

HANDBOOK to LIFE in the

# INCA WORLD

ANANDA COHEN SUAREZ  
AND JEREMY JAMES GEORGE



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**JEREMY JAMES GEORGE**

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## **Handbook to Life in the Inca World**

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*To the Incas*

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# INTRODUCTION

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The greatness of the Inca Empire, which by most accounts lasted less than 100 years in imperial form, is reflected today in the growing number of scholars and students trying to uncover the mysteries of the state enterprise. Often, decipherment takes the form of questions: Who were the Incas? How did they manage to control so vast a territory? Why did they rise so quickly, and how did they fall so fast? How did they carve such monumental stones and build such beautiful sites? We have tried to answer these questions and others in as concise a manner as possible. We hope, too, to have raised some new ones in the minds of young scholars.

At the moment of contact with the Spanish, the Inca Empire was already on the decline. Arriving in the midst of a fractious civil war between two rivals to the Inca throne, the Spanish conqueror Francisco Pizarro and the retinue in his charge were able to manipulate these divisions and contrive a surprisingly rapid defeat of the remaining imperial forces. The Spaniards' control was tenuous, as they fought among themselves while trying to manage a fallen empire, even as some hopeful Incas exiled deep in the mountains sustained a revolt into the 1570s. Today's descendants of these Andeans maintain many of the traditions, customs, and beliefs discussed herein—they speak the same language, and the archaeological remnants of their ancestors still mottle the landscape, so it should not be forgotten that the Andean culture remains vibrant, vital, and alive.

A note is necessary here on the Inca language—Quechua—the same one spoken today by some 5 million indigenous people. Language and spelling are among the most confusing aspects of reading about the Incas, because there is no standardized orthography. The Incas never developed an alphabetic writing component to their language, and as a result people felt free to translate spoken Quechua according to their own variation, resulting in numerous spellings of the same word—such as Inca, Inka, Inga, Ynga, Inqa—with little or no consistency. We have made the choice here to try and stay close to the spellings found most often in the literature and those that would be least confusing for an English speaker to pronounce. Here we have opted for what is hopefully the easier route—*Inca* with a *c* instead of a *k*, for example—even though the latter spelling is becoming more common. Pronunciation, however, is obviously a more complicated matter than presented here; Quechua words are accented on the penultimate syllable—PachaCUti YuPANqui—and pronunciation of most letters is the same as in English. Combinations of letters that are common in Spanish, such as the *ll* and the *ñ*, follow the Spanish pronunciation.

Finally, the nature of the Inca Empire, as we understand it, conflated and intertwined among the many aspects of daily life and the culture of the state—with mythology informing religion, religion informing politics, politics informing art making,

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## INTRODUCTION

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and art making informing the creation of Inca culture—is, to an extent, reflected in the organization of this book. We find that many topics and issues are inextricable from the themes as broadly

outlined in the contents, so we have chosen to deal with them where they make sense and emphasize the discussion within the context of that chapter's theme.

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# INCA CIVILIZATION AND ARCHAEOLOGY

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE INCA

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The Inca Empire was an empire of superlatives: Covering nearly the entire expanse of western South America, Tawantinsuyu, the Quechua term for the Inca Empire, was the largest pre-Columbian civilization in all of the Americas. It had the longest ancient road system in the Western Hemisphere, totaling more than 30,000 kilometers (18,600 mi.) of roadway. The Incas built their empire along the rugged, often inhospitable terrain of the Andes Mountains, the longest mountain chain in the world. These accomplishments were carried out without the aid of horses, load-bearing animals, iron tools, the wheel, or an alphabetic writing system, and they were completed in just over a century.

Scholarly investigations of the Inca Empire differ considerably from those of the ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman, or any number of Old World empires. The absence of written records among the Incas means that it is much more difficult to capture the nature of the Inca Empire and the peoples it governed at the time of its apogee. It is therefore necessary to rely on histories of the Incas reconstructed after the Spanish conquest by Spaniards and indigenous descendants of the Incas. Another means of studying the Incas is through their archaeological remains. This chapter will look at the historiography of the Incas—how the ways of studying the Incas have changed over time—as well as current trends in Inca scholarship.

## METHODS FOR STUDYING THE INCA PAST

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Scholars have studied the Incas from a wide range of disciplinary standpoints. As a pre-Columbian

civilization that was conquered by the Spanish about one century after its initial formation, the Incas have left behind both a material and a documentary record. The material record includes archaeological remains unearthed from the ground as well as objects produced by the Incas that remained in use or ended up in private collections after the Spanish conquest. The documentary record includes written documents composed in transliterated Quechua (the lingua franca of the Inca Empire), Aymara (the indigenous language of the peoples of southern Peru and Bolivia), Spanish, Latin, and other minor indigenous languages. Because the Incas lacked a written language, all of the documentary materials related to the Incas were produced after the conquest. Inca specialists have utilized these material and documentary remains in different ways, based largely on the dictates of their particular field of study. The primary fields of study used for examining the Inca past include anthropology, ethnohistory, and art history.

## Anthropology

Anthropology is the study of human cultures, both past and present. A branch of the social sciences, anthropology is concerned with the way that the environment, biology, and culture interact with one another to shape human behavior. Two of its sub-disciplines are particularly useful for studying the Inca past: archaeology and ethnography.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology is defined today as the systematic study of material remains of human life. Material remains can include cultural artifacts such as ceramics, basketry, metallurgy, textiles, stone tools (also known as lithics), bone implements, and architectural structures, as well as physical remains such as animal bones, charred seeds or plants, and human skeletons or mummies. Archaeologists conduct their studies through mapping, survey, and excavation. Mapping consists of geographically defining the parameters and structural features of an archaeological site. Surveying requires systematically collecting artifacts at surface level within a

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given expanse of land to determine the extent of cultural or political power that the site exerted in the region. Excavation involves the systematic unearthing of material remains from the ground. Great care is taken to determine the coordinates of each object unearthed relative to the excavation plot. The stratigraphic placement of an artifact—the soil layer within which it is located—is also important for establishing its comparative age with other material remains in close proximity. This concept, which underlies all archaeological practice, is known by the Latin terms *terminus post quem* and *terminus ante quem*. *Terminus post quem*, literally the “limit after which,” means that the stratigraphic layer within which a datable artifact is located must have been formed on or after the date of the artifact. *Terminus ante quem*, or the “limit before which,” means that the stratigraphic layer beneath a datable object must be older than the object itself. At a broader level these terms refer to the idea that any artifacts found at a lower stratigraphic level tend to be older than those found closer to the surface. This rule of thumb is dependent on the fact that the stratigraphic layers in question are undisturbed by human intervention or natural disaster. The archaeological investigation of sites, artifacts, and architectural remains offers a wealth of insight to an understanding of the Incas.

## ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is the study of living cultures. It is conducted through a process known as ethnographic fieldwork. Ethnographic fieldwork involves the interaction between an anthropologist and individuals belonging to the culture under study. This fieldwork often requires “participant observation,” which means that the anthropologist immerses him- or herself in the daily lives of his/her informants to the greatest extent possible. Ethnography is practiced both as a means of understanding contemporary cultures and of tracing the survival of ancient beliefs and traditions into the present day. Ethnographic fieldwork conducted with modern Andean populations has helped shed light on elements of Inca cultural practice that did not survive the archaeological or historical record but is preserved through the people who maintain it

today. For example, many modern Andeans continue to worship the same *buacas*, objects found in nature deemed to be sacred, and follow the same pilgrimage routes as their ancestors. An analysis of modern-day *buaca* worship and pilgrimage not only can reveal information relevant to the Inca past but stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of the Inca Empire nearly five centuries after its capitulation.

## Ethnohistory

Ethnohistory refers to the use of historical documents to understand ancient cultures. Almost all studies of the Incas use an ethnohistorical approach to some extent, whether to support or contradict archaeological data or as the entire basis of one’s study. Ethnohistorical documents used to reconstruct Inca society include 16th- and 17th-century conquest narratives, histories of the Inca Empire, statistical documents, and court testimonies. These types of documents are valuable for their potential to shed light on specific aspects of the preconquest past that would be otherwise unrecoverable. On the other hand, the fact that they were written after the conquest, some even up through the 18th century, means that much ethnohistorical research requires projecting colonial-period information onto a pre-Hispanic past. Given that cultures change over time, this method of inquiry can be problematic because of the vast temporal, cultural, and political gap between the Inca Empire and the Spanish colonial context within which these documents were generated. Nevertheless, when used carefully, this approach can be very effective in gaining a nuanced understanding of Inca society.

## Art History

Art history is the study of human visual expression throughout history. One of the most important tools of art history is visual analysis. Visual analysis requires an examination of the different elements that make up an image or object. These elements include composition, color, size, shape, texture,

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line, medium (what it is made out of), technique, and style. An understanding of these different elements can help explain a number of issues such as the way that images and objects were produced, the types of symbols and motifs shared and mutually understood by a certain group, or the way that people visually described the physical and symbolic world they inhabited. Art history also looks at the various facets of artistic production: Was it organized into workshops or guilds? Were the workshops or guilds structured according to medium, type of object, or other criteria? Did artists and artisans submit their works as tribute payment to a centralized government or were they created for the general population? How were artistic styles and symbols disseminated?

Art has long been used as a tool for expressing social or political power, particularly among the Incas, who developed a specific “state style” that was immediately recognizable to its diverse inhabitants across the vast empire. Art historical analysis is useful for interpreting the wide range of Inca artistry, including ceramics, metallurgy, and textiles. As a civilization that lacked a written language, the Incas used the visual language of the arts as a means of expressing their beliefs and values. Historians studying the art understand that it is necessary to examine their crafts not simply as aesthetically pleasing objects but for their importance in spreading Inca ideas, values, and messages.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE ANDES

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Archaeology has been practiced in the Andes for 150 years. Study of Inca patrimony began in the 1860s, with the discovery of important archaeological sites by American and European scientist-travelers visiting South America. Several archaeologists from Peru, Europe, and the United States have proven instrumental in reconstructing Andean pre-

history through archaeological data. Many different schools of thought have impacted the way that the Andean past has been interpreted, resulting in the development of several subfields within the larger field of Andean archaeology. A specifically “Peruvianist” (*peruanista* in Spanish) approach developed in the 1930s alongside American and European techniques.

### Early Explorers and Archaeologists

After Peru achieved independence in 1821, it welcomed outside visitors eager to explore a country largely unknown outside of South America. Explorers from North America and Europe traveled to South America, documenting its flora, fauna, geography, and archaeological sites and the customs of its inhabitants. Alexander von Humboldt, a naturalist from Prussia, was one of the most influential early explorers for his detailed studies and illustrations of the natural environment of South America. He was the first person to publish detailed descriptions of Inca ruins, in his 1810 text, *Vues des cordillères et monumens des peuples indigènes de l'Amérique* (Views of the cordilleras and monuments of the indigenous peoples of America). His work inspired a wealth of scientist-explorers to study the history and cultures of the Andes: Ephraim George Squier, Antonio Raimondi, Johann von Tschudi, and Charles Weiner all traveled to Peru and Bolivia in the 19th century and documented their findings in travel books, which provided information on the ancient and living inhabitants of Andean South America in the form of diagrams, illustrations, and detailed descriptions of their observations. Some of the illustrations of Inca archaeological sites are the only surviving documentation of now-disappeared or deteriorated sites. These early explorers were trained more as scientists than as formal archaeologists; stratigraphic excavations (measuring layers of soil to determine the length and relative date of site occupation) did not become fundamental to archaeological practice until the early 20th century.

Much of the archaeological fieldwork conducted in the Andes during the first half of the 20th cen-

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ture was focused on reconstructing the sequence of Andean cultures up to the Spanish conquest. Peruvian, North American, and European archaeologists alike were engaged in the project of tracing Andean prehistory. Particular emphasis was placed on the origins of Peruvian culture, which was tied in with nationalistic desires to cultivate a modern Peruvian identity. The archaeologists of the early 20th century approached excavation more systematically, with a keen eye for variations in artifact assemblages and architectural styles through space and time.

#### MAX UHLE (1856–1944)

Max Uhle was a German archaeologist who worked in Peru in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The scientific precision with which he conducted excavations and analyzed artifacts was remarkable for his time. Uhle was the first prominent scholar in the Andean region to differentiate cultures based on stratigraphy, which is a branch of archaeology that focuses on how rocks and soil are layered. By examining variations in artifacts from the deepest layers of the soil (that is, the oldest) to the most superficial (the youngest), Uhle was able to distinguish between Inca culture and the Tiwanaku (Tihuanaco) culture that preceded it. Previously, scholars had lumped these cultures together because of their stylistic similarities. This discovery was important because it confirmed the veracity of postconquest historical documents about Tiwanaku civilization through concrete archaeological evidence. He was also well-known for his intensive study of Pachacamac, an Inca pilgrimage site near modern-day Lima, and Tambo Colorado, an Inca way station in the Pisco Valley to the west of Cuzco.

#### HIRAM BINGHAM (1875–1956)

Hiram Bingham, an American explorer, was the most important of the early explorers to make a lasting impact on Inca archaeology. Bingham was involved in a variety of different careers, including that of missionary, politician, aviator, and archaeologist. Deeply interested in Latin American history, he decided to retrace the great liberator Simón Bolívar's steps during his famous march from Venezuela to Colombia. He took a lectureship at Yale

University to teach geography and South American history. After this first trip to South America Bingham returned several times on expeditions sponsored by Yale and the National Geographic Society to explore the vastly understudied cultural patrimony of the Andes. During a 1911 expedition Bingham discovered the site of Machu Picchu with the aid of local Peruvian guides. The discovery of this breathtaking site was instrumental in bringing the Incas to the forefront of scholarly attention. The success of Bingham's 1911 expedition inspired many scholars, both local and foreign, to conduct archaeological fieldwork in the Andes.

#### JULIO C. TELLO (1880–1947)

Julio C. Tello was one of the most important Peruvian archaeologists of his time and is considered the father of Peruvian archaeology. He was of indigenous descent and came from a humble background, born in the town of Huarochirí in the central highlands. Tello studied at the renowned University of San Marcos in Lima and pursued graduate work at Harvard on full scholarship. He is best known for his studies of Chavín, one of the earliest highland civilizations in the Andes, as well as the Paracas culture of the south coast. He eventually became the director of the National Archaeology Museum in Lima, for which he went on several expeditions to expand the museum's collection. During his directorship at the museum, Tello became involved in conservation projects on Inca archaeological projects. He also took an active role in designing exhibitions at the museum that communicated information about Inca sites to the general public in an accessible way. Furthermore, he introduced a major paradigm shift to the study of Peruvian prehistory. Unlike European archaeologists working in Peru such as Uhle, who believed Andean civilizations derived from Mesoamerican cultures that diffused into South America, Tello rightly argued that they developed independently in the highlands. Later in his career, he continued excavations that had been initiated by Uhle at the Inca site of Pachacamac. His work at this important pilgrimage site revealed earlier site occupations that had been left undiscovered by Uhle. Tello influenced an entire generation of Peruvian archaeologists,

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including Duccio Bonavia, Ramiro Matos, Rosa Fung, and Roger Ravines. His legacy was perhaps best continued by Luis E. Valcárcel, a Peruvian archaeologist who shared his commitment to engaging contemporary indigenous communities in the study of their cultural heritage.

#### LUIS E. VALCÁRCEL (1891–1987)

Luis E. Valcárcel pioneered a specifically “Peruvianist” approach to the study of indigenous cultures of the Andes. He studied literature, political science, and law at the Universidad de San Antonio Abad in Cuzco. While in Cuzco, he taught Peruvian history at his alma mater and founded the city’s first museum of anthropology. Valcárcel succeeded Tello as director of the National Archaeology Museum in Lima in the 1930s. He was responsible for advocating a vested national interest in the pre-Hispanic past and the retention of indigenous cultural practices in the modern era. He contributed to the valorization of indigenous cultures in Peru through promotion of dramatic performances featuring Inca subject matter, such as the great colonial-era plays *Ollanta* and *Usca Paucar*. He promoted the study of these peoples through the disciplines of anthropology (the study of human cultures), archaeology, ethnography (the study of modern-day cultures), and ethnohistory (the study of native peoples and histories through examination of written documents). He wrote a wealth of important books on both Andean culture and archaeology and trained a number of Peruvian archaeologists, historians, and social scientists.

#### JOHN MURRA (1916–2006)

John Murra, an anthropologist trained at the University of Chicago, made an important contribution to the study of Andean economies before the Spanish conquest. He served as professor at several universities but made his biggest mark at Cornell, where he taught in the anthropology department up until his death. Murra’s most famous contribution to the field was his characterization of the Andes as a “vertical archipelago.” Unlike traditional archipelagoes, whose islands stretch outward across the sea, the Andes jut upwards in altitude, but in the same way that the chain of islands that make up an archi-

pelago are connected by maritime trade, communities inhabiting different altitudinal levels of the Andes were economically interconnected through processes of exchange and reciprocity. Expanding on this concept, Murra proposed that the inhabitants of this special archipelago survived over the course of millennia through a strategy of “verticality.” He argued that communities in the Andes traded goods cultivated in different altitudinal zones as a survival strategy; for example, maize producers in the lowlands could exchange their product for the potatoes cultivated by highland people, allowing for a more balanced and nutrient-enriched diet in both zones. This exchange was facilitated by the settlement of extended family units across this vertical landscape. Contingent to the verticality model was the idea of reciprocal relationships between different highland groups. Although scholars continue to debate the accuracy of Murra’s theory, it continues to play an important role in understanding pan-Andean exchange systems, which would eventually become incorporated into Inca economic policy. Murra also wrote extensively about the economic and social value of textiles in the Inca Empire.

#### JOHN HOWLAND ROWE (1918–2004)

John Howland Rowe was one of the most influential Inca specialists of all time, publishing extensively on the Incas. He received his doctorate from Harvard in 1947 and began teaching in Cuzco at about the same time. During his stay in Cuzco he founded the archaeology department at the University of San Antonio Abad and became the director of the Museo Inca. His collaboration with Peruvian institutions paved the way for fruitful intellectual exchange between North American and Peruvian scholars. Rowe’s most important early work was *Introduction to the Archaeology of Cuzco*, published in 1944. Two years later, he published the seminal article “Inca Culture at the Time of the Spanish Conquest,” which detailed the various cultural, environmental, political, and economic elements that made up the Inca Empire. This article, published in the *Handbook of South American Indians*, remains even today one of the most consistently consulted sources for an overview of Inca culture owing to its comprehensiveness.

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One of Rowe's most important contributions to the field was his solidification of a chronology of Andean civilizations based on artifacts collected by Uhle in the Ica Valley. Rather than assigning distinct terminology for each cultural phase (for instance, Preclassic, Classic, and Postclassic, as used in Mesoamerican and Maya archaeology), he grouped Andean cultures into "horizons" and "intermediate" periods. Horizons are defined as periods in which power is centralized and social organization is at the level of state or empire. Intermediate periods are characterized by decentralization of power and the rise of regionalism. The highest level of social organization usually achieved during intermediate periods is that of chiefdom or small state, as in the case of the Moche (0–700 c.e.) of the north coast. Over the course of his 60-year-long career, Rowe wrote more than 300 essays and articles. His indefatigable work at Berkeley to develop the field of Andean studies resulted in a flourish of both North American and South American scholarship.

## Trends in Inca Archaeology

The way that the Incas have been studied archaeologically has evolved considerably over the past 100 years. Changes in archaeological field methods, the interpretation of sites and archaeological remains, as well as an increased interest in interdisciplinary approaches have helped to advance knowledge about the Inca Empire.

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODS

With the discoveries made by Bingham and other early archaeologists, the major concern in its nascent years was to excavate and identify major Inca sites. Before the advent of scientifically based excavation procedures, archaeological practice varied widely. The lack of systemization in field practices resulted in asymmetrical knowledge of Inca settlements and material culture. In the early years of Inca archaeology, typical practice was to unearth antiquities from the ground and uncover buried structures. Greater value was ascribed to complete objects over fragmented ones. Much of the archaeo-

logical literature consisted of identifying and describing artifact types and attempting to reconstruct architectural features of the site under investigation.

With the development of codified archaeological field procedures and the application of scientific methods to the interpretation of artifacts, Inca archaeology began to move away from a merely descriptive approach to site and artifact analysis. Archaeologists became interested in interpreting artifacts as a means of reconstructing social organization, economy, and the political structure of the Inca Empire. Moreover, Craig Morris's excavations at the Inca provincial site of Huánuco Pampa and Timothy Earle and Terence D'Altroy's fieldwork in the Upper Mantaro Valley in the central highlands in the 1970s and 1980s paved the way for studies of Inca sites outside the imperial capital of Cuzco. Studies of so-called provincial Inca communities, sites, and artifacts are essential in understanding how the empire spread within the span of less than a century and how it governed its vast territories. An interest in regional variation in the construction, design, and style of architecture, settlement planning, and artifacts has provided an amplified view of the Inca state, moving away from a Cuzco-centric model to see the different ways that communities throughout the realm adapted and responded to Inca rule.

Technological improvements in the field of archaeology have also allowed for improved accuracy in the dating of sites and sourcing of materials. Aerial photography and global positioning systems (GPS) have allowed archaeologists to determine the layout and size of archaeological sites with unprecedented accuracy. Neutron activation analysis (NAA) provides qualitative and quantitative elemental analysis of artifacts, minerals, and biotic materials. Employing NAA onto a group of excavated materials such as ceramic fragments can identify the source of the clays and temper (crushed rocks or shells used to bind the clay together) to determine where the pots originated. If the clays and temper came from a nearby source, it can be assumed that they were produced locally; however, if they derived from distant sources, one can infer that the ceramics were imported. These kinds of details are important for understanding the way

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that a society was structured and the modes of exchange within which it was engaged.

### THE SHIFT TO ARCHAEOLOGY

It was not until the mid-20th century that Inca archaeology could exist as a discipline in its own right, without recourse to the chronicles of the early colonial period. Archaeologists began to question the validity of the chronicler's descriptions of the Inca Empire. The individuals who wrote about the Inca Empire during the colonial period—conquistadores, Spanish friars, Christianized Indians, and mestizos (the product of Spanish and Indian unions)—wrote from a culturally and temporally distanced standpoint. Even the few indigenous chroniclers who actually experienced life under the Inca Empire before the Spanish conquest were writing about events from their childhood. Moreover, they had specific agendas of their own in characterizing the Inca Empire in an idealized way. As archaeologists began to focus more exclusively on Inca archaeological sites, it became evident that the archaeological record often tells a different story than the chronicles do. In fact, archaeological data often contradicts the early written sources, presenting a much more complicated picture of the Inca world than the historical narratives communicate. Archaeology also serves as an essential tool for understanding peripheral regions under Inca rule that are only scantily mentioned in the documentary record.

### PROCESSUAL VERSUS HISTORICAL APPROACH

One of the biggest shifts in archaeological investigation of the Incas involved the application of processual approaches to the development of the Inca state in a field dominated by historical and ethnohistorical models. Processualism is an archaeological theory that states that cultural change and adaptation are contingent on large-scale factors such as the environment, subsistence activities, or population density. It differs significantly from historical or ethnohistorical approaches, which depend largely on texts about the Inca past that were produced after the conquest. Given that the construction of history requires the placement of past events

and historical figures into a sequence, it provides a version of the Inca past that sees the accomplishments of individuals as the main determinant of cultural evolution.

One of the major implications of this dichotomy lies in how scholars have explained the Incas' rise to power. The event-based, individual-centered perspective of the 16th- and 17th-century chronicles continues to filter into modern-day interpretations of the development of the Inca state. This historical approach, which accepts the model that empires are built and expanded by a few key heroic "players," was initiated by Rowe and perpetuated by many subsequent archaeologists and historians. In terms of Inca expansion, it sees the military victories of the rulers Viracocha Inca and his son, Pachacuti, as responsible for the expansion and consolidation of the empire. A processual approach to the development of the Inca state posits that empire-formation was a gradual process that was the result of economic and political ties forged between the major ethnic groups of the Cuzco region. Some of the proponents of this latter view include the archaeologists Brian Bauer, Dorothy Menzel, Terence D'Altroy, Craig Morris, Katharina Schreiber, and R. Alan Covey. Both approaches continue to be employed today, although the findings from excavations conducted in the Cuzco area increasingly point toward a much different story of the beginnings of Inca expansion than the versions provided by the chronicles of the 16th and 17th centuries.

### INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

In recent decades more scholars have made efforts to integrate ethnohistorical, archaeological, and ethnographic data into their studies to gain a more well-rounded sense of the Inca past. The work of one Peruvian scholar in particular, María Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, demonstrates the success of such an approach. Rostworowski's proposal of the existence of two distinct Inca economies—one highland and one coastal—was able to come to fruition through her consideration of the importance and utility of each of these forms of data. Rather than relying on the methods of a single discipline, Inca scholars from a variety of fields, including anthropology, archaeology, literature, history,

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and art history, have begun to utilize a wealth of different sources and approaches to uncover the multifaceted nature of Inca civilization.

## MATERIAL CULTURE STUDIES

Another subfield of archaeology that has gained currency in recent years is material culture studies. Material culture refers to objects produced and used by a culture, including anything from cooking pots to weapons to works of art. The difference between material culture and artifacts is that the former is an all-encompassing term that can pertain to living societies as well as ancient ones, while the latter only refers to the past remains of a society. Material culture studies examine the role that objects play in social interactions. It operates on the belief that material culture can simultaneously define and construct social relations. It also sees objects as having the power to communicate a set of common cultural values that become absorbed by their users through sustained usage. Material culture can communicate values through its practical function, its meaning, the symbols or motifs inscribed on it, the social and cultural contexts within which it operates, or a combination of all of these elements. The application of a material culture perspective on Inca objects such as ceramic serving and cooking vessels can reveal aspects of Inca life such as eating and drinking customs, domestic life, social status, or local traditions that are not as easily accessed through other methods of scholarly inquiry. For example, the morphology (shape) of a vessel, its decorations (or lack thereof), its function, and its method of manufacture can tell us something about the social situations that necessitated its use, whether of elaborate feasts or simple domestic meals. Material culture studies also facilitate a “bottom-up” rather than a “top-down” perspective, placing value on everyday objects typically produced by nonelite sectors of society and what they can tell us about the lives of their makers and users.

## Problems from Looting

One unfortunate consequence of the rich archaeological record in the Andean region is the looting of

sites, which has continued unabated since the Spanish conquest. After the Spanish discovered the vast quantities of gold and silver objects crafted by the Incas, they dug for “treasures” at Inca and pre-Inca archaeological sites and melted them down into bullion to increase the wealth of the Spanish monarchs. The looting and melting down of objects not only destroyed the objects themselves but the archaeological sites from which they came. Modern looters, known as *buaqueros* in Peru, do not melt objects down but instead sell them on the international black market to make a profit. Although looted objects sometimes make it to museums and galleries rather than private collections, they are irrevocably stripped of their archaeological context. Since archaeologists base much of their interpretation on the location of an object relative to the archaeological site, the absence of such information makes it difficult to discern the original cultural context within which the object was engaged. The loss of this valuable piece of an object’s identity has led to erroneous claims of its significance.

## THE WRITTEN RECORD

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No alphabetic writing tradition existed in pre-Columbian South America. This does not mean that the Incas or the cultures that preceded them lacked language or methods for recording knowledge. In fact, the Incas developed a number of strategies for encoding information that functioned in much the same way as a written language. The quipu, made up of groups of knotted strings used for recording information, was an important device for delivering messages along great distances. Relay runners known as *chasquis* would pass quipus along a route until the message reached its final destination. Organized in a decimal system, with each knot representing a unit of 10, quipus contained information such as census tabulations and number or type of tribute payments. They also could be used to record histories, songs, and poetry. Oral tradition provided another mechanism for recording and preserving knowledge. In the absence of an

alphabetic writing system, people relied heavily on the powers of memory, cultivating the skill through repetition. In addition, textiles were also interwoven with specific messages that would be recognized by its users. For example, the *tocapu* (repeating square patterns inscribed with geometric motifs) found on many Inca tunics probably served as a type of visual code that expressed information about its wearer.

The Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire in 1534, however, interrupted many of these traditions for recording and sharing information. The disintegration of the Inca imperial structure meant that Inca systems of communication would become supplanted by the alphabetic writing tradition used by the Spaniards. Despite the waning of Inca traditions, the transliteration of Quechua, Aymara, and other indigenous languages, along with the training of native Andeans in reading and writing Spanish and Latin, resulted in a flowering of literature after the conquest. Narratives of the conquest, histories of the Inca Empire, accounts of Inca customs, and illustrated chronicles with descriptions of Spanish abuses against native people are just some of the genres that developed in the colonial period. These written documents provide invaluable insights on Inca history from a variety of different perspectives. Their specificity provides impressive details in sequence of events, dates, and explication of cultural practice that cannot be found archaeologically, ethnographically, or through art historical inquiry.

Written documents, nevertheless, demand a cautious approach for the following reasons: First is the problem of temporal distance. The historical record reconstructs Inca culture after it had already been fundamentally altered by the Spanish conquest. Since the Incas did not leave behind records that could be deciphered by Spaniards, oral histories and the testimonies of native peoples who survived the conquest were the fundamental tools for reconstructing Inca history. For many of these individuals, the Inca Empire was a distant memory, with the added caveat that in the decades before the Spanish invasion, the empire was in crisis, possibly nearing the end of its peak, due to violent succession clashes between the half brothers Huáscar and Atahualpa. Second, the cultural distance that sepa-

rated Inca forms of knowledge and Spanish written history was often vast. The transition from an oral history recounted in Quechua or encoded in a quipu to a written history in Spanish, Latin, or even transliterated Quechua often loses much of its original meaning. Inca forms of recording and disseminating knowledge were multisensory, requiring the use of sound, sight, and touch, whereas the written word is static and the act of reading only requires visual recognition. Thus, many specifically Andean or Inca concepts became lost in the transferral to written form. Third, whether the author of the text was Spanish, indigenous, or mestizo, he was always driven by an agenda, whether personal, political, moral, or any combination of these, that would invariably alter the form and content of the Inca history recounted. This is to say nothing of the fact that Inca practices of structuring, remembering, and narrating history from which the colonial chroniclers drew changed considerably over time, particularly when new rulers rose to power who wanted to associate themselves with important events and victories. For example, it was said that when Pachacuti came into power, he ordered the destruction of all quipus that told a story of the past that did not conform to his new vision of a strictly Pachacuti-centric history.

## Types of Spanish Narratives

### CHRONICLE (*CRÓNICA*)

Drawing from a medieval European tradition, the Spanish chronicle was a narrative device used to describe historical events in their sequence of occurrence, without any synthesis or interpretation. It was a straightforward, practical way to recount events that was often used when writing about the conquest. The chronicle was distinctive for its eyewitness, first-person perspective.

### HISTORY (*HISTORIA*)

In this case *history* refers to the practice of recounting historical events, but unlike the chronicle, history involves the contextualization of historical events into an ideological framework. It requires one to synthesize past events and explain their rela-

tionship to the “bigger picture,” whether to the history of the world, of a civilization, or of a place. However, despite the conceptual differences between these two writing genres, New World historians often drew from both traditions and used the terms interchangeably.

#### REPORT (*RELACIÓN*)

A *relación* is a legal report mandated by the Spanish Crown that described different aspects of colonial administration of indigenous populations in the New World. It was often written in the form of a letter, since it was directed to the king. The *relación* consists of factual information such as the imposition of labor regimes, the successes and failures of evangelization, or the founding of new towns and cities.

## Chroniclers

The Spanish chronicles were used to recount the history of the conquest of Peru and were largely published in the decades succeeding the conquest in 1534. They are often written from a military perspective, since the chroniclers tended to be part of the military personnel of Francisco Pizarro, the conqueror of the Inca Empire. The chronicles provide a great deal of factual information about the conquest, although there are discrepancies as they were written by individuals with different levels of involvement in the conquest. Moreover, they were often composed several years after the event, during which some information can become lost.

#### FRANCISCO DE JEREZ (1497–1565)

Francisco de Jerez is credited with the first account of the conquest of Peru. His *Verdadera relación de la conquista del Perú* (True report of the conquest of Peru) was published in 1534. Jerez was a secretary for Francisco Pizarro and was thus writing about the conquest from direct experience. His work was incorporated into Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo’s *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (General and Natural History of the Indies), published a year later. Oviedo’s work—and by extension, that of Jerez—

would have considerable influence on the later writings of Spaniards involved in the conquest.

#### PEDRO DE CIEZA DE LEÓN (1519–1554)

Pedro de Cieza de León’s famous four-volume text, *La crónica del Perú* (*The Chronicle of Peru*), published in 1553 and 1554, is the earliest comprehensive history of the conquest of Peru. He was born in Spain in 1520 and came to the Americas when he was about 13 years old. From the moment he arrived, Cieza was involved in military operations occurring throughout South America, but due to his young age he began as an apprentice, assisting soldiers when needed. While he did not participate in the early sieges of the Inca city of Cajamarca and Cuzco, Cieza was involved in civil wars that raged throughout Peru immediately after the conquest. He was appointed the official chronicler of the Indies, granting him the privilege of researching and writing about all subjects related to the New World. Cieza conducted interviews with descendants of Inca elites in order to piece together the genealogy of Inca kings. His *crónica* begins with an overview of the geography and inhabitants of South America and follows with a detailed description of the Inca Empire, aided by the interviews and field research he conducted. Cieza then describes the Spanish overthrow of the Inca Empire and the civil wars that ensued due to conflicts between the Pizarros and other Spanish factions. His *crónica* is one of the most important foundational texts for understanding Inca civilization and its conquest by the Spaniards. Cieza is credited for being the first to describe species of flora and fauna native to Peru. His vivid, first-person accounts are compelling and accessible and greatly impacted the format and content of the chronicles to follow.

#### AGUSTÍN DE ZÁRATE (1514–1560)

Agustín de Zárate’s work, *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista de las provincias del Perú* (*History of the Discovery and Conquest of Peru*), published in 1555, is a 300-page political history of the conquest. Zárate was sent to Peru as an accountant entrusted with managing the royal treasury. His text focuses primarily on the conflicts between the two principal groups of Spanish conquerors in Peru: Francisco Pizarro’s army and

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the army of Diego de Almagro. Zárate's description of the Incas and other indigenous groups is heavily informed by European standards of culture and civility and therefore does not represent the Incas as accurately or perceptively as Cieza, Juan de Betanzos, and other contemporaries do.

#### JUAN DE BETANZOS (FL. 16TH CENTURY)

Juan de Betanzos's *Suma y narración de los incas* (*Narrative of the Incas*), published in 1557, provides an account of Inca royal history unparalleled by his contemporaries in accuracy and detail. An expert in Quechua, he served as an official translator and interpreter in Peru. Betanzos married an Inca princess, Doña Angelina Añas Yupanqui, also known as Angelina Cusimaray. She was both niece of Huayna Cápac, the penultimate Inca ruler, and wife to his son, Atahualpa, the last legitimate Inca ruler. She then became Francisco Pizarro's mistress, bearing him two sons, and then married Betanzos in 1541 after Pizarro's death. Doña Angelina was the key to Betanzos's authorial success, providing him privileged access to royal records preserved in quipus, which she orally translated for his alphabetic transcription to written text. His text is especially strong in his discussion of Huayna Cápac and Atahualpa because of his wife's familial ties and knowledge of that history. Although much of Betanzos's *Suma y narración* comes from authenticated Inca sources, it is important to note that his exaltation of these members of the Inca royal lineage was also motivated by a desire to glorify his wife's lineage. Nevertheless, Betanzos's account stands out as one of the most authentic writings on the history of the Inca Empire and the events leading up to the conquest.

#### JUAN POLO DE ONDEGARDO (D. 1575)

Juan Polo de Ondegardo moved from Spain to Peru in 1545, where he enjoyed a career as a lawyer, tax collector, and magistrate. In addition to his bureaucratic pursuits, Ondegardo was deeply fascinated by Inca civilization. He was the nephew of Zárate, who published *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista de las provincias del Perú* in 1555. Ondegardo was commissioned by the viceroy Marqués de Cañete and the archbishop Fray Jerónimo de Loaysa to write a his-

tory of the Inca Empire based on information provided by native informants. His report, compiled in 1559, detailed Inca history, politics, economy, and religion. He was the first to undertake a systematic study of Inca social and political institutions, believing that it was necessary to understand the structures that made up the Inca Empire to successfully evangelize Indians and set up labor regimes in the new colonial state. Ondegardo's report was lost, but an excerpt of it, entitled *Tratado y averiguación sobre los errores y supersticiones de los indios* (Treaty and inquiry about the errors and superstitions of the Indians), was finally published by the Third Provincial Council of Lima in 1585. Fortunately, Ondegardo's section on religion was preserved through the writings of Father Bernabé Cobo, who borrowed liberally from his report.

#### PEDRO PIZARRO (CA. 1515–CA. 1602)

Pedro Pizarro was a cousin of Francisco Pizarro and participated in the conquest of the Incas. Although he was part of the original group of conquistadores, he did not publish his memoirs, *Relación del descubrimiento y conquista de los reinos del Perú* (*Relation of the Discovery and Conquest of the Kingdoms of Peru*), until 1571. His work constituted one of the few eyewitness accounts of the conquest.

#### PEDRO SARMIENTO DE GAMBOA (1532–1592)

Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa came to the New World in 1555, first residing in Mexico and settling in Peru a few years later. He was a sea captain and cosmographer for the Viceroyalty of Peru. Following in the tradition of acquiring information from native informants initiated by Betanzos and Ondegardo, Sarmiento sought to write an authentic history of the Incas. His *Historia índica* (*History of the Incas*), published in 1572, synthesized accounts provided by indigenous scribes from Cuzco as well as the provinces of Jauja and Huamanga. He also interviewed professional *quipucamayos*, or quipu-readers, whose histories were incorporated into the text. Sarmiento's field research was facilitated by the newly appointed viceroy Francisco de Toledo, whom he accompanied on a royal inspection of all the major cities and settlements between Lima and

Cuzco. The *Historia índica* is composed of three sections: The first is a description of the geography of the Inca realm; the second consists of an overview of the Inca Empire, including detailed descriptions of the lives and deeds of the Inca kings; and the third section deals with the conquest and the imposition of colonial rule. Perhaps the most remarkable aspect about the *Historia índica* is that, in an effort to verify the veracity of the information collected, Sarmiento had his entire text read aloud to a group of 42 indigenous informants. Shortly thereafter, the manuscript, along with four painted canvases depicting the lineage of Inca kings, was to be sent to Spain to King Philip II but never made it due to logistical issues. The history is also of great significance because Sarmiento's text was one of the last to record Inca histories relayed by the first generation of Inca elites.

## Indigenous and Mestizo Authors

In addition to Spanish writers, several indigenous authors wrote about the conquest and Inca-related themes. These authors came from diverse backgrounds; some were pure-blood descendants of Inca royalty, some were mestizos (of mixed Spanish and Indian descent), and others were Indians of non-royal descent. Despite their differences, however, what united these authors was a shared connection and familiarity with the Inca past, which endowed their writings with a unique perspective that distinguished them from their Spanish counterparts.

### RELACIÓN DE CHINCHA

The *Relación de Chincha* (Report from Chincha) was compiled by two Spanish bureaucrats, Diego de Ortega y Morejón and Fray Cristóbal de Castro, in 1558. Although the compilers were Spanish, the manuscript is composed of testimonies given by the native inhabitants of Chincha, a *señorío*, or “chiefdom,” on the southern coast of Peru. The *Relación de Chincha* provides an account of the Inca conquest of Chincha in the 15th century, when the Incas were in the process of consolidating their empire. It

describes the process by which the people of Chincha became subjugated by the powerful *cuzqueños* (people of Cuzco), which began as a process predicated on equality and transformed into an act of domination and exploitation. Highland relations with the Chincha lords who presided over their fishing society were originally commercial, rooted in pan-Andean notions of economic reciprocity. However, as the *relación* describes, the lords of Cuzco forcefully subjugated the people of Chincha into the rapidly growing Inca Empire, organizing the territory into a tribute-paying unit based on the decimal system, constructing roads, and erecting Inca administrative buildings. The *Relación de Chincha* is one of the few documents of the colonial period to describe Inca expansionism from a local perspective rather than from a “top-down” point of view. It contains valuable information about the dynamics between coastal societies and the highland Incas, a topic that is often ignored in the traditional chronicles. It also provides useful information about the customs and daily lives of the Chincha people at the time of the Inca conquest.

### TITU CUSI YUPANQUI (CA. 1530–1571)

Titu Cusi Yupanqui was a grandson of Huayna Cápac, the penultimate ruler of the Inca realm. Titu Cusi himself was the penultimate ruler of the neo-Inca state, the last Inca holdout located in Vilcabamba, which was eventually defeated by Viceroy Toledo's forces in 1572. His manuscript, *Relación de la conquista del Perú (An Inca Account of the Conquest of Peru)*, written in 1570, is the earliest known book by a native Andean. Titu Cusi did not actually write the text but dictated his story orally in Quechua to an Augustinian friar, who then dictated his Spanish translation to a scribe.

Titu Cusi's manuscript stands as one of the only conquest narratives to recount the history of the conquest from the standpoint of Inca resistance. As head of the neo-Inca state, which successfully resisted Spanish rule for nearly 40 years, Titu Cusi saw Inca history as alive and present well after the conquest in 1534. Some of the details included in his description of the dynastic lineage are uncorroborated by any other written sources, particularly his claims of the deeds of his father, Manco Inca,

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