

KIDS  
DISCOVER

# Incas

THE POTATO  
UNEARTHED



WHO WERE  
THE SUN'S  
SONS?



NICE TO  
MEET YOU  
MACHU  
PICCHU!



# Children of the Sun

About six hundred years ago, the Incas built an empire that stretched twenty-five hundred miles down the coast of South America and held over 12 million subjects. They accomplished this remarkable feat without having horses, the wheel, or even a written language.

Before expansion of the Inca empire began in the early 1400s, the Incas lived in or near their capital city of Cuzco, in

present-day Peru. At its height in 1532, the empire consisted of most of Peru, much of Chile, and parts of Ecuador, Bolivia, and Argentina. It included coastal and desert regions, rain forests, and parts of the Andes, the world's second highest mountain range.

What explains the rise of the Incas and their success as empire builders? How did they hold onto their empire, and how did they lose it? Let's step back through the centuries and find out.



◀ **MANY DRAWINGS** in this issue were done in the early 1600s by Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, a Spanish official. His book, *La Buena Crónica y el Buen Gobierno* (*The New Chronicle and the*

*Good Government*), was intended as a "letter" to the king of Spain. Guamán Poma described the Incas and their history and chronicled abuses committed by the Spaniards on the conquered Incas.







▲ **THE INCAS CLAIMED** that their ruler was the son of the sun. Living high in the Andes Mountains, the Incas depended on the sun for light, for heat, and for survival. Without the sun, crops would not grow. The

Incas believed their sun god, named Inti, was the giver of heat and light, the father of the Inca ruler, and the protector of the Inca people. Inti was only one of many gods, but he was the most powerful. Moon and thunder were also important deities.



▲ **THE INCAS DID** not have wheeled vehicles or work animals, aside from the llama. The llama, a distant cousin of the camel, can go without food or water for days and carry loads of up to 80

pounds. The Incas used the llama to carry supplies up and down winding mountain paths. They made cloth from its wool, ate its meat, and burned its dung as fuel. However, wool from the domesticated alpaca and the wild vicuña was more highly valued than that from the llama.

◀ **THESE ARE THE** ruins of Machu Picchu, the best-preserved Inca site. Situated a mile and a half above sea level, it was most likely a royal estate founded by the emperor Pachacuti. Members of the royal family stayed

there when they were away from their capital city, Cuzco. Unlike many Inca cities, Machu Picchu escaped discovery and destruction by the Spanish and was largely forgotten until it was found by American archaeologist Hiram Bingham in 1911.







**1408–1468**

▲ **THE FIRST OF THE** great rulers was Pachacuti, the ninth Inca. His name meant “he who transforms the earth.” In the early 1400s, Pachacuti conquered the area around Cuzco and then took his troops north. Until Pachacuti came to power, the Incas had little territory. Year after year, his military campaigns expanded the empire well beyond the valley of Cuzco. Pachacuti was also an able administrator. To unite the many different people under his control, he required that state leaders and their sons learn Quechua, a spoken, but not written, language.

**1468–1480**

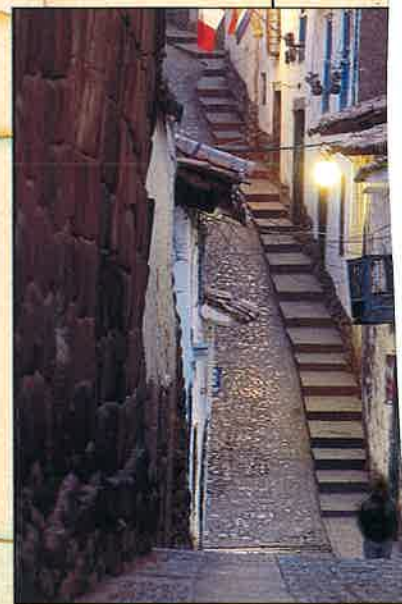


▲ **PACHACUTI’S SON,** Tupa Inca, the tenth Inca, was as good at making war as his father. In Chile and Argentina, Tupa Inca conquered an area larger than Spain. By the end of his rule, Tupa Inca had an empire nearly as vast as ancient Rome.



**1480–1528**

▼ **TUPA INCA’S SON,** Huayna Capac, added millions more subjects from Ecuador and Colombia to the Inca empire. However, when he tried to extend the empire into the forested lands of the fierce Araucanian Indians, they refused to give up. The Incas also failed to extend their control far into the Amazonian rain forest in the north. Around 1525, Huayna Capac died, probably of smallpox contracted from someone who had come in contact with Europeans. His death led to a bloody fight between his sons for control.





# Building a Mighty Empire



The Incas called their empire The Four Parts Together and divided it into four areas—northeast, southeast, northwest, southwest. The ruler was called the Sapa Inca. Strictly speaking, the term *Inca* refers to the small group of people who had as their original home the Cuzco area. The rulers of the empire came from this group. All the other people who made up the great Inca empire belonged to other ethnic groups and are known more correctly as Andean people, because they lived in the Andes mountains. However, today the term *Incas* has come to stand for all the people of the empire. Three determined rulers made the Inca kingdom into the largest empire to exist in the Americas up until that time. Read these pages to find out how it all took place.



▲ **THE INCAS BUILT** their capital, Cuzco, in southern Peru around 1300. It served as the center of government. Only members of the royal family and the nobility could live in the center of this city, 11,600 feet above sea level. Like the empire itself, the city was divided into four quarters.

When colonists were forcibly resettled in Cuzco, or when provincial lords spent part of the year in the capital, those who came from the northeast quarter of the empire lived in the northeast quarter of the city, and those from the other quarters followed the same pattern.



▼ **THIS DRAWING IS** Guamán Poma de Ayala's idea of how Huayna Capac looked going into battle. He is carried on a litter by his soldiers as he hurls a stone with his sling. Inca men were expert with

slings. They learned the skill as children and practiced by killing birds in the fields. Spanish soldiers said that the sling-throwers could throw a stone large enough to kill a horse at 30 paces.



▲ **SOME LATER INCA** rulers married their own sisters. The sister became the ruler's chief wife, but he had hundreds of other wives as well. The Inca ruled for as long as he lived. Before his death, he chose his successor from among the sons of his chief wife. The picture above shows an Inca princess.



▲ **IN THE INCA ARMY,** everyone was a foot soldier because the llama, the only beast of burden, was not strong enough to carry an adult. Most soldiers were farmers called to fight as needed and then returned home. The only full-time soldiers were the ruler's bodyguards. The Inca's relatives headed the army.



◀ **THE KEY TO INCA** military success was organizing people and supplies. As the Inca armies advanced, they built roads and forts to guard their conquests, and they erected

storehouses to hold supplies for the army. The thousands of storehouses throughout the empire ensured that the soldiers were never out of food.



# Inca Government and Law

The Incas expanded their empire not only through war but also through diplomatic means and threats of violence—and they knew how to keep what became theirs. They were good organizers, ruling one of the best-run empires in history. Without telephones, cars, or even a way to write a letter, they kept a tight hold on their subjects. In one hundred years, they conquered millions of people who had languages and customs quite different from their own and made them all a part of the Inca empire. Working together, officials spread Inca religion, laws, and language throughout the land, creating a united empire.



▲ **THROUGHOUT THE** empire, Inca officials required villagers to set aside about two-thirds of their farmland for the Inca ruler and for the temples dedicated to the sun god. Crops from these fields went

to the government and the Inca temples. Farmers kept what was left for themselves. These men are digging the soil with wooden foot plows, while the women break up the dirt by hand.

▼ **TREASURES LIKE** this golden baby rattle, taken from conquered peoples, were sent back to storehouses in Cuzco. The Incas and

other Andean peoples considered gold to be the sweat of the sun. They considered silver to be the tears of the moon.



► **THINKING OF** sleeping late today or skipping your chores? Bad idea if you're an Inca. There were no slackers in Inca society. Incas

sought to regulate behavior and sometimes enforced strict punishments. The penalty for repeated laziness could be death by hang-

► **BY LAW, EVERY** adult in Inca society spent a part of each year working for the state. This forced labor was a kind of tax, called *mita*. Every household had to pay it. Men and women shared some tasks, such as farming or mining, for the state. When the men went off to war, their wives often went along



to take care of them. At home, women wove rough cloth for the state from wool taken from state herds.

ing, stoning, or being pushed off a cliff. Laziness was considered a crime equal to treason!



## THE KEEPERS OF THE QUIPU

► **KEEPERS OF THE** quipu were royal accountants. They kept track of tribute brought to Cuzco. Each time the Incas conquered new territory, officials sent back to Cuzco a quipu census of village goods and workers.



To keep track of their vast holdings, the Incas used the quipu, a recording device made of knotted string. By making knots in the strings at different places, officials kept records of births and deaths, crops, weapons, and numbers of men available for war and construction projects.

► **THE QUIPU IS** made of strings of different colors, lengths, and thicknesses. The colors stand for whatever is being counted. For example, red might stand for

soldiers and yellow for corn. A simple knot stands for one. Longer knots show numbers of items up to nine. At the bottom of the string, the knots stand for

ones. Higher up, they stand for tens, hundreds, and thousands.





# ▼ WHEN INCA

armies captured a new territory, they often put local leaders to death if they didn't accept the Incas' conditions for surrender. However, the leaders' sons fared better. They went to Cuzco to be trained in Inca ways and then returned to their own provinces to govern. They stayed in power as long as their subjects did not rebel, paid the mita, and kept the storehouses full. In much of the empire, the real Incas were seldom present; instead, they ruled through subject lords and allowed local customs to prevail.



Inca society was organized like a pyramid. At the top was the emperor and his family. Below them came the royal family, then two classes of nobles: one directly descended from the ruler; the other, lesser nobles who had won the trust of the ruler and were considered honorary Inca nobility. At the bottom were the farmers or peasants, who raised the food and provided the labor for the empire's building projects.



**EMPEROR** The royal couple always traveled in a litter followed by servants and bodyguards.



**NOBLES** They wore colorful clothing and feathers.



**FARMERS** They worked hard providing the food.





# Runners, Roadways, and Rope Bridges

The Incas were master builders. They constructed thousands of miles of roads to link all parts of their vast empire. Officials traveled these roads as the eyes and ears of the Inca ruler. To get news from one end of the empire to the other, the Incas developed a messenger system, using their roads. The Inca builders also put their skills to work finding ways to grow food on mountain slopes. They excelled at building hanging bridges across mountain gorges and terracing hill-sides to grow crops.

► **HERE'S A JOB FOR** someone who likes heights. Inca workers built suspension bridges over mountain gorges and raging rivers. Made of twisted or braided ropes, the cables of the bridge were anchored on either side by stone pillars and weights. Workers made guardrails for the bridge with smaller ropes and lay twigs across the cables to form a floor for the bridge.



▲ **THIS MAN IS A** bridge inspector. His job was to make sure the rope bridges were safe and worn ropes were replaced. His ear-lobe plugs indicate he is a noble.



## MESSANGER SERVICE "INCA STYLE"

**GOOD NEWS OR BAD,** it traveled fast on the Inca road system. The Incas developed a messaging system six hundred years before e-mail! They built simple huts or relay sta-

tions at regular intervals along the roads. Runners carried messages and packages from station to station. In one day, news could travel as far as 150 miles.



◀ **MESSENGERS** waited in their stations. As a runner carrying a message approached a relay station, he blew a conch shell to let the next runner know he was coming.





### ▼ THE ANDES

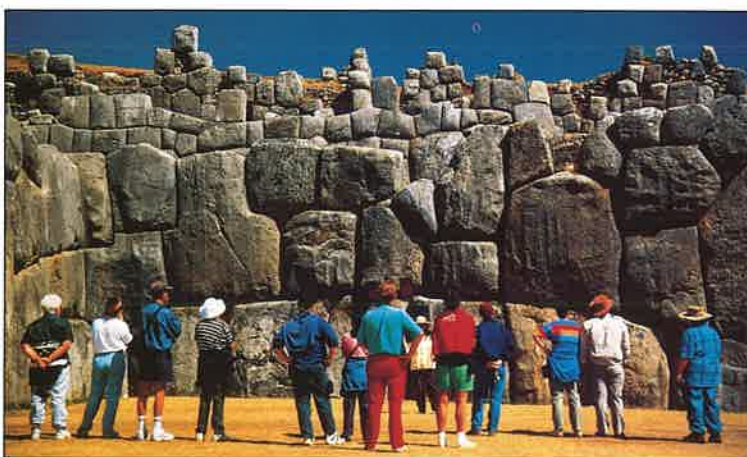
Mountains provide little level farmland. The Incas solved this problem by cutting huge steps, or terraces, into the mountainside,



with stone walls that kept the soil from being swept away by wind or rain. Terracing helped increase the amount of land that could be farmed.

### ► STONE HIGHWAYS

were part of the Inca army's winning strategy. Troops marched these roads, followed by long lines of llamas, weighted down with supplies. Some of the roads were built over existing roadways that had been built by earlier Andean peoples almost a thousand years before the Incas.



◀ **THE INCAS WERE** skilled stone-masons. Using bronze chisels and stone hammers, they fitted together enormous blocks of stone of different shapes and sizes to make jigsaw-puzzle walls that held together without mortar or cement. In 1950,

a big earthquake rocked Cuzco, toppling many buildings, but not one of the old Inca walls came down. In many walls, blocks fit so snugly that a knife blade cannot be slipped into the cracks between the blocks.



◀ **ANDEAN FARMERS** also battled poor soil, bad frosts, and frequent droughts. They fought the dry weather by digging canals to create irrigation systems. Stone-lined irrigation channels brought water from rivers and mountain

streams to the tops of terraces. From there it flowed down hill-sides to crops. At right, a woman is taking water from an irrigation channel for corn plants.



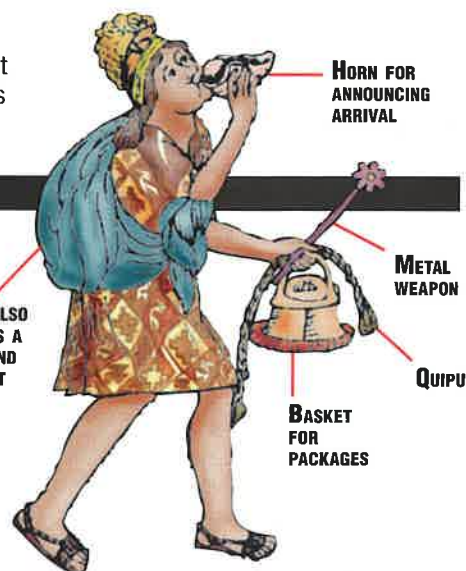
◀ **THE NEXT MES-**senger ran out to meet him and ran with him, memorizing the message. Once he had it down pat and had taken the basket of packages, he sped on.



### ◀ CALL INCA 911.

If a runner brought news of an emergency, such as an uprising or invasion, the Incas lit bonfires, and the rising smoke spread the alarm.

BAG, ALSO USED AS A CAPE AND BLANKET



HORN FOR ANNOUNCING ARRIVAL

METAL WEAPON

QUIPU

BASKET FOR PACKAGES









INCA GOLD-AND-  
TURQUOISE FIGURE,  
CREATED BETWEEN  
1000 AND 1470 A.D.

The Incas excelled at working with gold.



# Major Moments

From birth to death, the Incas had customs and practices that influenced every major event in a person's life. Birth, naming, marriage, and even death had their traditional observances.

▼ **INCA MOTHERS** wrapped their infants tightly and tied them into these wooden cradles. One leg of the cradle was usually shorter than the other so that the cradle could be rocked. Children were wrapped in the belief that it would help them grow straight

▼ **INCA CHILDREN** waited a long time to get a name. Until the age of two, they were called by a name that meant "baby." At two, each child got a nickname. Finally, at age 13 or 14, a boy chose a permanent name as part of a coming-of-age ceremony. At that time, he also began wearing a loincloth (a length of cloth around the waist), as a symbol of manhood. At 13 or 14, girls also chose their permanent names as part of a hair-combing ceremony.



FEATHER  
HEADRESS

SILVER PIN

SHAWL

TUNIC OF  
COTTON OR  
ALPACA  
WOOL

LEATHER  
SANDALS



◀ **ARCHAEOLOGICAL** findings give us clues to many aspects of Inca life, like how the Incas dressed and

the kinds of things that were buried with them when they died (above). The body of a young girl nick-

named Juanita (right) was found after being buried for 500 years on the summit of Ampato, a volcano in the Peruvian Andes. Buried with her were many artifacts, such as small statues, drinking vessels, and weaving tools. The Incas sacrificed humans at specific times. Calamitous events, such as earthquakes and epidemics, called for sacrificial offerings.



► **FOR THE SON OF A** noble, the coming-of-age ceremony also included tests of bravery and strength and participation in religious rites. The young man had his ears pierced and his first earlobe plugs inserted. Family members gave the boy weapons and other presents. Earlobe plugs, like those below, were a status symbol in Inca society. They were worn only by members of the royal family or the nobility. The larger a man's earlobe plug, the higher his rank in society.



▼ **AFTER COMING OF** age, the sons of nobles traveled to Cuzco, where they spent years learning to become members of the ruling class. They studied Quechua, history, and religion; learned to use the quipu; and received some military training.



▼ **A WOMAN TYPICALLY** married before the age of 20 and a man at 25. The wedding was a no-frills affair. The couple held hands and exchanged sandals.



▼ **WHEN GIRLS WERE** about 10 years old, officials picked the most beautiful and talented to be trained as "chosen women." Some would become the priestesses who assisted in ceremonies at the Temples of the Sun. Other chosen women became wives or servants of high officials.

▼ **AFTER THE AGE OF** 60, the workload for Inca men and women eased. Their labor tax ended and they had easier jobs, such as gathering firewood and baby-sitting.



◀ **MANY OBJECTS,** such as this silver llama and this figurine of an Inca doll, were left with the dead at burial pits. The llama may have stood for the herd that the Incas hoped would multiply. The doll may have represented an Inca goddess. Other objects found at burial sites were llama bones, pieces of pottery, and cloth bags holding corn kernels and cornucobs.

▼ **THE CLOTHING OF** nobles was distinguished by the design on the cloth and the cloth itself—the finest vicuña wool. This poncho was probably worn by a man of high rank.



▲ **DEAD RULERS** continued to participate actively in royal politics. With the help of assistants, carefully preserved royal mummies ate, drank, visited one another, and sat at councils.

▲ **SCIENTISTS EXAM-**ined Juanita to find out how she lived and how she died.

