

Inka Pilgrimage: Hidden Treasures of Pachamama Prologue

"Tumi is Peru's national symbol at present time, but was largely used by sun worshipping cultures such as Inca and pre-Inca cultures that flourished in ancient Peru.

"During Inca times for instance, a tumi was used by the High priest to sacrifice a llama in the Inty Raymi celebration.

"Incas considered themselves to be descendants of the sun god - Apu Inti - and every year on the 24th of June they would celebrate Inti Raymi to thank Apu Inti for the abundant crops - potato, maize, etc- or ask for a better one the next season."

<http://www.unique-southamerica-travel-experience.com/tumi.html>

"Since time immemorial, in Mexico as in Peru, there exist stories of travelers who arrived from a distant land to a village which would become the capital of a very advanced civilization. One such story is the Legend of Naylamp, a very important character from the coast of Lambayeque. It is said that he taught the Mochicas the arts that would help their civilization rise to become one of the most powerful since the arrival of the Incas.

"Historians have studied three different theories, based on similarities of Moche architecture and culture with other regions of the world.

"The first version concerns the story of a traveler who went all the way to Indochina from Peru, and got lost in a storm. The second concerns a possible Mayan origin – the most accepted version – and the third, that he came from the island of Puná near the Peruvian coast."

<http://www.globalexpresstours.com/english/country-peru/culture-peru/the-legend-of-naylamp-the-origin-of-northern-civilization.html>



Several years ago, my first-born son gave me a present of an alpaca woven-rug with the figure of a Tumi, the sacrificial knife of ancient Peru. The rug was soft and colorful. Two carrying vases adorned the top corners, and two symmetrical alpacas stood within green-blue landscapes at the bottom corners. Wave-like designs surrounded the central figure of the Tumi, whose golden design lay on an altar-like black background. The head of the legendary god-like Naylamp was crowned with a diadem of seven circular globes, and his stylized arms and body had green, brown, and red geometrical shapes placed in prominent places. A black phallic symbol verified his gender. The bottom part of the sacrificial knife was the circular blade that was used to cut out the heart of the sacrificial llama or creature.

When I hung the tapestry-rug on a wall next to the doorway of my room, I saw the beady eyes of the Tumi always staring back at me as I walked past the iconic representation of a deity from a distant land. Little did I know at the time that I was to travel to the land of that ominous-looking deity. Nor was I aware of what awaited me when I arrived at the San Francisco International Airport on a misty morning in May.

“Make sure you bring our daughter Susie back with you,” said my wife as she dropped me off at the entrance of the Continental part of the terminal and kissed me good-bye.

My mission was to travel to Bogota, Colombia, and meet up with my twenty-nine year old daughter. The pre-arranged plan was to travel throughout the South American countries of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, and then return home with Susie.

I had already bought round-trip tickets for both of us. I had even made reservations for a culminating adventure on the Inka Trail to Machu Picchu. It was to be a five-week whirlwind tour of pre-Inka and Inka civilization sites, along with places of cultural and historical significance.

My mind twirled with visions of long-lost civilizations and cultures as I stepped up to the ticket counter to check in my small suitcase. I had drawn up a preliminary itinerary with Susie: we would tour the capitals of the four countries; we would travel on a bus down the spine of the Andes through Colombia and Ecuador, and along the northern desert of Peru to Chiclayo, Trujillo and Lima; we would fly to La Paz, Bolivia, and take a boat trip on Lake Titicaca; and finally we would arrive in Cusco, where we would start our four-day adventure, hiking on the Inka Trail to one of the modern seven wonders of the world: Machu Picchu.

“Where is Susie Wigowsky?” asked the lady at the Continental ticket counter. She was looking at the email confirmation that I had handed her.

“She’s traveling back with me from Lima, Peru,” I answered. I had booked two seats for us on the same flights.

“You can’t do that,” stated the lady as she realized I had booked a round-trip ticket for Susie in order to avoid the more expensive one-way ticket from Lima back to the USA.

“I called an agent, and he told me I could buy my daughter a round-trip ticket as long as she was flying back with me,” I explained.

“Did you call an agent at Continental?” asked the lady.

“I called a number that was on the confirmation that I received from Cheap Tickets,” I said. I had wanted to verify that Susie could fly one way with me after I had heard of someone’s experience with their one-way ticket.

“I’m sorry, but your daughter’s ticket is not valid unless she flies both ways with you,” apologized the lady. She and I both realized that it was an honest mistake, but rules were rules.

I felt the Tumi sacrificial knife stab me into my chest, and I noticed that my breath was suspended in mid-air as my mind groped for answers to my dilemma. I had no choice – I had to bring my daughter home.

“What can I do?” I asked. “My wife will kill me if I don’t bring our daughter back home.”

The lady behind the counter smiled understandingly as she realized my predicament. “You’ll have to pay the price of a one-way ticket. You can do that at the customer service counter when you reach Houston.”

When I arrived at the George H. Bush International Airport in Houston, Texas, I went straight to the customer service counter, where I encountered the bad news of the exorbitant sacrifice I would need to make. In order for Susie to fly home on the same flight with me, I would need to pay Continental Airlines an additional thousand dollars. I felt like my heart was being ripped out, but there was nothing I could do. I had to bring my daughter home – at any cost!

I was beginning to wonder what else I would have to sacrifice as the airplane took off toward South America. I held on tightly to the expensive ticket that would guarantee Susie’s return flight with me. I decided not to tell her about the worrisome episode. After all, it was my fault for not double-checking with Continental.