

Ch. 12 - Journey to Cuzco and the Sacred Valley

In the old times people lived like wild beasts, without religion or laws, houses or towns, without cultivating the earth or wearing clothes, and without having separate wives. Our father the Sun, seeing people in this state, took pity on them. He sent Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo, his son and daughter by the Moon, to teach the people to worship their father the Sun, and to give them laws to live by so that they might live in houses and towns, and cultivate the earth and raise animals like rational and civilized men.

The Sun placed his two children in Lake Titicaca and gave them a golden staff, bidding them to set up their court at the site where it would sink into the ground at one thrust. Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo left the lake and walked north. They spent the night in a dwelling the Inca Manco Capac called Pacarec Tampu, House of the Dawn, because he left it as the sun rose. When they reached Huanacauri hill in the valley of Cuzco the staff sank in the ground with a single thrust, disappearing into the earth, whereupon they determined to establish their dwelling in the valley.

Manco Capac then went north and Mama Ocllo south, telling the people they met of their divine mission and calling them out of the wilderness. The people recognized them as children of the Sun by their clothes, their pierced ears, their words, and their faces, and followed them back to the valley. There they founded the city of Cuzco.
<http://www.astronomy.pomona.edu/archeo/andes/inca.folktale.html>

The Legend of the Ayar Brothers

After the flood, when the waters returned to their normal levels, the almighty Sun gave life to the first mortals, who were created at Parictambo (Abode of Procreation). High up in the caves in the Tampuctoco or "Place of Windows" there were three grottos: Maras Toco, the "salty cave"; Sutic Toco, the "damp cave"; and Capac Toco, the "cave of bounty".

Out of the first two came the lineages of the Maras and the Tambo, who failed to produce descendants. From the last cave came the Ayar brothers, the beloved children of the Sun. Since their mission was to populate the world, the Sun gave each one of them a wife. Thus, Ayar Manco--the eldest-- had as a wife his own sister Mama Ocllo; Ayar Auca had Mama Huaco; Ayar Uchu had Mama Raura and Ayar Cachi was paired with Mama Cora.

As per their father's orders, the brothers headed South, but during their long journey through the Andean highlands and plains, Ayar Cachi's rebellious and unruly temperament infuriated his brothers, who tricked him into returning to Tampuctoco, where he remains imprisoned forever.

It is said that the intensity of his screams caused springs and rivers to come into being. Cachi's curse caught up to his brothers, though, turning Ayar Uchu into a rock

mountain and causing Ayar Auca to drown in a river. Only Ayar Manco and his widowed sisters made it to Cusco.

<http://www.nflc.org/reach/7ca/enCAInca.htm>

We woke up with the sun for our journey to Cusco. We were supposed to be at the Puno bus station Terminal Terrestre before 7AM to check in for the listed 7:20 departure time. It was still cold, in the low 30s Fahrenheit, and we drank some warm coca tea at the station to warm up. The Inka Express bus was a very comfortable bus to ride in on the 390 km (242 miles) journey to the center of the Inka civilization.

We reclined in our reserved seats, which I had booked online at: <http://www.inkaexpress.com.pe/>

It was too early to converse with anyone, so I just looked out the window as the bus left the city of Puno and contemplated the journey we were taking from Lake Titicaca, the birthplace of the sun and moon, to Cusco, the “navel of the world.” According to ancient Andean legends, Viracocha (or Wiraqocha) walked this road -- from his emergence from the Island of the Sun, to the creation in stone of the prototypes of the human races on the shores of Lake Titicaca in Tiwanaku – and he blazed a path through Pucara and Raqchi, all the way to Cusco. Later, Viracocha would complete the trail by continuing the southeast to northwest diagonal path through Cajamarca (“village of lightning”) all the way to the equatorial region of Ecuador. There, at the ocean, he walked off into the sunset. This path would become known as the path of Wiraqocha (or the path of the sun). The Inka Royal Road (Qhapaq Nan) would be built to commemorate the journey of the creator-god Wiraqocha and the journey of the sun as it traced its path in the sky during the year. Shamans would use this Path of Wiraqocha as a metaphor of the spiritual journey of self-awakening to the light of the spiritual sun within.

The flat, grassy terrain of the antiplano (high plain) rolled by as the bus sped along well-paved highway 3S. A sign on the highway informed us that we were still in the region of Puno (one of 25 regions in Peru). Once in a while we would see a house and a field, and sometimes we would see a field that was being cultivated for potatoes, or a field with bales of straw for the llamas and alpacas. It was subsistence farming for people who had learned to survive in the high altitude plains, where few things grew.



Our first tour stop was at Pucara (“red temple or fortress”), a city-state that flourished at the same time as Tiwanaku. They were supposedly rivals, according to our guide, and they created similar lithic (stone) sculptures. It was a major stop on the Route of Wiraqocha; it was the mid-way point between Tiwanaku and Cusco. There was a legend that said when Wiraqocha came through Pucara, the people did not know their creator-god, and they tried to kill him. Wiraqocha caused fire to fall from a nearby volcano. When the people saw his power to command the volcano to hurl fire at the villagers, they threw down their weapons and kneeled at his feet. Wiraqocha struck the volcano with his staff and caused the volcano to stop erupting. Then Wiraqocha revealed himself as their maker, and they built a majestic huaca (shrine or temple) at the place where he called the fire from heaven. Another version of the same legend said that the fire came down from heaven and burnt a lot of the people, while others who were trying to escape from the wrath of the creator-god were turned into stone.

On our way to the Pucara museum, we noticed a crowd of indigenous people with their children in front of the colonial church. There was a parade and lots of music, and we found out that the local people were celebrating the city’s anniversary. The church looked like it had been constructed from the ruins of a nearby temple. Behind the church, it was evident that the church had gone through various phases of construction, destruction, and reconstruction.



At the Museo Litico de Pucara (Pucara Stone Museum), we saw ancient anthropomorphic and zoomorphic artifacts of the Pucara culture, which some people claimed was a civilization that flourished in the antiplano before Tiwanaku. The stone sculptures looked similar to what I had seen in Colombia at the San Agustin archaeological park. There were representations of sacred animals: the frog, symbol of water and fertility; the snake, symbol of wisdom and the underworld; and the puma, symbol of strength and the physical world.

Two low relief carvings on human-sized stones caught my attention. I instantly recognized the serpentine design that I had also seen on the tall red sandstone statue in the Semi-Subterranean Temple at Tiwanaku. However, the Pucara carving showed an actual skeletal design, simulating the human spine, with the fiery serpent energy ascending upward into the head (symbolized by the puma). Both carvings showed the spine design with the central path of the kundalini (serpent energy) ascending upward into the place of the skull. Above the head was a stone circle (solar) representing the crown chakra (field of energy) around the head. Another stone sculpture, with a similar carving of the serpentine design with the puma head and stone circle, was located inside the museum; and its unique feature was that there was a shape of a condor above the stone circle, and the top of the stone had a three-step chakana design. The Serpents of Wisdom, the priest-kings who had created the civilization of Tiwanaku, had spread their temples of initiation (into the sacred energy) to Pucara, and all along the Path of Wiraqocha. There were signs along the way – in the rocks, statues, and in the sacred landscape – even though the iconoclastic Spaniards, and their proselytizing priests, tried to destroy every trace of the ancient wisdom.



On the way back to the bus, our guide pointed out the “Toritos de Pucara” (little bulls of Pucara) that were placed on top of roofs for luck and fertility. The toritos, along with other ceramic figures, were sold in local stalls on the way back to the bus.



Back on the bus, I looked out the window to see cattle and sheep grazing together on tufts of grass in the arid antiplano. The Pucara River flowed on the left side of the highway. It was flowing from the Andes down to Lake Titikaka. Later I learned that the same river had a different name as it flowed through different places. From the place we were heading to – Abra La Raya (La Raya Pass) – the river had its headwaters in the Central Andes and was called Santa Rosa River as it flowed through Santa Rosa, then it flowed through Ayaviri and was called the Ayaviri River, and later the Pucara River as it flowed through Pucara; after its confluence with the Azangaro River it was called the Ramis River, which flowed into Lake Titicaca. Such was the river’s journey.



Our journey would also be remembered by the names of the places we passed through: Pucara, La Raya, Sicuani, Raqchi, Andahuaylillas, and Cusco. We had already traveled 105km (65 miles) from Puno to Pucara, and the next leg of our trip, to the La Raya Pass, would be another 101km (62 miles).

Several times during the bus ride, I struck up a conversation with my German friends, Johannes and Hilda, whom I had met at the Lake Titicaca tour. I told them about the time I had traveled to Germany with my mother. They wanted to hear more about that trip.

“My mother wanted to visit her relatives, who were able to leave the Soviet Union during Gorbachev’s glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) in 1989,” I said.

“So in 2006 I traveled with my mother and brother to Germany. We stayed with her relatives in a small town named Emstek, near Cloppenberg. My brother and I traveled to Bremen and Bremerhaven, where we saw the Gateway to America port from which we emigrated to the United States in 1952. My brother and I also took a train ride along the Rhine River all the way to Frankfurt on the Main. We also traveled through Berlin on our way to visit relatives in Ukraine, but sadly we weren’t able to stop to visit the capital city. Maybe next time.”

Hedda surprised me later when she brought me a special gift.

“This is for you from me and Johannes,” said Hedda, showing me a piece of the Berlin wall with an inscription on a plastic protective covering: “Die Mauer, 13.8.1961 – 9.11.1989, Berlin.”

“Gosh, this is a real surprise,” I said, looking at the concrete inch-and-a-half long piece of the wall with orange and green graffiti colors on the front.

“We brought this souvenir from Germany, hoping we could give it to someone,” added Johannes, “and we found the right person.”

“Especially since you were born in Germany, and you were wishing to see Berlin,” concluded Hedda.

“Thank you very much,” I said, with a tear welling up in my eye. “I will treasure this with all my heart.”

I shook both of their hands with warm affection. They were such a nice couple.

When we arrived at Abra La Raya (La Raya Pass), “the borderline” between the regions of Cusco and Puno, we got off the bus to enjoy the beautiful view of the Andes. At 4,338 masl (meters above sea level), the air was thin and cold. The mountain pass between snowcapped mountains was the place where the Vilcanota River had its source, originating between Mt. Chimboya and Mt. Moscaya of the La Raya range. This was the sacred river that flowed from the sacred mountains down to the sacred valley. When the solar being called Wiraqocha passed this way, it was called Villcanota (“House where the Sun was born during the December solstice”). Some people say that at one time there was a temple of Wiraqocha at the pass, but the apus (spirit guardians) of the sacred mountains are sufficient evidence of the passage of the sun-god through their territory.

Johannes (“God is Gracious”) stood at the welcome sign that gave the official altitude of Abra La Raya – 4,338 M.S.N.M. (metros sobre el nivel del mar, Spanish: meters above sea level).



Here at the heights of the Path of Wiraqocha was a marketplace for all the tourists, where the Quechua and the Aymara people shared the profits from the sale of textiles, ceramics, alpaca and llama skin rugs, and all kinds of indigenous souvenirs. The woman who had the most profitable job was the photogenic woman with colorful traditional clothing, who offered a picture for a fee of the baby alpaca she held in her hands. The alpaca, a species of South American camelid, stood beside her and showed off her silky soft, luxurious coat that would eventually be used as fleece for the alpaca fiber products that were sold to the tourists. Hedda loved the baby alpaca, and she held her in her arms like she would her own baby.



By now our stomachs were rumbling for food. The Inka Express bus drove us to the Buffet Andino Restaurant in Sicuani for a sumptuous lunch, with choices of every imaginable Andean food. We sat at a table with Johannes and Hedda, directly across from the instrumental group called Q’anchis, which was playing traditional music of the Andean culture.

Q’anchis (named after Canchis province, one of thirteen in the Cusco region) played my favorite tune: El Condor Pasa (“The Condor Goes By”). Even though Paul

Simon utilized the Peruvian tune for his “I’d rather be a sparrow than a snail” lyrics, the traditional music and song was about the Andean spirit-bird of the upper world – the condor. El Condor Pasa was declared an official part of Peru’s cultural heritage in 2004, and the Quechua words of the song call for the condor to take the singer back to the Inka realm of Machu Picchu:

*"Yaw kuntur llaqtay urqupi tiyaq
maymantan qawamuwachkanki,
kuntur, kuntur
apayllaway llaqtanchikman, wasinchikman
chay chiri urqupi, kutiytan munani,
kuntur, kuntur.
Qusqu llaqtapin plaza-challanpin
suyaykamullaway,
Machu piqchupi Huayna piqchupi
purikunanchiqpaq."*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-V5mpJ8iA38>

*Oh mighty Condor owner of the skies
take me home, up into the Andes,
Oh mighty Condor.*

*I want to go back to my native place to be
with my Inca brothers, that is what I miss the most,
Oh mighty Condor.*

*Wait for me in Cuzco, in the main plaza,
so we can take a walk in Machu Picchu and Huayna-Picchu.*

After the hearty meal and inspirational music, we walked around the grounds and took a picture with our German friends for memory’s sake. We waited for the bus to take us to our next stop on the Ruta del Sol (Route of the Sun) – Raqchi.



Raqchi was a short distance from Sicuani, but it was about 120 km (74 miles) from Cusco.

Everything started looking greener as the fertile valley of the Vilcanota River opened up before our eyes. This was the river that flowed from the throne of the towering mountain range that was born in smoke and fire, and it was a “River of the Sun” that flowed through the Sacred Valley as the Urubamba River. As it flowed through the heart of the Sacred Valley – between Pisac and Ollantaytambo – it was called Wilcamayu (“the holy river”). Around this sacred river revolved the Andean cosmology (pre-Inka and Inka) of mythic stories and mythic landscapes. The story of heaven and earth – and the cosmos – was told in the stories and landscapes. The story of Wiraqocha and his path was not only the story of a sun-god traveling the path of the sun on earth from the sacred Lake Titicaca to the Pacific Ocean (SE to NW), it was also the journey of Wiraqocha as he entered the cosmic sea in the west and ascended into the celestial river of Mayu (“the Milky Way”). The Vilcanota River was on earth what the Milky Way was in heaven (in the celestial sky). As the Inka (priest-sage-astronomer) gazed into the starry sky, he saw a reflection of the Vilcanota-Wilcamayu-Urubamba in the celestial Mayu-Milky Way. With Wiraqocha’s, and later Manco Capac’s, measuring “staff” the star-gazer attempted to measure the universe, and he found the center at Cusco, from where the four quarters (sayus) of the earth and the universe were configured. He saw the celestial river (Mayu) form two intersecting, intercardinal axes (NE – SW and SE – NW) during the twenty-four hours that it traversed the sky. The story that the Inka told of Pachayachachi (“World Teacher”) Wiraqocha was of the sun-god, the river-god, and the sky-god. And stone (sculptures, rocky outcroppings, mountains, temples, etc.) was used to immortalize the sacred stories and places that were part of the collective, ancestral wisdom of the Andean cosmos. So when someone was turned into stone, as happened in so many of the myths and legends that were told and retold in oral tradition and later in written accounts, the stone was the symbolic transformation from the temporal (historic or mythic event) to the eternal (fixed in space and time).



Such was the case when we arrived at Raqchi, where a Temple of Wiraqocha was erected to immortalize the cosmic fire that Wiraqocha brought down from the sky – symbolizing the “birth of the sun” (fire) at the June solstice, the winter solstice for the Southern Hemisphere.

The colonial church of San Pedro, in the village of the same name, was partially built from the stones taken from the temple of Wiraqocha. As in most cases, the Spaniards wanted to show the superiority of their god and their religion over, what they considered to be, the pagan gods of heathen people. And in most cases, they replaced the local deity, in this case Viracocha, with their celestial gatekeeper, St. Peter. As so happens throughout man's history, one civilization replaces another civilization, and one god replaces another god. The names change, but the concepts are the same.



Raqchi, known as Cacha in Inca times, was built in honor of Apu Kon Titi Wiraqocha Pachayachachic, the supreme invisible creator-god of the Andean cosmos. According to the historian (Inca) Garcilaso de la Vega, whose mother was an Inca noblewoman, the Temple of Viracocha was built by Inca Viracocha, the eighth Sapa Inca (“Great One”), who ruled from 1410-1438. This Inca ruler had a vision of Viracocha, so he was named after the deity. Needless to say, the Temple of Viracocha (oriented E-W) was on the Path of Wiraqocha (Path of the Sun) from the place of origin (Lake Titicaca) to the place of the center (navel) of the world (Cusco).

Our guide tried to have us imagine a large two-storey rectangular building with a central wall that supported a two-sided sloped roof. We were looking (from the south side) at the tall central wall that had a height of 12 meters (39 feet), although its original height was probably higher. Then he led us to the side (west end) and had us look at two rows of eleven circular columns. Remnants of 22 columns stood perfectly aligned along both sides of the central wall. The columns would have supported the sloped wood-and-thatched roof, which would be hanging over the outer wall of the building. I imagined the large 92 m (302 ft) by 25.5 m (84 ft) building, and I tried to visualize beams of wood connected to the holes in the eleven piers of the central wall. I also visualized the upper section of adobe bricks – on both the central wall and the columns – painted red, memorializing the legendary fire of Viracocha, the fire from the nearby extinct volcano Kinsachata, and the shaman's ceremonial raising of the divine fire up the spine (kundalini). This was a multi-purpose Temple of Viracocha built on a solid foundation of masterfully carved andesite stone.



The archaeological complex had other remarkable features: one was an Ushnu or ritual platform, where rituals were performed to the Apus, Pachamama, the Sun, and other deities. A special ritual was conducted in which an offering (or payment) was given to the Earth Mother (Pachamama). Near the Ushnu we saw a partially preserved wall of the entire enclosure. Another feature was the Capaq Nan (Royal Road) that ran by the Temple of Viracocha and exited at the southeast end of the complex. The chasquis (messengers) would run on this road. There were also six squares (or courtyards), where the inhabitants worked in pottery and ceramics. There were living quarters or apartments (enclosures that resembled the temple in miniature) nearby (north of the temple) for the artisans. Raqchi was a great center for making pottery and ceramics, and its name Raqchi in the Quechua language meant “to make pottery or ceramics.”



Perhaps the second best attraction – east of the Temple of Viracocha – was the Qolqas (colcas), which were circular structures for storing food. They were about 3 meters (10 ft) high and 8 meters (26 ft) in diameter. There were 156 qolcas (storehouses) at Raqchi, each of which was capable of storing about 150 cubic meters (5300 cu.ft.) of food supplies, which included potatoes, maize, quinoa, grain, etc. The volcanic stone and mud structures were established in rows, forming lanes and walkways.

The fields for the inhabitants of the village of Raqchi were adjacent to the archaeological complex. Some of them were presently within the complex. They were

plowed with straight furrows. Behind the field with furrows was the extinct volcano Kinsachata.



On our way out the well-preserved archaeological park, we passed the fountain that provided the complex with its water. And we passed the souvenir table, where a lovely indigenous lady in traditional clothing had lots of painted ceramics for sale.



We took one last look at Raqchi, located on the east side of the Vilcanota River, then the bus crossed the river and followed Highway 3S, which was now on the west side of the Vilcanota River. The enchanting river was a sight to behold. We traveled northward with the flow of the river as it carved its serpentine way through the valley. I continued to watch its flow, and I contemplated its grand journey to the Amazon Basin, and then into the Atlantic Ocean. That was its earthly journey. The other journey, which was hard to fathom, was its journey to the celestial water source in the cosmic ocean of the Milky Way. The water cycle on earth was explainable scientifically, but the continual circulation of water within the cosmic ocean on which our Milky Way galaxy floats is something hard to perceive with the concrete mind. It took the Inka astronomer-priests long periods of time to observe all the movements of the earth, sun, and celestial bodies, and to come up with the conclusion that everything in the universe was tied together. Thus, they reasoned, the Earth and the Milky Way are intrinsically tied together, and the Vilcanota River was essentially part of the celestial river of the Milky Way. And so the story of the Path of Wiraqocha from Lake Titicaca (place of

emergence) and the journey of the Vilcanota River from the sacred mountains coincided in the mind of the astronomer-priests, and they “saw” the same path in the celestial sky as Wiraqocha disappeared into the (cosmic) ocean in the west and then reappeared as the sun-god, mountain-god, and river-god at the dawning of the new day (or cycle). The shaman took the entire cosmic picture (the Path of Wiraqocha) and “saw” it all within himself, for he understood that he was part of the universe, too.



Our entrance into the small town of Andahuayillas was short and sweet. There was a charming plaza with lots of vendors selling souvenirs and snacks. It was a good time for a snack. A couple of tall palm trees and several blossoming trees adorned the plaza. The close at hand Andes formed the background scenery.

The main reason for stopping at Andahuayillas (originally called Antawaylla, “field of copper”) was to show the tourists the interior of the Church of San Pedro. The interior was proclaimed by tour books and tour agencies (including Inka Express) as the “Sistine Chapel of America.” Before we entered the church to see for ourselves what the publicity was all about, our guide pointed out the foundation of the church, which was made of carved andesite stone. That was clear evidence that the church was built over some important Inca temple – maybe even another Temple of Wiraqocha. Signs on wooden scaffolding informed us that the church was undergoing “conservation” (restoration).

The interior of the church had beautiful frescoes, but it was nothing compared to the Sistine Chapel that I had only seen in pictures. It was dark inside, so it was hard to really appreciate the internal beauty and architecture of the 17th century church. I did notice that at the center of the high altar there was a statue of the Virgen del Rosario – another manifestation of the Queen of Heaven and Earth (Pachamama).



I was more interested in the large blossoming tree that adorned the plaza. I walked up to the tall legume tree, which was called the Pisonay tree (genus *Erythrina*), to see its dense clusters of brilliant scarlet-red tubular flowers. I was told the Pisonay tree (species *Erythrina falcata*) was sacred to the Incas, and that it was pollinated by hummingbirds. I learned that it was associated with the Ceiba tree, which I had seen in Guatemala. It was the tree that the Mayas believed was the world tree (axis mundi), which connected the terrestrial world to the spirit world. That would explain why the Pisonay (*Erythrina*, “red”) tree was found in plazas all over the Andean world. It was their symbolic way of connecting heaven and earth. And for the shaman, it was probably a way of connecting with another source of “the plants of the gods.”



After Andahuaylillas, it was only another 36 km (22 miles) to Cusco, the “navel of the world” (or omphalos), which was the axis mundi of the Inca civilization, branching out to the four quarters of Tawantinsuyu (the four regions of the Inca Empire). The Vilcanota River continued flowing northeast, while Highway 3S veered slightly to the west towards Cusco. A couple of miles down the road we came to the ancient Gateway to Cusco at Rumicolca. The bus stopped for a few minutes at the viewpoint.

Rumicolca (literally, “stone storehouse”) was a pre-Inca depository for rocks (or quarry), and the Huari people constructed a massive defensive wall that supported an aqueduct that brought water to nearby Piquillacta. The Huari people dominated the area,

and other lands of Peru, from about 500 to 1000 AD. When the Incas started dominating the area, they added polished blocks of andesite from the local quarry to the aqueduct and created an intimidating gateway to control the flow of people and goods into the Cusco Valley. The impressive gateway stood about 12 meters (39 ft) above the ground.



We ascended slowly towards the Cusco Valley, which leveled out at an altitude of 3,400 m (11,200 ft). I closed my eyes and recalled the movie I had discovered while planning the itinerary for our pilgrimage to Cusco, the Sacred Valley, and Machu Picchu. It was titled “Secret of the Incas” (1954), starring Charlton Heston as a fortune hunter who finds the legendary Golden Sun Disk that was stolen from the Temple of the Sun. I replayed the movie in my mind: A haunting song of a Peruvian woman resonates across the Sacred Valley as Harry Steele (Charlton Heston) brings a group of tourists back to the airport in Cusco. Another group arrives for Harry, whose side job as a tour guide provides a cover for his treasure hunting. He tells them: “Welcome to Cusco, the City of Light.” He charges them 100 soles each. He takes them for a tour of the cathedral, and then to a museum. Harry finds out that the museum has a stone map – with a missing piece – of the tombs of Inca rulers in Cusco and Machu Picchu. Harry has the missing piece that shows him where the treasure he seeks is located. The museum director shows the group a relic of a small sunburst. Harry tells the tourists of a larger sunburst that has never been found; and he tells them of the legend that the stolen sunburst cost the Incas their empire, and if it is ever found, their empire will be restored. The story unfolds as a woman named Elena arrives from behind the Iron Curtain illegally. Harry agrees to help her get to a safe country like Mexico if she helps him get a single-engine plane for him from the person who is after her. She manages to get the plane, and Harry flies the plane over Cusco and lands in the Sacred Valley, where he uses a raft to float down the Urubamba River to the trailhead to Machu Picchu. When they enter through the gate of Intipunku (sun-gate), Harry discovers that an archaeological dig is underway for the hidden tomb of Manco Capac, the last Incan Emperor. A mummy is found, but it is not the mummy of the puppet emperor of the Spaniards, who finally got rid of him in 1544. An interlude in the story occurs, with the extraordinary five-octave voice of Yma Sumac singing a song about the Virgins of the Sun God as Quechua females perform a ceremony by offering fruit to Mama Cuna (the

head Virgin of the temple). The story continues with another treasure hunter confronting Harry, but Harry outsmarts him as they compete for the sunburst. When the main tomb of Manco Capac is finally opened, Harry uses a gold reflector to reveal the cornerstone that hides the golden sunburst (disc) of the sun god's face with nineteen rays. Harry returns the sacred golden sun disc to a native named Pachacutec – in honor of the ninth Inca emperor – and the native returns the golden sun disc to the Temple of the Sun in Machu Picchu. Yma Sumac sings the closing song in her bird-like voice to the Apus of the “High Andes” (Ataypura).

In my mind's eye I visualized the legendary golden sun disc, and I remembered reading of a legend that said the solar disc was brought from Lemuria – the legendary continent of the Pacific – and placed at a temple in Lake Titicaca, and then it was brought to Cusco by Manco Capac, but when the gold-hungry Spaniards came, it was returned to an etheric kingdom, like Shambala, in Lake Titicaca. When I opened my eyes, I saw Cusco, the ancient capital of the Incas. This was the place where the legendary Manco Capac struck the golden staff (tupayauri) of Wiraqocha into the ground and claimed the valley (as the axis mundi) for the Inka people. This ancient valley was known in the beginning as “Acamama” (this one that contains the things, or this one who is mother).



We said goodbye to our German friends at the bus station, and then we hired a taxi to take us to the Loki hostel, where we had reservations. Susie and I immediately ascertained that the mold-ridden room was not conducive to our health, so we went to the nearby Pampawasi Inn (“valley house”). After my experience with the noisy Loki (“god of mischief”) hostel in La Paz, I was glad to be staying elsewhere. Little did I realize at the time that the “god of mischief” (Loki) would follow me everywhere in Cuzco (Qosqo, “navel energy center” - in Quechua).

It didn't take long for the “god of mischief” to rear his ugly head. That evening, as Susie and I explored the historic center, I needed to use the restroom. We found a McDonald's at the Plaza de Armas. I took off my waist pack and laid it on top of the water tank. It was half-an-hour later, as we were sitting across the plaza at a restaurant

drinking coca tea, that I realized I had left my waist pack at McDonald's. The waist pack had my passport in it. Susie had tried to teach me not to carry my passport with me. I was about to learn a hard lesson. I rushed to the restroom at McDonald's and discovered that someone had taken my waist pack. I felt like I had been punched in the solar plexus. None of the workers at McDonald's saw the waist pack, nor was any such item turned in to them. The manager suggested I report the theft to the police.

We took a taxi to the Policia de Turismo to report the theft and loss of my passport. The police office for tourists was located at Plaza Tupac Amaru (the last Inca leader, of the independent state in Vilcabamba, who was beheaded by the Spaniards in 1572). I had to wait for the person in charge of tourists to return to the office so I could file a report. I felt like my identity had been stolen, and I was an American citizen with no way to get back home. I was also worried that I might not be able to go on the Inka Trail without a passport. I felt like I was in limbo.

The lady in charge soon arrived to write down my account of what happened: Que en el libro de registro de Denuncias por Perdidas de Documentos y Otros que obra a cargo de esta Unidad Policial existe una signada, con Numero 471, Cuyo tenor literal es como sigue: Hora, 21:50 Fecha, 02 Junio 2010 . Sumilla. Por extravio de pasaporte. Siendo la hora y fecha anotada al margen se hizo presente en esta Unidad Policial el turista Pau John Wigowsky (64), de nacionalidad estadounidense, casado, professor jubilado, sin pasaporte a la vista, de transito por esta ciudad, hospedado en el hostel Pampawasi Inn, ubicado en la calle Meloj Numero 500, de esta ciudad, quien manifiesta haber extraviado su pasaporte Numero 221>>>, en circunstancias que se encontraba en los servicios higienicos del local de McDonalds, a horas 19:30 aproximadamente del dia de la fecha 02 Junio 2010, al percatarse del hecho, el denunciante retorno al local antes indicado para realizar la busqueda de su pasaporte, sin resultado positivo, retirandose del local dejando sus datos a uno de los trabajadores del local, lo que denuncia a esta dependencia policial para los fines del caso. Fdo. El Instructor SO3. PNPF. IRAMI Z. Cuba Ballon. Resolucion: Se expide la presente Copia Certificada de la Denuncia Policial a solicitud de la parte interesada, para los fines que estime por conveniente. Fdo. Comandante PNP. Jefe de la Seccion de investigaciones de la Poltur-Cusco.

The report was very detailed, including where I was staying at (Pampawasi Inn), the place and time of the incident (McDonald's), the date when the report was filed, etc. The lady told me I would have to call the consular agent that represented American tourists and get a temporary replacement passport in order to leave the country of Peru. I would have to validate the official report at the Ministerio del Interior in the Banco de la Nacion. And I would have to bring the validated report with the proof of payment – with official bank stamp – back to Policia de Turismo office, where they would finalize the report with their official stamps and signatures.

Oh, my God! Pachamama! Help! I was totally overwhelmed with bureaucratic red tape. When I asked the lady if I would still be able to go on the Inka Trail without a legitimate passport, she told me I would have to ask the travel agency I had booked my tour with.

I couldn't sleep at all that night. My mind was replaying my lapse of memory at McDonald's and all the consequences that followed from that incident. Why me? Here I was, at the center of the ancient Inca empire, and I couldn't help but wonder if there was something from a past life that brought this to pass. A similar incident had happened to me in Mexico City when I was mugged by two thieves, and I reasoned that there as an Aztec connection from a past life. Was there an Inca past life that was now haunting me? That was a question that was hard to answer without a lucid view of the Akashic records – the memory of the universe.

In the morning, I called the US Consular agent in Cuzco, and I was told that the woman who handled lost passport issues was out on an assignment covering an emergency and was not available until tomorrow.

I kept my fingers crossed when I arrived at the SAS Travel agency to find out if I would still be able to go on the Inka Trail. Susie had eased up on her apprehensions about going, especially when I told her the amount of money that I paid for the trip as a deposit, which was not refundable. The staff in the SAS Travel office assured me that I was doing the right thing by getting a police report. The validated and stamped police report would be sufficient proof that I had lost my passport, and all I needed would be that report and a copy of my lost passport to pass through the control gate to Machu Picchu. I breathed a deep sigh of relief. I had several copies of my lost passport. I paid the rest of the money I owed for the Inka Trail, including the extra porters that I had asked for to carry all the necessary equipment for me and Susie. That made Susie feel much better about the trip. She would only need to carry a small daypack with essentials that she would need for herself on the trail.

I asked about the Sacred Valley tour that they offered. We were in luck. There was a morning tour leaving within the hour. Susie wanted to stay in Cusco and watch the Corpus Christi festivities. She enjoyed the social aspect of the good food, local music, and colorful procession of images of patron saints. However, I convinced her to go with me on the Sacred Valley tour. After all, it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see the famous Valle Sagrado.

When the Sacred Valley came into view – after a 31 km (19 miles) ride northeast of Cusco – it was as if Shangri-La had appeared to us in a vision. The Vilcanota River was now flowing from Pisca down to Ollantaytambo as the Wilcamayu River (“Sacred river of Mayu, the celestial Milky Way”). The concept of the Jordan River in the Holy

Land came to mind, and all the songs I had sung in my childhood about the Jordan River – “I won’t have to cross Jordan alone” and “Shall we gather at the river” (Jordan) – came flowing through my consciousness. The stories (and myths of origin) of the major civilizations identify their main river with the celestial river (in heaven or in the Milky Way). The shamans, of course, saw the celestial river as the kundalini (river of universal energy) that flowed from the base of the spine to the crown of the head.



The tour guide gave our group a choice at our first stop at Pisac – to go to the market and spend most of the time there, or to hike from the top of the ruins of Pisac down to the market and have little or no time for the market. The mostly young, energetic group chose the hike. The bus drove us up a winding 8 km (5 miles) road to the ruins. The tour guide told us he would give us only a short tour of the three residential areas of Pisac – named after the local Andean partridge, pisaqa. The hike back down to the market was going to take almost two hours.

The first residential area was called Qanchisracay (“seven enclosures”), composed of rough stone buildings for workers who cultivated the terraces. The guide told us that the path we were following through the Pisac ruins, and further down to the market, was part of an Inka trail that followed along the river. So it seemed that we were getting a preview of the real Inka Trail that we would be hiking in two days. The path traversed the hillside, over a small pass, and over a rocky summit to a sun temple. Then it continued past former purification fountains, a cemetery, and across a partially destroyed perimeter wall.

The second residential area, Hanan Pisaq (“upper Pisaq”) was entered through a trapezoidal doorway – hallmark of Inca architecture – known as Amarupunku (Amaru, “Serpent,” punku, “gate”). That name made me think of the gate through which the fiery serpent power (kundalini) ascended from the base of the spine through the gate of the sacrum (“sacred”). We passed by stone-mud buildings, storehouses, and towers on our way to a tunnel, and then on an uneven trail up steep staircases to the sacred place of the Intiwatana (“sun watch”). This solar observatory was complemented by a nearby

carved stone altar sculpted with the design of the stepped symbol (chakana, the three Andean worlds).

The third residential area, Pisaqa, was probably the homes for the elite. From here there was a trail that traversed the hillsides down to the city of Pisac and the famous market. That's the trail that we followed. We enjoyed the feeling of being on the heights of the Andean world, and it felt like we could sail like condors through those mountains. Each step along the stone path was filled with wonder and awe, and the view of the Sacred Valley was spectacular.

When we reached the market, we were tired, but happy. Some of the group had the urge to look at the vast selection of native goods at the famous market. I had the desire to simply sit in the plaza and look at the people of the valley, and the two ancient Pisonay trees with the scarlet-red flowers. Someone told me that the flowers were edible, and that they were used for nourishment. I also found out that the trees, which were like the World Tree (Axis Mundi) for the Andean world, were around at the time of the Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire.

Perhaps the most interesting thing I found out about the Pisac area was that it was created by the Incas as a ritual space for the condor. From the road, to the right above the town, could be seen an outline of the head and winged body of a condor looking in a southwest direction. The condor corresponded to the kuntur orqo ("mountain of the condor") above the ruins, and to the constellation of the condor (Cygnus) in the heavens. Pisac, as a whole, was the sacred space where the condor carried the souls of the dead across the heavens to the celestial river (Milky Way). As we traveled along the Sacred Valley, we would be informed time and again that the Incas considered this valley to be a reflection of the celestial sky. The Milky Way and its constellations were mirrored in the rock formations and the landscape, and sometimes the Incas would carve the rocks, create terraces, and build temples or huacas (shrines) to match their image of how they saw the visible star formations and the dark cloud formations in the night sky.



When we arrived at Ollantaytambo, we found out what an Inka fortress looked like. Originally named Qosqo Ayllu (“Cusco community”), the town and its surroundings are now included in the vast complex known locally as the Archaeological Park of Ollantaytambo, which covers the entire Vilcanota valley on both sides of the river at Kilometer 68 of the Cusco-Santa Ana railroad. The cobblestone streets of the town and its courtyards face a steep hill with sixteen massive carved stone terraces – with a stairway between the terraces – that were built to protect the valley from invaders. It was a line of defense for the city of Cusco. At the top of the terraces was the fortress (called Araqama Ayllu) where the puppet emperor Inca Manco Capac II Yupanqui tried to retake the Inca Empire and fought off the Spanish conquistadors before retreating to the jungles of Vilcabamba.

At the top was also a sun temple that was constructed with six monoliths made of pink rhyolite, which were designed to reflect the light of the rising sun. The temple was a good place to see the entire valley and the phenomenal “old man of the mountain” image of Viracocha.

“Take a close look at that mountain across the valley,” said our guide as he pointed at the hill to the east known as Pinkuylluna (“where the wind flute plays”). “There is a head facing the valley, and you can see his left eye and his mouth. That is Viracocha, the Andean god, or his messenger, who brought civilization to Cusco.”

I spotted the profile of the face looking left about one-third from the bottom, kind of centered, and to the left of what appeared to be several rows of canchas (storehouses).

“Viracocha traveled from Lake Titicaca to Cusco, and he was in this Sacred Valley, according to our tradition,” said the guide. “Now his spirit resides in the rock of that mountain, and he is like the guardian of this valley.” “I think I see the figure of a puma above the head of Viracocha,” I said, amazed to find what looked like eyes and a feline face staring at me. “Some people have seen Viracocha carrying a large round bundle or sack on his back,” said the guide, pointing to the curved formation above the god’s head. “And some have seen his hands.”

I was trying to see all that as I contemplated the 140 m (460 ft) monument sculpted in the mountain. There was what looked like a small crown on top of his head. A stone temple seemed to be sitting on a ledge further to the left of the head. This was one time when I wish I had brought my binoculars with me.

“Now if we were on the other side of the valley,” added the guide, “I could have shown you the mother llama and the baby llama where we walked through the terraces. The Inca believed that this was the sacred place that reflected the constellation of the llama in the sky. So they made the terraces look like the body, and the temple area on

top they built to resemble the head of the llama. The baby llama was to the left, below the head of the mother llama.



Later I discovered a book called Cusco and the Sacred Valley of the Incas by Fernando E. Ellorrieta and Edgar Ellorrieta Salazar, and they appeared to prove that there was other significant sacred imagery in the landscape at Ollantaytambo. One was the image of the Tree of Life, which had two branches representing the parents: Apotambo (Lord of Tambo) and Pachamamaachi (Mother of the Time). The river Patacancha formed the trunk of the tree and separated it into two branches (masculine and feminine). The other image was built into the female branch: it was formed in the fashion of a pyramid, and it was meant to represent Pacaritanpu (or the mythical Pacaritambo, “The House of Dawn”). [pages 92-101]

The authors of the book seemed to suggest that they had found the real Pacaritambo, from where the four original Inca brothers Ayar Manco, Ayar Auca, Ayar Uchu and Ayar Cachi emerged to found the Inca Empire. Since everything in the Inka cosmos was interdependent, and everything was written down in the sacred landscape, it would stand to reason that the story was dependent on a place, and the Inka created the place to substantiate the story.



When we returned to Cusco that evening, the whole city was rocking. There were celebrations on every street. Bands were playing at every street corner (or small plaza). Chicha made from maize was drunk from large water coolers and passed around in plastic cups. Susie was glad that she hadn't completely missed out on the Corpus Christi celebration. I joined in the festivities and tried my first drink of chicha. It tasted like the Russian kvass drink that my mother used to make for us to drink – it was made from rye bread, yeast, sugar, and raisins. It was mildly fermented. It was a good way to meet the local Cuzquenos. Also, it was a good way to forget what was facing me tomorrow.

The following morning, Susie and I walked about a mile through the city to the consular office at Avenida Pardo #845. Eda Cores, the Cusco Consular agent, was there.

“I'm sorry I wasn't able to help you yesterday,” said Eda, who was bilingual. “I had to rush out of the office on an emergency. A man, an American citizen, died, and we had to take care of a lot of paperwork, and some investigative work.”

“And you were worried about a lost passport,” chimed in Susie, reminding me of what's important in life.

“Wow, that sure puts things in perspective,” I said. “What's a little lost passport compared to a man who lost his life?”

The consular agent told me that I would have to fill out an application for a US passport, and I would get a limited passport book replacement, which would be good for 30 days. I would have to pay a fee to expedite the issuance of the temporary passport. The new passport would arrive in Lima, where I could pick it up at the embassy. That meant I would have to wait until after the Inka Trail.

In the meantime, I still had to go down a couple of blocks to get a passport picture taken for the application. And then I would still have to take a taxi to the Policia de Turismo at the Plaza Tupac Amaru. They would type out a finalized report with signatures and stamps validating the report. Then they would send me to get the police report validated at the Banco de la Nacion. Finally, I would have the proper papers to show the SAS Travel agency and the control center at the Inka Trail.

That took almost all morning. I felt worn out by all that bureaucratic obstacle course stuff that I had to wade through, but I was glad when it was over. And I was glad it was only a lost passport that I had to contend with. I was still alive. And I had the proper papers to go on the Inka Trail. After lunch, Susie and I had some time left to ourselves to see some of the major attractions in the city. Qoricancha and Sacsaywaman were on my list of things to see, and Susie wanted to also see the Inka museum. That

was probably all we would have time for. We had an evening meeting with SAS Travel and the group we would be traveling with on the Inka Trail.

We walked past the Plaza de Armas, down Avenida El Sol, to Qoricancha (or Coricancha, the Golden Enclosure), which was also known as the Great House called Coricancha pachaya-chachipac huasin (“the golden place, the house of the teacher of the world”). To the Inkas, it was the House of God. Everything inside the enclosure represented the vision of the cosmos, as seen by the Inka Pachacutec in his vision of the central role of Cusco in the expansion of the Inka Empire.

Part of the expansion-minded emperor’s vision was to have the city of Cusco built in the shape of a puma, the sacred animal of the Inka, symbolizing the energy, power, and strength of the present world (Kay Pacha). The two rivers (Tullumayu and Huatanay) running through Cusco would be the dual (masculine and feminine) currents running through the spine and body of the puma. We had walked from the heart of the puma (the plaza, formerly known as Huacaypata, “the place of tears”) down to the tail of the puma (the Coricancha, formerly known as Pumap Chupan, “the Puma’s tail”). Later, we would ascend to the head of the puma when we went to Sacsaywaman.

The first part of the Coricancha that we saw as we turned left (east) from Avenida El Sol was the finely carved semicircular 6 m (20ft) tall western wall of what at one time was a temple called Intiwasi (“House of the Sun”). In front of the terraces on which the temple stood was a small park and garden area. The ticket that we bought at the entrance said that the former sacred place we were entering was now known as the Convento de Santo Domingo del Cusco. Holy Sunday (Santo Domingo) had now replaced The Temple of the Sun. That was ironic, to say the least.

The thought of a golden enclosure and a place where a vast amount of gold had been displayed at the height of the glorious Inca Empire made the greedy heart of the Spaniards lust for gold. Most of the gold was removed to pay ransom to try to save the Emperor Atahualpa’s life, but the Spaniards killed him anyway. The Temple of the Sun was mostly demolished. The stone blocks would be used to build the Santo Domingo Catholic Church.

What we would see were four original chambers of the temple that had survived the 1953 earthquake, and previous earthquakes. The original layout of the temple complex that was dedicated to the major Inka deities was in the classical Cancha style – with six wasi (covered chambers) arranged around a square courtyard. There were six principle deities: Viracocha, the creator-god; Inti, the sun-god; Quilla (Killa), the moon-goddess; Chaska-Qoyllur, Venus as morning and evening star; Illapa, storm god of thunder and lightning; and Cuichu, the rainbow deity. The entire temple complex was larger than a big city block, and the sub-temples or chambers were positioned according

to a hierarchical order. Inti replaced Viracocha as the main deity, so Inti would have the main place (in the east) and Viracocha would be its right-hand deity. It would seem that Quilla, the moon-goddess, would be beside Inti since she was considered to be the sun's wife. However, since the temple complex also served as a vast astronomical observatory and calendrical device, the Temple of Chaska (Venus) and the Stars (like the Pleiades), would have a prominent position in the complex. The concept of a temple complex of several sub-temples dedicated to the deities of the Inca cosmos reminded me of a Hindu temple that I had visited, and it had separate small sub-temples to the deities of its pantheon of gods – Vishnu, Shiva, Durga, Hanuman, Ganesh, Krishna, etc.

The most interesting thing that I saw at the museum-convent-temple was a replica of the golden wall map that used to embellish the sun temple at Coricancha. The original had been lost or destroyed during the occupation of Cusco by the Spaniards in the 1530s. However, a document with a drawing by a native Peruvian named Juan de Santa Cruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamayha left no doubt that the Inca conception of the universe was vast, complex, and simultaneously monotheistic (creator Viracochan Pachayachachiy) and dualistic (sun and moon, masculine and feminine, etc.). In his *An Account of the Antiquities of Peru*, Pachacuti Yamqui wrote that the first Inca Manco Capac ordered the creation of the flat elliptical plate of fine gold that was the central image of the golden wall map; the elliptical (or egg-shaped) drawing represented the invisible all-encompassing creator: “Dicen que fue imagen del Hacedor del verdadero sol, del sol llamado Viracochan pachayachachiy.” (They say that it was the image of the Creator of the true sun, of the sun called Viracochan pachayachachiy) Later, during the reign of the Inca Mayta Capac (1290-1320), the sun and moon were added on the sides of the elliptical plate, and then later all the rest of the images depicting the Inca cosmos were added.

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/inca/rly/rly2.htm>
[Image of replica of the Inca golden map](#)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/textexin/3197967537/>

The Inca cosmos in the central shrine of the Temple of the Sun was depicted as a Great House with a pitched roof. That ideogram reminded me of the statement, “In my Father's House” (John 14:2), which appeared to include the entire universe as the abode of the omnipresent God. From the perspective of the androgynous oval (egg-shaped) representation of the supreme deity – Viracocha Pachayachachi, the creative agency or spirit which animates all things that emerge or emanate therefrom – the right hand (or side) represents the masculine imagery and the left side represents the feminine imagery of which the universe is composed. Thus, on the right side is the imagery of Inti (sun-god), Venus the morning star, the summer solstice (dry season), Catachillay (the constellation of the llama), the mountains of earth (Pachamama) and the overarching rainbow, thunder and lightning, the seven eyes (stars) of Pleiades, and the Wilcamayu

river (aka Milky Way) flowing from earth to the outer limits of the Great House. On the left side is the imagery of Quilla (moon-goddess), Venus the evening star, the winter clouds, Saramama (maize mother), the choqui chinchay feline (constellation of the puma, December solstice), Mama Cocha (the ocean and Lake Titicaca), and the arbol mallqui (the tree of life, ancestors).

At the top of the Great House, above the oval (Cosmic Egg) symbol of the origin of all life, was the cross-shaped constellation of Orion, with three prominent stars representing the belt of Orion; a similar design, of oval (Cosmic Egg) and Orion, is placed above the Great House (to the right, from the perspective of the supreme deity). This representation follows the axiom: "As above, so below." Below the oval (Cosmic Egg) was the Southern Cross, the Chakana (bridge) from the world of Kay Pacha (physical reality) to Hanan Pacha (spiritual reality). Below the Southern Cross was man and woman, and below them was a grid-like pattern called Collca Pata (storehouse), which represented Coricancha covered in gold plates.

[Cosmological diagram of Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua](#)

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/nam/inca/rly/pl1.htm>

Just before we left the grand Temple of the Sun, I looked up at the ceiling and saw a painting of the celestial sky, as the Inka priests-astronomers saw it. Across the Milky Way (Wilcamayu) were images (from left to right) of a shepherd, a fox, a mother llama with a baby llama, a partridge, a toad and a serpent. These images were seen in the dark shaded parts of the Milky Way. I was hoping I would see these images when we were camping under the dark skies on the Inka Trail.

When we walked out of the Qoricancha (Temple of the Sun) compound, it was like I had been in another world, in another space and time. I realized that the intent of Inka Pachacuti was to give us a universal perspective of the world (Great House) we lived in. I also realized that this was the foundation (or base) on which the entire Inka Empire was built, including the four sighting lines (called ceques) that stretched like four rays of the sun to the horizon of the empire, dividing their empire (Tawantinsuyu) into four suyus (regions) called Chinchisuyu (northwest), Kontisuyu (southwest), Antisuyu (northeast), and Kollasuyu (southeast). The four suyus corresponded to and physically aligned with the four great suyus of Mayu (the Milky Way). As above, so below.



We took a taxi to Sacsayhuaman. It was too far to walk, given the limited time that we had. The taxi dropped us off at the back entrance, and we walked the rest of the way up the hill. What was left of Sacsayhuaman (“marbled head” of the puma) – after the three towers had been dismantled and used to build the cathedral in the plaza – were three successively higher zigzag terraces of cyclopean, polygonal blocks of stone. Some people said the zigzag design was meant to represent the puma’s teeth. However, two rows of teeth (blocks of stone) would have sufficed to represent the puma’s upper and lower teeth. So there must have been something else the Inca had in mind when they were building the fortress-temple. Three usually stands for the three Andean worlds and its correspondences: upper, middle, and lower; Hananpacha (celestial world of the gods), Kaypacha (physical world of humans), Ukhupacha (underworld of ancestral spirits) ; condor, puma, serpent.

However, Sacsayhuaman was in Inka times also known as the Temple of Sacahuma (Puma head), and it was dedicated to the deities of lightning and the serpent. As lightning travels like the serpentine energy from the heavens to the earth, and the serpentine energy travels from the tail of the puma (base chakra, procreative center) to the head of the puma (crown chakra, illuminating center), so the zigzag terraces of stone served a threefold purpose: a military fortress for protection, a religious center for priests-astronomers, and ritual ceremonial center for shamans and initiates for the awakening of the inner lightning serpent, the kundalini. So what I saw was a three stepped crown of zigzag terraces of stone to crown the head of the puma. The puma-shaman had become master of all three worlds: the celestial world where he could fly like a condor, the human world where he could have the power of the puma, and the inner world where he could tap the wisdom of the snake.

Sacsayhuaman also had another meaning: “festooned head” (sacsa = festooned, uma = head). So the megalithic head had a garland of energized stones to adorn its head. Also, on top of the hill, above the stone terraces, was a ring of concentric stone circles that was at once a reservoir of water, a water mirror for astronomer-priests, and the “eye” (3rd eye chakra) of the puma.

It was amazing to see that there was still a lot of the original stones left, even though the people of Cusco used the stones as a quarry to build their homes, churches, and public buildings for over three hundred years. Luckily, the Peruvian government and concerned citizens stepped in to protect the national heritage. Now it is the site of the great Inti Raymi celebration every June 24th at the time of the June solstice, a time when the solar deity Inti came to bring light to the city of Cusco in a spectacular light show, illuminating the tail of the puma and progressing upward, section by section through the body of the puma, to the head of the puma. To the shaman, the entire light show was an awakening of the puma, and the illumination of the head (the mind).

From Sacsayhuaman (Sacahuma), I noticed a white statue on the nearby hill. What was that? I wondered. Susie and I climbed Cerro Pukamoqo (“red hill”) to see an 8 m (26 ft) statue of what the locals called “the White Christ.” The figure of Christ with outstretched hands in a symbolical gesture of peace seemed to be a copy of the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The image of Christ seemed to look down in a protective manner at the city of Cusco and say, “Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28) In most of the other Andean cities, I had seen the Virgin Mary (Pachamama) extend her hands in a protective, peace-inspiring manner, but this was the first major city where a figure of Christ was the guardian overlooking the city from a high hill.

The white statue of Christ was made of granite and covered with white plaster and marble. When I inquired about the statue, I found out that Arab-Palestinian residents of Cusco during World War II donated the statue to the city. I surmised that it must have been a gesture of goodwill. It was a history lesson for me to learn that Palestinians had been living in Peru since 1870. What was intriguing for me was the day the foundation stone for the statue was laid in 1944 – on Inti Raymi day. The day the Incas celebrated the return of the sun – and the reenactment of that sacred solar event was performed in a great ceremony at Sacsayhuaman – the Christian sun-god was been erected to show his superiority over the Inca sun-god, Inti. Somehow, looking down from the Pukamoqo Hill at the head of the puma, where the former temple of the sun was the crowning adornment of the Inca totem animal, I felt that the juxtaposition was iconoclastic. Once again, the mentality of the Spaniards, with their conquering cry of “Santiago” (Saint James, the brother of Jesus) seemed to have the upper hand. I couldn’t help but think of the time I was in Kiev, Ukraine, and I saw the monumental 102 m (334 ft) statue of the Motherland near the famous Kiev Monastery of the Caves. My Ukrainian cousin told me that the sword of the statue had to be cut so it wouldn’t be higher than the highest point of the cathedral in the monastery. The church would not allow the state, even if it was the Soviet Union, to be higher or superior to the orthodox church.

As I looked up again at the White Christ, I wondered if the Andean people thought it was a manifestation of Viracocha, like they viewed the Virgin Mary to be a

manifestation of Pachamama. After all, the Andean creed, unlike Christian dogma, allowed for the adoption of new deities. The Virgin Mary could coexist with Pachamama as the Queen of Heaven and Earth in the Andean cosmology. It was a syncretism that was seen in Mesoamerica and in the Andean world. When the Spaniards came with their Catholic (universal) religion, the Andeans had to adapt. When the extirpation of idolatry (destruction of Andean sacred huacas, shrines) became an institutionalized practice, the Andean adapted their belief system to the Christian forms of representing divinity and deities. So instead of having a procession of sacred ancestral mummies, the Andeans joined the procession of Christian saints and saw their own deities in them. When the Catholic priests tried to tell them that it was St. Thomas or St. Bartholomew who was the apostle who came to Lake Titicaca and taught the people Christian morals and principles, the Andean people still saw their ancient legendary Viracocha. They even gave St. Thomas an Andean name, “Tonapa Viracochapacachan or Tunupa. The story of the travels of Viracocha became the travels of St. Thomas through the Andean landscape. So it was an apostle of Christ, or even Christ himself, who walks the Americas, not Viracocha. But the Andean people knew better, even if they had to keep it to themselves.

We left the Andean Christ and descended the hill. We were able to see the center (plaza) from the hill, so we knew exactly which path to take on our way to the plaza. It was an easy one kilometer walk down the hill. At the plaza, I glanced askance at the two churches that had been erected on the sacred sites of the Incas: the Cathedral was standing where the Temple of Kiswar Kancha (Temple of Poplars), and the palace and temple of Inka Viracocha, stood; the Church of La Compania was standing where the Temple of Amaru Kancha (Temple of the Serpents), a wisdom university, stood.

After a short visit to the Museo Inka, where we saw artifacts from pre-Inca and Inca civilizations, we were finished for the day. Now it was time for us to get ready for the great adventure on the Inka Trail. I had been looking forward to this four day hike for a whole year. I had been training for it on the hills near my house. I was physically, mentally, and spiritually ready for the trip of a lifetime to the Crystal City of Light in the Sacred Valley – Machu Picchu.

Susie and I went to the SAS Travel office for our orientation meeting and to meet the guides and the people we would be traveling with on the Inka Trail.