

THE NATURE OF THE SOUTH AMERICAN MYSTERIES

From the Second to the Fourth Age

The Second Age in the Andes, especially along the north coast, anticipated and surpassed its counterpart in Mesoamerica. At this stage emerged a momentous cultural revolution accompanied by the building of imposing ceremonial centers, and the definition of a cosmovision centered around the Southern Cross. This translated into the cult of the Andean Cross, the worship of the mountains and water deities, basically all that represented the worship of Great Spirit, the Atlantean Tao, and the deities of the night.

At this point there were regional cultures that interacted with each other and formed extensive networks of cooperation in the building of what is known as the “vertical archipelago.” The cult of the Andean Cross introduced the sunken courts, in which one cannot fail to see an equivalent to the ball courts of Mesoamerica. Both are structures buried in the ground. In both continents they form the third ladder to the cosmological division of space into upper world (the pyramids), middle world (the platforms), and lower world (sunken courts and ball courts). This movement of differentiation was only reached in the Third Age in Mesoamerica.

Knowledge of the underworld is the watershed in time in which different cultures experience the condition known as the “Twilight of the Gods.” This is accompanied by the progressive weakening of natural clairvoyance of old, ushering in the possibility of human freedom. Signs that accompany this are counting and/or writing and the calendar, as well as the introduction of human sacrifice on the negative side of the scale. Evidence counting, and possibly writing, has emerged of late in the retrieval of the oldest *quipus* in Caral. We can surmise that a first agricultural calendar was very likely in use, though no archaeological proof of it has been brought to light. Human sacrifice constitutes a decadent way to acquire spiritual knowledge, and finding its evidence is another corroboration of the change of consciousness ushered in from the time of the Second Age in some parts of the Andes.

The transition to the Third Age marked the new role of the cosmopolitan Chavin center. Here an impulse flowed out of a center towards the periphery. The Chavin cult flourished far and wide from its own center and was adopted by the receiving cultures each in their own time. Chavin brought order in the cult of the *wakas*, it maintained their harmonious collaboration until a few centuries before the turn of our era. It also prepared

the message for the new deity of the Fourth Age, prefigured in the Staff God of the Stela Raimondi. There is ample evidence pointing out to the oracular-shamanistic nature of the Chavin cult, in keeping with the general characteristics of the Third Age and of matriarchy that accompanied it.

The Fourth Age marks a more definite change of cosmology. Here is introduced the solar calendar, and with it historical consciousness. The Second Creation makes of the Sun the supreme *waka* to which all *ayllus*, tribes, and nations look back. The Dawning marks their common origin in time. It is the reason for unity in diversity, the foundation of peaceful collaboration, and the base of an economy of reciprocity. At the same time the cult seems to be going hand in hand with the reordering of society around the new form of the matrilineal-patrilineal social unit of the *ayllu*. Where the nature of the cult appears with most clarity from the archaeological record—as it does in Nazca—the *ayllu* itself plays a major part in the sacred ordering of time and space. That is not to say that there was no priesthood, but very likely a new solar priesthood, and the role of the shaman decreased. Another difference with the previous Age is the formation of regional pilgrimage centers, such as Tiwanaku and Cahuachi, rather than a central Mystery center radiating its impulses throughout the land, such as Chavin was in the previous epoch.

Pacha: Time-Space

Central to the Mysteries of the South is the notion of *pacha*, the time-space dimension that dominates all use of sacred space and ceremonialism, as it was made clearest of all in Inca times in the use of the *ceque* lines that gathered in themselves both the ordering of time and the calendar and the ordering of space for ceremonial and practical uses. In fact, the year and its festivals and the use of space were intimately tied together through the *ceques* as they appear most clearly of all in Cuzco.

C. Milla Villena and M. Scholten d'Ebneth have illustrated in a striking way how all religious symbolism, elements of design, and spatial organization were subjected to the Andean measuring operational system. This is why Thunupa, the initiate par excellence, is represented with the two measuring staves. The unity of measurement in the Andean system is the functional counterpart to the dated stela in South America. Everything from the building of the temples to their relationships and the ordering and placement of cities in the territory was subjugated to this ordering principle. The *ceques'* organization of the south are contrasted with the Long Count of Mesoamerica; the landscape of the fields of power to the south with the *codices* of the north.

Even writing acquires mathematical qualities as appears most clearly in the conversion of Inca letters to numbers in the use of the *khipus*. And of Quechua language, Valera asserts that it presented a great advantage over all other languages in the way it could be used in commerce and spiritual and temporal affairs. It was a vehicular language, very easy to learn because of rational grammatical principles. It may be considered the special language of the Mysteries.

A comparison with the Mesoamerican Mysteries of the north highlights a greater role played in the north by the Venus Mysteries and in the south by the Mercury Mysteries, the Mysteries of measure and of number.

The Sun Orientation of the Early Intermediate Period and Inca Cultures

The southern Mysteries of the Andes appear most clearly revealed in two times in history: during the Early Intermediate Period (EIP) and in Inca civilization. Let us look at some of the characteristics of the changes introduced by the EIP. This Fourth Age is a period of cultural renaissance, framed on either end by periods of strife. Most striking of all is the pattern of settlements—from the rise of *pukaras* and fortified settlements in the time immediately preceding the Fourth Age (1st century AD) to the return of similar conditions in the “Age of the Warriors.” In between appears a new monumental architecture, settling the plains.

Civilizations at war with each other carried the need for safety in the settlement patterns, hence the abandonment of fertile lands and the location of cities and villages on mountain ridges and places that afforded more defensibility. In times of peace, expansion occurred in the fertile valleys and ecosystems like the altiplano, where different ethnicities and *ayllus* could coexist peacefully and introduce the revolution of technical and artistic innovations of great dimension that could only be carried out through large coordination of manpower, knowledge, and resources. Since this had already been possible during the Second Age, it is necessary to explore the similarities and the differences.

During the EIP the achievements of the preceding Second Age were restored. Such was the exploitation of the environment through what has been called the vertical archipelago, basically allowing different ethnic groups the access to ecosystems other than their own, through colonies distant from the motherland, and through routes of commerce open to all. As a result of this atmosphere of peaceful coexistence, grand architectural undertakings were possible, such as the construction of imposing pyramids

and large canalization of water tied to complex systems of irrigation and terracing, making it possible to extend the use of resources to fragile or marginal ecosystems.

What happened in the north coast during the Second Age was brought a step forward through the Gallinazo culture, after the Salinar interlude. The same was true most noticeably in Tiwanaku and Nazca, and all of this at the turn of our era. What appeared that was new to the EIP was the solar reference frame of the Mysteries and their special brand of ceremonialism. We can follow this in a number of steps.

The first cultural revolution introduced the cult of the Great Spirit—Wirakocha—or cult of the *ahpus*, carried out by the whole of the Second Age, most clearly and earlier than elsewhere along the north coast. Here, as few authors have proved conclusively, the cosmology of the Southern Cross and the resulting Andean Cross was developed in great depths. The gods worshipped were deities of the night. From this time originates the impulse leading to the building of the pyramids and of the sunken courts. As Milla Villena conclusively demonstrates, the patron of the Andean unit acquired increasing importance and permeated the whole of ceremonialism.

Towards the end of this period appeared the cosmopolitan impulse of Chavin—the Andean Third Age—continuing the trends of the Second Age and preparing the ground for the fourth. In a fashion similar to the Olmec civilization, Chavin laid the grounds for the revelation of the future. In South America we have no such revelation as that of the Mayan *tzolkin* or sacred calendar—at least no such recorded one. There are, however, two important indices of what gets carried in the time of the EIP; the first is the announcement of the new solar deity of the Staff God, most clearly visible in the Stela Raimondi, and the second is that of the new solar orientation of the most important civilizations of the EIP. The first, very isolated instance is that of Chankillo, appearing side by side with the more decadent late examples of the Chavin civilization (e.g., Sechin) where human sacrifice resurfaced. The solar revolution appeared with the inauguration of a solar calendar, indices of which are most clearly visible in Tiwanaku's Sun Gateway. The calendar must have been previously present in other, simpler forms, and so, most likely, writing.

The Sun referential played an important role in subordinating the *wakas*. The Second Creation, at the turning point of the Fourth Age, meant that all tribes were united to a common point in time, to the Dawning of the time of Thunupa, and that, although they all had their own *pagarinas* and honored their own *wakas*, they all did so in reference to a higher reality of the Sun deity and to the time of the Dawning from which they all issued.

This is the thread of all the myths concerning the Second Creation. Until this impulse maintained ascendancy, equality among tribes and *ayllus* was an established matter of fact. The Sun worship had an equalizing effect upon Andean civilization.

The Fourth Age ended in what was called the “Age of the Warriors” in which once again the *wakas* were variously subordinated to regional *wakas*, and those in turn most likely subjugated to an “empire *waka*.” Wari marked a return to the conditions prevailing at the end of Chavin’s Third Age, a state of continued struggle for ascendancy among the *wakas*.

After the Age of the Warriors, the Incas reestablished the preeminence of the harmonizing cult of Inti, the Sun. This could no longer be done as it had been in the EIP, due to the consciousness of the time. The Inca themselves battled against their own centrifugal tendencies embodied in the conflicting interests of the royal *panagas* and regional groups. Inca Pachacuti established subtle balances of power in the political and spiritual realms to bring a civilizing impulse and a unifying impetus among the people of the empire. This cannot be understood from a Eurocentric perspective.

Central to Pachacuti’s reforms was the importance of the new cult of the Sun and the establishment of its priesthood throughout the empire. All local cults survived in the harmony of the Sun impulse, avoiding thus the centrifugal tendencies leading to continuous sustained warfare among the *wakas*. Inca culture played the same role. It aimed at creating and spreading the common language of the Mysteries of the Sun. In the instruction of the Inca nobility and of the regional *curacas* was the effort to spread a common culture, and loosening the ethnic ties in various ways. The first was the spreading of Inca blood through the gift of Inca women to the local *curacas*, or conversely the marriage of the Incas with foreign noble women. To this loosening of ethnic ties followed the adoption of Quechua language, and the unifying culture deriving from the common initiation of the nobles, be they Inca or foreign born.

Central to the Inca revolution was the establishment of a state structure that could spread the teachings of the Sun religion, and those are considerable. All of the architecture of the fields of power is the result of the Mystery knowledge preserved within the precincts of the Sun temples that the Inca introduced after each territorial conquest. We could argue that what survives about Inca culture at present is but a pale version of what existed prior to the Spanish Conquest. None of the deeper knowledge of the Sun Mysteries could be preserved without the social form of the empire that sustained them.

Inca civilization played another important role in creating the grounds for a possible rapprochement between the Christianity of the Spaniards and the Sun religion of the Andes. Through the memory of the deeds of Thunupa and his teachings, the possibility existed for the religion of the Gospels to meet with the Inca revelations of the Sun God. This was intuited by the indigenist Jesuits and individuals such as Santa Cruz Pachacuti. What was possible in Peru and the Andes had not been even remotely imaginable in Mexico given the complete cultural rift between Aztec and Spanish cultures. Historically this possibility was left mostly unfulfilled in the Andes, where Spanish greed for gold played a great hindering role. But perhaps even Pachacuti's dream had been vitiated prior to the Incan defeat. We should remember that a civil war was raging when Pizarro arrived in the Tawantinsuyu, and the empire was already greatly debilitated.

The Dream and the Reality

It could be argued that Inca cosmovision was a generous gift to the world that came too early for the human capacities of the time. Already at his succession, the ideal that Pachacuti legated was soon vitiated by power struggles and political infighting that cost a great deal to the credibility of the Inca mission. In times of political succession, the spirits of the Age of the Warriors reared their heads through intrigues and plots. Later on, the path to initiation cast its shadow reflection when the Inca asserted spiritual powers he did not have, leaving room for manias of grandeur. Let us review this in some detail.

Topa Inca, Pachacuti's successor, forged alliances with local ethnic groups and their *wakas*. This was a strategy to loosen the bonds with his collateral kin (other *panaqas*) and reduce his dependence from them in times of difficult relationships. In doing so, however, Topa Inca was offering power and autonomy to local rulers who had no interest in carrying further the old ideas of reciprocity or the message of Pachacuti. In particular he created a strong alliance with the *waka* of Pachacamac. That meant giving prominence to gods other than the Sun and weakening the harmonizing and equalizing effect the cult had among competing *wakas*.

The story of what the oracle exacted from Topa Inca is quite indicative. First it asked that the temple be enlarged and therefore be given more importance. Then it asked for "sons," meaning branch oracles. The first two were built in Mala and Chincha; the third in Andahuaylas and at Andahuayllas.⁽²⁾ Pachacamac had other offshoots too: "wives" in Chincha and Mamaq, further "sons" in Huarochiri, and a house near Chan Chan, in the heart of a restive old Chimú kingdom and a dangerous, potential rival.

Investigations at the site of Mamaq show an absence of Inca pottery vessels and indicates what degree of independence Pachacamac acquired from the Cult of the Sun. The same is true in the core of Pachacamac's temples, even though Inca artifacts are found in the immediate environment.⁽³⁾ The oracle had a vast local following on the northern coast, and pilgrims visited it from great distances. The rise of Pachacamac served to foment local political ambition and the return to the rivalry of the *wakas*. This gives an idea of the oracle's ambition and of the price that Topa Inca paid for political expedience.

Wayna Capac was born in Tumibamba, Ecuador, and inherited the title of emperor while still an infant. During his childhood his throne and his life had been threatened by plots. He was later forced to assume the rule because of a time of high inner political turmoil, and he transformed the throne into a remote place of intrigues and luxury. He established a second center of gravity of the empire in the north, by building important cities in Ecuador—Tumibamba, Carangui, Quito—and was thus long absent from Cuzco. One of his first early moves was to degrade the office of high priest by creating above it the post of Shepherd of the Sun and filling it himself. With that he could claim closer proximity to the divine than had all the earlier Incas. The immediate result of it was the severance of the functional relationship and balance of power between political and spiritual functions at the head of the state. Santa Cruz Pachacuti also reproaches the emperor for having made recourse to the oracle of Pachacamac.

Wayna Capac created confusion in his succession. He first named Washkar his heir, and then reversed his decision in favor of his other son Ninan Cuyochi. However, there was a clause in his will that specified that Washkar would be invested of the highest charge if the omens revealed that Ninan Cuyochi was not favored by the gods. What happened later was that Ninan himself contracted the plague. His brother, unaware of it, had already moved forward to oppose the legal heir.

Washkar had an unbalanced personality, at least in his later days. He was disdainful and allied weakness with sadistic traits. In his effort to wrest power from the *panagas*, he broke off from Hanan Cuzco and even from his own kin, and reaffiliated with Hurin Cuzco. He established a residence fortress away from Cuzco's center in Collcampata to the north of it. This had been a sacred place—Manco Capac's first *chacra* (cultivated ground)—and the choice constituted a sort of desecration. The emperor also incited the marriage of his mother with his father's mummy. He claimed that this was the wish of the mummy as expressed by its medium. He died prematurely

from the effect of a plague that ravaged Ecuador. In all of the above one cannot fail to see the result of failed initiations!

The Apocalyptic Dimension of South American Spirituality

The geography and climate of the Andes point to modern and future times. Exceptional geographic conditions place Andean humanity at the mercy of turns of fate, such as droughts, floods, or earthquakes. Collaboration and integration are a sine qua non of survival and cultural expansion. When that possibility was realized, natural catastrophes could better be dealt with; when civilization cyclically sank to its depths, a stark struggle for survival ensued. It is even legitimate to ask oneself if climatic changes followed to some extent human disharmony, as the tenets of Andean reciprocity hold true. All of this seems to point to the challenges of present time and prefigure them—a time of ecological upheavals, in which civilization as a whole depends on planetary collaboration. In a sense Andean civilizations have known far ahead of the rest of humanity what we experience at present with global warming and ecological crises. Andean geography and ecology themselves are a microcosm of the world at large; suffice to think that 85% of world ecosystems are present in the Andes.

To a higher extent than any other contemporary civilization, Andean culture played a role of co-creator with its natural environment. It collaborated with the elemental world and cosmic influences to fashion its environment in a way that modern man can only rediscover if science turns again from the exclusive focus on earthly influences that offer us such questionable innovations as genetically modified organisms, to the interplay of earthly and cosmic factors. The interplay between the human and spiritual worlds is the foundation upon which is based Andean reciprocity in times of cultural renewal and expansion. The fields of power, the sacred pyramid of Ollantaytanpu, the *muyus* of Moray point to an incredible wealth of knowledge of the religion of Inti in mastering the use of cosmic influences for the advantage of human beings.

Reciprocity is the central nexus of all Andean ethics, and the support of its economic life; it is a principle of cosmic justice. This worldview goes beyond the individual and the present generation. Natural disasters are considered the result of lack of reciprocity; the same is true of manmade calamities. Communities may have to shoulder the guilt of an individual; indeed, even posterity may have to do the same. God inflicts a chastisement in order to allow the correction of the cosmic imbalance, which is not seen as a gratuitous punishment.

The apocalyptic nature of Andean spirituality is most present of all in the notion of Pachacuti or change of time. There were larger and smaller periods of time. The way of defining the smaller ages is more explicitly stated in Montesinos' *Memorias Antiguas Historiales*. The one-thousand-year interval was called *Capac-huata* or *Intip-huata*, the “great year of the Sun.” Each millennium was subdivided in two five-hundred-year periods known as *pachacuti*. The emperor of that name came to power close to the year 1500. We know that Inca division of time corresponds to a deeper esoteric reality. Every thousand years, Lucifer and Ahriman can join forces and make a particularly strong attack on human culture. This is the root idea that is outwardly reflected in millennialism.⁽⁴⁾

The apocalyptic theme also appears in the contrast between cultures that attained an almost complete secularization, such as Wari and Chimú, and the future-oriented impulses of the Inca. What occurred in the Age of the Warriors prefigured by many centuries the movement toward secularization that became visible in Aztec society. This reflects the fact that the Twilight of the Gods saw its onset earlier in South America, at least on the north coast of Peru where human sacrifices were already recorded in the third millennium before our era.

The Inca lived in a very high ideal of earthly and cosmic collaboration that humanity can only start to develop at present. This is the overarching impulse to shape the whole of the earth as a refection of the heavens, as best exemplified in the Sacred Valley. To what extent the Inca went in order to reshape the landscape cannot be understood from a utilitarian perspective. The massive undertaking of the sacred pyramid of Ollantaytanpu is a point in case, and so is the rest of the sacred landscape around the city. Through this undertaking the Inca could have recourse to the use of the cosmic forces in the selection and amelioration of plants and animals—an example of what humanity can hope to achieve in the far future.

The Incas included in their planning of the landscape a balanced integration of artistic, functional, and environmental concerns. Theirs was a complete reshaping of the natural world, a sanctification of the environment through the integration of earthly and cosmic concerns. This extended to the alignment of cities and ceremonial sites with the ordering of the heavens, e.g., the path of Wirakocha. Wari or Chimú offered the complete mirror image, one of the earliest indigenous examples of an architecture turned completely utilitarian, estranged from cosmic influences and even from its environment.

