

Essay on machu picchu in inca culture

[Religion](#), [God](#)



Abstract

The paper is dedicated to the Machu Picchu settlement and its religious importance. The work provides an insight into Incas culture and history as well as explains in a more detailed way the religious beliefs of Incas Empire. The paper includes a brief description of worshipping ceremony of the God of the Sun, Inti. Then, it reveals the peculiarities of the architecture of Machu Picchu and those features of the Lost City of Incas that have religious implications. Among them a pyramidal structure of the most city buildings is mentioned. The features of the Temple of the Sun are also described in the paper. Besides, the work includes brief information about other culture - Mayan and a comparison of the Mayan Temple, Tikal, and the Machu Picchu.

The Inca civilization belongs to one of the oldest civilizations in the world. Like many other ancient civilizations, its origins remained unknown. Nevertheless, those tribes had a rich and developed culture and complicated ceremonies and a wide range of customs. Under the rule of Pachacuti and his son Topa Inca, who were emperors between 1438 and 1493, the Inca civilization became a great empire, which was located in the unattractive region of the Andes Mountains. These two great emperors managed to unite over one hundred tribes under the one political system, culture and religion. The empire had a well-developed society structure where everyone had his own duties including children and disabled people. For example, kids over five years old helped their parents to water fields, mentally deficient persons and people with disabilities chewed maize and this substance was later used to make a kind of alcoholic beverage (" The Inca Culture", n. d.). The Incas

were magnificent engineers. They developed one of the most elaborate and complicated road networks in the world. It is worth mentioning that with this road system Incas managed to overcome obstacles created by nature. For example, they carved or constructed steps in the mountains to avoid steep slopes. In desert areas, engineers constructed low walls to protect roads from the sand. Another amazing thing invented by Incas is a rope bridge made from the natural fibers. But the whole network was used mainly by chasquis - messengers, who transported information from one region to another, and pedestrian travelers, who used llamas to carry their food and goods (" Inca Roads and Chasquis", n. d.). The Empire did not have literacy as well. But Incas had a unique way of communication. They used ropes and tied knots on them. The type and the quantity of knots, distance between them and color of the rope were distinctive factors that defined the sense of the message. This kind of communication is called quipu.

Incas left rich historical heritage in the form of legends, oral traditions, stone sculptures, silver and gold jewelry. The empire was famous for their gold decorations. But the metal was not used for making money. Gold and silver were divine metals and jewelers made masks and statues of their Gods. Incas had polytheism. This means that they worshipped many Gods, not a particular one. Like many other cultures Incas believed there is a specific God for every aspect of nature - sun, moon, wind, mountains and many other elements. As a rule, the main God was the God of the Sun. It was a male deity named Inti. Everybody including emperors took part in the worshipping ceremony. The most important annual ceremony dedicated to this God was called Inti Raymi (" Inca Religion", n. d.). During the ceremony

an emperor wore rich clothing, a lot of gold and silver decorations were set everywhere. The ceremony itself was a procession, which was held by the emperor to the temple of the Sun. After the procession animals and sometimes people were sacrificed. The ceremony ended with drinking of corn beer and eating.

One of the temples, which remained after the Incas culture was destroyed by Spanish conquistadors, is located in Machu Picchu, the lost city of Incas.

Originally, the city was built as fortress to protect royal family. This temple is dedicated to the god of the Sun, Inti. The temple was not found by the Spanish warriors and therefore it is still standing and allows tourists and scientists to discover the architectural peculiarities. The city consists of about two hundreds buildings. Probably, it was one of the most amazing settlements of the Incas Empire, because of the heights of the buildings and amount of work force and engineer thinking needed for the construction (“Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu”, n. d.). Apart from being a fortress the city also had an important religious role. Almost all holy mountains were seen from the buildings of Machu Picchu and ancient priests could observe them as well as movements of sun and moon. Most buildings in the settlement have truncated pyramidal structure. They are constructed of carved grey granite. Most of the stones are polygonal, that means that they have many angles. Incas often used such stones for their religious buildings. With these form they wanted to highlight their polytheism. Another architectural peculiarity of a religious importance is an above mentioned pyramidal structure. Inti, the God of the Sun, was the most important creature in Incas mythology. With pyramidal structure architects wanted to

display the path of the sun and how people can come closer to the God. The society of Incas had a strict hierarchical structure and pyramidal building also point out this attribute of the ancient society. Besides, it shows the importance of sacrifice ceremonies. An animal should pass the whole way to the altar and by passing every single stair it became closer to the deity. The pictures of Machu Picture clearly display its pyramidal structure and polygonal stones. The only building in the Holy City that has a semicircular wall is the Temple of the Sun. Probably, ancient architects wanted to use the form of the sun to show their respect to the main God. The temple of the Sun has another architectural feature - when the sun of the winter solstice comes up its rays enter the central window and lay down on a stone located in the centre of the temple.

Besides, the city itself was divided in several districts: agricultural, urban, royal etc. There was a special place to venerate Gods and a special stone to catch the sun movements. Such stones were not only of religious but also of astronomical importance. But at those time astronomy and religion were interrelated with each other.

Another Mesoamerican culture, Mayan, is also considered to be one of the oldest on the Earth. Mayans are famous for their calendars, which are believed to predict future events and event forecast the Apocalypses. According to the scientists, Maya had a polytheistic system as well as Incas. They also had Gods of the Sun and the Moon, which were highly respected by the society. But the most important God for Mayan peoples was Itzam - the God who controlled all aspects of life and death.

Mayan architecture is considered to be the richest on the territory of

Americas. It really has lots of sculptures and carvings as well as paintings depicting scenes from real life and imaginary events from the life of their deities. One of the most famous Mayan Temples is located in the ancient Mayan city of Tikal, which is now in Guatemala. The Temple is called the Temple of Masks. The building has a pyramidal structure, which is so common among American tribes. This structure also has a religious meaning, which coincides with the one above. Besides, it has a special acoustic feature. When a man, who is standing at the top of the pyramid, is talking, his voice can be clearly heard all around on big distances. This means that priests and rulers said their prayers from that top and their words were heard by all other people living in the city of Tikal.

Both examples - Machu Picchu and Tikal have something in common - a pyramidal structure of their buildings. This was done according to the religious beliefs of both cultures. Both Incas and Mayan believed that the steps are associated with the path to Gods. And despite different cultural level and history these cultures are linked through their architecture.

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