

SOME FACTORS THAT MADE FOR THE GRANDEUR OF THE INCA EMPIRE



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(sólo en PE/733)

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1949

INSTITUTO RIVA AGÜERO
BIBLIOTECA

FEB 29 1952

No. ingr. No. clas.

16983

SOME FACTORS THAT MADE FOR THE GRANDEUR OF THE INCA EMPIRE

Critical History has pronounced contradictory judgements on what the Inca Empire was. To some, it was a political state based upon tyranny; to others, a confederacy of Nations paternally ruled by the Inkas, or an aggregate of "bahetmas" with no order nor discipline; or a Nation divided by internal fights.

The historical criterium has been misled partly because of the collapse of the Empire at the attack of a small group of Spaniards, which is inexplicable to many writers depending for their information solely upon the historical documentation left by the conquerors, full of biased judgements against the defeated people. But at present there exists an incontrovertible trustworthy source for historical investigations, which is Archaeology. Excavations carried on during the last few years in various places of the country have furnished evidences of great informative value, unveiling ruins of old cities, monuments and tombs with thousands of aboriginal art and industry specimens, the study of which has changed the knowledge of this chapter of History.

The well known legends of the civilizing couple, Manco Capac and Mama Ocello and the four Ayar Brothers, which explain the birth of the Empire and the sudden development of civilization within a period of four to five centuries, make no historical sense today. The history of the Peruvian people is very different as we see it through their remaining works. An excellent exponent of the aboriginal culture before the conquest are the cyclopean monuments in existence throughout the country, the giant archives of 95,000 pieces of art in the National Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology and the thousands and thousands of archaeological specimens in foreign museums and owned by individuals.

Studies of these testimonies permit us to know today many phases of the spiritual and material life of these people, forgotten since the XVI Century. We can now glimpse into their social organization, their government systems, their forms of work, their religious philosophy, their habits and moral standards. Ignorance of these sources of study or prejudice has led some writers to present

an adulterated history of our pre-hispanic era, which does nothing but confuse the historical judgement.

I will point out briefly in this paper some of the factors that, in my opinion, determined the progress of this nation, its financial welfare and the flourishing condition in which it was when the Spaniards came in the 16th. Century. These conclusions are from a strictly archaeological point of view, based upon the study of the monumental works and the plentiful collections of ceramics, textiles and metals maintained in the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology.

I consider the following fundamental factors:

- 1.—The maximum exploitation of the land.
- 2.—The social organization based upon the Ayllu.
- 3.—The cooperative and conjoint work; and
- 4.—The systems of social service.

I

MAXIMUM EXPLOITATION OF THE LAND

It may be said without exaggeration that the ancient Peruvians are the most remarkable farmers in the world. The tremendous territory incorporated by the Inkas — from 2 degrees North of the Equator to 35 degrees South, — was totally exploited by man. In spite of the difficulties of an irregular soil with high mountains, deep valleys and narrow ravines and the existence of large desert areas with no water, the natives mastered it devising artificial methods that turned into a fertile landscape both the arid plains of the Coast and the bare slopes of the Andes.

Among the most original works devised by the aborigin to obtain the greater production out of the land, the terraces, the "mahamaes" or basins and the flood cultivation areas are worth noting.

In places where the soil would not offer plain extensions for cultivation, the slopes of the hills and mountains were fitted with "terraces or platforms" built with stone walls and agricultural earth brought from other places; these terraces went from the bottom of the ravine to the top of the hill. Cultivation in these terraces was mainly done with rain water, but in many places the terraces were watered by canals and ditches ingeniously laid out at various levels.

Cultivation in an incline is typical of Peru and reveals a technical knowledge of the advantages involved in having the chemical of the plants in the upper terraces fall down to the lower terraces. Furthermore, it permitted the cultivation of plants corresponding to various climates, from the tropical at the bottom of the valleys, to the frigid in the "punas". This explains the tremendous agricultural production reached by the Peruvians.

In some places the artificial terraces completely cover the mountains, to the point that they seem an integral part of the mountains themselves rather than human work. For example the aspect of the headwaters of River Majes, called Colca, is impressive. It looks like a large hanging garden; the sides are covered with thousands of terraces extending over many kilometers. The same thing happens in the Urubamba Valley, where there are terraces up to the top of the mountains.

Aside from the utilitarian terraces there are others which are merely ornamental, destined to embellish certain places and building of important pre-inca cities, as is the case of the hanging gardens in the palaces of Chanchan.

Certain indian legends give credit to the gods, such as Kon-Iraya, for the construction of the terraces and the early ditches. This should give an idea of how old they are, to the point that in the memories of men they appeared as built by supernatural beings.

Another gigantic work of the Peruvian natives is the "basin of cultivation or mahamae". Through this procedure, agriculture was carried out to the very desert. Tons of sand were removed for this from a large extension, until the damp earth underneath was found suitable for cultivation. This land does not need artificial irrigation, because it absorbs the water from the rivers, which filters under the sand. The basins of Villacuri in Pisco, and Chilca were famous and many years after the conquest, they were still being cultivated with vineyards. In the surroundings of the old Metropolis of Chanchan and Pachacamac, there was also done this artificial preparation of the soil. In the Northern area these works are called "wachakes".

Through systems of flood and fertilization, the natural areas of cultivation were enlarged, so that when the Europeans arrived, almost all the Coastal zone was a fertile landscape.

The indian not only invented procedures to enrich the agricultural areas, but turned the land into a large experimental laboratory. Over ninety food plants were cultivated, including various tubers, grains and fruits; and adapted to the coastal climate fruits original from the jungle and the mountains.

II

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION BASED UPON THE AYLLU

The basic organism of the original Peruvian society was the Ayllu. This consisted of a group of families or "churis", united by blood links, by the belief in a common ancestor — the origin of their lineage or genealogy — and by the common usufruct of the geographical site where it was established. Several Ayllus together formed a "Waman" or Province, and several Wamans formed a "Suyo".

In the light of the archaeological knowledge and the facts contributed on this subject by the indian tradition, the internal organization of the ayllus is unveiled as well as the importance of this institution in an essentially agricultural society.

Each ayllu occupied a small area of the territory, with very definite natural boundaries, generally a section of a valley. Along the valley there existed several ayllus, which because of common interests and geographical environment, eventually would unite to form a province or a homogeneous cultural area. The peculiar situation of the valleys in the Peruvian coast, with two definite sections, a high one or the headwaters and a low one, originated the formation of ayllus in the high frigid zone where people would raise cattle and produce wool, "charqui" (jerked beef) and plants characteristic of the altitude; and ayllus in the lower zones, rich in agricultural products and products from the sea. Commercial interchange and reciprocal relationships gave unity to

stone blocks, are works that can only be realized with the efforts of thousands of men.

Such conjoint works strengthened the feelings of solidarity which are clearly expressed in the nature of their feasts and social ceremonies. Hence in all the pre-inca villages and cities large plazas are found which were used for their feasts and meetings, platforms for the authorities, fields and avenues for sports of the youth. Archaeology is uncovering an unsuspected world to the eyes of modern men.

IV

SYSTEMS OF SOCIAL SERVICE

The Inka Empire, which is the goal or culmination in the development of the Native Civilization, merged in a harmonious combination the numerous pre-inca nations that had created advanced cultures through many Centuries.

Deepening in the causes that determined the grandeur of the Empire, we find out that it is the unity of origin, the unity of race and, above all, the unity of sentiments that made for this grandeur. The numerous peoples, apparently different and heterogeneous that occupied this territory, had common roots; they came from a mother cultural origin, from the old Chavin that had their cradle in the eastern side of the Andes and spread to the Sierra and to the Pacific Coast, leaving imperishable mark in their arts, religion and philosophy. In all the cultures formed through the Centuries, the unity of religious beliefs and spiritual traditions can be found. This would explain the strong concepts of Fatherland or Nationality crystallized in the power and advanced degree of culture of Peru at the arrival of the Spaniards.

During the period of Inca domination new institutions and systems of political administration were established to give cohesion to the various social aggregates involved. Among the most important institutions, the royal Tambos or Storehouses, the Kipucamayos, the Mamaconas, the division of the population by ages and the systems for preserving food vegetables and meats are worth mentioning.

The original name of this Nation was **Pirwa-y**, adulterated by the Spaniards to **Piru-a-**, which from the time of the early European settlements in Darien became symbolic of a country full of riches where the rulers ate and drank in gold and silver cups. In fact, Peru was then a gigantic Pirwa, Collca or granary, a large storehouse of food and manufactured products. From Rumiachaca in Colombia to the Argentinean North West there were numerous Tambos along the great Royal Road. In Cajamarca, Huancabamba, Caxas, Zaran, Jauja, Huanuco, Vilcashuaman, in Cusco and other places, there were stores full of fine and ordinary clothes, sandals, personal ornaments, tools, raw materials for industries, wool, cotton, dyes, weapons, etc.; and fantastic amounts of food which, as figured by witnesses of the Conquest, could meet the needs of the people for a number of years.

The so called Fortress of Sacsahuaman, when visited by Pizarro and Father Valverde, was full of store rooms with all kinds of elements for human life; and according to the latter, it takes six days to see all of it.

This is an eloquent evidence of the economic welfare and overproduction existing in the Empire. Accumulation of part of the human and soil produc-

the culture of the peoples established along one valley. Archaeology has verified the existence of cultural areas embracing sometimes two or more valleys in the coast; or a large longitudinal valley in the Sierra (the mountains). Confederacies of peoples similar in customs, language and religion, gave birth to Nations such as Chimu, Muchik, Chinchu, Wanka, Chanka and others which later were incorporated by the Inkas.

A Council of the Old ruled the ayllu who had under its responsibility the control of public activities. Each family or "churi" had a parcel of land to cultivate for their own benefit, which was big enough to amply meet their needs. A small part of the production was given to the Council for community purposes, mainly for the service of religion and the cult of the dead.

This phase of the spiritual life of the indian is very interesting; and through the documents left by the catechisers, we find out that the ayllu incurred large expenses in these ceremonies, which included pilgrimages to distant places, community banquets, festivals with dances, music and singing, sacrifices of animals and precious offerings from the land or from craftwork. Excavations carried on in the vicinities of the Temples and in the cemeteries have uncovered large amounts of ritual objects, which reveals that a part of the activities of the society was dedicated to the production of numerous articles for the gods and for the dead. Even parcels of land and part of the cattle was destined to this purpose. It can be said that the division of the land in three parts mentioned by the chroniclers: one for the community, another for the religion and the third for the state was not originated in the last Inka period. I believe this division is as ancient as the Ayllu itself, because in every period of pre-Columbus History testimonies are found of a collective cult, which is another of the factors of social solidarity among the ancient peoples.

There were two kinds of Ayllus: "waris" or native and "llacuas" or foreigners. Some ayllus enjoyed prestige because of their specialization in a certain art or local industry. This would explain the importance of some archaeological centers such as Parakas, where the art of textiles reached extraordinary progress, and Muchik and Nasca, famous for their ceramics work.

The Inkas, on incorporating to their domain the various pre-Inka Nations did not destroy the old social systems nor despotically imposed new standards of living. They respected the customs, religious beliefs and languages of the confederated peoples; only established for the better government of that wide country, wise systems of political administration and institutions that encouraged progress and gave unity and homogeneity to the Peruvian culture.

III

THE COOPERATIVE AND CONJOINT WORK

Cooperative and conjoint work, which has this character since the remotest times, contributed to the progress of the inca people. Public or social welfare works were done with the simultaneous assistance of the people. The very nature of the gigantic indian works that still remain required the collective effort. Drawing water canals sometimes from the mountains, opening irrigation ditches, building roads such as the "royal roads" from one end to the other of the country, terraces, building temples and fortresses with enormous

stone blocks, are works that can only be realized with the efforts of thousands of men.

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tion is perhaps one of the most advanced systems of social foresight of the aboriginal people. Even now they stick in the Sierra to their time-honored custom of storing food in their *pirwas* or *collkas*.

Specially important to social economy are the technical procedures invented by the Indian for indefinite preservation of food products. Advanced knowledge of the quality of fruits, their chemical contents and conditions of corruptibility, is revealed in the various methods employed for artificial desiccation of tubers, for making flour out of many vegetable products and for the preservation of meat and fish. Wisdom and previous experience was also required in the various forms of keeping such products in store rooms, protecting them against humidity and certain animals. In the thousands of tombs excavated by the National Museum, chiefly in the valley of Nasca, plates have been found containing flour of corn, yucca, sweet potatoes, beans, quinoa, etc.

Original of Peru is the division of the population by ages and in this wise principles are involved in regard to the protection of health and improvement of the human factor. The chroniclers that came after the conquest picked up from the *kipucamayoc* ample information on the subject. The Inkas divided the population in twelve ages ranging from childhood to old age. Each age has a special name in *kechua*, indicating the function or work performed by each. This division was established in every province; there were also established organisms and authorities for control and statistics. Thus were created the institutions of the *Kipucamayoc* or recorders, the *Tucuy Ricoc*, supervisors in charge of the activities of the people, and the officials in charge of collecting the taxes.

The taxpayers or *Auca Camayoc* — age 25 to 50 — were the most important group in this organization, but in general each group had specific functions and responsibilities.

The census of population, births, deaths, incoming and outgoing goods were recorded in the *Kipus*. Each *Tambo* had a *Kipucamayoc*.

Men: Various Age Groups

Uaua, 1st, Babies.

Lluccoc, 2nd, Small boys from 1 to 5 years, Children that crawl and begin to walk.

Puellacoc, 3rd, Boys from 5 to 9 years, who help their parents in any way they can.

Toellacoc, 4th, Boys from 9 to 12 years. They catch birds by means of *toclla* or traps; spin and twist, transport straw and wood.

Mactacona, 5th, Boys from 12 to 18 years of age. They pasture the livestock and take care of the cemeteries.

Saya payac, 6th, Indians from 18 to 20 years. They serve as messengers and shepherds, aids in the wars.

Uncoc Runa, 7th, Men of all ages, sick and defective: deaf, dumb, crippled, armless, lame, dwarfed, hunchbacked. These have special work.

Auca Camayoc, 8th, Warriors. This group includes those from 25 to 50 years.

Ruric Macho, 9th, Men from 51 to 73 years. They serve as porters, stewards, in the fields, etc.

Rocto Macho, 10th, Men from 80 to 100 and 150 years. They serve as guardians of the houses, caretakers of the guinea pigs, ducks, and make ropes and blankets.

Women: Various Age Groups

Llullo uaua uarmi, 1st, Girls recently born, from 1 year of age.

Llullac uarmi uaua, 2nd, Girls from 1 to 2 years. Babies that crawl.

Puellacoc uarmi uamra, 3rd, Girls from 5 to 9 years. They serve as pages to the Koyas or ñustas, young women of noble birth; help their parents in transporting wood and straw. They spin delicate things.

Pauau Pallac, 4th, Girls from 9 to 12 years. They occupy themselves in picking flowers, in eating and helping their parents.

Coro-tasque, 5th, Girls from 12 to 18 years. They help their parents; learn to weave and spin, pasture the livestock, care for the fields, clean their houses. They wear short hair.

Sipascona, 6th, Young woman of marriageable age, from 19 to 33 years. Young girls destined to be Akllas or to be married.

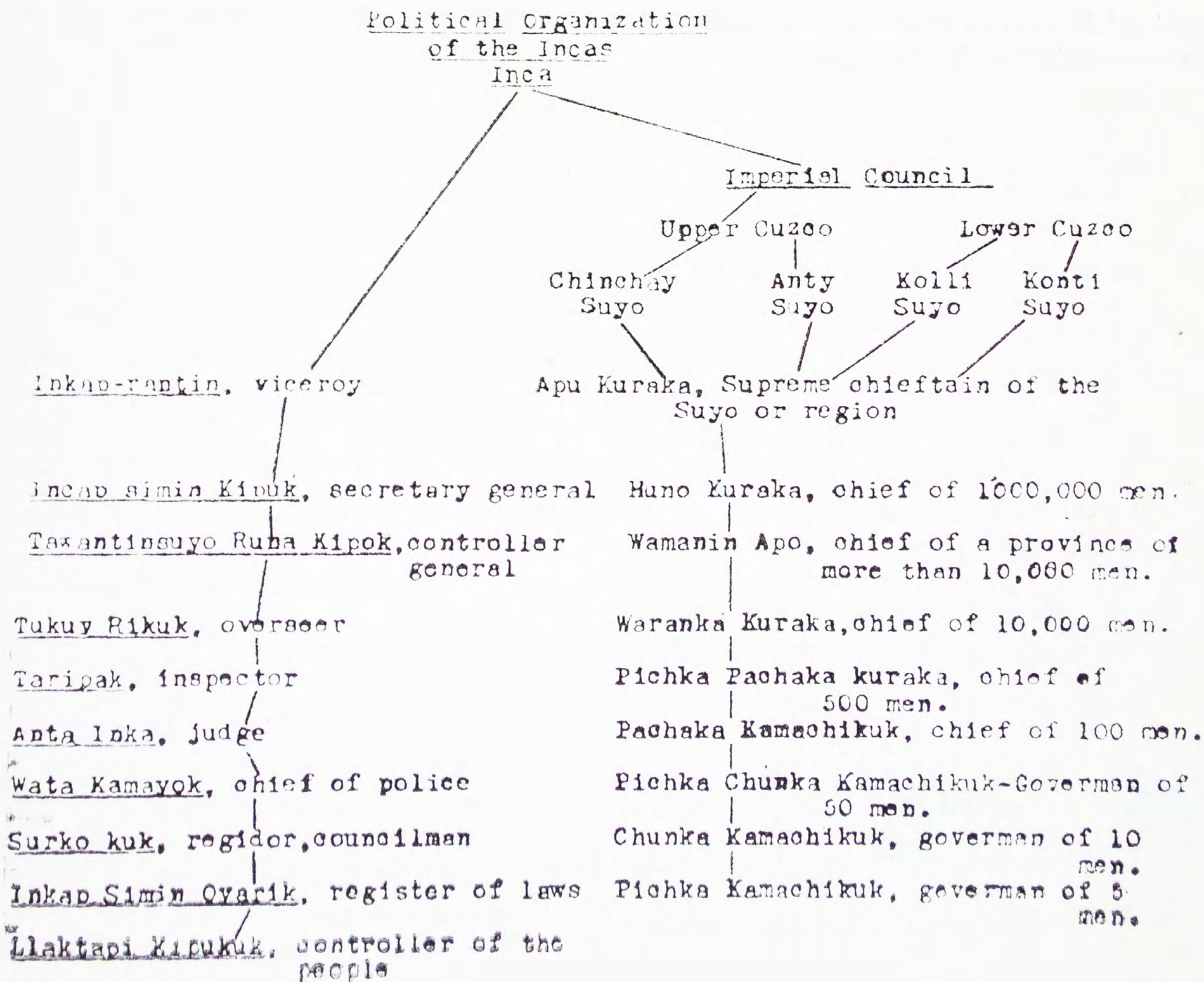
Auca camayocpa uarmin, 7th, Women from 33 to 49 years; they weave fine and rough clothing for the Inka, principal men, captains and soldiers.

8th, Woman of all ages, sick and defective: blind, dumb, deaf, crippled, dwarfed, or hunchbacked. Expert weavers of headbands and garments.

Payacona, 9th, Women from 50 to 79 years. They serve as porters, stewards, head cooks of the Akllakonans and weave coarse clothing.

Puñoc Paya, 10th, Women of 80 or more years. Ancient women that only eat and sleep. Those who are able work as porters, dispensers, weavers of coarse clothing, caretakers of children, etc.

V



As stated by the late Dr. Julio C. Tello, during the Inca period the arts became mechanized and industrialization absorbed many objects which had before a ceremonial character and were hand-made. This mechanization was a consequence of the greater needs of a nation composed of many small nations; it was also a consequence of the division of work and specialization. Trade Unions were formed of potters, carpenters, goldsmiths, weavers, and molds were introduced in the manufacture of ceramics pieces, as well as other means to increase production. Textile shops were organized or Houses of Mamaconas, where marvelous royal "kumpis" were made, along with ornaments for the temples and clothes for the general people. Pizarro found these houses stablished throughout the country.

Thus the Inca Empire reached an unual splendor and magnificence; the Temples filled up with metal richness; mummies of illustrious men were ornamented with valuable jawels; the clothing of the leading cass is pompous; the towns are prosperous and connected by roads forming real nets; the population is numerous and strong, soaring to nearly fifteen million. Temples were built for the cult of the Sun and the Moon in almost every center influenced by the Inkas; fine arts and social welfare works were encouraged. All this was due to the close contact of man with the earth, to the Indian's capacity to exploit it and get the most out of it to meet the collective needs.

Hence the fame of the Inca Empire, reaching beyond Panama, to Darien; and hence too the great ambitions of men in those times which motivated the conquest of this country and at the same time the destruction of one of the most remarkable Civilizations of the American Continent. However, there remain the descendants of this Race and also many of the values of te native culture, preserved in the old traditions; and we may hope that in the melting pot of Peruvian Culture, the indian element will contribute to give it vigor and personality, as in the past.

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"Tipografía Peruana, S.A."
RAVAGO e HIJOS ENRIQUE