THE CREATION AND DESTRUCTION OF THE CEQUE SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

The Inca civilization had incredible organization in every aspect of their society. They had an extensive road system to connect the far reaching areas of the empire, had annual labor contributions to accomplish the agriculture, construction, and military needs of the state, and had many levels of government officials to keep the empire in order. Their organization spread into religion in the form of the ceque system. The ceque system is made up of 42 ceques, or lines, radiating from the Coricancha in Cusco, Peru. Throughout the 42 ceques there are 328 huacas, or shrines. The huacas come in many forms, both natural and artificial: caves, boulders, springs, mountain passes, houses, fountains, and many more. The huacas were given offerings and worshipped with fervor by the Inca and Quechua people. The offerings were given for different purposes depending on the huaca. Some huacas guarded against the death of a child, ensured rainfall in the coming harvest, and warranted a safe journey, as well as encouraged or prevented many more naturally occurring phenomenon. When the tyrannical Spanish conquerors arrived in 1532, tracking down the huacas and destroying them became a priority. Due to the perseverance of the Quechua people, some huacas still remain today and have been found with offerings recently given. However, many huacas were destroyed during the Spanish conquest. In recent years, researches have been systematically tracking down the huacas using colonial documents. Four hundred years after the documents were written, many natural huacas have moved or
changed and many of the artificial huacas prove just as difficult to find. Locating and identifying the huacas in the ceque system would allow researchers to form a more comprehensive understanding of the Inca religion and its organization. (Bauer 1998: Chapter 1)

**THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CEQUE SYSTEM**

In the time of the Inca civilization, the empire was called Tawantinsuyu meaning four provinces. The empire was starkly divided into four suyus, or regions, called Chinchasuyu, Cuntisuyu, Antisuyu, and Collasuyu, and the ceques were divided in the same manner. Nine ceques lie in each of the following provinces: Chincasuyu, Antisuyu, and Collasuyu regions and fifteen ceques lie within Cuntisuyu which can be seen in Figure 1. In each region, the ceques are split into groups of three. These three lines are ranked based on their importance and are given a corresponding title. “Collana” is the title for the most important ceque in the group of three followed by “payan” and “cayao”. (Bauer 1998: Chapter 1, Section 3)

In order for researches to identify and differentiate among the huacas, they use a classification system. Both of the top researchers in the ceque field, Bauer and Zuidema, have their own method for identification. Bauer uses an abbreviation for the suyu then lists the ceque followed by the huaca. For example, (Co. 2:5) names the fifth huaca on the second ceque in the Collasuyu. The ceques of the Chinchasuyu are numbered counterclockwise while the other three suyus have the ceques listed clockwise. This inconsistency started in the Relación de las Huacas, a manuscript written by Bernabé Cobo soon after the Spanish conquest. In order to avoid confusion, the inconsistency has persisted into modern times. (Bauer 1998: Chapter 1, Section 6)

Since there were over three hundred huacas in the ceque system it was not just one entity that maintained and gave offerings to the huacas. Allyu, or kin groups, and panacas, or royal
descent groups, were assigned to specific huacas. The allyu and panacas cared for the huaca and made offerings which varied depending on the huaca and the time of year (Bauer 1998: Chapter 1, Section 2). Frequent offerings included chicha, coca leaves, sea shells, miniature figurines of llamas, alpaca, or humans, and miniature textiles. Important huacas received sacrifices of llama or guinea pig blood and the most important received child sacrifice. The sacrifice of children was especially common among huacas dedicated to the sun (Bauer 1998: Chapter 3, Section 5). Spanish chronicler Cobo makes a reference to child sacrifice in his document, “…there was a stone which was an important idol, to whom children were offered along with other things” (qtd. in Bauer 1998: Chapter 2, Section 2, para. 10). State owned fields often accompanied the huacas, and it was in these fields that crops and animals required for the offerings were raised (Bauer 1998: Chapter 3, Section 4).

THE CREATION OF THE CEQUE SYSTEM

The natural and artificial forms in the Inca Empire became huacas by being associated with legendary events, by honoring an Inca or Qoya, or by being involved in festivals, celebrations, or sacrifice. In general, the natural forms for the huacas were chosen when they differed from the ordinary either by being extremely beautiful or ugly (Bauer 1998: Chapter 1). In one version of the origins of the Inca, four brothers and four sisters emerge from a window on a hill called Tampu-tocco. While travelling from this window to their eventual settlement in Cusco, the journey is terminated for three of the brothers. Ayar Cachi is trapped inside a cave and both Ayar Uchu, and Ayar Auca are turned to stone. Their resting places become huacas. One of the most important huacas in ceque system is called Ayar Uchu Huanacauri and it is dedicated to the second brother’s death (Sarmiento de Gamboa 2003: Chapter 11, 12). In accordance with its importance, it received more offerings and was given greater detail in the
Spanish chronicles. In addition to the origin legend, many huacas correlate with the Chanca War especially the pururaucas, or stone warriors of the war (Bauer 1998: Chapter 3, Section 2).

Many Inca rulers, as well as their wives and sons, had huacas in their honor. However, no Inca ruler can claim as many huacas as the ninth Inca ruler, Pachacuti. He is the Inca credited with the expansion of the empire and has nineteen huacas in his honor. One of the nineteen huacas is Patallacta (Ch. 1:2), the location where the Inca died and according to some authors where is mummy resided (Bauer 1998: Chapter 3, Section 2).

The third reason for the creation of a huaca is the natural or artificial form’s importance in a festival, celebration, or sacrifice. Two such huacas are located closely on the first ceque in the Collasuyu, namely Guayra (Co. 1:8) and Mayu (Co. 1:9). These two huacas received sacrifices to honor the wind and rivers, respectively (Bauer 1998: Chapter 7, Section 2). Some celebrations had huacas dedicated to them, for example the celebration of the December solstice, called Capac Raymi. Other celebrations involved visiting many huacas, such as the Warachikoy which celebrates the transition of boys into manhood. During the ritual, several huacas were visited (Bauer 1998, Chapter 3, Section 2).

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CEQUE SYSTEM

The Spanish arrived in Peru in 1532 and quickly conquered the Inca Empire with their advanced weaponry and horses. Most of the known information about the Inca Empire was provided by chronicles written by the Spanish, mestizos, and Quechua people, although most accounts were written by the Spanish. The chronicler Bernabé Cobo, a Catholic priest, wrote the document Relación de las Huacas in 1653 and this text provides the most detailed account of the ceque system. The document by Cobo copies a lot of information from a previously written
document with an unknown author. However, due to clues in Cobo’s text it is suspected that the author is Juan Polo de Ondegardo and that the document was written between 1559 and 1572, less than forty years after the conquest. Quipucamayocs, or specialists of the quipus, kept records of the offerings given to the huacas. For this reason it is assumed that a quipucamayoc was interviewed about the ceque system because the original document contained very detailed descriptions of the huacas and the ceque system (Bauer 1998, Chapter 2).

Other documents, written by possible authors of the original ceque document, mention the ceque system. However, the Spanish did not keep detailed records of the system so that the huacas could be visited or preserved, but rather to destroy the holy shrines of their conquered people. The Spanish did not respect the culture or beliefs of the Quechua people and their thoughts shine through in their written documents. Cobo writes, “…I judge it necessary to enumerate them [the huacas] to explain more clearly the gullibility of these people” (qtd. in Bauer 1998: Chapter 2, Section 2, para. 1). In addition to being called gullible, the Inca religion was frequently referred to as “superstition” in the chronicles and the people were belittled for worshipping a large range of objects such as trees, springs, and hills. José de Acosta recorded that “…a vein of ore, the odd and elegant form of any little stone;…then instantly they take it for divine and without delay they worship it” (Bauer 1998: Chapter 2, Section 9, para. 2).

The campaigns to find and eliminate the huacas were used to remove the current Inca religion and replace it with Catholicism. One important leader in the destruction of the huacas was Pablo Joseph de Arriaga who gave specific instructions about how the huacas should be recorded and destroyed. Recording the location of the huaca was important so that it could be visited again to ensure that worship had stopped (Bauer 1998: Chapter 1, Section 2). Polo de Ondegardo, the possible author of the original ceque document, even made a map of the huacas.
to make the task of revisiting the huacas easier. Unfortunately, this map does not survive to today (Bauer 1998: Chapter 2, Section 6). The instructions for destruction of the huacas was very detailed: the foundation should be removed, the object of worship should be destroyed, and anything that can be burned should be burned. Finally, a cross would be built in the same spot (Bauer 1998: Chapter 1, Section 2).

The Quechua did not abandon their religion easily, even after the destruction of their shrines. Polo de Ondegardo wrote, “…much vigilance is necessary to extirpate their impious worship from their hearts” (qtd. in Bauer 1998: Chapter 2, Section 3, para. 3). As soon as the Spanish left, the Quechua would start worship again. As Polo de Ondegardo wrote: “they venerate every one of them [the huacas] when not watched” (qtd. in Bauer 1998: Chapter 2, Section 3, para. 8). Although the destruction of all huacas in the ceque system was devastating, nothing compared to the destruction of the Qorichanca, the most venerated of all temples in the Inca Empire and the center of the ceque system.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CORICANCHA

The Coricancha was the most sacred temple in the Inca Empire and played a central role in the ceque system. As the holiest of places, entrance to the temple was limited and the removal of shoes required. Plates of gold covered the stone walls, which were constructed with the greatest care and precision. Statues and an artificial field of corn made of gold also filled the space. The destruction of the Coricancha served two purposes for the Spaniards: to undermine the Inca religion and to make the Spanish very wealthy (Bauer 2004, Chapter 11).

In the spring of 1533, the Spaniards made their way into the Coricancha with shoes adorning their feet. Crowbars in hand, they roughly removed over seven hundred plates of gold,
each weighing about two kilograms. The Spaniards instantly gained immense wealth while the Inca watched their holiest temple be violated.

Due to the impressive construction of the walls of the Coricancha, the Spaniards did not destroy all of the general structure of the temple. They removed all of the ornaments, repurposed the walls for their own use, and at times cut walls in half for their own construction. The convent and church of Santo Domingo now lies on top of the Inca Coricancha temple and both are still in use today as a museum.

THE CEQUE SYSTEM POST SPANISH CONQUEST

The Spaniards continued to identify and destroy huacas for decades after the initial campaigns (Bauer 1998: Chapter 1, Section 2). The Inca religion has persisted through centuries of persecution. However, evidence of syncretism, or the combination of two religions, is rampant throughout Peru where offerings to the Inca idols are combined with a Christian cross.

The systematic rituals of giving offerings to the huacas on the ceque system has disappeared since the Spanish conquest, but worship of individual huacas has continued. Research teams in search of huacas that fit the descriptions provided by Cobo have come across many huacas with recently burned offerings. It is even possible to purchase packages of common offerings in markets in Cusco (Bauer 1998, Chapter 3, Section 6). The Inca religion and the use and maintenance of huacas has evolved over centuries, but it has not disappeared.

CONCLUSION

The ceque system is an extensive network of huacas that spanned the Inca Empire. The ritual offerings, sacrifices, and festivals that incorporated the huacas played a central role in the Inca religion. The care by the ayllus and panacas to maintain the huacas and give them the
appropriate offerings helped ensure that rain would fall, that children would not die, and that a journey would be safe. The Spaniards immediately realized the importance of the huacas and the ceque system to the Inca religion and Quechua people and they set out to destroy it. They systematically found and destroyed many huacas, including the Coricancha at the center of the ceque system. The Quechua would not abandon their beliefs without a fight and due to their perseverance, huacas still exist and are worshipped today. There is still a lot to discover about the ceque system for there are a lot of huacas that elude modern researchers. As more details are uncovered about the ceque system, a clearer picture about the Inca religion will unfold.
Figure 1: A visual representation of the ceque system as presented in the book The Sacred Landscape of the Inca by Brian Bauer.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


