

HAM: Inca Origins

One challenge faced by historians is determining what is true and what is mythical. Presented below are two accounts of the origin of the Inca people. As you read them and mark the text try to think about which seems to be more mystical and which seems to be more historically accurate.

VR

Account 1

CC

¹Ayar Manco carried a magic staff made of the finest gold. Where this staff landed, the people would all live there. They travelled for a very, very long time. Finally, they reached Cuzco. The staff sank into the ground.

Before they reached here, Mama Ocllo had already bore Ayar Manco a ⁵child, Sinchi Roca. The people who were already living in Cuzco fought hard to keep their land, but Mama Huaca was a good fighter. When the enemy attacked, she threw her bolas (several stones tied together that spun through the air when thrown) at a soldier (gualla), and killed him instantly. The other people were so scared, they ran away.

¹⁰After that, Ayar Manco became known as Manco Cápac, the founder of the Inca. It is said that he and his sisters built the first Inca homes in the valley with their own hands. When the time came, Manco Cápac turned to stone like his brothers before him. His son, Sinchi Roca, became the second emperor of the Inca.

Account 2

¹⁵About 1000 AD the Incas were one of many small tribes who scratched out a living in the forest around Cuzco. They spent most of their time defending themselves from invaders and trying to eke out enough food to eat. The Incas had no written language, everything was passed down orally. As the story goes, the Sapa Inca (unique chief) was named Manco Capac, and he ruled ²⁰with his sister-wife Mama Ocullo sometime around 1200 AD. At this time there may have been as few as 500 Incas. Manco and Mama successfully brought together all of the small tribes near Cuzco and instituted the ayllu system of clans.

Soon, with the construction skills they had learned from the Tiahuanacos ²⁵they began building the city of Cuzco. Not long after Manco Capac built the first sun temple, Intihuasi, so that the Incans could worship their primary god. Like the other nations of that era the Incas had a body of myth that ascribed a divine origin to its rulers. This gave their warriors the assurance of supernatural protection.

