

***JOURNAL OF  
CONTEMPORARY ANTHROPOLOGY***

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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**VOLUME III**

**2012**

**ISSUE 1**

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Ritual Sacrifice of Children in Inca Society**

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## *ABSTRACT*

The focus of this paper is to evaluate the Capacocha (also referred to as *capac hucha*) or child sacrifices in Inca society. This paper begins by evaluating the Capacocha ceremony as practiced by the Inca. By addressing how children played a role in past rituals, the paper centralizes its focus on ritual sacrifice, a subject that has warranted numerous debates by archaeologists. The Capacocha children are sacrificial victims found in summits of the Andes. Their nearly perfectly preserved bodies yield valuable information regarding the health, diet, and birth place of Incan children. In determining these specific elements, archaeologists can theorize the status and ethnicity of the sacrificial victims. Archaeologists discovered the overall diet and health of the sacrificial victims was exceptional, leading them to infer that the majority of the victims were high-status children. However, there was great variability regarding the ethnicity of the Capacocha child victims, permitting to hypothesize the use of these children as political and economic pawns for the Inca king. Then, remains of these children offer archaeologists a glimpse at ritual sacrifice in Inca society as a performed ritual practiced for solidifying the Inca king's political and economic power.

## INTRODUCTION

Archaeologists commonly posit that children and childhood identity are irrelevant to the reconstruction of past lifeways, because the social organization and political economy of past societies are not pertinent to children. This conception is clearly conveyed by Jane Baxter in her book *The Archaeology of Childhood: Children, Gender and the Material Culture* when stating “The apparent distance between children and the material and historical records, combined with a modern tendency to marginalize the importance of children, has led most archaeologists to exclude children from the realm of archaeological inquiry” (Baxter 2005:2). This conception is further compounded by the lack of archaeological evidence of children in prehistory. Indeed, one may successfully utilize ancient texts to reconstruct childhood in the historic past, but understanding the socially constructed category of childhood is difficult to discern (Ardren 2006; Bird and Bird 2000; Baxter 2005; Finlay 1997; Follensbee 2006; Joyce 2000; Smith 2006).

Archaeologists like Kamp and Baxter argue that the primary reason why few studies are devoted to children and childhood identity is due to a Westernized bias of age. Modern scholars from Western societies tend to stress the importance of age and utilize hierarchical categories to link age to childhood. Furthermore, the Western conception of children as innocent and helpless members of society has been imbued upon studies of past societies where children may have participated in warfare or were possibly considered adults at the age of ten. These biases have fostered a misconception that children cannot be studied, or, children can only be studied demographically (Ardren 2006; Baxter 2005; Kamp 1999 and 2001).

When surveying the literature, there is an apparent paucity of studies corresponding with the role of children in Incan society. Although a challenge, the study of children in societies like the Inca is imperative to foster a method for giving these marginalized groups identity. Some archaeologists argue that this onerous task is nearly impossible in prehistoric societies due to the lack of texts or the subjective writings of colonial states about indigenous South American populations. However, when surveying the material culture, one can begin giving voices to children by examining the impressions they left behind; both figuratively and literally. Material remains like the Capacocha victims aids researchers in developing a rubric for the study of children and childhood in Inca society. While scarce, these few images of children allow archaeologists a glimpse of childhood in South America.

This paper begins by evaluating the Capacocha ceremony as practiced by the Inca by addressing how children played a role in past rituals. In this specific case, the ritual sacrifice of children will be assessed. Commonly evaluated by archaeologists, however, often assumed rather than measured, the subject of ritual sacrifice offers archaeologists a glimpse of children’s roles in Incan society. The paper then discusses case studies of Capacocha sacrifices discovered by archaeologists in hopes of determining the implications of the selection of Capacocha children. Researchers discovered the overall diet and health of the sacrificial victims was exceptional, leading them to infer that the majority of the victims were high-status children. However, there was great variability regarding the ethnicity of the Capacocha child victims, permitting one to hypothesize the use of these children for political and economic purposes. Based on both archaeological data and ethnohistoric documentation it appears as though Incan society used children as ritual pawns for the Incan emperor. Then, remains of these children offer archaeologists a glimpse at ritual sacrifice in Incan society as a performed ritual practiced for solidifying the Inca emperor’s political and economic power.

## CAPACOCHA SACRIFICES: AN OVERVIEW

### Capacocha Ceremony

According to both archaeological evidence and ethnohistoric documents, the Capacocha ceremony was an important event that involved the ritual sacrifice of objects, animals, and children. As part of the ceremony, offerings were deposited to all the religious shrines (or

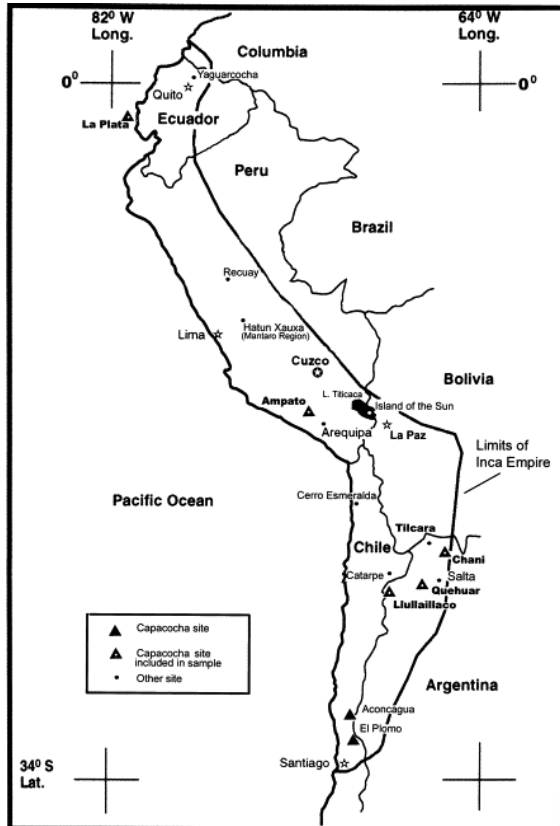


Figure 1: Inca Empire from Bray 2004.

*huacas*) within the Inca Empire. Owing to the large number of *huacas*, the Inca were reluctant to offer a sacrifice of children at every important landscape. As an alternative, they left offerings of goods and animals in the children's stead. However, the more powerful the *huaca* or the more important the *huaca* was to the Inca, the greater the offerings bequeath by the religious state recruits (Bray et al 2004; Reinhard 2000, 2002a and 2002b).

The selection process of the sacrificial victims was a complex web of political negotiations and social obligations (and will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections). According to Bray et al, the Incas would "...issue a levy upon all the provinces of the empire to tribute boys and girls between the ages of four and ten, as well as objects of gold, silver, and shell; fine cloth; feathers; and camelids" (Bray et al 2004:83) when declaring that the Capacocha ceremony was going to be held. Female sacrificial victims were often selected based on their *acllakuna*, groups of women that were selected to serve the Inca king and perform rituals in important temples, but little

is known regarding the selection of males for the ceremony. Some archaeologists suggest they may have been selected based on the status of their fathers and were argued to be the children of local lords (Bray 2004; Previgliano et al 2003; Reinhard 1998). Others suggest that the children were offered voluntarily to create an alliance with the Inca king (Previgliano et al 2003).

During the ceremony, the Inca king and his court received visits from neighboring dignitaries who presented tribute. The Inca (or Inca king/emperor), along with his or her priests, decided which sacrifices and offerings would be distributed to specific *huacas* around Cuzco. They further decided where the tribute offered by neighboring dignitaries would be dispersed among sacred locations (Bray 2004). After the ceremony, the priests, record keepers, nobility, sacrificial victims and their families, and attendants left Cuzco on a pilgrimage to sacred *huacas* in the territory. According to Spanish narratives, the procession dispersed llama's blood mixed with shell to citizens of various territories as an offering to their *huacas*. However, the principle *huaca* would receive the sacrifice of children (Bray 2004).

## CAPACOCHA CASES: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF CAPACOCHA CHILDREN

The following section will discuss the recovery of Capacocha child sacrifices to determine their diet, ethnicity, and health in hopes of understanding why they were selected and how they can be perceived as ritual sacrifices. By studying elements such as the children's DNA, the material culture recovered in situ, and physical features such as cranial modification one can theorize the ethnicity, and ultimately, the selection process, of the child victims (Previgliano et al 2003). Although material culture such as clothing and headdresses recovered in the context of the burial can aid in determining the ethnicity of the child victim, material culture can, unfortunately, misrepresent the ethnicity of the child in question. For instance, a child victim uncovered at Mt. Aconcagua was wrapped in clothing associated with coastal Peru, but isotopic evidence suggests that the child was most likely raised in the highlands rather than on the coast (Previgliano et al 2003). Thus, archaeologists rely heavily on DNA analysis, isotopic analysis and physical features of the children in questions for determining the ethnicity of the child victims. The sites of Lullailloco, Ampato, Aconcagua, and Sara Sara will be addressed in the following sections of the paper in an attempt to decipher the ethnicity, diet, and overall health of the Capacocha victims (Previgliano et al 2003).

### *Lullailloco*

Located on the summit of Mt. Lullailloco, researchers uncovered three tombs of child sacrifices nearly perfectly preserved (Ceruti 2003). Tomb One interred the remains of a young boy (commonly referred to as Lullailloco Boy), age seven, accompanied with "...two miniature figurines, spondylus shell, one pottery vessel (an aríbola), slings, extra sandals, and several small woven bags (chuspas)" (Bray et al 2004:88). He was also recovered with small bags containing coca leaves and traces of human hair (Ceruti 2004).



**Figure 2:** Lullailloco Maiden from Reinhard 2005.

Located in Tomb Two were the remains of the oldest Capacocha mummy, a juvenile, age fifteen (commonly referred to as Lullailloco Maiden), buried with several offerings which included: ceramic vessels, wooden cups, several woven bags (six containing food and one containing hair), a woven belt, spondylus shells, and three female figurine miniatures (made of gold, silver and spondylus) (Wilson et al 2007). She was also clothed in a sleeveless brown dress, a shawl kept in place with a gold pin, and leather moccasins. Placed on the textile on her shoulder was a bone and pendant. Lullailloco maiden's face was painted in red pigment and her hair was intricately braided (Wilson et al 2007).

The final, and richest, burial recovered from Mt. Lullailloco included the remains of a six year old girl (called Lightning Girl since she was struck by lightning postmortem) accompanied with eleven ceramic vessels, wooden cups, combs, sandals, moccasins, woven bags (four containing food, while one contained feathers, and another exhibited the remnants of hair), a sling and five female figurine miniatures (made of gold, silver and spondylus shell). Buried in a flexed position and facing west, the girl's body had traces of lightning damage on the left side of her body that extended from her face to her chest (Ceruti 2004). She was buried adorned with a feathered

headdress placed on her head and a shawl on her shoulders. Archaeologists have suggested that the six year old girl most likely exhibited the highest status of all the victims uncovered at Lulluailaco due to the amount of offerings associated with the burial (Ceruti 2004).

### ***Lulluailaco Mummies: Overall Health and Diet Health***

Owing to the excellent preservation of the Lulluailaco mummies, these child sacrifices were some of the most intensely studied mummies in the world. The overall health of the Lulluailaco mummies was determined through the utilization of CT scans, a non-destructive method for gleaning information about said mummies. According to the CT scans, all of the children had good muscular development and thick layers of fat tissue, permitting researchers to determine that they were well-fed. Moreover, they had excellent bone mineralization and a dearth of Harris lines, which would denote episodes of illness or malnutrition that could impede normal growth and allowing archaeologists to surmise that the children were high-status (Previgliano et al 2003).

The results of isotope analysis tested on the Lulluailaco mummies suggests that Lulluailaco Maiden's diet changed dramatically a year before her death, when her diet became very meat and plant rich. However, the evidence suggests that a year and a half prior to her death she consumed small quantities of meat, allowing archaeologists to argue that her diet exhibited a more seasonal, moderate change. They affirm that the change in Lulluailaco maiden's diet was most likely attributed to her status change, since there are indications of increasing consumption of maize (a food commonly consumed by the elite) and meat. The other two children recovered at Lulluailaco exhibited increasing nitrogen values a year prior to their deaths signifying an increased in corn consumption, but maintained diets rich in both meat and plants throughout their lifetime (Wilson et al 2007). Although the two younger children had little changes in their diets, the changes in their nitrogen values were significant enough to suggest that the changes in their diets may have been attributed to the Inca's desire to sacrifice healthy, high-status children (Wilson 2007).

### ***Lulluailaco Mummies: Ethnicity***

The ethnicity of the Lulluailaco children was tested to determine where they were born and why they were selected to participate in the ritual sacrifice. In the study conducted by Wilson et al, the researchers used hair samples to determine the ethnicity of the Capacocha children. The researchers concluded that Lulluailaco Maiden, the eldest Capacocha child at Lulluailaco, was most likely from a non-Andean environment and was presumably from southern regions of the empire (Wilson et al 2007). This information may denote why she was selected for sacrifice, since the eldest female was killed at a time when the Incans were spreading their empire south. The researchers determined that the two younger children of Lulluailaco were from the Cuzco region of Peru (Wilson et al 2007). However, conflicting data recovered from a test completed by Reinhard and Ceruti suggests that the young boy's closest relatives were Mapuche, or native people from southern Chile and Argentina. Thus, based on the evidence provided for the ethnicity of the sacrificial victims, the authors concluded by stating that the children's ethnicity varies greatly, this coincides with the evidence provided by Spanish narratives (Reinhard and Ceruti 2005).



**Figure 3:** Juanita of Ampato from Reinhard 2005.

### *Ampato*

Located in southern Peru, the remains of four Capacocha victims were buried at a funerary complex at 5852 meters above sea level. The first individual was a female between the ages of 12-15. Nicknamed Juanita, she was discovered out of context seventy meters below the summit of the mountain (Ceruti 1999). The contents of her funerary goods included several woven bags, llama bones, pottery, and four female figurines made from spondylus shell. Clothed in several layers of decorated textiles, she was buried with a belt, a piece of shell on a chord, and several bags. Juanita's feathered covered bag contained coca leaves, which is commonly attributed to ritual, while another bag found in context contained hair (Reinhard 1998). According to DNA studies conducted on the eldest child of Ampato, archaeologists Reinhard and Ceruti argue that she was not related to villages nearby Ampato, but offer no alternative information regarding her ethnicity (Reinhard 1998).

The other three individuals included the remains of two females and one male, between the ages of eight and twelve years of age. These mummies were damaged by lightening. The first child uncovered at the summit, a female, was buried with a host of goods, which include: vessels, cups, spoons, weaving goods, sandals and several figurines. Unlike other Capacocha burials, her burial was unusual because several of the vessels found in context were ritually smashed and scattered on top of her burial. She was adorned in a beautiful headdress and her clothes were excellently preserved and displayed beautiful Incan textiles (Reinhard 1998).

The second burial, the only male, was accompanied with a ceramic vessel that was damaged by lightening, ceramic plates that contain handles with bird heads, a wooden cup and a male figurine. His body contained elongated pierced earlobes, which, according to Spanish records, was a practice commonly attributed to Incan elite. The final tomb contained the remains of another female, buried with several vessels and one spondylus female figurine. Archaeologists contend that the burials at Ampato signify a single event, rather than several ritual events based on the arrangement of the remains and the conditions of the burials (Reinhard 1998 and 2005). Since the three Ampato mummies were damaged by lightening, archaeologists were unable to conduct research on their bodies, and, thus, the diet, ethnicity and health of the three Capacocha victims remain a mystery.

### *Aconcagua*

The burial uncovered at Mount Aconcagua, at 5300 meters above sea level, yielded the mummy of a seven year old child. Archaeologists inferred that the child was male and was in excellent preservation due to the extremely dry environment. The child was covered in red pigment, vomit and fecal matter. In contrast to the other finds, the burial of this male contained numerous grave goods. At other Capacocha sites, the female assemblages contained more prestige goods than those of the male sacrificial victims (Fernandez et al 2001). Numerous studies were conducted on the Aconcagua boy to determine his diet and ethnicity. In an article by Fernandez et al, the authors took samples of carbon, nitrogen and sulfur isotopes to determine not only the diet of the child of Aconcagua, but also his ethnicity. The researchers determined that Aconcagua mummy consumed maize (both for consumption and ritual imbibing

of chichi, or Andean beer), quinoa, capsicum, potatoes, meat derived from herbivores, and fish. A year and a half before his death, the child subsisted mostly a terrestrial diet that included maize, beans, quinoa, and herbivore meats. However, prior to a year and a half before the child's death, he subsisted on a marine diet. (Fernandez et al 1999).

Fernandez et al also studied the ethnicity of the sacrificial victim of Aconcagua by examining the isotope analysis of the Aconcagua mummy, utilizing the mummy's hair and collagen to obtain samples. Unfortunately, the researchers were unable to distinctly pinpoint the ethnicity of the Aconcagua child, owing to conflicting representations of a marine and terrestrial diet. The authors concluded that the child was most likely from the Pacific littoral or regions ranging from Southern Peru to central Chile. This information is substantial since the child was found in the mountains of Argentina. Furthermore, the location selected for his interment was a trans-mountain path that linked Chile to Argentina. A year before the child's death the child probably resided in the same environment in which he was sacrificed. This evidence leads archaeologists to infer that children were selected for sacrifice from various localities and were not restricted to a specific ethnicity (Fernandez et al 1999).

### ***Sara Sara***

Located in a Peruvian summit in a place referred to as Sara Sara, archaeologist Johan Reinhard found a Capacocha mummy commonly referred to as Sarita. Sarita was recovered with burnt material, bits of textile, silver female statues wrapped in clothes, a gold female statue, a silver male statue, and a spondylus and silver llama statue and a gold statue that represented a *vicuña*. The mummy was found on an earthen platform on a slope facing east. There was a shawl pin on her outer clothing that indicated the mummy was female. Inside the garment were four gold statues. Furthermore, a gold male statue and female silver statue were placed near her head. She was also found with a bag of coca leaves. Sarita's preservation was poor due to exposure to the sun and she was positioned with her legs crossed and her knees pressed to her shoulders. Archaeologists suggest she was fifteen years old based on her bone development. Sarita's diet was evaluated by archaeologists to determine why she was selected for sacrifice. The archaeologists concluded that the Sarita's diet varied greatly based on seasonal changes (Previgliano et al 2003; Wilson et al 2007).

## **ACTS OF VIOLENCE: HOW DID THESE CHILDREN MEET THEIR END?**

### ***Recognizing Violence in Prehistory***

When determining if these acts are evidence of violence, one must first recognize violence in prehistory. According to archaeologists, context is crucial for understanding the type of violence and the reasons for violent acts. Unlike the Capacocha sacrifices, this usually entails the examination of skeletal material owing to poor preservation. But, in this case, preservation is not an issue since several Capacocha children's bodies are nearly perfectly preserved. Signs of violence that can be determined archaeologically includes: blunt trauma (such as blows to the head), sharp trauma (incised wounds), fractures (shearing, compression fractures), torture (amputation), defensive wounds (Perry fractures), and asphyxiation (strangulation, smothering, hanging), and cause of death (such as the type of wound inflicted) (Walker 2001).

Studying human sacrifice in both the historic and prehistoric past is an onerous task since it is nearly impossible to determine whether the sacrifice was a selective or voluntary victim. Furthermore, human sacrifice can often overlap with executions. But the study of violence becomes more complex when it is executed on children. When inflicted on children, it is difficult



to discern whether the act of violence was attributed to abuse, warfare, or infanticide (Mays 1993). Miranda Green argues “In attempting to identify child sacrifice in the archaeological record, it is necessary to be careful not to confuse ritual killing with either natural death or infanticide” (Green 1998:185). Although a challenge, examining violence performed on children is crucial because it allows archaeologists to solidify children’s roles in ancient rituals.

### ***Recognizing Violence Inflicted Upon the Capacocha Victims***

When turning to the example of the Capacocha victims, it appears as though these children were the victims of violent acts. The children were subjected to a long, arduous pilgrimage to the high summits of the Andes (at a very high altitude to which many foreign children may not have been accustomed), which may have aided in their demise. When arriving to the summit, the children were exhausted from the journey. Evidence of the strain from the journey may be suggestive by the medical analysis Lullaillaco Maiden, where there is evidence indicating that she suffered from bronchitis and sinus stress (Reinhard 2005).

According to Spanish chronicles, there were various techniques used by Incan priests for sacrificing the children in a ceremonial manner. Spanish chroniclers argued that the most common sacrificial techniques were “...strangulation, a blow to the head, asphyxia, or burying the victim alive after being ritually inebriated” (Previgliano 2003:1476). There is no evidence of strangulation in any of the bodies found at Mount Lullaillaco. Moreover, evidence from CT scans and radiography refutes cranial trauma as a cause of death. The victims of the sacrifice at Lullaillaco were presumably buried alive and their deaths may have been aided by exposure to the frigid climate (Previgliano et al 2003). Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that Lullaillaco boy was bound at the hands, which may suggest that he was the victim of acts of violence (Reinhard 2005).

Little is known regarding the demise of the younger children of Ampato, which is most likely attributed to the damage imposed upon the bodies from lightning. However, blunt head trauma can be found on the elder female recovered from Ampato, the young female found at Sara Sara, and Aconcagua boy. The elder female mummy of Ampato exhibits evidence of blunt force trauma to the head. Based on forensic evidence, archaeologists argued that Sarita died due to a perimortem forceful blow to the head (Reinhard 2005). At Aconcagua, the seven year old boy also died due to a blow to his head (Ceruti 2004). Furthermore, the child must have been under extreme stress due to the presence of both vomit and fecal matter found on his clothes, suggesting that these children were presumably not voluntary victims. When examining his excrement, vomit and stomach contents, archaeologists discovered evidence of achiote, or a hallucinogenic drug. Spanish chronicles suggest that the children often consumed alcohol prior to their death, which may have led them to fall asleep while the violent acts occurred. Then, the archaeological evidence of Aconcagua boy concurs with the Spanish accounts that suggest the children consumed large quantities of corn (which is the main source of alcohol) and alcohol based on stomach and isotope analysis (Reinhard 2005). According to CT scans, Aconcagua boy was also strangled. His body was crushed by his textile wrappings, which were drawn so tightly that it crushed his ribs and dislocated his pelvis. Therefore, archaeologists argue that the blunt trauma to the head and strangulation in the case of Aconcagua boy either caused the death (perhaps in the case of Sarita who exhibited extreme trauma to the head) or caused them to lose consciousness. Once the children lost consciousness, they were then buried alive (which may have been the case in the Aconcagua boy).

Whether the head traumas caused death or cause a loss of consciousness, the trauma inflicted on the children suggests acts of violence. When comparing the archaeological evidence to that of the Spanish accounts, it appears as though the Spanish chronicles may have been accurate when assessing the sacrificial techniques of the Capacocha children. Indeed, archaeological evidence concurs with the accounts of death from blows to the head, being buried alive, and asphyxia. Although one may argue that the Spanish could have exaggerated with their accounts of violence, there is enough evidence of Spanish accounts concurring with archaeological evidence to admit that the violent accounts described by the Spanish undoubtedly took place (Reinhard 2005). Moreover, it appears as though the children were victims of acts of violence rather than infanticide or execution, due to the ritualized manner of death and the care that was taken in the manner of death. The children were well-fed, well-clothed and killed in a ritualized manner.

### ***Ritual Violence in Prehistory: An Example of the Capacocha***

The concept of ritual violence is crucial for examining the Capacocha sacrifices, because the ritualized manner of death, coupled with the ornate grave goods, and elaborate manner of preparation (the braiding of Lullailaco Maiden's hair, the inducement of hallucinogenic drugs to Aconcagua boy, and the ritualized dressing of the children to name a few examples) leads one to infer that they were the victims of ritual violence. Miranda Green discusses the implications for ritual sacrifice in great detail (1998). According to Miranda Green, religious or ritual sacrifice is "...the destruction of something or its removal from the earthly world, in order to bring about the benefits for the sacrifices" (Green 1998:169). Green contends that sacrifice can be brought about for positive outcomes or for negative aversions depending on the case. She further argues that what separates sacrifice from other kinds of ritual killing is the need to placate the supernatural. Ritualized child sacrifices took place during exceptional circumstances, such as the onset of catastrophe (famine, epidemics, etc) or as a means to appease the supernatural. Green argues that child sacrifice is rare because it "...involves relinquishing part of the future generation" (Green 1998:185). Green's contention for child sacrifice directly correlates with the Capacocha sacrifices, since they were recorded to take place in times of catastrophe or to commemorate an important life event of the Inca emperor.

Green offers additional information highlighting the reasoning for death by strangulation (another presumed cause of death of the Capacocha victims). Strangulation is seen as a liminal state, allowing the victims reside between the earthly and the underworld state (Green 1998). This concurs with the evidence provided by Spanish accounts of death by strangulation and may, indeed, be the case for the demise of Aconcagua boy as discussed above. According to Spanish documents, the children were sacrificed because the Incans believed they were intermediates between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Thought to be pure entities, as suggested by Spanish accounts stating that the victims were "...physically perfect, unblemished, and virginal..." (Bray 2004:83), these children were believed to be messengers between these to liminal stages (Reinhard 2005). Thus, based on the evidence provided on ritual sacrifice in Incan societies, one could infer that the Capacocha sacrifices signify the probable performance of ritual sacrifice. Coupled with the Spanish accounts of Incans traveling to note sacred places, the consumption of hallucinogenic drugs and alcohol, and the prevalence of rich grave goods and elaborate clothing, one could surmise the presence of a ritual sacrifice prevalent in Incan societies.

## **WHY WERE THESE CHILDREN RITUALLY KILLED?**

### ***Spanish Narratives***

Although the Capacocha sacrifices can be seen as an example of ritual sacrifice, one may wonder what role the sacrifices played in the political economy of the Incan society. Based on the written accounts garnered by Spanish narratives from the sixteenth century, it appears probable that the ceremony encompassed numerous meanings to the Inca and likely represented political, economic and religious interests of the state. According to Spanish accounts, the Capacocha ceremony was performed to mark an important event in the state such as the death of an emperor, the coronation of the emperor, a commemoration of a great victory, or the birth of an imperial son. Other chronicles suggest the Capacocha ceremony was conducted as a cyclical event, an event that took place yearly or biennially. Finally, some experts affirm that the sacrifices were performed to cease natural disasters such as epidemics, earthquakes, droughts, and volcanic eruptions (Bray et al 2003).

Bray et al argue that the sacrifices were messengers to the main deities, such as the creator god (Viracocha), the sun god (Init), and the thunder god (Illapa). The children were chosen because the Inca beloved their purity which made them more appeasing to the gods. Although this may be possible, one must take into account that this interpretation may be a Western subjective bias of the sacrifice as there is scant ethnohistoric and archaeological evidence suggesting this may be true. Indeed, sacrifices were also undertaken to serve as a political and economic advantages. This conflicting depiction of the Capacocha ceremony has led numerous archaeologists to affirm that the ceremony carried various meanings and could have been acted for diverse purposes (Bray et al 2004).

### ***Ritualized Performance***

The performance of the Capacocha ritual was a communicative means for dramatically presenting a message that the Inca emperor was attempting to transmit to a given audience; in the case of the Capacocha sacrifices, the given audience was the Inca people and their contemporaries. It was, as Corben states, a:

...performance of the Inca, by the Inca and for the Inca. These repeated performances served to legitimize, reinforce, redefine, and reformulate the Inca hegemony and ideology. They also served to reinforce an Inca's identification with and status and identity with the empire (Coben 2006:250).

The Inca presumably enacted ritual performance during times of stress, such as rebellion, to manipulate the ideology of the society at a crucial moment for political gain, such as polity expansion. Thus, in the case of the Capacocha, the Inca utilized the ritual ceremony as a means for controlling and manipulating his power for political expansion. The Capacocha sacrifice was undertaken to delineate territorial boundaries between different ethnic groups. An example of this is an account written by Spanish chroniclers where they discuss the use of a local lord's daughter for the sacrifice. According to the account, "...the sacrifice of a local lord's daughter (Tanta Carhua) in exchange for the Inca's assistance with a canal construction project..." (Bray et al 2004:85).

Rituals were strategically performed at Cuzco since it was the political and ideological center of the Incan empire. The Inca elite assigned offerings at given huacas during specific events to establish a link between the Incan polities and the Inca capital. According to Spanish

accounts, ritual ceremonies took place not only for imperial spectacle, but as a means for maintaining close associations with local polities in order to employ power in these regions. The performance of rituals, pilgrimages, and sacrifices at important sites in foreign regions could bolster the Inca's power to control not only religious practices, but the political economy. By utilizing foreign children in the performance and enforcing tribute to be gleaned by foreign dignitaries, the Inca demonstrated his power over the empire, though the use of children as political pawns. Then, the reassurance of the Inca's destiny to rule would be important as a means for practicing polity and military expansion. Local elites were obligated to practice rituals at Incan huacas as a means for solidifying the Inca's power. Children may have been selected from particular regions in the Inca Empire not only for ritual purposes, but also for solidifying the Inca's power. Based on this information, children's roles in Inca societies were quite limited; they were merely utilized to bolster the Inca king's power. However, one cannot discount that children played a crucial role in the manipulation of the Inca king's power. Often disregarded by archaeologists, by addressing the use of children as ritual sacrifices, one can assess children's roles in ritual in Incan society.

## CONCLUSION

It becomes apparent that the Capacocha sacrifices were examples of ritual sacrifice in South American prehistory, sacrifices in which children were utilized as pawns of the Inca king. This trend allows one to define children's roles in Incan society. Although venerated, children, especially children of the elite, were seen as individuals who could be manipulated and utilized to the advantage of the state. They were selected, well-fed, and killed as a symbol of the Inca's political power, leading one to infer that one of their roles in Incan society was to act as ritual agents of the king. Ethnohistoric records of the Spanish accounts coupled with the archaeological evidence suggests a distinct pattern of ritualized sacrifice in Incan societies and can successfully aid in determining the role in Incan ritual. Based on the forensic evidence, the sacrifices met violent ends though the modes of strangulation, blows to the head, asphyxiation, and burial alive. A description of ritual violence was addressed to determine whether the Capacocha children were examples of ritual violence in prehistory. Moreover, based on their deposition of prestige and ritual goods in accompanying graves, the sacrifices were ritually enforced. Then, one concluding factor may suggest that enforced enculturation may be taking place, by forcing children to play a role in ritualized sacrifices and aiding in the development of the Incan empire.

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