Primary Source

Inca Creation Myth

Prepare to Read

Objectives
In this selection you will

1. Read a myth describing the origins and development of the Inca people of South America.
2. Identify which parts of the story historians might be able to verify as fact.

Background

The Incas built one of the largest and wealthiest empires in South America in the 1400s. They called their empire Tahuantinsuyu, the four united quarters. The Incas had a complex political and religious system. They worshiped many gods, and their religious ceremonies centered on the rain and the sun. They believed that Viracocha, their most important god, created nature. Special teachers, called *amautas,* recited Inca history in the form of legends and myths like this one.

Vocabulary *Builder*

tongue (tuhng) *n.* language
hoard (hord) *n.* supply that is stored up and hidden
acquisitive (uh KWIHZ uh tihv) *adj.* greedy
fastness (FAST nihs) *n.* secure, fortified place
parched (pahrcht) *adj.* dry
multitude (MUHL tuh tood) *n.* very large number of people

The Sun rises and sets, the world spins, people live and die. Such are the cycles of time, which have endured through all the ages. Those who speak the Quechua tongue call this Pachacuti.

The age of the first Sun was born in the darkness of the beginning. The people then were primitive creatures, cousins to the *wari,* a beast which is part-llama, part-alpaca. Some of these people . . . worshipped Viracocha, saying that he had made them; others said Pachacamac. Knowing no better, they clothed themselves in leaves.

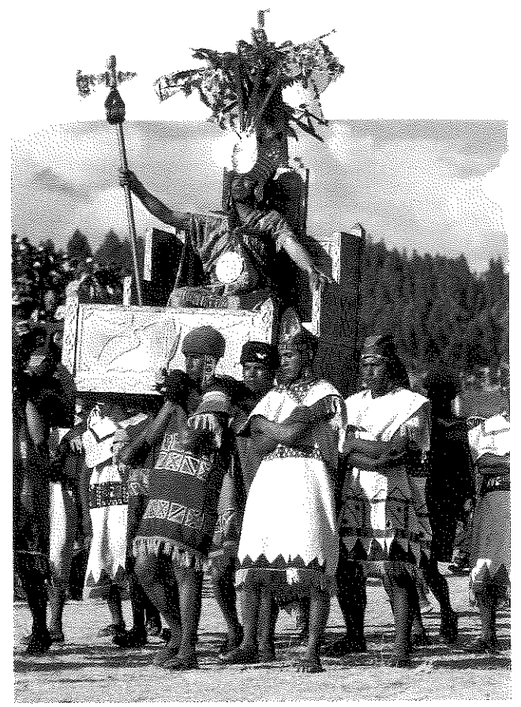
The age of the second Sun belonged to the Wari Runa, the *wari* people, a race with a little more learning. Dressed in animal skins, they tended the soil and grew a few simple crops. Their god was Viracocha. A great flood ended their peaceful lives.

The age of the third Sun was a good time and a bad time. It belonged to the Purun Runa, the wild people. Their god was Pachacamac and they enjoyed the bounty he had provided. They spun wool into yarn and wove and colored the yarn to make cloth for clothing. They planted and harvested their own crops. They mined the Earth for her hoard of gold, silver and precious stones, which they turned into jewelry and other fine ornaments. With good food in their bellies and warm clothes on their backs, they were healthy and strong and increased in number. Soon there was not enough space for them in their highland home and they spread out into the lowlands. But now, instead of sharing what they had, the people became afraid of losing it. Possessive, acquisitive and defensive—of territory, of possessions—they banded together in towns, each under the rulership of a different king. For the first time, the people went to war with each other.

The age of the fourth Sun continued the mood of the third. This was the time of the Auca Runa, the warlike people. From their stone houses and fastnesses on the tops of mountains, they kept a lookout and guarded themselves against attack. Conflict and divisions marked this age. The people were divided into *ayllus,* kinship groups, according to their blood. The land, too, was divided; it became Tahuantinsuyu, the land of the four united quarters.

The age of the fifth Sun was the age of the glorious Inca empire, which stretched north, south, east and west across Tahuantinsuyu, over coastal desert, frozen mountain and fertile valley, and dazzled with its imperial wonders: its network of roads, which allowed for good communications and the rapid movement of troops; its irrigation systems, which brought water to a parched earth; its agricultural terraces, climbing up the hillsides like stairways for giants, which produced not only enough food for the multitude, but a surplus; its monumental buildings, erected without the benefit of iron tools or the wheel, and constructed of stones which interlock with such fine precision that barely a whisper can pass between them; its handicrafts in weaving and ceramics and jewelry and gold; and, presiding above it all, the High King himself, the Inca.

—Source: *Tales of the Plumed Serpent,* Diana Ferguson



Inca religious ceremony

Analyze Primary Sources: *Distinguish Relevant Information*

1. Which statements in this myth are relevant to understanding its purpose?
2. Which parts of this myth might a historian be able to verify? How might a historian verify the names of people?
3. What information about Inca culture in this myth might a historian not be able to verify?

Primary Source

Magna Carta

Prepare to Read

Objectives
In this selection you will

1. Describe some of the early rights that nobles demanded from the king of England in 1215.
2. Determine the purpose of the document.

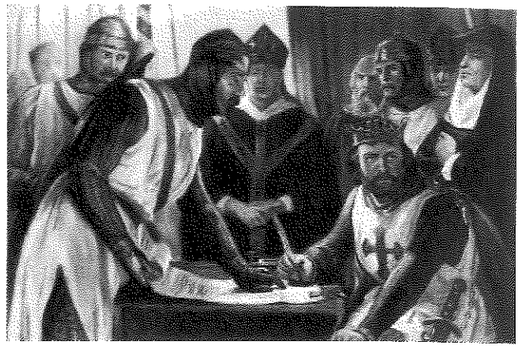
Background

When King John came to the English throne in 1199, he made great demands on his subjects. For example, he increased the nobles' taxes and length of military service. People who lost court cases had to pay enormous penalties. King John also fought with church leaders. The nobles and church leaders demanded that the king recognize their rights. In 1215, they forced King John to approve the Magna Carta, or Great Charter. In this excerpt, the pronouns *we* and *our* refer to King John.

Vocabulary *Builder*

inviolate (ihn vī uh liht) *adj.* unbroken
scutage (SKYOOT ihj) *n.* tax
levy (LEHV ee) *v.* to make someone pay a tax
remit (rih MIHT) *v.* to excuse or cancel
allay (a LAY) *v.* to calm or quiet
concession (kuhn SEHSH uhn) *n.* something given in order to end an argument
transgression (trans GREHSH uhn) *n.* something that is against the rules
redress (rih DREHS) *v.* to correct something that is wrong

1. . . . the English Church shall be free, and shall have her rights entire, and her liberties inviolate; and we will that it be thus observed. . . . We also have granted to all freemen of our kingdom, for us and our heirs forever, all the underwritten liberties, to be had and held by them and their heirs, of us and our heirs forever.
12. No scutage or aid shall be imposed on our kingdom, unless by common counsel of our kingdom, except for ransoming our person, for making our eldest son a knight, and for marrying our eldest daughter once; and for them there shall be levied no more than a reasonable aid. . . .
13. And the city of London shall have all its ancient liberties and free customs, by land as well as by water; furthermore, we decree and grant that all other cities, boroughs, towns, and ports shall have all their liberties and free customs.
28. No constable or other bailiff of ours shall take corn or other provisions from anyone without immediately [offering] money . . . unless he can have postponement . . . by permission of the seller.
29. No constable shall [force] any knight to give money instead of castle guard, when he is willing to perform it in his own person, or (if he himself cannot do it from any reasonable cause) then by another reliable man; and if we have led him or sent him upon military service, he shall be quit of guard, in proportion to the time during which he has been on service because of us.
30. No sheriff or bailiff of ours, or other person, shall take the horses or carts of any freeman for transport duty, against the will of the freeman.
38. No bailiff for the future shall, upon his unsupported complaint, put anyone to his "law," without credible witnesses brought for this purpose.
39. No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned . . . or exiled or in any way destroyed . . . except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land.
40. To no one will we sell, to no one will we refuse or delay, right or justice.
42. It shall be lawful in future for anyone (excepting always those imprisoned or outlawed in accordance with the law of the kingdom, and natives of any country at war with us, and merchants, who shall be treated as if above provided) to leave our kingdom and to return, safe and secure by land and water, except for a short period in time of war, on grounds of public policy—reserving always the allegiance due to us.
45. We will appoint as justices, constables, sheriffs, or bailiffs only such as know the law of the realm and mean to observe it well.
55. All fines made by us unjustly and against the law of the land, shall be entirely remitted. . . .
61. Since, moreover, for God and the amendment of our kingdom and for the better allaying of our quarrel that has arisen between us and our barons, we have granted all these concessions . . . we


King John signing the Magna Carta

give and grant to them the underwritten security, namely, that the barons choose five-and-twenty barons of the kingdom . . . who shall be obliged to observe and hold . . . the peace and liberties which we have granted and confirmed to them by this present Charter, so that if we . . . or any one of our officers, shall in anything be at fault towards anyone, or shall have broken any one of the articles . . . and the offence be notified to four barons of the . . . five-and-twenty, the said four barons shall come to us and, laying the transgression before us, petition to have that transgression redressed without delay. And if we shall not have corrected the transgression . . . within forty days . . . the four barons aforesaid shall refer the matter to the rest of the . . . barons, and those . . . barons shall . . . distress us in all possible ways, namely, by seizing our castles, lands, possessions, and in any other way they can, until redress has been obtained as they deem fit. . . .

—Source: Magna Carta, 1215

Analyze Primary Sources: *Draw Conclusions*

1. What was the purpose for writing the Magna Carta?
2. What issues was the Magna Carta trying to resolve?
3. What is the Magna Carta's point of view on individual rights?

Primary Source

The Conquest of Mexico

Prepare to Read

Objectives
In this selection you will

1. Read an Aztec account of the arrival of the Spanish in Mexico.
2. Draw conclusions about the Aztecs' reaction to the arrival of the Spanish.

Background

The Aztecs built a great empire in Mexico. By 1519, Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital, had a population of more than 200,000. In 1519, Hernan Cortés and his troops landed on the east coast of Mexico and marched into the Aztec capital. The following is an Aztec account of the arrival of the Spanish.

Vocabulary *Builder*

resound (rih ZOWND) *v.* to echo
entrails (EHN traylz) *n.* internal organs
pestilent (PEHS tuh luhnt) *adj.* deadly
distraught (dih STRAWT) *adj.* worried

A few days later a . . . [common man] came to the city from Mictlancuauhtla. No one had sent him, none of the officials; he came of his own accord. He went directly to the palace of Motecuhzoma and said to him: "Our lord and king, forgive my boldness. I am from Mictlancuauhtla. When I went to the shores of the great sea, there was a mountain range or small mountain floating in the midst of the water, and moving here and there without touching the shore. My lord, we have never seen the like of this, although we guard the coast and are always on watch. . . ."

"Our lord and king, it is true that strange people have come to the shores of the great sea. They were fishing from a small boat, some with rods and others with a net. . . . On their heads they wore red kerchiefs, or bonnets of a fine scarlet color, and some wore large round hats . . . which must have been sunshades. They have very light skin, much lighter than ours. They all have long beards, and their hair comes only to their ears. . . ."

Motecuhzoma was astonished and terrified by their report. . . .

He was also terrified to learn how the cannon roared, how its noise resounded, how it caused one to faint and grow deaf. The messengers told him: "A thing like a ball of stone comes out of its entrails: it comes out shooting sparks and raining fire. The smoke that comes out with it has a pestilent odor, like that of rotten mud. This odor penetrates even to the brain and causes the greatest discomfort. . . ."

The messenger also said: "Their trappings and arms are all made of iron. They dress in iron and wear iron . . . on their heads. Their swords are iron; their bows are iron; their shields are iron; their spears are iron. Their deer carry them on their backs wherever they wish to go. These deer, our lord, are as tall as the roof of a house. . . ."

Motecuhzoma was distraught and bewildered; he was filled with terror, not knowing what would happen to the city. The people were also terrified, debating the news among themselves. There were meetings and arguments and gossip in the street; there was weeping. . . . The people were downcast: they went about with their heads bowed down and greeted each other with tears. . . .

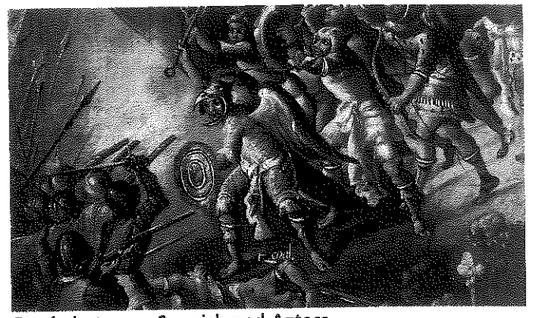
Then the Spaniards fired one of their cannons, and this caused great confusion in the city. The people scattered in every direction; they fled without rhyme or reason; they ran off as if they were being pursued. . . . They were all overcome by terror, as if their hearts had fainted. And when night fell, the panic spread through the city and their fears would not let them sleep. . . .

While the Spaniards were in Tlaxcala, a great plague broke out here in Tenochtitlán. It began to spread during the thirteenth month and lasted for seventy days, striking everywhere in the city and killing a vast number of our people. Sores erupted on our faces, our breasts, our bellies; we were covered with agonizing sores from head to foot. . . .

A great many died from this plague, and many others died of hunger. They could not get up to search for food, and everyone else was too sick to care for them, so they starved to death in their beds. . . .

And now the Spaniards came back again. . . .

The Spaniards wasted no time as they loaded and fired the cannons. The smoke



Battle between Spanish and Aztecs

belched out in black clouds that darkened the sky, as if night were falling. . . . When the smoke cleared away, the Spaniards could not see a single Aztec. . . .

The Spanish blockade caused great anguish in the city. The people were tormented by hunger, and many starved to death. There was no fresh water to drink. . . .

The only food was lizards, swallows, corncobs, and the salt grasses of the lake. The people also ate water lilies . . . and chewed on deerhides and pieces of leather. They roasted and seared and scorched whatever they could find and then ate it. They ate the bitterest weeds and even dirt.

Nothing can compare with the horrors of that siege and the agonies of the starving. We were so weakened by hunger that, little by little, the enemy forced us to retreat. Little by little they forced us to the wall. . . .

—Source: *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, edited by Miguel Leon-Portilla

Analyze Primary Sources: *Draw Conclusions*

1. Is this a reliable description of the arrival of the Spanish? Why or why not?
2. What questions might historians ask about this source before accepting it as accurate?
3. What can you conclude from this description about how the Aztecs reacted to the arrival of the Spanish?