

The Inka Prophecies

My mentor, an old Indian who made his great and final journey a few years ago, used to tell me, "Alberto, we have a pending dinner engagement with the Great Spirit." He explained that as we were being kicked out of the Garden of Eden, a voice said "For you have eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and now, less you also eat of the fruit of life everlasting and become as one of US, out!" (Genesis 3:22). We must to go back to eat of the fruit of that second tree, he would say.

The first great awakening of the shaman happens when he looks at his reflection in a clear pool, and realizes his own mortality. Until then, he is like a child, who realizes that death happens, but believes that it will never happen to him. The presence and awareness of his death, of his temporal nature, becomes the shaman's greatest teacher. The next great awakening for the shaman happens with the awareness of his trans-temporal nature, when he steps outside of time. For the medicine person this awareness is not an intellectual understanding. It isn't some tired cliché that we are eternal beings. It is first an experience, and next a skill that allows one to journey to our destiny.

The Inkas are very practical people. They believe that if you cannot grow corn with it, its another cliché. And they differentiate between information and knowledge. Information is knowing that water is H₂O. Knowledge is being able to make it rain. To the Inka the prophecies are useless without the keys, the rites of passage to get you there. The word Inka in the Qechua language means a child of the Sun, our local star. The processes at the heart of the Inka prophecies are the Star Rites, the Mosok Karpay, the Rites of the Time to Come.

I asked don Humberto Sonco, the leader of the Q'ero Nation, to explain to me what these processes were. We were hiking to our base camp at the base of the Holy Mountain, Mt. Ausangate, this past summer. "Our prophecies are written in stone," he said. "We have no written language, like you do. We have only our weavings and our stones. If you understand Machu Picchu, and the stones at that ancient city," he went on, "you understand Cuzco. Machu Picchu is a miniature of Cuzco. If you understand Cuzco, you understand the entire Inka empire." At that point he paused, and I seized the opportunity to lean against a large boulder to catch my breath. We were within one mile of our base camp at the Blue Lagoon. All around us were *apachetas*, piles of prayer stones brought by pilgrims who undertook the same journey we had embarked upon. The stones had been carefully laid one upon the other, making towers three to four feet high. Don Mariano squatted down next to me and opened his mesa, the collection of stones and power objects that every shaman, or *altomesayoq*, carries. "If you understand the mesa," he said as he carefully opened up his medicine bundle to reveal the rocks inside it, "you understand Machu Picchu and the prophecies."

Machu Picchu was built by Pachacutec, the ninth Inka. His name means the 'transformer of the Earth.' He was the architect of cities in the clouds like Machu Picchu, and the builder of an empire the size of the United States. His name and his person embody the essence of the prophecies. The word Pacha in the language of the Inkas means Earth, or Time. Cutti means to turn upside down, or to set things right. The prophecies of the return of Pachacuti herald the end of time. The last Pachacuti happened five hundred years ago with the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors. Throughout the Americas, the world of the Indian was turned upside down. Kings and chiefs were subjugated and turned into slaves, and barbarians became rulers. Medicine people were tortured in the mines and fields, and rapists began preaching the word of a white god. Order in the Americas was overturned, and replaced with chaos. And with the coming of the European religions, the children of the earth were cast out of the garden. The

next Pachacuti, according to the Inkas, has already begun, and the upheaval and chaos characteristic of this period will last another four years. During this time the world will be turned right side up again. The paradigm of European civilization will continue to collapse, and the ways of the Earth peoples will return. The Conquistador will perish by his own hand and his own blade.

For the last of the Inkas this next Pachacuti means the possible end of the world as we know it. But it also promises the emergence of a new human at the end of this period of turmoil. It announces the beginning of a millennium of gold in the Earth. Even more important, for the medicine people the prophecies speak about a tear in the fabric of time itself. This presents an opportunity for us to begin defining ourselves not only in terms of who we have been in the past, by our personal and collective history, but who we will become ten thousand years from now.

Like the Hopi, the Q'ero were given signs that would announce the coming of the Pachacuti. These signs included the drying of the high mountain lagoons, the near extinction of the condor, and the wrath of our father the sun (the Q'ero live at 17,000 feet right below the tear in the ozone layer.) It is these signs that led them to first come down from their mountain tops to reveal the rites of passage for stepping outside of time.

Shamanism is not a religion, yet it is the basis of all religions. The Andean shamans, the *pacos*, will explain that they have no Christ, no Buddha, no Moses that says "follow my footsteps." The *pacos* say "follow your own footsteps. Learn from the rivers, the trees and the rocks. Honor the Christ, the Buddha, and your brothers and sisters. Honor the Pachamama (the Earth) and the Great Spirit. Honor yourself and all of creation." None the less, the theme of stepping beyond time that the Inkas speak of can be found in every religious tradition. In Judaism, the Messiah will come at the end of time. When Christ came, time ended and a new time began (Before Christ and After Christ.) What is unique among the Inkas is that stepping outside of time has not been institutionalized. It remains an act of personal power that can be attempted by anyone with the daring and courage to step through the doorways of time, escape the grip of death, and become who we are becoming ten thousand years from today. The Q'ero elders will be performing the Mosok Karpay during their upcoming visit to the United States during the months of September and October. Please see the "Meet the Q'ero" section for more information and dates.

