

# An Overview of Chachapoya Archaeology and History

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### Introduction

In a remote corner of northern Peru, the ancient Chachapoya once held sway over a vast territory, today scattered with the distinctive remains of their trademark cliff tombs and hamlets of circular structures. Feared warriors and famed shamans, the Chachapoya flourished from around AD 800 until their violent conquest by the Inkas in the 1470s. The arrival of the Spaniards in the 1530s spelled the end of the Inka empire, and brought renewed hardship to the Chachapoya as the conquistadors systematically seized their land and imposed forced labor and tribute burdens. More recently, looters and vandals have engaged archaeologists in a desperate race to save the remains of this great, but little known civilization.

Despite over a century of exploration and more recent archaeological and archival research, our understanding of the region's prehistory remains fragmentary. What little we know comes from a variety of sources: archaeological excavation and exploration, nineteenth century travelogues, the accounts of the first Spaniards to enter the region, *visitas* (fact-finding missions by Spanish officials), the legal squabbles of disenfranchised local lords —*kurakas*— and the frustratingly meager references in the chronicles of Garcilaso de la Vega, Pedro de Cieza de León, Antonio de la Calancha and a handful of others.

Curiously, none of these three men ever set foot in Chachapoyas: Garcilaso based his account on the lost chronicle of Blas Valera, Cieza gathered his description from an unknown informant, and Calancha based his writings on those of an anonymous Augustinian friar summoned to Chachapoyas by early Spanish settlers.

In the wake of initial sixteenth-century Spanish interest and settlement in the region, Chachapoyas became mired in economic stagnation. Isolated from mainstream Peru, the region looked east to Moyobamba and the Huallaga for trade contacts. The shortage of native labor was especially acute as peoples succumbed to the epidemics that beset the region or fled to the "free lands" to the east, where they could live beyond the control of the Spanish colonial administration and the onus of tribute. In 1843, however, the landmark "discovery" of the ancient citadel of Kuelap put Chachapoyas back on the map, at least scientifically.

When Juan Crisóstomo Nieto, a judge from Chachapoyas, stumbled upon Kuelap in 1843, the site had been abandoned and reclaimed by forest for some 300 years. The report on his discovery remained unpublished until 1892, but once word got out, though, it attracted a stream of notable and intrepid nineteenth-century explorers such as Adolph Bandelier, Ernst Middendorf, Charles Wiener and Antonio Raimondi.

Plodding across the northern Andes on mule back and crossing the Marañón river on balsa rafts, it took them over a week to reach Chachapoyas from Cajamarca.

Some 50 years later, archaeologists Henry and Paule Reichlen carried out the first scientific excavations in the region. The Reichlens too came by mule from Cajamarca, but crossed the Marañón on a suspension bridge built in 1905 at Chacanto, near Balsas. The discovery of Gran Pajatén in the early 1960s sparked a new flurry of exploration and archaeological research, followed by excavations at Kuelap. In 1983 the Peruvian government created Río Abiseo National Park to protect pockets of pristine montane forest, threatened and endangered fauna and many archaeological sites, including Gran Pajatén, the focus of a multi-disciplinary study from 1985 to 1990.

The century culminated with the discovery — alas, by looters— of a Chachapoya-Inka burial site at Laguna de los Cóndores. Although *huaqueros* (looters) had ransacked the tombs, the extraordinarily well-preserved mummies and burial offerings salvaged by archaeologists offered researchers a unique opportunity to learn about Chachapoya and Inka burial practices, Inka rule in the region, and provided a tantalizing glimpse of the little known Chachapoya art style.

## **An Ancient Land**

The Chachapoya occupied a vast swath of the northern Peruvian Andes, embraced by the Marañón to the west and the Huallaga to the east. Garcilaso noted that Chachapoyas “is more than fifty leagues [250 kilometers] long and twenty [100 kilometers] broad, apart from the part that projects to Muyupampa [Moyobamba], a length of thirty leagues [150 kilometers] more...” (A sixteenth-century Spanish league is roughly equivalent to 5 kilometers or about the distance one can walk in an hour).

At the same time, in fact, the Chachas —as they are often called in the early documents— may have been one of many ethnic subgroups, along with the Chillaos, the Pacllas, the Chilchos and myriad others, that inhabited the province later called “Chachapoyas” by the Inkas. Garcilaso’s description mirrors the province of Chachapoyas as the Inkas defined it and does not necessarily reflect the extent of pre-Inka Chachapoyas. His view, however, is widely accepted by scholars and students alike as both the Chachapoya archaeological and ethnohistorical culture area.

With Garcilaso’s designation in mind, the flood plain of the Utcubamba, in the province of Bagua, formed the northern frontier. The Pupos valley east of the modern city of Chachapoyas, northeast to the lake of Pomacocha and perhaps as far east as Moyobamba marked the northeastern frontier. The region of Huacrachucos south of Pías, today in the department of La Libertad, signaled the southern boundary. Over the centuries, the Marañón —called the Hatun Mayu, or “big river” in Colonial documents—created a formidable, western boundary. Too wide to span with ancient

bridge building technology, people crossed the river on balsa rafts until the construction of modern bridges in the twentieth century.

The region's southeastern frontier appears to have been more porous, with settlements such as Gran Pajatén, Llaqtacocha near Laguna de los Cóndores, and several other sites on the forested slopes of the Huallaga drainage serving as staging areas for yearly or scheduled encounters between the Chachapoya and lower montane or cloud forest groups such as the Cholón and Hibito. The region straddled vital *entradas*, or gateways, to the eastern lowlands, source of highly valued tropical forest products and produce.

Garcilaso added that “[the province] then had more than forty thousand inhabitants, and is extremely inaccessible.” Calancha claimed that more than “twenty thousand tribute-paying Indians” resided in Chachapoyas. Yet, we will never know the size of the Chachapoya population on the eve of the Inka conquest in the mid-fifteenth century, despite the abundance of ruined settlements. Were all these sites occupied simultaneously? Only a systematic study of settlement patterns and changes in architecture over time, coupled with archaeological excavations and carbon<sup>14</sup> dates will reveal the region's complete occupation history.

## **The setting**

Modern Chachapoyas embraces a variety of ecosystems, ranging from the dry tropical forest along the Marañón to the high grasslands, or paramo, and down again to the cloud forest flanking the easternmost slopes of the Andes. Early and modern descriptions concur that the region was rugged and inaccessible (at least for Europeans), although some accounts, such as Calancha's, exaggerated the hardships somewhat: “[it is] a land of rugged mountains where it always rains, a mountainous land filled with leeches, abundant tigers, and full of wild trees...”

The dry tropical forest along the Marañón ranges from 900 to 1800 meters, and is distinguished by its scattered forest, native *Bougainvillea* (*Bougainvillea peruviana*) and succulents. In antiquity farmers planted cotton, coca and aji peppers, among other crops.

From the dry forest the landscape gives way to the humid montane forest, known locally as the *quichua*, ranging from 1800 to 3200 meters. The area is well suited to traditional staple crops such as maize, beans and squash. Yet, deforestation by farmers clearing the slopes for fields and pastures for livestock has left only a few pockets of primary forest. From the montane forest the land rises again to the tropical sub-alpine paramo, a transitional zone between the drier *puna* of southern Peru and the wetter paramo of Ecuador.

Ranging from 3200 to 4500 meters, the area is characterized by its grasslands, stunted bushes and stands of *quinual* (*Polylepis* sp.) and *quishwar* trees (*Buddleia Inkana*).

Remains of ancient agricultural terraces and field systems point to intensive use in antiquity, when farmers cultivated high altitude grains such as *quinoa* and *chocho* as well as tubers, especially potatoes. From the high grasslands the land descends once again, giving way to the tropical montane wet forest. Many species of palms, bromeliads, orchids, mosses and ferns typify the vegetation of this zone of high rainfall and swirling clouds.

## **The Chachapoya**

The evidence suggests that at times the ancient Chachapoya interacted with cultures living to the east, west and north of the Marañón, while at other times they flourished in relative isolation. Although the Chachapoya played a part in the greater Andean cultural sphere, their art and architecture convey a bold and independent spirit that sets them apart from their neighbors. “Classic” Chachapoya civilization — with its hallmark cliff tombs, circular constructions and masonry friezes— appears to have coalesced around AD 800 and continued into Inka times, ca. 1470-1532.

Some scholars have suggested that highland peoples from the west of the Marañón settled the region relatively late in Andean prehistory, in Inka and immediately pre-Inka times (approximately 1200-1532). This scenario, however, does not dovetail with the archaeological evidence. Studies have revealed that people began inhabiting the southern fringes of the region as early as 8,000 BC, following the retreat of the glaciers that once cloaked much of the eastern Andean slope. People lived in rock shelters such as Manachaqui Cave (located on the periphery of Río Abiseo National Park), semi-permanently or seasonally well into Inka times. Around 1500 BC, people used the cave as a temporary hunting camp. Pollen analyses from Rio Abiseo National Park point to the emergence of agriculture in the region at about the same time.

Moreover, excavations at Gran Pajatén indicate that people began settling this part of the cloud forest at the onset of what archaeologists call the Early Intermediate Period, around AD 200, reinforcing the notion that the Chachapoya cultural tradition evolved locally. Early pottery excavated in Manachaqui Cave points to links with peoples to the east and to the north as early as 1500 BC, and ceramics dating to 900-400 BC resemble the pottery of southern Ecuador. Other compelling data also signal contacts with people to the west. Pottery found at Gran Pajatén, for instance, is akin to that of Huamachuco, the Callejón de Huaylas (the Recuay and white-on-red styles) and perhaps the Callejón de Conchucos during the Early Intermediate Period, AD 200-600. Other researchers have noted the presence of Cajamarca ceramics in the area.

At the same time, several scholars have pointed out similarities between the stone-working traditions of late Gran Pajatén and of the Callejón de Huaylas during the Early Intermediate Period, AD 200-600. This is especially notable in the treatment of human and feline heads carved in stone and tenoned into the walls of structures. It is

also seen in relief carving found in other parts of Chachapoya territory. Lastly, a tenoned head of a feline still projecting from a house wall at the site of Runashayana near Chuquibamba features prominent incisors and teeth that wrap half way around the head, in a style reminiscent of Recuay tenoned heads.

Like many ancient Andean peoples, the Chachapoya probably were organized into family or lineage groups, known in Quechua as *ayllus*. These *ayllus* shared rights to land and regarded origin places (*pacariscas*) as the sacred abodes of their ancestors, conceived of as lakes, rivers, prominent mountains or boulders, and even trees. "Before the Indians and *ayllus* were conquered...by [Topa Inka], these Indians and *ayllus* were in different towns and *parcialidades* [moieties]; and in each one of them there was a lord without being subject to another until they were conquered by [Topa Inka]."

Sites with 400 or more structures such as Kuelap and Caserones in the Timbambo valley near Chuquibamba, which Schjellerup believes is the Papamarca recorded by Garcilaso (a settlement conquered by the Inkas), are rare and may have been the seats of powerful local lords, *kurakas*. The *kurakas* formed alliances with smaller, surrounding settlements ruled, in turn, by lesser lords. The *kurakas* must have wielded considerable local authority, rallying the necessary labor from the surrounding area to build settlements as large and imposing as Kuelap.

Among the scattered colonial descriptions of Chachapoyas, almost all the chroniclers commented on the beauty and white skin of the women. Even Father Calancha succumbed to their beauty, noting, "These are the whitest and most graceful Indians in all the Indies, and the women are the most beautiful." Cieza, a usually levelheaded observer, mentions the whiteness of Chachapoya women's skin three times in his brief description of Chachapoyas. "These Chachapoyas Indians are the whitest and most attractive I have seen anywhere I have been in the Indies, and their women were so beautiful that many of them were chosen to be the wives of the Inkas and the vestals of the temples."

Although he did not visit the region, Cieza saw Chachapoya people in Cusco, where, according to Calancha, they lived in the Karmenka district. Aside from the fact that sixteenth century Spaniards obviously regarded white skin as a sign of beauty, there is no evidence that the Chachapoya were descended from colonists who had sailed across the Atlantic and up the Amazon, as explorer Gene Savoy has suggested. Studies of pre-Inka Chachapoya skeletal remains from Salsipuedes and other burial sites indicate that the Chachapoya were of Andean stock but, on average, taller than their contemporaries in other parts of ancient Peru (1.59 meters for men and 1.46 meters for women). Analysis of the skeletal remains from Los Pinchudos confirms the trend.

Like many Andean peoples, the Chachapoya distinguished themselves by their headdress style, described by Garcilaso as a sling wrapped around their heads. Cieza remarked that women and men wore woolen clothing "...and a headband by which they are known wherever they go." Judging by stone sculptures found in the region and

from carved wooden figures and mummies from Laguna de los Cóndores, men wore earspools and nose ornaments, although it is not clear if this was a common trait or restricted to men of high status, as occurred elsewhere in ancient Peru. In an illustration by the chronicler Felipe Waman Poma de Ayala, Inka troops are shown skirmishing with Chachapoya warriors (among other northern peoples), one of whom wears a nose ornament.

Famed warriors, the Chachapoya put up fierce resistance to their Inka conquerors. One eyewitness called them “bellicose and indomitable,” while another referred to them as “people of war.” Garcilaso noted that “The conquest of this province was very difficult, and cost the Inka many men, partly because of the rugged and difficult nature of the land, and partly because the people were so spirited and warlike.”

Yet another chronicler, Sarmiento de Gamboa, observed that the Chachapoya “...only obey a chief during war time, not any special one, but he who is known to be the most valiant, enterprising and daring.” As we will see below, a pictograph on the cliffs of La Petaca suggests that the Chachapoya took the heads of their victims and displayed them as “trophy heads.” While the portrayal of severed human heads is a recurring theme throughout the ancient Andes, Chachapoya head taking may reflect their proximity to the Jivaro, renowned “head-hunters” well into historical times.

Beside their fame as warriors, the Chachapoya were celebrated shamans: “In the land of the Chachapoyas there are great sorcerers and skilled herbalists who make poisons.” And, remarked Polo, “In the city of Chachapoyas the profession of witchcraft is so common that the populous district of Luyaurco is noted as the abode of sorcerers, who are doctors and who cast spells.”

## **The Chachapoya Language**

We do not know what language or languages the Chachapoya spoke, although traces remain in non-Quechua place names such as Kuelap, Chilingote or Huemal. (The Inka introduced Quechua as a lingua franca into conquered regions, although one study proposes that Quechua may have been spoken earlier.) Studies by Gerald Taylor and Jorge Zevallos of local surnames and place names point to possible links with Jivaro languages in the Alto Imaza region (which in itself appears to be a Jivaro word) and with the Amazon basin to the east.

Surnames and toponyms offer the most persuasive evidence for the Chachapoya language. Taylor, for instance, suggests that the suffix “-mal,” by far the most common ending (e.g., Choctamal, Cuemal, Huemal, Yulmal) may mean *pampa* or plain. The suffix “-lap” or “-lape,” as in Yalape or Kuelap(e), may indicate a fortress or fortified settlement. “Huala” may signify mountain: “Shukahuala,” mountain of the vulture; “Huala Huala,” a mountain range.

Indeed, the very meaning of “Chachapoyas” is mired in controversy. Garcilaso said it meant “place of strong men.” Others argue that it is derived from the name of a local ethnic group, the Chachas, combined with a Quechua word, *puyu*, cloud. Still others believe it is formed of two Quechua words, *sacha*, tree and *puyu*, cloud. A rough translation conveys the idea of cloud forest, an apt description for much of the territory. Nonetheless, Taylor argues that while this etymology is compelling, “Chachapoya” is probably not of Quechua origin.

## Gods, Wakas and Ancestors

What gods did the Chachapoya worship? We know very little about local religion, in part because the Inkas exiled so many Chachapoya to other parts of the empire, leaving few native Chachapoya to preserve their beliefs, and in part because the Inkas imposed their solar cult on the conquered province: “After they were subdued... [the Chachapoya] assumed [Inka] laws and customs, by which they lived, and worshipped the sun and other gods.” What has trickled down to us in the chronicles is a mix of Inka religion, local *wakas* (sacred places or objects), *pacariscas* (places of origin), and ancestor worship, judging by the abundance of above-ground burial structures that afforded descendants easy access to the mummies placed in the tombs.

From a sixteenth century account by Cristóbal de Albornoz, we learn of several *wakas* that featured as *pacariscas*, venerated as places of origin: boulders and lakes as well as special natural or manmade features in the landscape. As we will see below, many burial sites overlooked supposed *pacariscas*, connecting the dead with their place of origin. Moreover, the profusion of above ground burial structures known as *chullpas*, along with evidence that people visited the tombs of their ancestors — a widespread Andean practice — indicates that the Chachapoya revered their ancestors, bringing them offerings of food and drink and wrapping the mummy bundles in new textiles. Important ancestor mummies, referred to as *mallkis*, often became *wakas* themselves, worshipped and visited by members of their *ayllu*.

Albornoz relates that the *ayllu* of Chuquipuyuntu worshipped a *waka* known as Calondi “a stone in a cave near the village of Pucso vilca.” Cuychacolla, *waka* of the Indians of Pra, was a small lake near the town of Llaucamalla, the *pacarisca* of the Chuhayayas. Some chroniclers, such as Sarmiento de Gamboa and Murúa, note that Cuychacolla (although they call it Curichaculla) featured as the principal *waka* of the Chachapoya and that one of Wayna Qhapaq’s generals took it to Cusco. (The Inkas captured the *wakas* of conquered peoples and held them as honored hostages in Cusco. Because Cuychacolla is described as a lake, water from it was probably poured into a vessel and, in this fashion, taken to Cusco).

Albornoz goes on to designate Callacalla (a mountain range between Cochabamba and Leymebamba), as a stone on a mountain, three leagues from the town

of Cochabamba. Inge Schjellerup believes she has identified this stone — a prominent boulder overlooking a small, stone-lined pond — at the way station or *tampu* of Las Lagunas, near Cochabamba. Checa was a *waka* of the *ayllu* Salcac, a spring next to the village of Salcac. Pozan, a *waka* of the *ayllu* Coyllac, was a tree on a mountain next to the village of Coyallap (Kuelap?) Finally, Guixicoc, worshipped by the *ayllu* of Ploya, “is a house on a mountain called Gallase, next to the village of Lapal.” “There are many more in this province,” noted Albornoz.

Garcilaso says the Chachapoya venerated “snakes and regarded the *cuntur* [condor] as their principal god.” The only images in Chachapoya iconography that could possibly be construed as condors are the ones portrayed in a mosaic frieze decorating a building at Gran Pajatén. Snake imagery, however, abounds, carved in stone (such as on the summit of Mt. Shubet, one of the highest peaks in the province of Luya), and applied as decorative attachments to pottery.

Judging by the fragmented nature of Chachapoya society and the partial list of *wakas* provided by Albornoz, people evidently worshipped many *wakas*, although a few may have ranked above others, or even served as regional shrines. Some structures or sectors within sites may have functioned as shrines or gathering areas for ceremonies, such as Kuelap’s Tintero or Pueblo Alto sector.

## The Economy

The Chachapoya based their economy on the household production of pottery and textiles for local exchange, and relied on agriculture, herding, hunting and gathering for their sustenance. Many settlements were located strategically, providing ready access to a variety of ecosystems. They sculpted mountain slopes into broad earthen terraces and transformed low-lying areas into systems of ridged fields with elaborate drainage systems. Farmers amassed stones into low walls at the sides of the field systems, forming stone dykes that also served as drain lines.

Remains of terrace systems still sculpt sectors of the middle Utcubamba valley, probably devoted to warm valley crops such as cotton, aji and coca. Utcubamba, in fact, means “cotton flood plain,” from the Quechua, *utcu*, cotton and *bamba*, flood plain. In higher areas, people cultivated a variety of tubers — potatoes, *mashwa*, *oca* and *olluco*— and grains — *quinoa*, *kiwicha* and *chocho*— at altitudes ranging from 3200 to 3800 meters above sea level. Farmers used clod breakers to prepare the soil for cultivation and digging sticks to plant seeds.

During the times archaeologists refer to as the Middle Horizon and the Late Intermediate Period, ca. AD 700-1450, the Chachapoya appear to have exploited more high altitude crops such as potatoes, *chocho* and *quinoa*. At the site of Caserones, identified by Schjellerup as Papamarca, the remains of earthen terraces point to intensive agricultural production. Located at almost 3,800 meters, the area is ideally



suiting to potato cultivation. During Inka times, on the other hand, the emphasis shifted to *quichua* zone crops, especially maize. No doubt, this reflects the intense Inka demand for this ritual, prestige crop used to make *chicha*, the maize beer consumed in vast quantities at Inka ceremonies.

People also hunted for deer, using antlers to decorate tombs and houses and to fashion headdresses and decorate leather drums, such as one found in a looted tomb in the Huabayacu drainage, today displayed in the Chachapoyas office of the National Institute of Culture. According to Cieza, “in olden times...they had large flocks of llamas,” and no doubt alpacas as well, but today the camelids have been replaced by sheep.

## **The Chachapoya Art Style**

Like the culture itself, the Chachapoya art style reflects a mix of local and exotic influences that point to connections with the east and the west. We are just beginning to unravel the origins and evolution of this little known art style. The well-preserved burial offerings from Laguna de los Cóndores are playing a vital part in finding answers to the genesis of the style, revealing new imagery on perishable artifacts such as textiles and gourds. Recurring images such as splayed human figures sporting feathered headdresses — found throughout the region in pictographs, on stone mosaic friezes and at Laguna de los Cóndores on textiles and gourds— suggests common narratives and beliefs and the myths they reflect. Another image from Laguna de los Cóndores is that of a feline or hybrid animal with fanged teeth, often shown in profile. Such representations may reflect aspects of Chachapoya symbolism, whose meaning has been lost in time.

### ***Weaving***

In the words of Cieza, the Chachapoya “made fine and highly prized clothing for the Inkas, and they still make excellent garments and tapestry so fine and handsome that it is greatly esteemed for its quality.” The textiles from Laguna de los Cóndores displayed in the Museo Leymebamba bear witness to the skill of the Chachapoya weavers, not only in the art and technology of cloth manufacture but also in the distinct imagery decorating weavings.

Cotton (*Gossypium barbadense*), a native, naturally pigmented cotton that produces fibers ranging from white to dark brown, was the predominant textile fiber used. Weavers employed cotton for most apparel, woven on backstrap and possibly vertical looms. Weavers also used the fiber of camelids, probably the domesticated llamas and alpacas.

Other fibers included *cabuya*, an agave (*Furcraea* sp.) employed in making rope, slings, nets, sandals and bags. Sedges and other plant fibers were used in basketry. The

feathers of parrots and other tropical birds were assembled into accessories such as headdresses and attached to cloth to produce colorful and iridescent garments. The Chachapoya weaving style is quite distinct from the Inka one and garments combined a variety of techniques such as tapestry, brocade, embroidery and plain weave on a single textile.

Because archaeologists have not excavated intact, pre-Inka Chachapoya burials with the same degree of preservation as the tombs at Laguna de los Cóndores, we do not know what people wore before the Inka conquest. But after the Inka occupation women wore wrap around dresses pinned at the shoulders with dress pins of silver or bronze. Strung between the pins women suspended woven cords decorated with a variety of items such as metal tweezers, palm seeds and shell beads. Over their shoulders women wore *llicllas* — shawls — also fastened with pins.

Men wore plain cotton loincloths and sleeveless tunics, called *unkus*, usually of cotton. They were fashioned in plain weave cotton, painted in all-over designs or decorated at waist level, and on the shoulders or around the edges with elaborate woven or embroidered designs. Weavers used camelid fiber to portray mythical hybrid beings in tapestry weave, brocade or embroidery. Men wore sandals made of *cabuya* and carried their coca leaves in *chuspas*, small woven bags.

Most dyes were probably derived from plants such as indigo (*Indigofera* sp.), which produces a blue and alder (*Alnus* sp.), which yields a yellow. One dye source, walnut (*Juglans* sp.) is still used by contemporary weavers.

### **Pottery**

Chachapoya pottery in general is quite simple, especially when compared to the textile arts, at which Chachapoya artisans excelled. Most ceramics are utilitarian, brown wares manufactured by coiling or by forming a slab of clay. They decorated their pottery with appliqué, incision, punctuation, and stamping. The vessels are usually decorated on the rim of the body with appliquéd strips; some incised and protruding knobs were often applied to the bodies of the vessels. Some of the pottery is influenced by the Cajamarca tradition, which flourished on the west bank of the Marañón river; this is especially notable in the use of kaolin clays, sources of which are found near Balsas on the Marañón.

Pottery shapes include *ollas*, or cooking pots, ollas with short necks, jars and tripod bowls. The brown ware tradition continued into Inka times, although potters began to imitate some Inka shapes. The provincial, Inka imitations made by local potters are not as fine as the imperial Inka wares manufactured by specialists at some of the many pottery production enclaves established by the Inka and distributed by the state.

## Chachapoya Architecture

Chachapoya settlements appear to follow the terrain in a seemingly random pattern, although some sites such as Kuelap include houses grouped along corridors or facing patios, suggesting a pre-conceived plan. A typical site wends its way along a ridge, mountaintop or slope with as few as 30 and as many as 400 structures, most of them circular. A few sites, for example, Macro and Tutch, are located just above the Utcubamba river, allowing residents ready access to river resources and fertile valley bottom farmland.

While the location of sites on ridges and summits may be a response to hostilities among the various Chachapoya groups, as suggested by the chroniclers, few sites are fortified. Kuelap's colossal perimeter wall is, in fact, quite unusual. At the site of Huepón near Chuquibamba, four walls ranging in height from 2 to 6 meters surround the site, where Inge Schjellerup's excavations revealed a 2,000-year occupation span. A handful of other sites also appear to have been fortified: Vira Vira, Torre Pukro, La Joya, Teya and Pabellón.

The settings of sites on mountain tops, flanks and ridges may also have been a practical response to a "very rugged and wet land, all year it does nothing but rain, and for this reason the Indians build their houses on the summits and heights."

## Residential Architecture

Although circular houses are not unique in the ancient Andes, several features distinguish the Chachapoya ones. The houses sit on solid platform bases topped by the upper walls of the structures themselves. Decorative, masonry friezes (zigzags, rhomboids, step-frets or figurative, mosaic-like friezes such as those at Gran Pajatén) often embellish the foundations or the structure's upper walls. Cornices, surrounding or set in a half-moon around the houses, served as decorative features or walkways, protecting the foundation platforms from rainfall.

Often, steps led into the interiors of the houses where residents cooked on stone-lined hearths. Stone-lined, subterranean storage bins are found in floors, and some houses still contain large, flat grinding stones, or *batánes*. Small interior niches may have supported posts for hanging possessions, and larger niches may have served for storing items. Some houses have low stone benches that may have been used as sleeping platforms. Tenoned human and feline heads fashioned in stone decorated exteriors and, at times, the interiors of houses and deer antlers have also been observed embedded in interior walls.

The Chachapoya topped their circular residences with conical, thatched roofs. While none have survived, nineteenth and early twentieth-century eyewitness descriptions provide persuasive evidence for ancient roofing technology. The roofs were quite steeply pitched to allow rainwater to run off; archaeologist Alfredo Narváez

reckons that the roofs had a pitch of 40 degrees. A house with 4 meter-high walls and a 3 meter-high foundation platform would have resulted in a structure 15 meters high, about the height of a six-story modern building. A site as large as Kuelap must have looked quite imposing with its hundreds of conical thatch roofs dominating the skyline.

An illustration of "La Casa Redonda," the round house, in La Jalca Grande by Austrian traveler Charles Wiener shows a steeply pitched conical roof. "The modern Indians live in the homes of their ancestors" remarked Wiener, who visited La Jalca in 1881. "This was the first and last time during my long journey traversing the length of equatorial America that I had the opportunity to see the traces of the past and to cast a backward glance through the centuries." Wiener described a house with walls 4 meters high, a roof 10 meters high, and a 1.80 meter-high doorway (He erroneously recorded the diameter of the house as 3 meters when in fact it has a diameter of 8 meters, and so his illustrator depicted a house that is higher than it is wide.)

Three meters above the ground, a zigzag frieze composed of a mosaic of white and black stones set in mortar, with traces of red ochre in the background of the frieze, encircled the house. The house was still occupied when French archaeologist Louis Langlois saw it in 1933, but abandoned when the roof, probably not the one Langlois saw, collapsed around 1965. Langlois, however, noted a double zigzag frieze (recalling the one on La Jalca's colonial church) and two tenoned heads set between the friezes, which have since disappeared. One meter above the ground he observed a row of projecting white cornice stones.

Langlois described a roof composed of a conical framework of 39 light poles joined by small branches or canes that rested directly on the walls. He saw no evidence of a central post or column. The roof was covered with thatch, and the 39 poles tied together at the top like a sheaf of corn. He noted that the sheer weight of the roof prevented it from being blown off by strong winds. Some roofs, however, may have been tied down to stone pegs protruding from the exteriors of upper walls, such as those observed at Gran Pajatén.

The 39 rafters extending about half a meter above the roof were trimmed flat and a large, round slate stone placed on top to protect the tied off portion of the roof from the rain. In the center of the slate an agave plant kept vultures from perching on the roof.

### *Gran Pajatén (Abiseo)*

Discovered in the early 1960s by a group of men from Pataz searching for new farmland and pastures for their cattle, Gran Pajatén is perhaps the most emblematic of Chachapoya sites. The settlement tops a ridge surrounded by steep, forest-clad mountains and is perched high above the Montecristo river, a tributary of the Huayabamba, which flows into the Huallaga.

Despite its seemingly remote location, Gran Pajatén is not an isolated settlement. Rather, it formed part of a constellation of habitation and burial sites linked to a network of Prehispanic roads, roadside shelters and installations that today lie within Río Abiseo National Park. The Abiseo drainage features a number of large settlements, such as Las Papayas and its 100 or so mostly circular, constructions. And just across from Gran Pajatén, sprawled along a long and narrow ridge, lies the site of Cerro Central. Built on artificial terraces, it contains some 150-200 circular structures, some of which are decorated with mosaic friezes similar to Gran Pajatén's.

In comparison, Gran Pajatén is quite small. Set on a series of artificial stone terraces linked by stairways, the site embraces some 50 hectares, but its 26 buildings (and an undetermined number of others still covered by forest) occupy fewer than 2 hectares. The terraces also served as retaining walls and as agricultural terraces.

Excavations demonstrated that people occupied the site as early as 200 BC. We do not know what early Gran Pajatén looked like, however, because the later occupants used fill from earlier refuse dumps and constructions to build their settlement. Gran Pajatén appears to have been uninhabited from around AD 600 until the Inkas reoccupied the site. The circular buildings crowning the ridge today were built in the Chachapoya style during Inka times.

The majority of Gran Pajatén's constructions are circular, with diameters ranging from 3 to 14 meters. In trademark fashion, they are composed of circular foundation platforms topped by somewhat smaller, upper constructions, with the two levels separated by a projecting cornice. The discovery of a 16 meter-long canal suggests that a network of stone lined drainage canals once probably covered much of the site. This is no surprise given Gran Pajatén's location in the tropical montane wet forest, where annual rainfall averages between 2,000-3,000 millimeters.

The masonry friezes decorating the foundations and upper walls of the buildings are by far the most elaborate encountered at any Chachapoya site. The front of Building No. 1, the site's largest construction, is embellished with a mosaic frieze set in panels on either side of a 3 meter-long central stairway leading to the structure's only doorway. Composed of slate and sandstone, the frieze depicts 10 splayed human figures about 1 meter high, fashioned in slate. The men wear earspools and elaborate headdresses; their heads, elbows and knees are of sandstone.

Intriguingly, the figures are clad in two different types of headdresses: one is circular and undoubtedly shows a feathered headdress, while the other is composed of two prongs, possibly representing deer antlers. The sandstone heads recall tenoned heads found at other Chachapoya sites. Peruvian archaeologist Duccio Bonavia suggests that they may have been recycled from the earlier constructions at Gran Pajatén.

A step fret frieze nestled between two rows of zigzags tops the panel of human figures on Building No. 1. Its interior floor was paved with slabs of sandstone, slate and

siltstone. The structure overlooks a small, flagstone-paved plaza and an upright stone, 80 centimeters high, known as a *wanka*. Excavations within Building No. 1 in the 1960s and in the 1980s unearthed domestic pottery, indicating that it was used as a residence. Building No. 1's upper wall is preserved to a maximum height of 2.75 meters, and we do not know how high its walls once stood. But based on the smaller structure at La Jalca with 4 meter-high walls, Building No. 1 must have been a very imposing structure indeed, especially when it was roofed.

Building No. 2 is somewhat smaller than Building No. 1. It too has an unusual frieze, composed of condors or some other large bird with spread wings, a large tail and a sandstone head shown in profile. The bird figures alternate with geometric motifs and human figures that recall those on Building No. 1. Curiously, blocks of sandstone carved with geometric and anthropomorphic designs were incorporated into masonry courses of Building No. 2's upper walls, again suggesting the use of recycled construction material from an earlier occupation. One building at Gran Pajatén, No. 7, is unusual for its interior step-fret frieze.

Why is Gran Pajatén located where it is? Maize grows well at Gran Pajatén, as Bonavia observed while working at the site in the mid 1960s. The limited amount of agricultural terracing at Gran Pajatén — estimated at 50 hectares — would not have sustained Gran Pajatén's estimated 150 residents. Level land near the river, not far from Gran Pajatén, however, would have provided area residents with expanses of arable land. Fragments of stone hoes recovered at Gran Pajatén indicate that its occupants engaged in agricultural activities.

Like other Chachapoya sites in the Huallaga watershed, Gran Pajatén probably served as a strategic way station or a center for encounters with peoples from the lower Amazon basin to exchange products and produce, part of a widespread exchange network that crisscrossed the region, linking it to its neighbors to the north, the east and the west.

### *Vira Vira*

Gran Pajatén and Kuelap are the most famed Chachapoya sites, only two among hundreds of similarly constructed settlements straddling ridges and clinging to mountain tops and slopes throughout the Chachapoya heartland. Yet, although they all share architectural features, each site's setting makes it unique. Vira Vira is located a hard days' ride from Atuén, and sprawls along a ridge overlooking Laguna Huayabamba, a major source of the Huabayacu river.

Mapping by architect Vincent Lee recorded around 200 round and elliptical structures, placing it among the larger known Chachapoya settlements. The largest building measures some 14 meters in diameter. Its exterior, composed of red, black and white stone, is decorated with small, square niches placed between two rows of cornices. At the foot of the structure researchers found a small, eroded tenoned head. A

wall ranging in height from 2 to 4 meters and averaging about 1 meter in width, surrounded much of the settlement. In some sections, the buildings lie beyond the confines of the wall, suggesting that the original community built its houses within the walls and, as the settlement expanded or, perhaps when security was no longer a concern, inhabitants constructed their residences beyond the walls.

Vira Vira's location is strategic. Not only did it overlook its probable *pacarisca* and the origin of an important river, but its residents had ready access to pastures for camelids, fields by the lakeshore for growing potatoes and terraces in the warmer, Huabayacu valley to the east for crops such as coca. The people of Vira Vira buried their dead in cliff tombs marked by red pictographs overlooking the lake.

### *La Congona*

La Congona, one of several ancient settlements near Leymebamba is noted for its unusual architectural features and for the variety of geometric masonry friezes embellishing its buildings. In fact, the three geometric frieze motifs found in the region: zigzags, rhomboids and step-frets, converge at La Congona. South of Leymebamba zigzags and step-frets adorn structures while north of Leymebamba builders decorated houses with friezes of rhomboids and zigzags. We do not know why people decorated some structures with friezes and left others unadorned. Did the friezes serve as ethnic or social markers or were they merely aesthetic?

La Congona is divided into a northern and a southern sector. The northern part contains the remains of some 30 buildings, of which a third are decorated with friezes. The most imposing structures are two solid circular platforms (their superstructures were plundered for building stone) joined by a central stairway. Nearby are the remains of a D-shaped foundation platform, the upper walls of which are graced by a step-fret frieze. Especially unusual is a building embellished by a frieze of rhomboids set between a mosaic of small, protruding quadrangular stones. Several structures contain double, slightly trapezoidal niches. Buildings are not as densely packed or as decorated in the southern sector, where archaeologists recorded some 34 structures. Friezes include zigzags and rhomboids. A rectangular structure measuring 16 meters in length by 6 meters in width with six trapezoidal doorways points to the Inka occupation.

### *Llaqtacocha*

Mapping and archaeological excavations on the north side of Laguna de los Cóndores revealed a large settlement snaking its way down a lateral moraine. This residential site, known today as Llaqtacocha, or town-on-the-lake, covers about 33 hectares and includes the remains of some 130, mostly circular structures, probably home to the people interred in the *chullpas* across the lake. Researchers, however, do not rule out the possibility that people may have been brought from elsewhere for burial at Laguna de los Cóndores. Excavations at Llaqtacocha unearthed Chachapoya and provincial Inka

ceramics, indicating that the settlement and the *chullpa* site across the lake are contemporary. The site may have been founded as early as AD 1200, and it includes rectangular structures that point to the Inka occupation as well as buildings that may have been built in early Spanish Colonial times.

Llaqtacocha has been severely damaged by forest clearing to open pastures for cattle. Today, ancient carved sandstone mortar stones serve as salt licks for the cattle. The trees toppled the site's walls and subsequent burning shattered limestone building blocks. Cattle range freely, tumbling the few remaining walls and trampling the site's ancient drainage system. As a result, few of Llaqtacocha's walls stand higher than 1 meter.

Llaqtacocha boasts an especially elaborate drainage network. Stone faced canals wind their way through the settlement and small, stone slab bridges provided access to the half-moon cornices surrounding the house foundation platforms. Some cornices, curiously, were built on supporting walls and are not freestanding, serving as ramps leading to the doors of the houses.

Stones scattered along the ridge of the moraine appear to be the remains of an ancient, paved road. As the moraine narrows and divides into two ridges, a platform adjacent to the presumed roadway (once probably topped by a structure) appears to have controlled access to an area known as "downtown" Llaqtacocha, containing the densest concentration of buildings, including two rectangular constructions in the "plaza" area that point to an Inka presence.

Llaqtacocha's houses average 6 to 7 meters in diameter. One construction is especially unusual. Although it is no larger than others at the site, it once had two doorways. One of the jambs is carved with the images of two figures, apparently felines. Unlike Kuelap, where doorjambs are composed of several flagstones, single slabs form Llaqtacocha's doorways.

## **Funerary architecture**

Chachapoya funerary architecture is as elaborate as its residential counterpart. Sadly, few burial sites, despite their seemingly inaccessible locations, have survived the turmoil of centuries of looting and vandalism. The Chachapoya buried their dead in a variety of structures, ranging from funerary capsules known as *purunmachus* to above ground stone tombs called *chullpas*. Some *chullpas* are set in rows, like those at Laguna de los Cóndores, while others are single constructions poised in hard to reach locations. Many *chullpas* are plastered and painted in white, red and yellow pigments and embellished with friezes and deer antlers or, in one case, wooden figures attached to the roof with an elaborate wooden chain link and tenon.

The cliff tombs of La Petaca and Diablo Wasi include *chullpas*, plastered over burial chambers designed for single interments and caves, whose entries were sealed



with walls. Low walls built on crevasses or ledges were used to cantilever beams that served as balconies. Pictographs often adorn the cliffs surrounding burial sites, acting as beacons for looters. Dry caves also served as burial sites as did boulders or rock shelters. At Llaqtacocha, for instance, a group of large boulders within the “downtown” area had been walled off and converted into a burial cave. Although heavily looted and used as a shelter by humans and animals, excavations unearthed fragments of human bone and provincial Inka pottery.

People deliberately chose burial sites protected from rainfall. On the rainier slopes of the montane forest they sought cool, dry ledges that received only a few hours of sun every day, enhancing preservation. In some cases, such as Laguna de los Cóndores and Laguna Huayabamba, the tombs overlook lakes that ancient people probably venerated as *pacariscas*, or places of origin. The tombs also overlooked the communities of the living. In this fashion, the dead not only looked out over the birthplace of their ancestors, but watched over their descendants as well. Offerings of food and evidence that mummies were covered in new burial wrappings indicate that people visited the tombs, a widespread ancient Andean practice. Andean peoples also regarded *tinkuys*, the convergence of rivers, as sacred or auspicious places. Revash and La Petaca lie above confluences with major rivers, the Utcubamba and the Atuén, respectively.

### *Laguna de los Cóndores*

Deep in the cloud forest blanketing the eastern slopes of the Huallaga watershed, a row of stone burial houses perches high above a lake. Tucked into a ledge on a limestone cliff 100 meters above Laguna de los Cóndores, the structures stood untouched by humans for almost 500 years. Composed of six intact *chullpas* and the foundations of a seventh, the burial site is one of 18 funerary sites documented on the limestone cliffs looming above Laguna de los Cóndores. Although the farm hands who had discovered the burial site in late 1996 churned through the tombs, slashing mummy bundles with machetes and destroying valuable contextual information, the more than 200 mummy bundles and a wide array of burial offerings indicate that the finds date to Chachapoya (ca. AD 800-1470), Chachapoya-Inka (ca. 1470-1532) and early Colonial (ca. 1532-1570) times.

The *chullpas'* builders took advantage of a natural ledge, 45 meters long and 5 meters wide, in the limestone cliff. The tombs are nestled against the cliff, which serves as their back wall. The builders modified the ledge by leveling the floor and carving smaller ledges into the cliff onto which they built low masonry walls set in mud mortar that supported the back roofs of the *chullpas*. The roofs are composed of thick, roughly hewn wooden planks. Each tomb is about 3 meters high and divided into two levels by a platform of small logs. The structures are roughly quadrangular in shape and built of limestone blocks set in mud mortar. Four of them, *Chullpas* 2, 4, 5 and 6 are plastered

and painted in shades of white as well as in red and yellow ochre, while zigzag friezes adorn Chullpas 2 and 6. Deer antlers protruded from either side of the window of Chullpa 6. All the chullpas face the lake and the ancient settlement of Llaqtacochoa.

Chullpa 1 stands some 10 meters apart from the others, although a wooden, balcony-like construction, part of which collapsed in antiquity, connects it to the roof of Chullpa 2. There too, the builders modified the cliff face, creating a ledge onto which they built a low stone wall from which they cantilevered the beams of the upper balcony. The remains of a lower balcony are also visible beneath the upper one; it collapsed under the weight of a stone dislodged from the cliff wall, probably during an earthquake.

Preliminary evidence suggests that when the Inkas occupied the area they removed the earlier Chachapoya burials that they found at the site and relocated them in Chullpas 1 and 3 (both of which are hastily built, later additions lacking plaster and paint and embellishments such as friezes or deer antlers. Chullpa 3, for example, has only one wall, wedged between Chullpas 2 and 4). The Inkas then apparently reused the more elaborate *chullpas* built by the Chachapoya as tombs for their people, a mix that probably included Cusco administrators and *mitmaqs* as well as local lords and their kin.

### *Revash*

The *chullpas* of Revash are tucked into ledges on limestone cliffs high above a tributary of the Utcubamba, near the town of Santo Tomás de Quillay. Charles Wiener, who visited the tombs in 1881, published a rather fanciful illustration. It was not until the mid-twentieth century, however, that any serious investigation took place. Henri and Paule Reichlen, who excavated some of the tombs in 1948, spent 12 days camped beneath the cliffs. The *chullpas'* walls, they noted, are composed of small stones set in mud mortar, subsequently plastered and painted in shades of cream and red. Unusual gabled roofs fashioned of wooden logs tied together with plant fiber cord and then plastered and painted, top some of the chullpas. A few of the *chullpas* are embellished with T, quadrangular or cross-shaped niches. A variety of pictographs decorate the cliff walls behind the *chullpas*.

Certain *chullpas* were divided into two floors, each about 1 meter high. In one the Reichlens found a funerary bundle containing the remains of a newborn child and the skeletons of 11 adults accompanied by fragments of cloth, cord, feather ornaments, combs, necklaces, wood and bone tools, musical instruments, pottery, and a *solpe* or tump line, much like those still used by women today to carry heavy loads. In another they recovered a dozen skulls and long bones. About 1 kilometer from the main group of *chullpas*, in a large funerary cave, they found the remains of 200 funerary bundles. Water had filtered into the cave and destroyed the textiles, reducing the bundles to a heap of bones.

Compared to most Chachapoya burial sites, the Revash *chullpas* are relatively accessible and, as a result, the funerary complex has been extensively plundered and its finely plastered walls etched with the graffiti of thoughtless visitors.

### ***Los Pinchudos***

Located within Rio Abiseo National Park and an hour's slog from Gran Pajatén, looters, unfortunately, reached Los Pinchudos before archaeologists. But a few offerings revealed by early photographs, such as provincial Inka-style ceramics, imply that Los Pinchudos is a Chachapoya-style burial site reused or constructed in Inka times. In fact, although there are eight visible tombs, recent excavations discovered the foundations of a ninth, earlier *chullpa* beneath Tomb No. 7, suggesting that Los Pinchudos served as a Chachapoya burial site before the Inkas conquered the region.

Builders assembled the tombs on a ledge some 35 meters long and averaging around 4.50 meters in width; a narrow path in front of the tombs provided access. Like the tombs at Laguna de los Cóndores, the *chullpas* face north, receiving few hours of direct sunlight and creating a microclimate that promoted conservation. The resulting preservation is extraordinary.

Built of locally quarried limestone and slate, the eight tombs were placed either directly on the ground or set on low platforms, with the cliff serving as the tombs' back wall. Some *chullpas* had flagstone floors while others had earthen floors. One tomb is divided by logs into two floors. Tree trunks covered with mud mortar roofed all the *chullpas* except one that used the overhang as a roof. At the edges of the roofs, builders placed rows of cornice-like stones supported by another row of stones that acted as counterweights.

Step-fret and zigzag masonry friezes decorate several *chullpas*. Almost 500 years after they were abandoned, the tombs still retain their vibrant red and yellow ochre paint. But even more astonishing is a group of five wooden sculptures suspended from the cornice of Tomb No. 5 by elaborate chain links and tenons. Carved of *caoba* (a variety of mahogany), five sculptures remain in situ (a sixth was pilfered, and its whereabouts are unknown). The figures themselves, the links and a tenon that embedded the figures into the wall just beneath the cornice, were carved from a single piece of wood. The figures portray nude males (hence the site's name, Peruvian slang for the male anatomy), wearing earspools and sporting inverted T-shaped headdresses. Not all of the figures are alike, however. One of them wears a headdress embellished with a bird head, perhaps that of a condor, and another plays the panpipes. All were once painted in shades of red and yellow ochre and white.

### ***La Petaca-Diablo Wasi***

A five-hour horseback ride from Leymebamba, following the Atuén river along an ancient road, lies Tajopampa, La Petaca, Diablo Wasi, Boveda and La Joya, only a few of

the dozens of habitation and burial sites perched high above the Atuéen between Leymebamba and the village of Atuéen. At La Petaca-Diablo Wasi, local people buried their dead in cliff tombs that appear to cling to an enormous limestone cliff soaring high above the San Miguel de Malpaso, an intermittent stream and tributary of the Atuéen.

Tomb types include elaborately constructed *chullpas* with foundation platforms and upper walls with doorways and walls embellished with T-shaped niches, painted in hues of red and white. In other cases, builders took advantage of natural openings in the cliff face, sealing the entrances with walls. Cantilevered balconies created by inserting wooden poles into crevasses or fissures in the cliff, front several tombs. Some of the balconies have collapsed, strewn their contents along the riverbed below. The tombs may look hard to reach — indeed it is hard to fathom how they were built in the first place— but this has not deterred looters from ransacking virtually all of them. In some cases, ancient —and modern— people used natural ledges to reach burial sites, in others the tombs could only have been reached by rappelling down on ropes or climbing up on ladders.

Like so many Chachapoya burial sites, the cliff is covered in red pictographs, ranging from hastily painted circles and arcs to figurative representations. One scene illustrates a human figure wearing a deer antler headdress. It clutches a human head with blood streaming from the severed neck. The headless victim is portrayed next to it, blood spurting from its neck. While such scenes are common in ancient Peruvian art before AD 1000, it is unusual in Chachapoyas. Only one other representation is known, found on a pyroengraved gourd from Laguna de los Cóndores showing an unku-clad figure holding a severed human head. Nonetheless, in colonial times the Chachapoya were reputed to be takers of heads: “the natives are very bellicose, they favor war and cutting off heads.”

### *Purunmachus*

Near Kuelap and north of the citadel, the Chachapoya buried their dead in capsule-like tombs constructed of stone, wooden or cane poles and clay. Known locally as *purunmachus* (from the Quechua, *purun*, wild; savage and *machu*, old), the funerary statues brood from cliffside perches overlooking the left bank of the Utcubamba and several of its western tributaries.

*Purunmachus* stand on ledges protected from the weather either on their own, in small clusters ranging from four to eight or even in groups of 15 to 20. Langlois remarked that the funerary site of San Antonio near Lamud contained more than 40 *purunmachus*, but it is not clear whether these *purunmachus* are grouped together or found in scattered groups across the cliff. Unlike *chullpas*, however, designed to hold the remains of several individuals, the *purunmachus* contained single interments.

According to the Reichlens, the bodies were seated with the limbs drawn to the body and the chin supported by the hands. It is not clear from their description whether

the bodies were naturally mummified or if they had been treated in some way or embalmed to enhance preservation. The body was wrapped in cloth and then covered with a deerskin and tied with plant fiber cords. Ceramic vessels placed at the foot of the *purunmachus* probably held offerings of food. French archaeologist Bertrand Flornoy found ceramic vessels topped by painted stones set next to *purunmachus* near Caserío de Angulo, 200-300 meters above the Utcubamba.

The Reichlens noted two types of *purunmachus*: tall ones (as high as 3 meters) topped by sculpted clay heads, and small ones, under a meter high, tucked into low ledges, with the heads placed on the torso for lack of space. They remark that the similarity in concept between *purunmachus* and cloth funerary bundles is “striking,” although the materials used are quite different. In addition, the solid, clay heads attached to the funerary capsules recall the “false mummy heads” found on coastal Peruvian mummy bundles, dating from around 1000 to Inka times.

The *purunmachus* were constructed by first building a low wall decorated with painted relief designs, or by placing the body directly on a ledge. Then, a small wall was built around the funerary bundle, covering the bundle, and long poles inserted into the construction. Next, the capsule was covered in mud mixed with straw and painted white or cream. Finally, details such as necklaces or pectorals, feathered tunics, facial traits or face paint and genitals were added in shades of yellow ochre and two shades of red, probably an ochre and hematite for the darker red.

A solid head fashioned of clay tempered with straw and notable for its sharply jutting chin and prominent nose, crowned the capsule. Almost all of the heads appear to have been coiffed with a headdress. Some are embellished with a small head modeled in relief (a miniature version of the larger head) or with two attachments shaped like clawed animal paws placed at either side of the headdress. These recall the feline headdresses portrayed on Moche and Recuay pottery as well as on Recuay stone sculpture, dating to AD 200-600.

At the site of Carajía, the cone-shaped heads of the *purunmachus* end in a point that supports a human skull. Thin cord fastened the lower jaw and the entire skull was plastered and probably painted. Several *purunmachu* burial sites are embellished with pictographs in red ochre representing herding or hunting scenes of llamas or deer flanked by human figures with rays emanating from their heads, probably feathered headdresses

## **The Inka Conquest of Chachapoyas**

The Inka occupation of Chachapoyas probably began around 1470 during the reign of the emperor Topa Inka. At the time of the Spanish invasion in the sixteenth century, the Inka ruled the largest empire in the New World. They had begun to expand beyond Cusco, their capital, sometime around the mid-fifteenth century and, in fewer than 100

years, they assumed control of an empire that stretched for over 4,000 kilometers from end to end, embracing much of modern Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia, and extending into northern Chile and north-western Argentina.

It was an empire of striking ethnic diversity, rich with a great variety of natural resources. Even if much of the Inka achievement was based on pre-existing technologies and institutions, the sheer scale of the enterprise made it unique, not just in the Andes, but also in the Americas. In urban organization and city building — as in agriculture, metallurgy, weaving, road building and even administration— the Inka excelled mainly because they took what already existed and incorporated it into a vast new vision of political and economic expansion.

The Inkas called their realm Tawantinsuyu, the empire of the “four parts.” It was composed of a loose confederation of ethnic groups linked to Cusco by varying degrees of loyalty through conquests, alliances and kinship ties. The Inkas spread across the Andes on more than just military skill. They were adept at negotiations and made use of age-old Andean social institutions that fostered reciprocity, carefully balancing rights and obligations. Foremost among the obligations of new citizens was to provide labor, on which the empire’s productivity depended.

When possible, the Inkas sent emissaries to try and negotiate peaceful submission, a tactic that often succeeded, especially with societies that did not have the resources to resist. If the Inkas viewed a region as critical, but its people were recalcitrant, this could lead to conflict. And so it did in Chachapoyas. Attracted by reports of “a region where name and treasure might be acquired, especially from a Sinchi named Chuqui-Sota,” Topa Inka “ordered his army to take the field and advance forward toward the province of Chachapoya. A messenger was sent forward according to the traditional Inka custom to offer peace or war. The Chachapoya resolutely replied that they were ready to take up arms and die in defense of their freedom; let the Inka do as he would, they would not be his subjects.”

The Inkas built a conquest road from the administrative center of Huánuco Pampa in the north-central Andes, crossing the Marañón in the area of Huacrachucos or farther south.

The Chachapoya, noted Garcilaso, “had built many forts in strong places...” The first to fall was Pías. (Archaeologist Warren Church believes that he has located the ancient Pías at a site today called Timburco, located above the modern town of Pías. Although vegetation chokes much of the site, Church estimates that it contained 100 circular buildings surrounded by defensive walls.) At a pass beyond Pías “called Chirmac Cassa, ‘the harmful pass,’ because of the great harm it does to those who cross it,” 300 Inka soldiers sent ahead to reconnoiter perished in a snowstorm.

Undeterred, the army marched on to Cuntur Marca, where “the numerous inhabitants made a great resistance; they fought valiantly and sustained the conflict for

many days." (Warren Church has documented the ancient Cuntur Marca above modern Condormarca.)

Eight leagues (approximately 40 kilometers) beyond Cuntur Marca "by a very rugged road through wild mountain ranges" the army reached Cajamarquilla (modern Bolívar), marching on to Papamarca and another eight leagues to Raimipampa (modern Leymebamba). Raimipampa means "field of the chief festival of the sun," a name that "was given and the original name suppressed, because after [Topa Inka] had taken this place, which stands in a very beautiful valley, he celebrated this festival there...."

Why did the Inka invest such effort and time not only conquering, but also reconquering the region? Topa Inka's son, Wayna Qhapaq, then occupied with wars of conquest far to the north in Ecuador, had to rush back to the area twice to suppress uprisings. "[Wayna Qhapaq] received news that the great province of Chachapoya, on finding him busily engaged in wars and conquests...had rebelled, relying for success on the possession of a large and warlike population and a rough and difficult country. They had killed the Inka's governors and captains under pretense of friendship, and slain many of the common soldiers and captured many more, intending to use them as slaves."

The Inka emperor dispatched his troops to Chachapoyas, where "he hoped to inflict severe punishment on the natives." Reaching the Marañón, where "he ordered the rafts to be turned into a bridge by making a chain of them across the water," he marched to Cajamarquilla, intending to "lay it to waste." There, "[He] met such resistance; so much that twice he had to make a hasty retreat to the fortresses he had built for defense. But with reinforcements...he marched upon the Chachapoyas once more and inflicted such a defeat on them that they sued for peace, and laid down their arms."

One of the fortresses Wayna Qhapaq may have retreated to is a site, since destroyed by modern road building, reported on the west bank of the Marañón, near the modern bridge at Balsas, called by locals "Castillo del Puente de los Gentiles" or "del Inka."

Yet, despite the hardships and rebellious subjects, the region's human and natural resources must have been extremely desirable to the Inkas. As noted, the region straddled zones with access to tropical forest products, resources vital to the Inka. Early Spanish documents speak of rich gold mines, but the Inka probably valued the area more as a source of coca, medicinal and hallucinogenic plants and herbs, honey and beeswax, cacao and wild vanilla, vegetal dyes, animal pelts, the hardwood of the chonta palm, feather cloth, and the feathers of tropical birds used to decorate high status textiles. Much of the region's output was probably dispatched to Cajamarca, an important Inka administrative center some 250 kilometers to the west, and staging area for Wayna Qhapaq's Ecuadorian campaigns.

### *Inka Rule*

The Inka presence in Chachapoyas amounted to a brief, yet intense, 60 or so years. The Inkas not only made an impact on local religion and language, but also transformed the region politically, imposing strict control over the local population and reshuffling the power of the *kurakas*. Topa Inka divided the province into administrative units of tribute payers composed of *pachaka* (100), *waranqa* (1,000), and *hunu* (10,000) heads of household. The entire province is said to have contained three *hunu*, or 30,000 tribute paying heads of household, but this could be an ideal number.

Moreover, the Inka dispatched the Chachapoya as *mitmaq*—colonists—to other parts of the empire, sending them as far away as Lake Titicaca, where there is still a town on the Copacabana peninsula called Chachapoyas. By some estimates, the Inka shipped out as much as 50 percent of the population, while others were simply killed.

In turn, the Inka resettled the region with bureaucrats from Cusco, potters and farmers from other parts of the realm, as well as with people loyal to the Inka emperor and whose mere presence foiled local foment. The pottery-producing community of Huancas, just north of the department capital of Chachapoyas, for instance, is inhabited by the descendants of Wanka (Huancas) *mitmaq*, sent out during the reign of Wayna Qhapaq from the Mantaro valley east of Lima. Still others, such as 200 Chupaychu from Huánuco, manned garrisons, to quell any rebellions should they occur. According to some sources, *mitmaq* from the north coast controlled the river crossing at Balsas.

The Inka broke up former political alliances and power groups among the *kurakas* by naming lesser lords as principal *kurakas*. They curried the favor of the *kurakas* by lavishing them with gifts of women as wives and presents of fine cloth as well as other prestige items such as ceremonial wooden drinking cups known as *keros*, and woven bags, *chuspas*, to carry coca leaves. (Coincidentally, archaeologists uncovered burial offerings of Inka style *keros* and *chuspas* at the Laguna de los Cóndores *chullpas*, probably imported into the region and bestowed as gifts.)

Yet many Inka policies kindled resentment among the *kurakas*, especially those whose status had diminished as a result of Inka political reorganization. In the confusion of the civil war between Wayna Qhapaq's sons Atawalpa and his half-brother Waskar that followed the death of their father, many *kurakas* tried to recreate their former *kurakazgos* and several Chachapoya lords sided with Waskar.

### *Inka Settlements*

In Cochabamba, “which in those days was very large and had many luxurious buildings” and “very fertile lands,” the Inka built an administrative center and seat of an Apo, or provincial governor. Cochabamba’s “fertile lands” produced excellent maize, and grinding stones (*chungos*) point to ancient mining activities.

Located at the junction of the Huánuco Pampa and Cajamarca roads, Cochabamba is one of the few Inka sites in the region to boast classic, imperial style



architecture with double jambled doorways, fountains watered by an 8 kilometer-long canal, large halls —*kallankas*— designed as temporary housing or used to stage ceremonies in rainy weather, and *kancha* compounds (rectangular structures surrounding courtyards). Little remains of Cochabamba's former glory, however, because local inhabitants recycled Inka building stones for their church (where an Inka lintel serves as the altar) and other structures.

Like similar centers, Cochabamba not only housed administrators but also served as a cult center and seat of an *aqllawasi*, a residence of the so-called chosen women who wove fine cloth and brewed *chicha* —maize beer— for the religion. Stone foundations uncovered in the former Inka plaza may have formed part of the center's *ushnu* (a stepped dais that served as a viewing platform for visiting dignitaries and/or was used in rituals involving the pouring of liquid offerings into a stone-lined basin on top of the *ushnu*).

Inge Schjellerup excavated two small sets of storehouses, or *qollqa*, near Cochabamba. Inka administrative centers located along the Qhapaq Ñan, the main highland road between Quito and Cusco, often contained hundreds of storehouses. The paucity of Inka storage facilities in Chachapoyas in general and in Cochabamba in particular, may reflect the region's location far from the main highland artery. As noted, most of the region's output was probably shipped to Cajamarca.

The Inkas built roads in Chachapoyas, basing part of their network on earlier, Chachapoya roads. They extended the road from Cochabamba to Levanto, near the modern department capital, where they also built an administrative center, probably to govern the northern part of the province. Lateral roads ran east to the *entradas* or gateways to the tropical lowlands. Along the roads the Inkas built bridges, *tampus*, or rest stations, as well as posts, or *chaskiwasi* for the chaski runners who, running in relay, conveyed messages throughout the empire.

One such lateral road led to Laguna de los Cóndores, situated in the heart of territory once occupied by the Chilchos people, a group of *ayllus* that formed a subgroup of the Chachapoya polity. The Chilchos inhabited the area east of Leymebamba and northeast of Bolívar, between the Huabayacu and Chilchos rivers, both tributaries of the Huayabamba that flows into the Huallaga. Early Spanish documents report that in 1572 the Chilchos comprised five *waranqa*, or 5,000-tribute paying, heads of household divided, in turn, into nine *ayllus*.

No doubt, Laguna de los Cóndores featured in the sacred geography of the Chilchos, who may have regarded it as their *pacarisca*, or place of origin. When the Inka conquered the area in the late 1400s they appropriated the Chilchos-Chachapoya burial sites, physically and spiritually usurping the sacred tombs of the Chilchos' ancestors overlooking a venerated lake, so that *their* ancestors, in turn, assumed power and control over the Chilchos *pacarisca*.

The Inka presence in Chilchos territory is pervasive, and the area features some of the few known sites in the Huallaga watershed that contain Cusco-style architecture. Located along stone-paved roads flanked in parts by low walls, the Inka installations in Chilchos territory apparently had multiple functions: *tampu* or way stations as well as cult centers and garrisons that served as visible reminders of Inka power. Here, suggests Inge Schjellerup, the Inka garrisons may have been serviced by local people. The Inka also tapped mineral resources, judging by abandoned mines in the area. At the same time, these and other cloud forest settlements in the Huallaga watershed may have functioned as staging areas for encounters between the Chachapoya and groups such as the Hibito and Cholón, who occupied territories sandwiched between those of the Chachapoya and lowland forest people, to exchange tropical forest products for those of the highlands.

At Pukarumi, located on the Huabayacu upriver from the modern settlement of La Morada, the Inkas constructed a walled site with a level plaza reached by ramps. A 36 meter-long *kallanka*, designed to house passing armies or *mitmaq* and stage ceremonies in bad weather, flanks the plaza. The plaza also contains a sunken fountain, a *kancha* compound and two platforms, one of which appears to have been an *ushnu*. Pukarumi's location at a bottleneck in the valley is strategic and easily defended. A few kilometers down river along the Inka road lies Tampu Eje, with a large plaza, a 28 meter-long *kallanka* and two fountains, apparently under construction on the eve of the Spanish invasion. Farther downriver, at the confluence of the Huabayacu and Hornopampa rivers, researchers recorded the remains of Chachapoya and Inka constructions as well as agricultural terraces and, surprisingly, the ruins of a chapel, part of an abandoned sixteenth or seventeenth century mission.

Flanking Chilchos territory to the west, on the shores of Laguna La Sierpe, the Inkas built an impressive installation in Atué, at the strategic junction of the Leymebamba and Huabayacu roads. Atué lies at 3550 meters, overlooking the origin of the Atué river, a major tributary of the Utcubamba. No doubt, this imbued the site with added significance. The modern name "Atué" is the Chachapoya Quechua rendering of "Hatun," or great, an honorific given to only the most important Inka settlements.

Because much of the Inka masonry has been pilfered to build modern houses and farm walls, little remains of Atué's former grandeur, aside from two finely built Inka baths or fountains, scattered constructions downriver from Atué, and the remains of an *ushnu* on a terminal moraine overlooking Laguna La Sierpe. The lake's outlet flows through subterranean canals to emerge as the river, and also supplies the two fountains. Two Chachapoya sites, La Peña Calata and Cabildo Pata, overlook the Inka settlement.

## The Spanish Invasion

Like many other Andean peoples, the Chachapoya at first sided with the Spaniards in the mistaken belief that Spanish rule would be less onerous than Inka rule. But the onslaught of European diseases and Spanish demands to serve as porters on expeditions into the Amazon lowlands taxed the people of Chachapoyas. Furthermore, the Spaniards stripped the *kurakas* of their power, took the *ayllus'* best farmlands for themselves, and moved people from their scattered settlements into Spanish-style towns. People were now forced to pay tribute to new overlords who gave them nothing in return. The arrival of the Spaniards brought only renewed suffering to the Chachapoya people as the revealing census records, detailed below, demonstrate.

### *Colonial Chachapoyas*

In 1535 Alonso de Alvarado rode into Cochabamba accompanied by four horsemen and three foot soldiers (though he may not have been the first Spaniard to visit the region, for there are reports that Hernando de Soto made a brief foray into the region in 1532.) At Cochabamba, Guaman, a *kuraka* and bureaucrat who served the Inkas, greeted Alvarado. In 1532, Guaman had encountered the conquistador Francisco Pizarro in Cajamarca, following the capture of the Inka emperor, Atawalpa.

Imprisoned in November 1532, Atawalpa had tried to secure his freedom by offering to pay Pizarro and his men a ransom of gold and silver. At today's values this ransom is estimated to have consisted of gold worth \$30-50 million and silver worth another \$1-2 million. Atawalpa's effort was in vain, however. It only fueled Spanish gold fever, and his captors killed him in July 1533, shortly after the ransom had been delivered.

Two years after Atawalpa's murder, Alvarado and his men "arrived at Cochabamba where they were well received by the natives. He told the caciques [chiefs] and the lords that he ... would inform all of them of our sacred religion, because to be saved they should not worship the Sun or stone statues, but God Almighty...They and their wives gathered in the plaza, and they did a dance arranged according to their custom. They came adorned with pieces of gold and silver, and then made a mound with all of it and gave it to Alvarado."

Guaman — christened and named Francisco Pizarro Guaman in honor of the conquistador — had ingratiated himself with Pizarro, who appointed him principal *kuraka* and "Lord of all the land of the Chachapoyas and of the land of the Inka as well as of the herds and farmland and clothing and their services and *yanakuna* [servants] and litter-bearers of the *kurakas*."

Alvarado promised to return to Cochabamba. Leaving a few Spaniards behind, he recruited some 80 horsemen and foot soldiers in Trujillo with the gold and silver given to him in Cochabamba. He returned to Cochabamba a few months later,

impressing the people with his well-armed soldiers: “They appeared with bucklers and swords or crossbows, short coats, and strong padding, useful for the war here, and the horsemen with their lances and morions [a helmet without a visor] and other armor made of cotton.”

Alvarado ordered Guaman to consult the record keepers, *kipukamayus*, and supply him with information on the local population and its resources. *Khipus* — dyed and knotted strings suspended from a cord — served as the principal Inka record-keeping device. In Quechua, *kipu* means, “knot.” Inka administrators, known as *kipukamayus* (“knot makers/keepers”) used the *kipus* to record statistical information such as census counts, amount of tribute and storehouse contents. Moreover, some *kipus* recorded narrative information, including genealogies, histories and even poems and songs.

Alvarado told Guaman “that he should have *kipu* accounts of all the *waranqa* [1,000 tribute payers] and *kipu* that were to be had in the province and that he should inform himself of all the others that were had before said province of the Pacallas so that when he [Alvarado] returned from Lima where he was going to meet with Don Francisco Pizarro, he would tell him about what he had learned.”

In 1536, however, Manco Inka, another of Wayna Qhapaq’s sons, sparked a rebellion against the Spanish invaders, forcing Alvarado and his men to leave Cochabamba and rush to the aid of their fellow Spaniards besieged in Cusco and Lima. Failing to oust the Spaniards from Cusco, Manco Inka escaped to Vitcos in the forested fastness of Vilcabamba, northwest of Cusco.

According to his son, Titu Cusi Yupanqui, Manco Inka was invited by “some Chachapoya captains” to seek refuge in Chachapoyas. “My father,” wrote Titu Cusi Yupanqui, “left Vitcos [Vitcos] because some Chachapoya captains told him that they would take him to Rabanto [Levanto]” where there “was a fine fortress where they could defend themselves against their enemies.” This “fine fortress,” suggests the historian John Hemming, may have been none other than Kuelap.

Then again, others argue that the “fine fortress” was probably located in or near Levanto itself, an Inka stronghold and administrative center. Although Manco apparently did set off for Levanto, “which is towards Quito,” for some reason he abandoned his journey, perhaps fearing treachery from the Chachapoya (many of whom had sided with the Spaniards) or sensing that Vilcabamba offered a safer and more strategic refuge than Chachapoyas, which was so removed from events in Cusco.

### ***Spanish Settlements***

Alvarado did not return to the region until 1538, when he again marched into Cochabamba, this time accompanied by 250 soldiers. Ordered by Pizarro to establish a Spanish city, he founded San Juan de la Frontera de Chachapoyas at La Jalca. Sixteenth-

century Spanish documents again attest to the Spaniards' reliance on *kipukamayusqs* from the region in setting up the Spanish colonial administration.

In recognition of their service, the Spanish crown awarded Alvarado and his men with *encomiendas*, granting them Indians "in custody" to use as labor. "...In the town of La Jalca Alonso de Alvarado divided all the Indians of the province among the Spaniards who were with him; which he did according to the *kipu* accounts with information supplied by Guaman; and in the division Alonso de Alvarado took for himself this *repartimiento* of Leymebamba and Cochabamba, Kuelap and Pausamarca."

San Juan de la Frontera de Chachapoyas survived for only nine days in La Jalca, where the cold climate and illness ("the city was unhealthy," noted an eyewitness), forced the Spaniards to abandon La Jalca and reestablish their settlement near Levanto. But Levanto faced hostilities from renegade Chachapoya and the resident Spaniards again requested that the city be moved to a less vulnerable location. Around 1545 San Juan de la Frontera de Chachapoyas was transferred to its present site, today the department capital of Chachapoyas.

Accompanied by 3,000 troops and bearers, Alvarado went on to explore and "pacify" lands to the east, establishing Santiago de los Valles de Moyobamba in 1539. "The land," noted Cieza "is very populated, and the Inkas always kept a garrison there because the people are very spirited." Like the Inkas, the Spaniards confronted several rebellions, among them an uprising in the region of the Chillao, north of Chachapoyas.

Beginning in the 1570s under the administration of the Viceroy Francisco Toledo, Spanish officials began removing native peoples from their dispersed settlements and resettling them in Spanish-style towns known as *reducciones*. These towns, often located considerable distances from the native communities and their burial sites, were laid out on a grid plan with a central plaza and a church to facilitate religious indoctrination and colonial administration, particularly the collection of tribute.

Not only did the Spaniards ignore the ancient Andean custom of locating settlements in areas that afforded people access to myriad resources, but they also completely disregarded the age-old social system of the *ayllus*, lumping together several *ayllu* communities and their lords, or *kurakas*, into one *reducción*. By ignoring the ethnic and political ties that once sustained the communities, quarrels erupted over leadership and land tenure. Legal squabbles among the disenfranchised *kurakas* over land rights and the succession of the *kurakas* have left us valuable testimonies of the early years of Spanish colonial rule. Stripped of their power, the *kurakas* were reduced to collecting the tribute of their former subjects for their new masters.

The Chachapoya had provided the Inkas with their labor, receiving in turn the gifts and hospitality that Andean reciprocity and institutionalized generosity had traditionally bestowed. While the system certainly was not ideal for many Inka subjects, the tribute and forced labor demanded by the Spanish mines, sugar mills and sweat shops (*obrajes*) strained peoples' already diminished resources. The Spaniards also

introduced new farming methods, crops and animals. Spanish *encomenderos*, who possessed *encomiendas*, required “their Indians” to deliver goods such as silver, cloth, wheat, maize, potatoes, “birds of Castile” (chickens) and pigs from their communities as tribute. Faced with spiraling poverty and suffering, many people succumbed to European diseases or simply fled.

The *reducción* of Leymebamba contained Indians from the *ayllu* of Chuquibamba, among others. The original Spanish settlement of Leymebamba was founded in the 1550s in what is today San Miguel, site of the Museo Leymebamba, with a few houses surrounding a plaza flanked by a small chapel, whose ruins are still visible. Leymebamba’s strategic location at the confluence of the Atuén and the Pomacochas rivers – which form the Utcubamba – as well as its vicinity to the gold mines of Gollón and Santo Tomás de Quillay influenced its siting. “...Today [it] is already a small town founded among some mountains...A moderate river runs through it, which at times flows above ground and at others hides underground.” Even today during the dry season the Atuén river flows underground, emerging several kilometers downriver from Leymebamba.

By 1563 an Augustinian friar, Juan Ramírez, had established San Agustín de Leymebamba: “The town of Laimbamba...at the time was a big town, with thousands of Indians...they were the most rebellious Indians against the Faith in all the surroundings.” Ramírez “built churches, decorated altars...illustrated the cult and converted many souls,” using Leymebamba as a base for his evangelizing missions to the east, probably via the Chilchos valley to the Huallaga. A small wooden crucifix found as a burial offering at Laguna de los Cóndores and today displayed in the Museo Leymebamba, may be the result of one of Ramírez’s missions. (The *chullpas* at Laguna de los Cóndores continued to be used into early Spanish colonial times. Archaeologists also found glazed pottery and glass beads, but the *chullpas* obviously escaped the missionary zeal of the Spanish clerics, who would have destroyed them and their contents.)

The region was especially hard hit by the European-introduced disease such as smallpox, measles and diphtheria that swept across Chachapoyas in the wake of the Spanish invasion. By some accounts, within 200 years of Alvarado’s first meeting with Guaman in Cochabamba, more than 90 percent of the region’s estimated 300,000 people had perished. “The Indians are so reduced in number that these lands are almost depopulated,” lamented the Chachapoyas town council records of 1540.

Stark census records back up the town council’s records: the 1549 census lists 17,550 tribute payers, or a population of 87,750. (Tribute payers are heads of household. Multiplying the number of tribute payers by five, the size of an average family, provides an approximate idea of population size). Only some 40 years later, in 1591, the number of tribute payers had plunged to 7,045 (35,225) and by 1608 it had plummeted to 4,000, or 20,000 people.

In 1549 Alvarado, faced with the dwindling fortunes of his *encomienda*, renounced his *encomienda* claim to 1,000 tribute paying Indians under the *kuraka* Quinjo and 1,500 tribute-paying Chilchos under the *kuraka* Ancinga. Viceroy La Gasca divided Alvarado's former *encomienda* into two *repartimientos* (a subdivision of a province): Leymebamba and Cochabamba along with the Huancas *mitmaq* and Moyobamba went to Juan Perez de Guevara, while the *repartimiento* of Los Chilchos was granted to Alejandro Medina. At the time, Guevara's *repartimiento* was valued at 4,000 pesos, but by 1571 its' worth had dropped to 3,600 pesos and by 1578 it had dipped to a paltry 500 pesos, excluding the Chilchos.

The bleak census records mirror the fall in value of the *repartimientos*. The Repartimiento of Leymebamba and Cochabamba, for instance, listed 3,000 tribute payers (15,000 people) in 1535, undoubtedly a number taken from the *kipu* records. Some 30 years later the number had dropped to 912 (4,560 people) and by 1601 the records list only 413 tribute payers (2,065 people).

Despite the hardships, throughout colonial times Chachapoyas continued to serve as a key, albeit isolated, production area, thanks in large part to the high quality textiles produced in the region. In fact, the region's fame as a center of textile production — so esteemed by the Inkas and even noted by the chronicler Cieza in the sixteenth century — continued well into the eighteenth century, with local weavers manufacturing bedcovers, sheets, shirts, stockings, breeches, fine shoes, and cotton cloth for sails.

Hundreds of years before their subjugation by the Inkas and the Spaniards, the Chachapoya created a spectacularly complex civilization in the cloud forest of northern Peru, embraced by the Marañón and Huallaga rivers. Today, the most visible reminders of the Chachapoya legacy are the tombs clinging to cliffs and the settlements of circular stone constructions sprawled along forest clad mountaintops and ridges throughout the region.