

SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION

TIME

GREAT DISCOVERIES

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Sacrificial Lambs

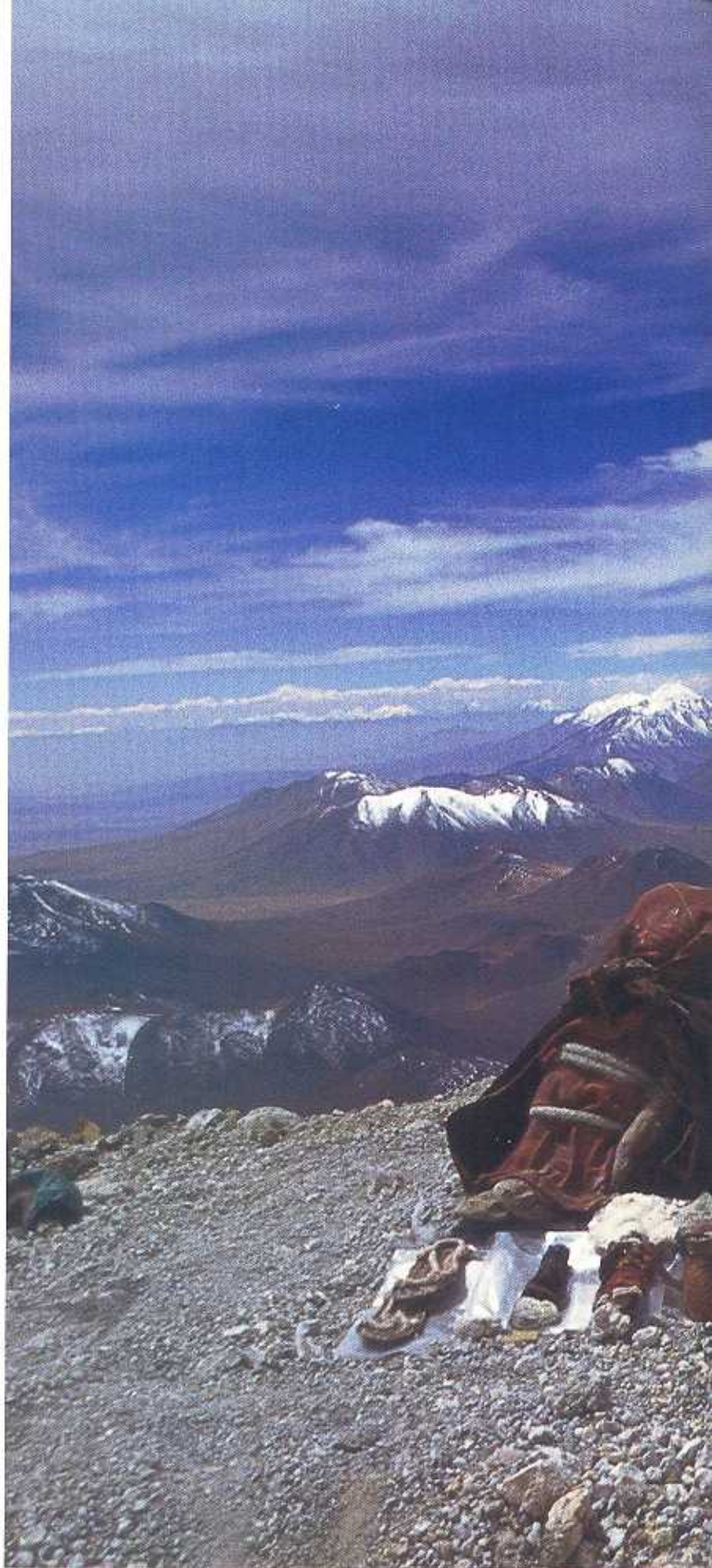
By modern standards, the hostile summit of Mount Lullailaco, in Argentina's Andes, is no place for kids. But the ancient Inca saw things differently, and so it was that one day some 500 years ago, three children ascended the frigid, treacherous upper slopes of the 22,000-ft. peak. They would not return. Once at the summit, the children—two girls and a boy, between eight and 15 years old—were ritually sacrificed and entombed beneath 5 ft. of rocky rubble.

And there the story might have ended but for the work of Johan Reinhard, an archaeologist funded by the National Geographic Society, who scales the Andes in search of sacrificial remains. He had already located 15 bodies, including the famed ice maiden he found in 1995. But these three, whose discovery he announced in April 1999, are by far the most impressive. They were frozen solid within hours of their burial. Two of the bodies are almost perfectly preserved; the third was evidently damaged by lightning. The children's internal organs are not only intact but also still contain blood.

A wealth of artifacts was buried along with the bodies: 36 gold and silver statues, small woven bags, a ceramic vessel, leather sandals, a small llama figure and seashell necklaces. The head of one of the girls sports a plume of feathers and a golden mask. Bundles of food wrapped in alpaca skin indicated that the children came from the Incan social elite. But the real riches were within: the preserved bodies gave scientists an unprecedented look at Incan physiology.

Photograph by Johan Reinhard—*National Geographic*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT Scientists examined the children's stomachs to find out what they ate for their last meal, their organs for clues about their diet and their DNA to establish their relationship to modern-day ethnic groups





ARON K. STEPHENSON/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



THE INCA ICE MAIDEN

Four years before he found the mummies pictured at left, Johan Reinhard and his Peruvian assistant Miguel Zárate discovered the well-preserved remains of an adolescent girl on Mount Ampato in Peru, above. That listed the discovery as one of the 10 most important scientific events of 1995. The kneeling posture in which the body was found indicates that the girl may have been praying at the time of her death, a clue that she was perhaps a human sacrifice. The remains were examined at Johns Hopkins University Medical Center Hospital in 1996. DNA testing showed that the young woman shared the genetic profile of modern-day Panamanians, but also that of people from Taiwan and Korea, supporting the theory that the first Americans may have migrated from Asia. When the "Inca Ice Maiden" was displayed at National Geographic headquarters in Washington in 1996, Senator Joe Lieberman quipped: "In high school, she dated Bob Dole."