

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPEDITIONS ATLAS



TRUE STORIES OF THE ADVENTURERS
WHO HELPED DEFINE OUR WORLD

AMUNDSEN • COUSTEAU • HILLARY • GRIGGS • LINDBERGH • LEAKEY
BYRD • EARHART • BALLARD • PEARY • BINGHAM • BISHOP • GOODALL
WASHBURN • FOSSEY • GLENN • STEGER • AND MANY MORE

FOREWORD BY PETER H. RAVEN

JOHAN REINHARD AND HIS QUEST FOR THE INCA MUMMIES

Explorer-anthropologist Johan Reinhard's 1995 trek to the summit of Peru's 22,000-foot-high Nevado Ampato might not have been such a dramatic success if the nearby volcano, Sabancaya, hadn't awakened at the same time. Drifting ash darkened Ampato's snows, causing more absorption of the sun's heat and thawing some of the ice. This process helped expose a 500-year-old shrine containing the mummified remains of a teenage girl and caused her corpse to plummet to an icefield below. Reinhard found the body there, still frozen and intact, with perfectly preserved clothing and other artifacts that, upon detailed analysis later, should reveal new information on the Inca, ranging from ancient diet to religious beliefs.

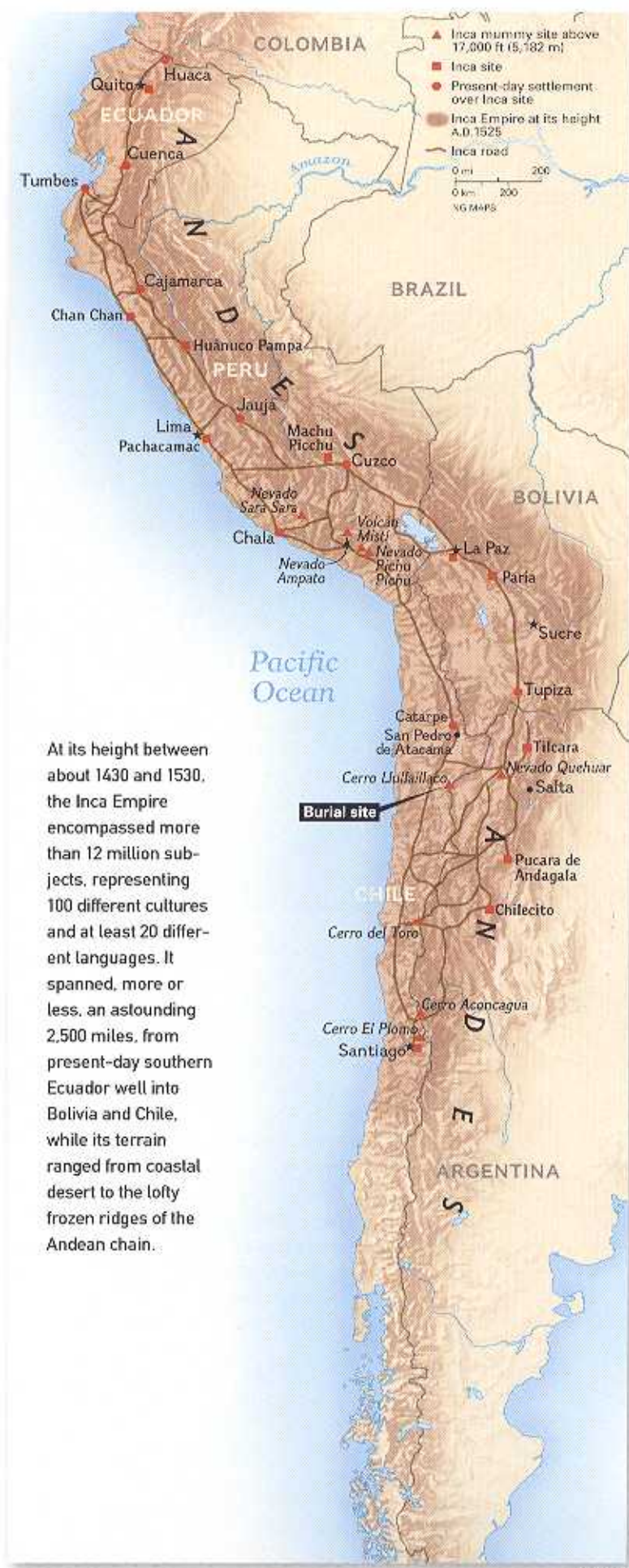








Reinhard, a Society grantee, reaches out to another Inca mummy (left)—this one partly burned by a lightning strike that penetrated more than four feet underground. His team found the remarkably well-preserved girl atop Chile's Cerro Llullaillaco, in a bedrock crevice near the summit. Close by in other crevices lay the remains of a teenage girl and a boy about eight years old. All had been sacrificed. Yet beneath her carefully plaited hair, the teenager's face (above) still wore a placid expression. Reinhard surmised that the youths probably had been rendered unconscious by the chill altitude and alcoholic drink during a ceremony and had died expecting immortality as participants in a sacred rite honoring the spirit of the mountain. Interred with them were numerous Inca statues, some elaborately costumed, along with delicately woven sandals, pottery, textiles, and dozens of other artifacts.



At its height between about 1430 and 1530, the Inca Empire encompassed more than 12 million subjects, representing 100 different cultures and at least 20 different languages. It spanned, more or less, an astounding 2,500 miles, from present-day southern Ecuador well into Bolivia and Chile, while its terrain ranged from coastal desert to the lofty frozen ridges of the Andean chain.

of the city by the Inca around 1470.

In 1987, Society funding helped archaeologist Walter Alva secure the great mound at Sipán, Peru, from looters who had already begun to sack the rich burials there. Alva's subsequent excavations revealed the treasure-filled tomb of a warrior priest of the Moche culture, which had flourished from about A.D. 100 to 800. The opulent burial contained gold beads made in the form of large peanuts, as well as a gold-and-turquoise ear ornament showing a human figure in full regalia, equipped with a movable nose piece, gold headdress, and war club. It is perhaps the finest example of pre-Columbian jewelry ever found in the Americas.

MORE RECENT SOCIETY-FUNDED expeditions in this region include the remarkable exploits of anthropologist and mountaineer Johan Reinhard. I shall never forget the afternoon in 1995 that Reinhard telephoned me at National Geographic headquarters to say that, only hours before, he had found the 500-year-old frozen body of a young Inca girl near the summit of Nevado Ampato, near Arequipa, Peru. He needed emergency funding to keep the body safely frozen until scientists could study it. The money was granted that afternoon.

Later analysis indicated that this girl of perhaps 13 years had been sacrificed to the sacred mountain. The event took place around the time that the conquistadores first approached the shores of the New World.

Reinhard has since found other amazingly well-preserved discoveries on some of the highest summits in the Hemisphere, and will doubtless make many more.

In the meantime, the Society's other archaeological work continues. Ann Cyphers, of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, carries on Matthew Stirling's pioneering work at the Olmec center of San Lorenzo, while other archaeologists with National Geographic funding pursue their goals throughout the globe.

One Society grantee looks for clues on social organization in Germany during the Iron Age, while another seeks ceramic samples that will help reconstruct ancient human migrations in the Pacific Ocean. Still another attempts to assess ancient earthquake damage to medieval Silk Road cities in Kazakhstan. The list goes on and on.