

Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui

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Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui was responsible for the growth and development of the Inca Empire during the mid-15th century. He took the early reforms and successes of his father, Viracocha Inca, and transformed the Inca from one of several ethnic chiefdoms in highland Peru to a huge empire controlling much of the coast and highlands of western South America.

Pachacuti's date of birth is unknown. He was the son of Viracocha Inca, the eighth emperor of the Inca. Up to the time of Viracocha Inca's reign in the early 15th century, the Inca had been content with the status quo and didn't venture far from the Incan capital city of Cuzco in modern Peru. Viracocha Inca, however, began conquering neighboring ethnic groups, including the Ayarmaca, who made their home in the southern part of the Cuzco valley. When Viracocha Inca's health deteriorated in the mid-1430s, he named Pachacuti's brother Inca Urcon to succeed him. Around that same time, the powerful Chanca tribe was making an aggressive push for control of the Andean highlands, conquering the Quechua peoples around 1437. By 1438, the Chanca were on the verge of seizing Cuzco from the Inca, and Viracocha Inca and Inca Urcon fled the city.

With the aid of some top generals and nobles, Pachacuti rallied the Incan Army in Cuzco to make a final stand against the invaders. Helped by the arrival of the Quechua and some other allied forces, he defeated the 30,000-man Chanca Army by using his troops in surprise flanking movements at key moments during the Battle of Cuzco. Pachacuti then used his great victory as a springboard to the throne, wresting control of the empire from his father and his brother. After being crowned emperor, he set out to expand the empire beyond the Cuzco valley, leading to the Inca Empire Imperial Wars that were the hallmark of his reign.

Over the next several decades, Pachacuti completed his subjugation of the Chanca, conquered the highland kingdoms of Lupaca and Cajamarca, formed alliances with the Quechua and Charca, and conquered the coastal states of the Ica and Nazca. His strategy of cycling in fresh troops to threatening realms was crucial to his success, particularly during the Battle of Chan Chan in 1468. During that engagement, Incan forces led by Pachacuti's talented son, Topa Inca, captured Chan Chan, the capital of the formidable coastal Chimú culture, leading to the Incan conquest of the Chimú kingdom by 1470.

Pachacuti developed a permanent military system and grand strategy for the empire in carrying out this expansion. The military system consisted of ethnic Incan nobility trained in the arts of war and leadership at schools in Cuzco. Other ethnic Inca were trained at military-style schools and formed the core of Incan armies. He used alliances to provide the bulk of troops from loyal provinces, utilizing their alternative weapon and fighting systems to complement the Incan core. Fortifications like Sacsahuamán on a hill overlooking Cuzco were used to protect road systems and supply depots, and the llama was the pack animal for the expeditions.

The huge expansion of the Inca Empire during Pachacuti's reign created new challenges and problems related to government and resources. Pachacuti responded by rebuilding Cuzco, embarking on a major agricultural project in the Cuzco valley, and instituting a policy of forced resettlement that helped incorporate the various ethnic groups in the Andean highlands and ensure their loyalty to the empire. His use of the *mitmae* (labor tax) allowed for one of the most rapid developments of an empire infrastructure in world history. In addition, Pachacuti established a new state religion based on the worship of the god Viracocha. (Pachacuti's father

had adopted the name of that god during his own reign.)

Sometime around 1471, Pachacuti stepped down and handed the throne to his son Topa Inca. Topa Inca continued his father's expansion of the empire, eventually controlling a large portion of the central Andes region.

MLA:

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