

Expedition INCA ORACLES - Peru and Boliwia

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By

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Mariusz Ziolkowski with Monika Rogozinska on Suriqui Island

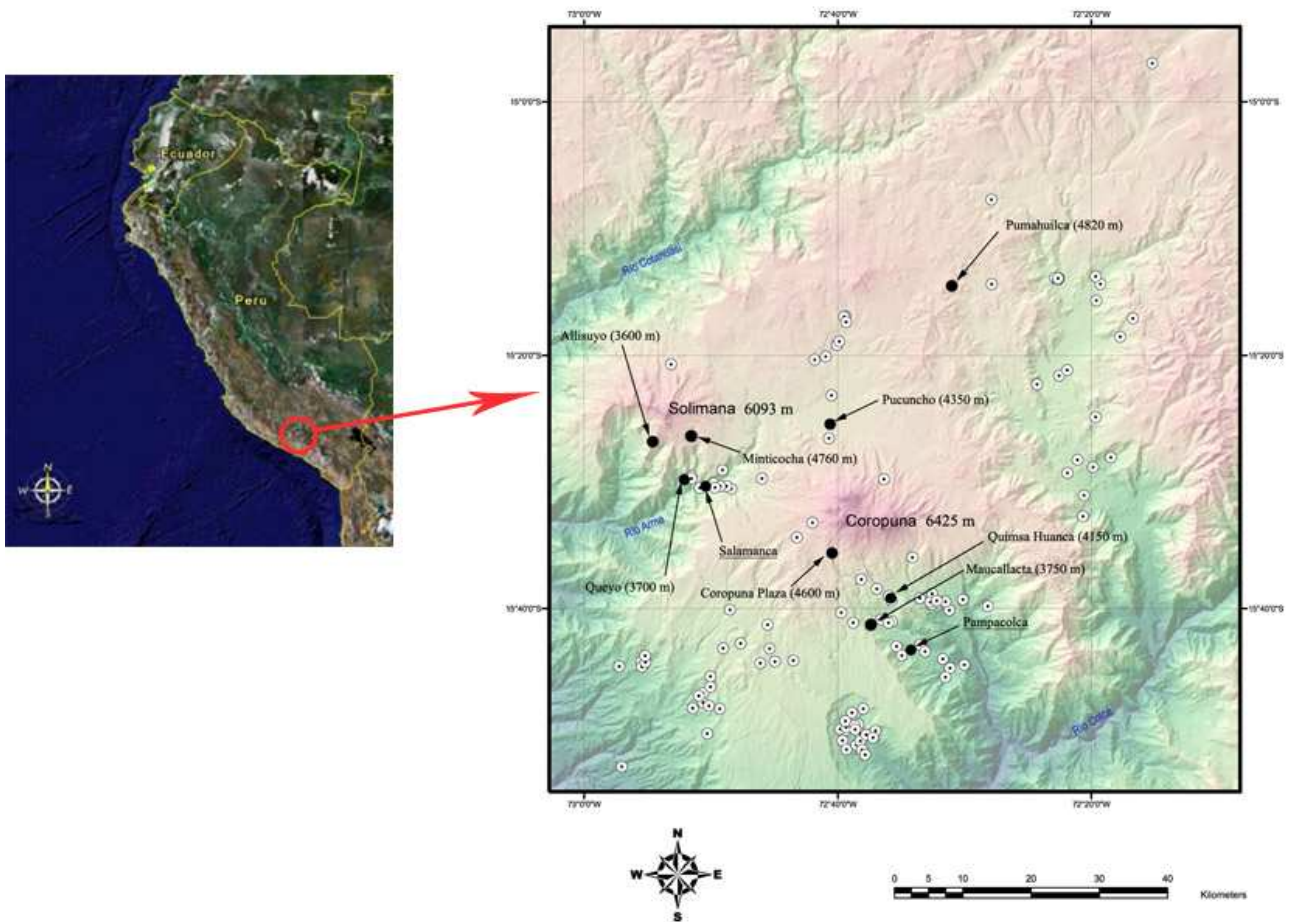
Incas and pre-Incas sites

Peru:

- Maucallacta, 3600-3800 m above the sea level (massive of Coropuna Volcano 6425 m),
- Allisyuo, 3600 m (massive of Solimana Volcano 6093 m)
- The mummy in a grotto of Pumahuilca at 4820 m - the last worshipped mummy in this part of Peru.

Boliwia:

- Inca Uta - the sanctuary on Suriqui Island on Lake Titicaca devoted to the cult of the Sun



Map: A network of Inca sites examined by Polish and Peruvian archaeologists from the Condesuyos Project.

Main purpose of the Project Condesuyos

Polish-Peruvian archaeological mission has found in the Peruvian Andes the largest administrative and religious center, and at the same time the most important oracle of the Condesuyos - one of the four parts or districts of the Inca Empire (known in the Quechua language as Tahuantinsuyo, that is Four Parts [of the world] Taken Together).

The oracle Maucallacta, "Old Settlement" in Quechua language, has circa 250 buildings, tombs and stone platforms. It lies in the massif of the snowcapped Coropuna volcano, an hour drive by car from the present-day town of Pampacolca (2900 m) and 10 hours drive from Arequipa. The road crosses steep slopes of picturesque valleys and is mostly unpaved.



Coropuna
Credit: Monika Rogozinska

It was known from the colonial chronicles, that the Coropuna played an important role here.

The mighty and snow capped massif was believed at the beginning of the 20th c. to be the highest peak of the South America. It was Hiram Bingham, the discoverer of Machu Picchu, who climbed one of its summits and made more proper measurements. (Today we can find two measurements of its highest point: 6377 m and 6425 m). Nevado Coropuna is undoubtedly the highest and largest volcano in Peru. It is located about 150 km northwest of Arequipa.

The 16th c. chronicles mentioned that Coropuna-holy mountain, was a key cultic centre of the Incas, a place where an oracle was open throughout the whole year. The sanctuary enjoyed great prestige among the indigenous people and attracted crowds of pilgrims. The Incas visited it to get prophecies. Finding this oracle was the main aim of the Condesuyos Project.

The project has been led for 11 years by Mariusz Ziolkowski together with Peruvian archaeologist Dr Luis Augusto Belan Franco, professor of the Catholic University of Santa Maria in Arequipa. The Polish-Peruvian archaeological mission has worked along with the specialists from Spain, Germany, France, Netherlands and Argentina. In 2006 volunteers from the Earthwatch Institute took part in the excavations.

Maucallacta a unique place

Most of the buildings of Maucallacta are within a 30 hectare area. The central part of the ruins is on a hill that is crisscrossed with stony terraces, which afford a magnificent, panoramic view across the snow-covered summits of Coropuna and the mouth of the Colca Canyon.

Buildings bare the signs of provincial Incan architecture. They are made of stones bound with clay mortar. (There are no carefully hewn stone blocks, typical for the architecture of Cuzco - the capital of the Inca Empire). The hill is surrounded by three burial grounds.

A pyramidal platform towers above Macuallacta. It was raised on the top of a hill and shaped like a flattened pyramid (reminiscent of one the summits of the Coropuna volcano). The largest man made stone and earth platform could easily accommodate 5000 people. On its edge, the archaeologists have unearthed remains of ushnu – dais for the priest and the dignitaries.

At the base of the platform, the archaeologists found two dump sites with ashes and animal bones, pieces of ceramics and items made of metal and ivory, which were sacrificed to the God of Coropuna Volcano by burning on pyres.



Maucallacta
Credit: Krystian Bielatowicz

During the Flag Expedition monumental stairs, which were the entrance to the main platform, were uncovered from beneath the ashes. The examination of ashes and layers of remains allowed the archaeologists to reconstruct the course of sacrificial ceremonies.

It also indicates that Maucallacta was a holy place hundreds of years before the arrival of the Incas.

We can tell that the site is truly a unique place. In 2007 in the months of June and July alone, the expedition excavated about a ton of shards and ceramic Incan vessels shattered in sacrifice. It also found an ivory hair comb that was used 500 years ago for last time.

All the items found in Maucallacta are placed in the Archaeological Museum of the Catholic University of Santa Maria in Arequipa.



Mariusz Ziolkowski in one of the tombs of Maucallacta
Credit: Monika Rogozinska

A building named Mausoleum in the center of the sanctuary, housed mummies, however, the degree of destruction allows only to suspect that just about two to three important people of Maucallacta were laid there. In front of the Mausoleum chamber, there is a vestibule, in which offerings were given. There are also human remains buried deeper under the altar for offerings.

In the upper parts of the Coropuna volcano no children sacrifices have been found so far, although, from the illustrations of the Indian chronicler, Guaman Poma de Ayala, we know that they were made. It is not an easy task though, since a permanent ice cap of about 130 square kilometres covers the hills of Coropuna. Some remains have already been found on other volcanoes in the vicinity: on Sara Sara, Misti and Ampato where Dr John Reinhard found a frozen Incan sacrifice – a girl named after him “Juanita”.

Mission possible

The scientists are fulfilling another important mission.

The Condesuyos is an interesting, sparsely populated, impoverished and beautiful region. Polish archaeologists have penetrated the area of about 2.5 thousand square kilometers up to the glacier line - 5500 m, in order to localize and document the network of Inca settlements, and religious centers, organized at the turn of the 16th c., such as: Coropuna Plaza (4600 m) and Quimsa Huanca (4150 m) on the southern slopes of Coropuna

The area has not yet been opened to the tourists. Archaeologists who examine and restore the buildings, are working on making the historic sites open to the public, which might improve the economical situation of this poor region of Peru.

A good example is what happened after the exploration of the Colca Canyon in 1981. Polish canoeists from the CANOANDES expedition, who for the first time traveled the virgin canyon, devoted themselves to the promotion of the region and consequently the Cocola Valley became the most popular and most profitable tourist attraction site in Peru, after Machu Picchu.

In the 2007 season, archaeologists were uncovering Maucallacta buildings from bushes and rubble that covers the walls and began setting tourist trails. The work is supervised by a Polish archaeologist Maciej Sobczyk and a Peruvian architect, restorer and archaeologist Gonzalo Presbitero Rodriguez, who was twice on a scholarship from the Polish Government, learning the methods of the famous "Polish school of art preservation".



**Conservation Project protects Acchaymarca - the Inca site on the west side of Coropuna
Credit: Monika Rogozinska**

To convince local people that ruins can be attractive to tourists the Polish Chapter of The Explorers Club organized the first trip to Maucallacta. Monika Rogozinska guided a group of tourists from Poland.

May this inauguration of the “the tourist traffic” help convince local highlanders to protect the ruins and to invest in tourist infrastructure. The first hostel in Pampacolca was built for the archaeologists so that they could have a base camp.



Chatting with women in Salamanca
Credit: Monika Rogozinska



Hospitable local people in Pampacolca
Credit: Monika Rogozinska

Puyas Raymondi, very rare, gigantic plants, grow at 4000-4200 m. They blossom once per hundred years resembling a 12 m column littered with 20 thousands flowers and then die. There is no mention of this place in the travel guides as well as of unused hot springs in the vicinity of Maucallacta.



Puya Raymondi shedding blossoms on the slopes of the Coropuna Volcano



Puya Raimondi
Credit: Monika Rogozinska

Found on the slopes of Solimana

On the 10th of July 2007, after a 10 hour horse ride through steep paths of the Rio Arma valley, archaeologists encountered a completely new and unknown ceremonial complex, related to the cult of the God of Solimana volcano. Allisuyo, is a group of about 100 buildings, over a dozen squares and tombs and a pyramidal platform towering over them all. It was a former settlement expanded by the Incas.



Mariusz Ziolkowski and Maciej Sobczyk while discovering the new Inca site - Allisyuo
Credit: Krystian Bielatowicz

In 2003 they also discovered the Minticocha pilgrimage center (4760 m), with the highest situated kallanka structure (pilgrims house with many entrances) ever to be recorded. It was probably one of the main places of worship of the Solimana volcano in the Pre-Hispanic era.

In the next year they found Queyo (3600 m), mentioned in chronicles as Canjirca – another place where the God of Solimana was worshipped.

All those important locations, previously unknown to the scientific society, constitute the map of the Inca administrative and religious authority over their territory.

Worshipped mummy

Eight hours by car from Maucallacta by the unpaved road and then through wilderness, from the west side of Coropuna, lies Pumahuilca, a mountain with flat summit surrounded by small lakes. After an hour of hiking a herdsman led us to the last worshipped mummy in this part of Peru.



Mummy
Credit: Monika Rogozinska

It is situated in a grotto on the hillside of Pumahuilca at 4820 m. The local shepherds treat the mummy as the patron of herds of llamas. In the past they offered coca leaves and corn beer – chicha as a sacrifice. Some of the items and ceramic vessels were offered 500 years ago, in the Pre-Columbian times. Now, we found a bottle after Inca-cola filled with rotgut. We made an offering of rum, sweets and biscuits.

Inca Uta on Suriqui Island on Lake Titicaca Bolivia



Lake Titicaca and Suriqui Island
Credit: Google maps

800 km from Maucallacta begins Lake Titicaca. On the Suriqui Island there is Inca Uta – a sanctuary devoted to the cult of the Sun. So far it has been known from a brief, unpublished research carried out by Bolivian archaeologists in 1982. The researchers, however, did not examine the most interesting aspect of the site, which is the direct vicinity of the sacred rock and the ceremonial square in front of it. A small recess is hewn out in the rock: most likely a place for an idol. The recess is turned to the East so that it is illuminated by the morning sunrays.

Although this part of the sanctuary has not been uncovered, the evidence shows that it was a special place. What surprises, are two perfectly chiseled polygonal blocks in front of the recess. Such exquisite stonework has not been recorded even in the sanctuary on the famous Island of the Sun on Lake Titicaca. Maybe, the answer to this mystery lies a few hundred years before Incas is in the Tiahuanaco State, whose capital of the same name, was located 22 km away from Lake Titicaca (currently in Bolivia). On the neighbouring Pariti Island, a Finnish-Bolivian expedition discovered in 2004 an enormous offering of beautiful vessels belonging to the Tiahuanaco culture. Is it that Inca Uta is in fact a Tiahuanaco temple? Future seasons of research will answer this question.

Presentation of expedition results

Monika Rogozinska and Krystian Bielatowicz prepared an illustrated article titled "Sacred Andes", for National Geographic Poland, which is due in April 2008.

We cannot, however, enclose any of the breathtaking photos in the Flag Report as they are copyrighted and reserved for the publication in National Geographic Poland and for the exhibition.

The "Sacred Andes" exhibition is prepared by the Polish Chapter of The Explorers Club together with National Geographic Poland, Centre of the Precolumbian Studies of Warsaw University, Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Patronage of UNESCO, "Rzeczpospolita" Polish Daily, TVP Polish Television and Polish Radio.

The exhibition will take place:

In the United States of America:

- Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York 13th-15th March, 2008 during the Explorers Club annual meetings;

In South America:

- Lima, within the framework of the Vth European Union-Latin America and Caribbean (EU-LAC) Summit at the level of Heads of State and Government (April and May 2008), in the Cultural Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru, at the University of Lima, University San Ignacio Loyola and the Pacifico University.

And later in:

: Trujillo and Arequipa (Peru),
: La Paz and Santa Cruz (Bolivia);
: Quito, Guayaquil i Cuenca (Ecuador);

In Poland:

- Warszawa, Poznan, Torun, Krakow, Gdansk, Suwalki and other cities.

Members of the Expedition

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Credit: Krystian Bielatowicz

THE END