

## INCAN RELIGION

Like the other Indian tribes, the Incas worshipped many gods and goddesses. The major Incan god was the god of nature, Viracocha, the creator.

Another Incan god was Inti, the sun god. Gold was the symbol of Inti. The sun god temple is the most important structure in Cuzco, the major city of the Incas. The Incas believed Inti was the father of Incan rulers. They worshipped the ruler as a living god.

Major Incan goddesses included those of the earth and the sea. The Incas also worshipped many lesser gods and goddesses. These included gods of thunder, the Moon, stars, rainbows, and others.

The Incas believed they could learn the will of the gods by divining. Divining is studying objects to find magic signs. Priests would look at things such as animal organs, flames of a fire, or movements of animals, and from these they would try to discover if it was a good day for planting crops, going to war, or making other important decisions.

In addition to the gods and goddesses, the Incas worshipped *huacas*. A huaca was a sacred place or thing. Huacas included mummies of the dead, temples, holy places, and things of nature such as mountains, springs, and stones. Each Incan family had small statues in their homes of huacas. The statues were sacred to that family.

Religious ceremonies were an important part of Incan life. Each family had daily prayers to their huacas. The priests performed daily ceremonies at the various temples. The high priest was a favorite relative of the ruler.

The Incas held a major religious festival during each of the 12 months of their calendar. The Incan year began in December with the Capac Raimi. This means "the magnificent festival." This was the most important and elaborate of all celebrations. Pauca Huaray, in March, celebrated the ripening of the earth. The June ceremony of Inti Raimi was the festival of the Sun. Uma Raimi, the festival of the water, occurred in October.

Some rituals happened inside the temples. The great monthly festivals occurred outdoors. All of the people could take part in them. The celebrations included dancing, feasts, games, songs, and parades. The ceremonies also included sacrifices and offerings. Incas sacrificed animals such as the llama and guinea pigs. At times human sacrifices, including child sacrifices, were part of the rituals.



Winged attendants of the thunder god are shown in profile rather than full face. The figures have rayed headdresses and carry staffs.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Who was the major Incan god?

2. What was the name of the sun god?

3. What was the sun god's symbol?

4. What is divining?

5. What was a huaca?

6. How many months did the Incas have in their calendar?

7. What events were held each month?

8. What was the most important festival? When was it held?

9. Where did the festivals take place? Why?

10. What types of things were sacrificed at festivals?