

PEDRO DE CIEZA DE LEÓN (ca. 1518–1560)
CHRONICLE OF PERU (1553)

The city of Cuzco is laid out on rough terrain, surrounded by mountains on all sides, between two small brooks, one of which runs through the middle of it, because it has been settled to both sides.

In another section stands Karmenka Hill, where at intervals there are small towers which they used to study the movement of the sun, to which they attached great importance. Midway between the hills, where most of the inhabitants resided, there was a good-sized square which they say was a swamp or lake in olden times, and which the founders of the city filled in with stones and mortar and made as it now is. From this square four highways emerge . . . Thus, just as in Spain the early inhabitants divided it all into provinces, so these Indians, to keep track of their wide-flung possessions, used the method of highways.

Nowhere in this kingdom of Peru was there a city with the air of nobility that Cuzco possessed, which . . . was the capital of the empire of the Incas and their royal seat. Compared with it, the other provinces of the Indies are mere settlements. . . . In many parts of this city there were splendid buildings of the Lord-Incas where the heir to the throne held his festivities. There, too, was the imposing temple to the sun, which they called Curicancha, which was among the richest in gold and silver to be found anywhere in the world.

Most of the city was settled by mitimaes, and the great laws and statutes had been enacted, after the Inca custom, which were obeyed by all, both as refers to their vain observances and temples as well as their government. It was the richest city in all the Indies, as far as we can gather, for the treasures assembled for the glory of the Incas had been collected there for many years, and none of the gold and silver brought into it could be removed, under penalty of death. Sons of all the provincial chieftains came to live at this court with their pomp and service. There were numbers of silversmiths and goldsmiths who worked for the Incas

As this was the main and most important city of this kingdom, at certain times of the year the Indians of the provinces came there, some to construct buildings, others to clean the streets and districts, and [to do] anything else they were ordered.

Without doubt there must be great treasures buried in the area of this city, of which those now living have no knowledge. As so many people lived there, and the devil held such sway over them, with the permission of God, that there were many wizards, augurs, and idolators. Nor is the city wholly free of such relics, especially as refers to witchcraft. Near this city there are many temperate valleys where there are orchards and gardens, both of which flourish, and much of the produce is brought to the city to be sold.

Taken from Pedro de Cieza de León, *The Incas*, translated by Harriet de Onis (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 143–149.