



Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Inca Myths & Primary Sources: Analyzing State Power

Overview: The Inca Empire (Tawantinsuyu) did not have a traditional written alphabet. Instead, they used oral storytelling, sacred geography, and knotted strings called *quipus* to record their history. When the Spanish arrived, they wrote down these oral traditions. Today, we must read these "colonial chronicles" carefully, not just as magical stories, but as political tools used by the Inca rulers.

Part 1: Primary Source Analysis

Read the following adapted excerpt based on the writings of Spanish chronicler Pedro Cieza de León (circa 1553), then answer the questions below.

"The local elders say that long ago, the world was in darkness. Then, a creator god named Viracocha emerged from the waters of Lake Titicaca. He commanded the sun, moon, and stars to appear in the sky to bring light. Afterward, he traveled the land, calling the first humans to come out of the earth from caves, springs, and mountains—places we call *pacarinas*. The Sapa Inca (emperor) claims to be the direct descendant of the sun god, Inti, placed on earth to rule in his name."

1. Fact vs. Belief: According to this chronicle, where did the first humans come from? Why do you think the physical landscape (caves and springs) was so important to the Andean people?

2. Political Power: If you were an ordinary farmer in the Inca Empire, how would believing that the emperor (Sapa Inca) is the direct grandson of the Sun change the way you view his laws and taxes?



3. The Colonial Filter: This story was written down by a Spanish explorer, not an Inca priest. Why might a historian be careful when using this text as their only source of information?

Part 2: Myth and Geography

The Incas believed the earth was alive, a concept tied to Pachamama (Mother Earth). They used the landscape to prove their myths were real.

Task: Imagine you are standing in the Inca capital of Cusco. The Sapa Inca has ordered you to build a new temple. Based on the creation myth, which natural feature would you choose to build it near, and why? (Circle one and explain your reasoning). A) A deep mountain cave B) A high-altitude natural spring C) A flat, empty valley

Explanation: _____

Part 3: Critical Thinking – Myth as a Tool

Scenario: You are an Inca general who just conquered a new province. The local people worship a mountain god and do not know about Viracocha or Inti (the Sun).

Your Mission: How will you use the Inca creation myth to bring this new tribe under your control without using military force? (Hint: Think about how the Incas embedded local gods into their own stories).

My Strategy: _____

