

# Kids' Korner

## Incas worshipped Gods from mountaintops

WASHINGTON — More than 20 Inca sites on mountaintops in the Andes have been discovered in the last four years by Johan G. Reinhard, an American anthropologist and mountain climber.

Reinhard thinks he has at last solved the mystery of why the Incas labored up mountains, some higher than 20,000 feet, to build their elaborate stone structures and platforms. They were worshipping the mountains and the gods that supposedly dwelled in and on them, he believes.

At least 50 such mountaintop sites with Inca ruins, remains, and relics have now been found on peaks from southern Peru to central Chile. In the course of his work, Reinhard and some companions set the world's high-altitude scuba-diving record while looking for artifacts in a 19,200-foot-high lake near one of the summits.

### Gods Determined Lifestyle

"The Incas and even peoples of the Andes before them thought the mountain gods determined the weather and controlled the springs, rivers, and underground water sources vital to their harvests and animals," says Reinhard.

"Offerings and sacrifices — sometimes human — made in the sacred places on the peaks were attempts to assure good weather, adequate rainfall, and abundance of crops and herds."

Mountain deity worship also affected the famous Inca legacy of Machu Picchu. The anthropologist thinks the city was built on an 8,000-foot-high mountainside for strategic reasons, but also because the location was perfect for worship. All the peaks in view were considered sacred by the Incas and are still worshiped by their

Peruvian descendants today.

The sacred inti huatana stone, long thought to be a type of sundial, stands in the center of the complex surrounded by four sacred mountains.

"I believe the stone had little to do with the sun," says Reinhard. "It probably represented, and was worshiped as, a major mountain deity in the region."

### Sacrifice To Deities

Present-day offerings to the mountain gods are made far beyond Machu Picchu. The anthropologist estimates that 2 to 3 million people in the andes still sacrifice such things as coca leaves, grain, textiles, and llamas to the deities.

Just as in Inca times, ceremonies include ritual drinking and communal meals, followed by dancing and singing. Llama is a popular main course when it's used as part of the offering.

Human sacrifices may also still take place. In 1942 and 1945, children reportedly were sacrificed in Peru to prevent a drought. Villagers in the central part of the country still talk about human sacrifices from time to time, especially when a major tunnel or road that might anger the gods is being built.

One of the most dramatic examples of human sacrifice from the days of the Incas was found in 1954 by treasure hunters on El Plomo, a peak in Chile — the amazingly well-preserved remains of an Inca boy sacrificed to the gods 500 years ago. Attended by figurines of llamas and a silver goddess found nearby, his body now rests inside a freezer-showcase in a Santiago museum.

When Reinhard heard reports of a similarly well-preserved Inca body buried in the ice on the summit of Quehuar, a 20,106-foot

peak in northwest Argentina, he scaled it in 1981 only to find that looters had beaten him to the site.

They had dynamited the place, probably to get at the artifacts accompanying the remains, and all he found was an ear, a few pieces of cranium, and some textiles plastered against a wall. Later analysis indicated that the ear belonged to a teen-age child.

### More Artifacts Found

On various summits, Reinhard has found grain, textiles, and coca leaves used in Inca rituals. But the most unusual things he found were small human-like statues fashioned from Pacific Ocean sea shells and outfitted with perfectly woven textile clothing.

The Incas valued the red and white spondylus shells more than gold and considered them indispensable in ceremonies calling for rain.

Most impressive, however, were the ruins of buildings and altar platforms on many of the peaks, some with walls five feet thick and 16 feet long.

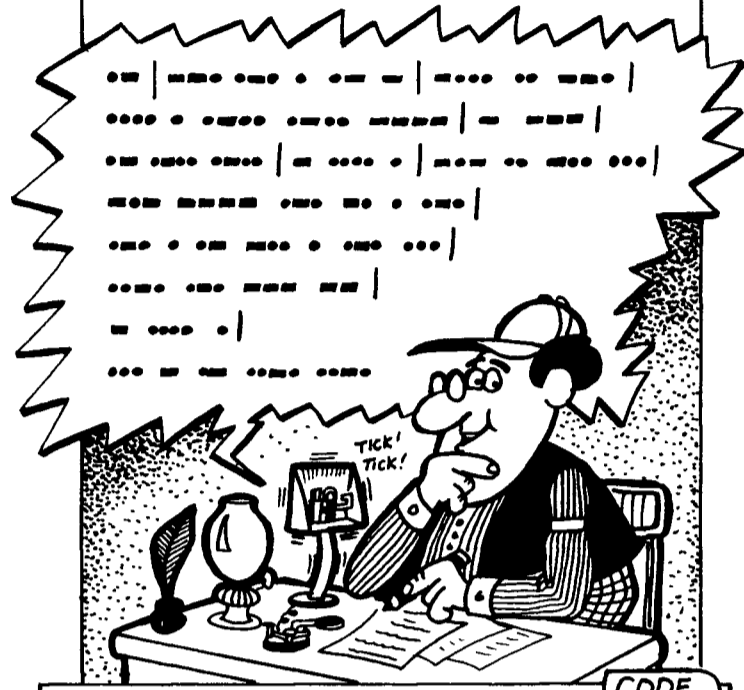
On Chile's Llullaillaco, at 22,057 feet one of the highest volcanoes and archeological sites on Earth, Reinhard and fellow climber Robert Blatherwick found stone buildings, collapsed roofing, bits of ceramics, pieces of textile, firewood, and a sacrificial altar.

To build the altar on top of Las Tortolas in Chile, Reinhard estimates that at least 4,000 baskets of gravel had to be carted 1,500 feet.

Priests and their assistants were probably responsible for the building and maintenance of the lofty sites. They regularly scaled peaks more than 20,000 feet high in leather sandals.

Climbing the Andes today, even with modern equipment, can be

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BY DALE CARPENTER

MESSAGE SAYS: A GREAT BIG HELLO TO ALL THE KIDS KORNER READERS FROM THE STAFF.

risky business. Reinhard has been his hair on end and made his menaced by blizzards and near climbing ax and metal crampons musses from lightning that stood buzz like angry bees.

## Airville Community 4-H Club

The Airville Community 4-H Club met on April 17 at the Lower Chanceford Community Building.

Sandy Barton and Bill Gleaves joined the club.

Rural Life Sunday is scheduled for Sunday, May 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Chanceford Presbyterian Church. The group is planning a trip to the Philadelphia Zoo.

# COLOR THIS!

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| 1. BLACK  | 6. PEACH      |
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| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. BROWN  |
| 4. BLUE   | 9. LT. BLUE   |
| 5. BROWN  | 10. LT. GREEN |

**MOTHER'S DAY: THIS IS A DAY SET APART EACH YEAR TO HONOR ALL THE MOTHERS, WHO SPEND THEIR WHOLE YEAR CARING FOR OTHERS. A DAY FOR HONORING MOTHERS WAS OBSERVED MANY YEARS AGO IN ENGLAND. IT WAS CALLED "MOTHERING SUNDAY." MAY 8, 1914, CONGRESS PROCLAIMED THE OBSERVANCE OF MOTHER'S DAY.**



5-10-84