

CHAPTER
16

Section 4

HISTORYMAKERS **Pachacuti**
Patience in Adversity

“A noble, courageous man is recognizable by the patience he shows in adversity.”—saying of the emperor Pachacuti, quoted by Garcilaso de la Vega, in The Incas (1608)

Pachacuti used a combination of bravery and patience to save the great Incan Empire, which was located in the mountains of present-day Peru. By standing courageously when his people met their most serious challenge, he not only rescued them but also won the imperial throne. He then launched a series of conquests that expanded Incan lands and created the basic institutions that the Inca would follow for many decades.

Born around 1448 with the name Cusi, which meant “joy” or “good luck,” Pachacuti took the name Inca Yupanqui, or “Honored Inca,” when he entered adulthood. He was one of Emperor Viracocha Inca’s many sons. Trained in war, Yupanqui was a fierce fighter who was determined to increase his own power and expand the area of Incan control. As he became a young man, his father grew old and tired of war. Viracocha withdrew from active rule without giving up the throne and named another son, Inca Urcon, as the active ruler and heir apparent. Urcon, however, had little interest in leading an empire. He only cared about pleasure.

During this time, the Inca experienced a severe challenge from another people, the Chancas, who had invaded Incan territory. Rather than leading their people, Viracocha and Urcon retreated out of the Incan capital of Cuzco. Staying to defend his land and people, Yupanqui rallied the defenders who remained. He said that he had experienced a divine vision that guaranteed success. The Chancas attacked the next day. Though outnumbered, the Inca managed to hold their own in the first day of battle. After a restless night, reinforcements arrived. During bitter fighting the next day, the Inca managed to break the attack. They then pursued the fleeing Chancas for six miles, killing every last warrior. A year later, Yupanqui led an attack on the remaining Chanca forces. He won a great battle that ensured Incan control over the whole area.

The victory over the Chancas propelled Yupanqui to the throne. His cowardly brother Urcon was killed, and he compelled his father to pass the imperial crown to him. He took the name Pachacuti, which means “Earthshaker.” Pachacuti

then launched invasions of neighboring areas. Eventually, he was able to extend Incan territory from Lake Titicaca up to modern Quito, Ecuador.

Other groups in the region saw the Chanca attack as a sign of Incan weakness. Leaders of the Cuyo people tried to kill Pachacuti during a celebratory meal. Attackers gave him a vicious blow to the head, leaving a scar that was later visible on his mummified body. His supporters struck back, however, and destroyed the Cuyo people. This, in combination with the defeat of the Chancas, warned other groups not to fight the rising Incan Empire.

Another challenge confronted the Inca as well. Several years of drought hurt them late in Pachacuti’s rule. Because he had created food warehouses, though, the people were able to survive until the rains came again. Pachacuti also took other steps to put the empire on firm footing. He established the royal government, made Quechua the official language, formalized religious practices, and built sacred cities.

Pachacuti even solved the matter of succession. He named one of his sons, Amaru Inca, to follow him. However, Amaru lacked the warlike qualities that Incan nobles wanted in their leader. After five or six years, Pachacuti saw their discontent. He called a meeting of all the nobles and spoke at length about Amaru’s good qualities. Nevertheless, they refused to support his son. The emperor sadly withdrew Amaru from the succession. Some years later, Pachacuti found a suitable heir in his last son, Topa Inca. A superb general, he carried on his father’s conquests.

Questions

Drawing Conclusions

1. Pachacuti had several names, each with a special meaning. What name do you think is most appropriate? Explain.
2. Is it reasonable to call Pachacuti the founder of the empire? Explain.
3. **Comparing** Compare the way Pachacuti named an heir with how his father did it.