

Record: 1

Title: Turmoil and destruction.

Authors: Newton, Roberta M.

Source: Calliope; Mar2000, Vol. 10 Issue 7, p28, 2p, 1 bw

Document Type: Article

Subject Terms: INCAS -- Politics & government
PERU -- History -- To 1548

Abstract: Focuses on the destruction of the Inca rulers during the 16th century. Cause of Inca leader Huayna Capac's death; Defeat of leader Atahualpa by Spanish conqueror Francisco Pizarro; Capture of Tupac Amaru in 1572.

Lexile: 1100

Full Text Word Count: 436

ISSN: 10507086

Accession Number: 2828722

Database: MAS Ultra - School Edition

TURMOIL AND DESTRUCTION

When Huayna Capac became the eleventh Sapa Inca in 1493, the empire was at the height of its power. Around 1525, Huayna Capac died in an epidemic that also claimed the life of his son and appointed heir, Ninan Cuyachi. Archaeological evidence suggests that the two royals, like many other Incas, fell victim to smallpox, a disease European explorers had introduced to the area and against which the Incas had no resistance. The Inca nobles in Cuzco proclaimed Huascar, another son of Huayna and his principal wife, the Coya, the new Sapa Inca. Not everyone, however, agreed with this decision.

The Inca army, which was stationed in Quito, supported Atahualpa, Huayna's favorite son. Quito was also the place where Huayna had spent the latter years of his life, and many members of the royal court lived there. Aware that Huascar considered him a rival, Atahualpa remained in Quito for several years and avoided any contact with him. When Huascar demanded Atahualpa's presence in his court, Atahualpa chose to send ambassadors in his place, but Huascar ordered them killed. Huascar then sent an army to bring Atahualpa to Cuzco. This act led to civil war.

After several bloody battles, Atahualpa's generals captured Huascar, defeated his armies, and triumphantly entered Cuzco. To prevent further opposition to his rule, Atahualpa ordered Huascar's family, his generals, and thousands of supporters killed.

It was during this period of chaos that the Spanish conqueror Francisco Pizarro entered Inca territory with approximately 170 men. At the time, Atahualpa was traveling south to Cuzco for the Sapa Inca ceremony. On November 16, 1532, Atahualpa, accompanied by thousands of Inca warriors, entered the Inca city of Cajamarca for a pre-arranged meeting with Pizarro.

Within minutes, the Spanish had killed Atahualpa's honor guard, taken Atahualpa captive, and slaughtered thousands of Inca warriors. The Spanish had the advantage of guns, cannons, metal armor, and steel swords. The Incas had only battle axes, slings, cotton-padded armor, and arrows. Following Pizarro's orders, the Spanish imprisoned Atahualpa

and, after demanding and receiving tons of gold and silver, they strangled him in August of 1533.

The devastating destruction continued as the Spanish looted the country for treasure. For years, Inca resistance and infighting among the Spanish themselves slowed Spanish domination, but in 1572, the last reigning Inca, Tupac Amaru, was captured, tried, and beheaded.

ILLUSTRATION: Another of Poma de Ayala's drawings, this one shows the meeting of Atahualpa and Pizarro.

~~~~~

By Roberta M. Newton

Roberta M. Newton is a graduate student at Teachers College, Columbia University. She loves to travel and study history.

---

Copyright of Calliope is the property of Cobblestone Publishing, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.