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Community Conservation in the Andes: Possibilities and learning

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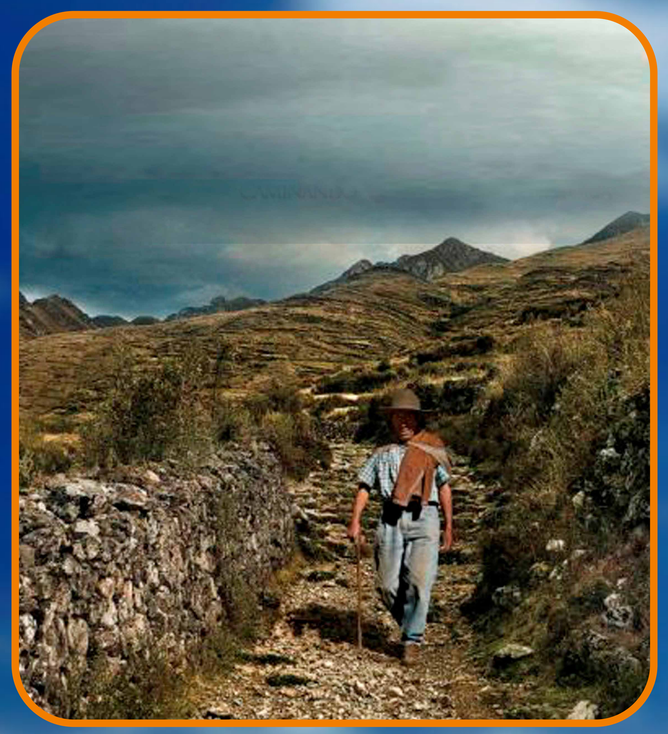

Talking about Qhapaq Ñan implies a deep reflection on the economic, political and cultural order in the Inca Empire. This “road system” had a great relevance during a stage of Andean history where order, in all its aspects, was characterized by the existence of a State that exerted the fiercest control on the labor forces and social and political relationships, which allowed the existence of the most important Empire of pre-Hispanic America.

There is a constant that indicates that the most underdeveloped zones of our countries have better conserved the infrastructure and traditions linked to Qhapaq Ñan its Qhapaq Ñan; in these places the trails are still used by the inhabitants of the most isolated communities that keep the traditions of collective work for their conservation, but who often lack of the mechanisms granted by citizenship. Thus, this work is aimed at increasing the self-esteem of this population by means of the revaluation and respect to their culture and by the empowerment resulting from the initiative of state institutions that may help to make this process effective. We also want to make them aware of their own heritage so that the sustainability required to preserving the cultural landscape results from the appropriation of their environment. The success and development of this regional project will be ensured by the increase of life quality of these peoples.

From the social and political point of view, Qhapaq Ñan allowed the State to be able to establish an effective communication with the different ethnic groups and curacas' kingdoms of the Empire so that it could deliver its political and administrative decisions in such a way that the obedience and reproduction of the Inca dominating model could be maintained. Likewise, the territorial division of the Inca empire in tour suyos was marked by the four main trails that started in Cusco and reached the different parts of the Empire; these tour trails did not only linked the populations, but an entire system of sacred places that symbolically connected the cult to the Inca political and social domination

Cabuya
Scientific name: furcraea andina
Family: Agaváceas
Common names: cabuya, maguey, cardon, fique
Cabuya is a plant typical of the yungas and Andean western slopes. It is an herbaceous plant with long and narrow green leaves with thorns in the edges. It has fleshy, large and fibrous leaves and it reproduces by means of sprouts appearing in the edge of its roots. Threads are made from the cabuya's fiber; paper from its leaves, needles from their thorns and the soapy extract of its leaves is used as detergent.
In pre-Hispanic societies it was used to manufacture fabrics such as nets, slings and other textile fabrics. It was also used in Nazca culture to make shoes, baskets and to build pending bridges. Cabuya is found in Latin American countries such as Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and Argentina.

Preparation of bridge, with advisory of Andean Engineers of the peasant community of Quchue, Province of Canas, department of Cusco.

Two braceras or banisters made of two thick cables that start in the buttress of each side. This element was reinforced in its core by a 1.5¨ iron cable.
Four weighs, based on four thick cables tied to the beans (also known as screws) and which extend to the lower part of the buttress. It is the bridge floor.
Once the bridge structure has been passed from one side to the other, the accessories are installed.
Cirpas, ropes deployed between the weighs and one of the buttresses, tied vertically along the bridge span.
Trabas, thick ropes which that keep the weighs together. They are placed every 50 cm. in average.
Mandiotas, wooden pieces placed across the weighs which help to anchor the bridge to the base.
Masta, bridge polished surface made of branches and fabric to cover the floor and the trabas.
Rope preparation
- Recollection and selection of cactus leaves, removal of thorns.
- Smashing of maguey leaves, with bundle or timber.
- Maceration, plunging in water for 16 days

Thus, the project conducted sensitization works which included maintenance/ conservation workshops, where the inhabitants themselves exposed the techniques they currently use to build and repair houses, as well as the maintenance of the Inca Trail, which has obliged them to develop new ways to preserve it.

One of the most relevant and broad activities was that conducted between the Communities of Llama and Yauya, separated by a 20-meter abyss over the Yanamayo River: an ancient bridge which was planned to be recovered since the 1950s. Based on the work of the Communities and with the participation of Inca Engineers, Qesua Chaka, experts on the technique of pending bridges of Cuzco, a technique for preparation and maintenance of the bridge was developed, this time using some modern elements for restoration.ocks, as well as the location of the necessary clay and rock quarries. Reinforcement techniques used in zones of frequent landslides or hillside erosion were also identified, such as dips and dilatation joints in the stream of water. This information was used to create the direct relation between the traditional architecture of the communities related to Qhapaq Ñan, as well as the ways to conserve their paths during the last 20 years.