

Bridging History: Peter Winn on the Inka

Analyze the following quotation from Peter Winn:

Even the best run and seemingly benign empire often looks different when viewed from the perspective of its subject peoples. Historians studying the Inka Empire through the lens of the ethnic groups they conquered tell a different story than the official Inka story of a benign welfare state, a view confirmed by periodic rebellions and by the collaboration of some Inka subjects with the Spanish conquistadors. But 250 years of oppressive Spanish rule would make even these peoples dream of an Inka restoration. In 1780, a Cuzco kuraka of Inka descent took the name of the last Inka, Tupac Amaru, and rose in revolt against the Spanish bad government. The news that the Inka had returned to claim his kingdom and free his people from Spanish misrule inspired rebellions from Colombia to Bolivia, which took the Spanish four years to suppress and cost a hundred thousand lives in the highland territory whose population was only 1.2 million. Nor did the legacy of the Inkas end with independence from Spain. In our own times, there has been a guerilla group named Tupac Amaru, a soft drink was successfully marketed as Inka Cola, and the national currency has been named Inti and Sol with pictures referring back to the Inka Empire. At bottom, many Peruvians are still looking for their Inka. All empires integrated varied peoples, religions, and cultures under a common political umbrella. They also created difference and inequality by imposing political, social, economic, and ethnic hierarchies. Historians explore the tension between the forces of integration and difference within empires. They examine multiple perspectives of the peoples who built, ruled, and lived within them. In this way, historians identify patterns of common historical experience as well as diversity among empires in world history.

(Peter Winn, Tufts University, interview with Oregon Public Broadcasting, *Bridging World History, Unit 11: Early Empires* [Oregon Public Broadcasting, October 2003].)