

Inca Alchemy: Bifurcation and Reunion in the Inca Catch-and-Release Symbol

Insights from the Peru New Years Trip, 2013-2014

John Major Jenkins © January 8, 2014

Intipunku, Gate of the Sun
facing the sacred site
We climbed the trail into the sky
All is One
we never die
We just dissolve into the light



On the first day of our excursion, we visited the site of Chinchero near the Sacred Valley. A curious flat stone monument portrayed an abstract symbol that also served as a channel for water (see picture above). I found this fascinating. It takes a single stream of water, separates it into two parts and then dumps the two parts into a shallow pool, where it slowly fills and then rejoins as one stream, to continue flowing onward. This symbol

became the leitmotif of the trip, on more levels than one. And it was my very first impression of the Inca world, from the first site our group visited, on December 28, 2013.

After examining that symbol, which I came to call the Inca “catch-and-release” symbol, we walked down the path into a beautiful little ravine where a waterfall was found near a big rock. The ambiance of this place felt like a vector of beauty and gravity, where the water collected into the pool and then flowed onward down the valley.



I immediately sensed I was looking at the same energetic process that the Inca symbol embodied. The water flows downward, sometimes dividing into separate streamlets, to fall into and recollect in the pool, where it brims the edges and flows onward down the natural incline.

It began to drizzle and our group made our way out of the site. Near a restaurant we found an Inca woman weaving with a little foot loom. She was tending her sheep below. She had a bag of weavings that she began to show us. My friend Teol bought a belt. When he showed it to me I was intrigued with the repeating symbol that the old Inca woman had artfully woven into the design. She said it was a heart symbol; later another person said it represented the hoof-prints of the llama. As I looked at it, it seemed like the hearts were tied

together in an energetic flow process that I immediately recognized as another expression of the energetic catch-and-release symbol:





This is apparently an ancient core symbol of the Inca, and it represents the heart flow from one heart to another, one pool of life-force to the next. It also illustrates how a oneness will divide and recombine, suggesting the alchemical process of separation and recombination, of oneness dividing into many and then flowing back into one. Duality and Unity.

Our group of eight people settled into the process of travel, sharing, eating, exploring, and getting to know each other. It can be a great learning experience as people from different backgrounds come together for a short time, often from different parts of the world. We spent the first three nights in Pisac, and made our foray to Chinchero and Moray on the first day. Moray was further along the Sacred Valley, and we reached it

by mid-afternoon. The site consists of three natural earth depressions that the Inca worked into circular terraces.

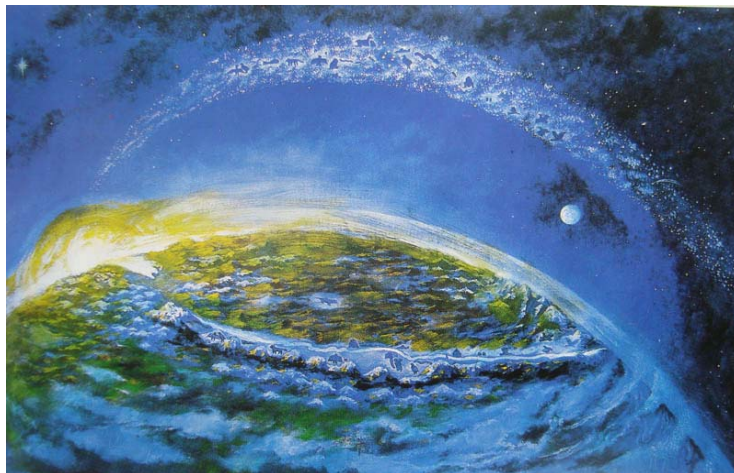
Brien Foerster told us that the site of Moray was believed to be on an energetic line, a ley-line, from Ollantaytambo and another site. As I gazed over the biggest earth-well of Moray, I imagined telluric force threading along the energy grid, flowing into the site and pooling in the circular depression, where it would collected and spill over to continue along the ley-line. It was like the waterfall pool, but designed to collect and hold telluric life-force. It was not like a destructive damn of water, as our culture uses, but a non-destructive energy collection that works with the natural flow of current and lets it flow onward. It dawned on me that this was yet another application of the catch-and-release symbol. I walked down into one of the circular earth-wells of Moray, lay down and fell into a dream that recharged by brain.

It is believed that the Inca creating Moray to amplify earth energy to energize and heal people and plant seeds. From above, the three energy pools of Moray seem to sift

and separate and collect telluric energy without disrupting its flow onward. It is a brilliantly conceived earthwork that recognized natural energy flow in the area and collected it for advantage without the undiscerning rape-and-pillage effects of our “modern” civilization’s approach.



This idea of energy-water flow is reflected in the Inca’s fascination with the Milky Way. The entire Sacred Valley of the Vilcanota River in central Peru is seen to be the earthly counterpart of the celestial Milky Way overhead:



Back at our hotel in Pisac, I noticed the large stands of San Pedro cacti growing in the patio. This cactus is used in ceremony and contains mescaline, the same mind-expanding chemical found in peyote. This foreshadowed our discoveries of the next day.



On day two we headed down the Sacred Valley towards Ollantaytambo. But first we stopped at a strange little site in a side valley --- Naupa Iglesia, the Ancient Church. As we approached, I looked up at the cave high up on the valley's northern flank.

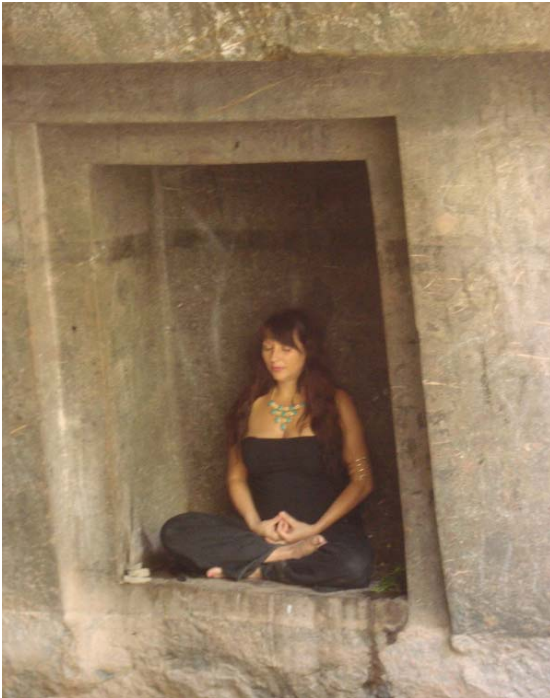


It was clearly formed by the rocky bluff's collapse, many thousands of years ago. In the picture above you can see the dark mouth of the cave, and the exposed rock behind it where the bluff collapsed. We had to walk along a railroad track for a short distance to access the trail, which became a stone stairway going past manmade terraces. People could live here, and further up, beyond the cave, more ruins have recently been found. There was something quite sacred about this spot. As we walked I noticed some cut and desiccated San Pedro cactus trailside. This alerted me to the possibility of shamanic rituals taking place --- and not ancient rites, but much more recent ones! The stairs were steep and we had a fantastic view of the valley. Down below the river roared. Our group solemnly and silently ascended the steps and approached the cave. It

was a wide open cave inset into the bluff. A bizarre megalithic throne seat was prominently situated at the entrance, illuminated from above by the noon-time sun.



The megalithic style of carvings are much older than the Inca style. It is believed that the Inca re-discovered many of the older megalithic sites and reused them for their own ritual purposes. When you first see the stone-throne at the mouth of the Ancient Church site, you immediately want to sit in it. The cave mouth has the effect of collecting the sound of the river and wind into a vortex of high-energy that you feel bathed within. You get the sense of the river flowing by far below, and the wind whipping by. Like the telluric energy collectors at Moray, the cave is a resonant chamber that collects the sound and wind energy. But it's always in flow. When you sit in the



throne, you are bathed right in the center of it and you feel your back connecting deeply into the rock. You are like an eye, a perceiving mind, inserted into the socket of uplifted bedrock. You imagine there must be others out there in the world, at similar shrine sites, communing with the elements as you are now, and you feel a connection with a universal mind from which you and the others came.

Off to the side, another seating area has been cut out of the rock, like a square of butter sliced out with a hot knife. How they did this baffles the mind, as all the corners and surfaces are smooth. What kind of tool could do such work, leaving no jagged edges? When you sit in this side-chair, you sense you have a more objective viewpoint, off to the side, not within the center of the swirling vortex of energy. Needless to say,

the cave is another form of the catch-and-release dynamic. Outside the cave, a little

building of Inca design is off to the side. Near it one sees a large stand of San Pedro. Significantly, the columns have been cut, harvested, in several places. The obvious deduction is that they are being harvested for use in rituals inside the cave.



In fact, there are two stands of harvested cacti, one on each side of the cave, that can be seen at a distance from the cave's mouth:



Obviously, the Naupa Iglesia is a contemporary shrine site for initiatory rituals with San Pedro, to accentuate the meditative effects and mystical insights that the sacred space offers the perceptive seeker. Imagine spending the night in there, being taught by the plant teacher. Since the sun was illuminating the central stone-throne around noon, and the solar zenith-passage occurs in early February at this latitude, one can deduce that the full moon will also illuminate the throne at certain times, when it is straight overhead. And perhaps at other times the moon, when lower along the southern horizon, will illuminate the interior of the cave. The southern direction across the valley should also give a nice view of the nuclear bulge of the Galactic Center on certain nights. The Ancient Church, known locally as the Inca Raccay or Pernillyoq, is truly an amazing place.

Spirits playing every day
on rocks in watery pools
Gravity pulls the earth to shape
there is a way
with heart agape
To learn from Nature's school

Ollantaytambo, the Galactic Center town of the Sacred Tree

Our group continued along the Sacred Valley / Milky Way. It was December 29, and later that evening I was scheduled to give a talk at the Pisac Inn, drawing from a chapter in my 2002 book *Galactic Alignment* called “Circles of Water: The Galaxy in South America.” We entered the ancient Inca town of Ollantaytambo in time for a late lunch. Afterward, we walked to the entrance of the wide stairways leading up to the complex of structures that looms above the town.



Ollantaytambo figures prominently in Inca tradition and mythology. The whole site is filled with archaeoastronomical alignments, rock carvings, and shadow-casting devices. As with other sites, there is an earlier megalithic sub-structure that the later Inca adapted and build upon. Some of the larger blocks are known to have come from across the valley. Again, the mind is boggled.

Ollantaytambo is situated in a striking valley between prominent hills, and the valley opens into another valley. This unusual setting allows for sunrise and sunset alignments and, in fact, a prominent temple complex on the western hill is called the Sun Temple. It is this area that was most developed by the Inca, building upon an earlier megalithic phase. The wide stairways and terraces lead upward to walkways and platforms, walls and rooms. Several different levels can be reached. Looking across the valley to the east, you see the rounded mountain of Pinkuylluna. The two solstice sunrises occur to the left and right of this mountain, flooding the temple site and nearby valleys with light from different angles. The equinox sunrises break through directly above the middle of the mountain. These astronomical events are easily viewed from the main temple complex, and other phenomena, such as Pleiades rise points, can be calibrated

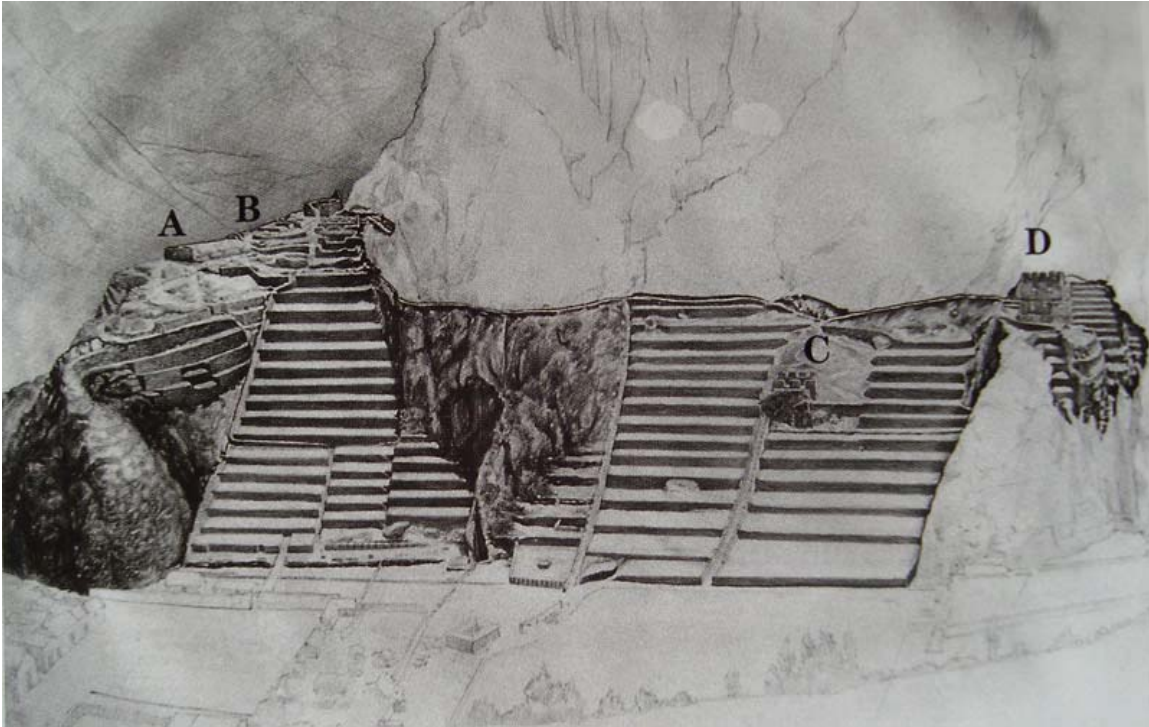
along the left edge of the mountain. The timing within the solar year of such risings shift with the precession of the equinoxes. Most strikingly the famous face of the Inca deity Wiracochan (the messenger of Wiracocha, also called Tunupa) is seen in the center of the mountain. He has a temple complex on his crown.



Winter and summer solstice sunrise light enters from the left and right; the left face of the mountain is where rise positions of the Pleiades and other stars can be calibrated. The profile of Wiracochan is seen the middle of the mountain (and below).

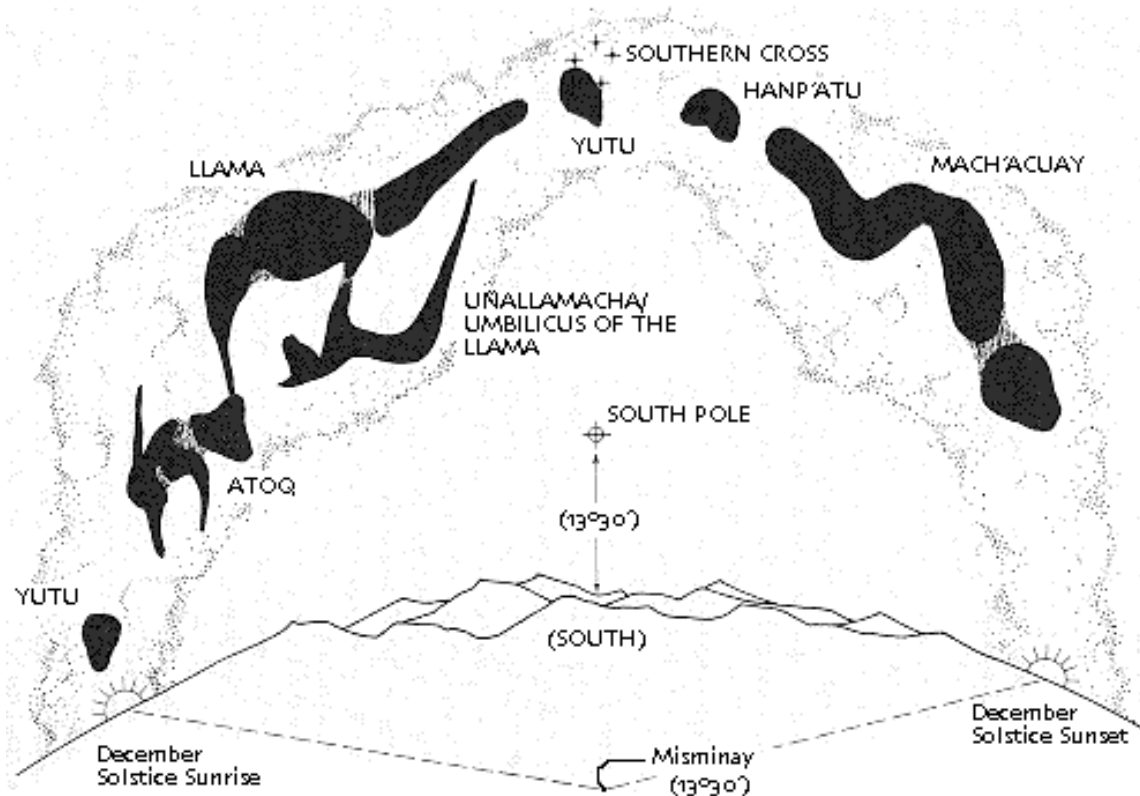


The Sun Temple complex on the west side of the valley is a massive construct that represents two Inca “dark cloud constellations”: the Mother Llama and her baby:



These two features are not asterisms but are seen in the dark cloud features of the Milky Way. As Gary Urton has explored, these two dark cloud figures are seen near the Southern Cross, in the wide area of the Milky Way known as the nuclear bulge of the

Galactic Center. As such, it seems that Ollantaytambo was intended to symbolize, on earth, a part of the sky that also was of great interest to the Maya of Mesoamerica.



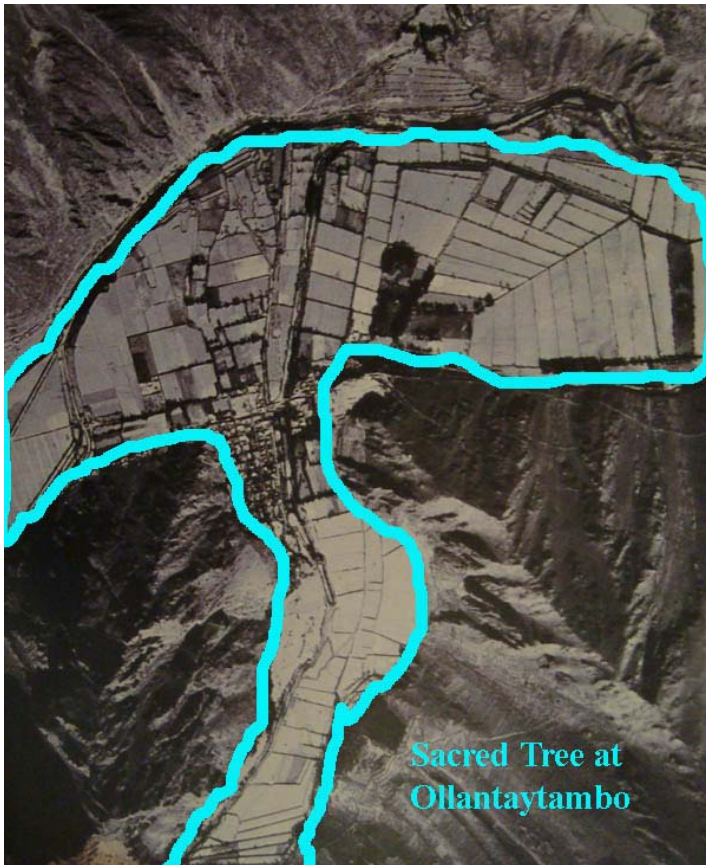
The diagram is somewhat misleading as it portrays the December solstice sun too far from the nuclear bulge. Nevertheless, you can see the Mother Llama with her baby on the left. This is basically a picture of the galactic alignment (the subject of my work on the Maya 2012 period-ending date) that occurs in the present era, era-2012 --- an astronomical fact that NASA astronomers and many Maya scholars have denied in the myopic hoopla of 2012 disinformation.



Other alignments include a solstice noon-time shadow projecting downward from a stone post into a carved notch (see picture on the left).

The solstices and equinoxes were all clearly being calibrated at the site of Ollantaytambo, an amazing place in the

Sacred Valley that represents the part of the Milky Way containing the Galactic Center. This information is found in the book *Cusco and the Sacred Valley of the Incas* by Fernando E. Elorrieta Salazar and Edgar Elorrieta Salazar (2003, Lima: Tanpu, S.R.L).



However, it is not explicitly mentioned in that book how the Galactic Center coincides with the Llama figures. This seems to be a significant but unrecognized dimension of what the Inca, and possibly the earlier megalithic culture, were intending the site to represent. A place of fertility and life-giving energy with cycles of water flow triggered by the solstices. In fact, the Salazars point out that the tri-fold valley in which Ollantaytambo is situated depicts a sacred tree form, a Tree of Life. (It actually looks quite like a mushroom.) This emphasizes the idea of life and fertility, also signified by the Mother Llama and her baby. As with the Maya, the Inca saw the Galactic Center as the birthplace of the sky, the womb and center of all creation.

Finally, another solstice alignment is seen in the orientation of the water-flow window in the Temple of the Virgins (see below). Water flow is all important at



Ollantaytambo. Overall, this site was a very pleasant surprise. I didn't expect there to be such a striking confirmation of galactic ideas I've been working with in the Maya cosmology. I knew that the Sacred Valley in Peru represented the Milky Way, as do many sacred rivers in cultures around the globe. The "catch-and-release" symbol seems to be a metaphor for the galaxy itself, with its bright energy knot at the center, collecting and dispersing life force. Oneness becomes parent and child, male and female, then they flow together to form another oneness. Water flows down from the mountains, evaporates into the sky and falls again. The metaphors of Nature provide perfect lessons for understanding time and consciousness, seasonal change, as well as the life cycles of humanity and civilizations. This

was what got perceived and downloaded by the end of the second day of the tour. And the most astounding site was still to be explored: Machu Picchu. In any case, back at the Pisac Inn I gave my talk and couldn't help sharing what I had been finding. Our group of eight was situated around the table in the upstairs room of the Inn. It was promising to be discovering so much in the first few days, and we all anticipated going to Aguas Calientes by train the next day, in preparation for entering Machu Picchu on the following day, New Years Eve, December 31, 2013 --- the day that my divorce was to be finalized in the county where I live, after the obligatory 92-day waiting period.

At Aguas Calientes, alongside the river that runs through town, I found a massive modern catch-and release symbol:



See how the water flows into the circle, separates, and rejoins on the far side to fill the pool? When the water reaches a certain depth, it spills out again through a channel. I see this as a kind of Inca alchemy symbol, because in alchemy there are stages of growth and purification that involve separation and recombining. The One turns into two, into the many, and then recombines into Oneness.

Machu Picchu

December 31, 2013, we enter suddenly upon higher ground and a splendid vista is revealed to our astounded minds and hearts.

The clouds are building, Condor came
to bless and point the way
Alligator and the Hummingbird
it's all the same
if you know the word
and find the power to say

What resounds within your soul
connecting you to me
We know the place we share within
there is no goal
or thing to win
when love and life are free

The site of Machu Picchu is best portrayed as a photo essay. There are astronomical alignments but the impact of the site is on the senses in terms of aesthetics and grandeur of vision. I will say that when my friend Teol and I reached the solstice window, we lingered and I said prayers and meditated. Letting go. I looked up and saw a double rainbow halo around the sun:



The picture only captures part of it. It was a full double rainbow-halo encircling the sun. What more can be said? It came at a most providential moment of release and transition in my inner process, releasing 14 years of marriage and a 17-year relationship. The relationship had in fact ended over a year earlier, and I'd been living alone for a full year, but the divorce was to be final *on that day*, and after giving thanks and letting go under

the solstice window, the sun seemed to give me a sign. Magic and new life was right around the corner.

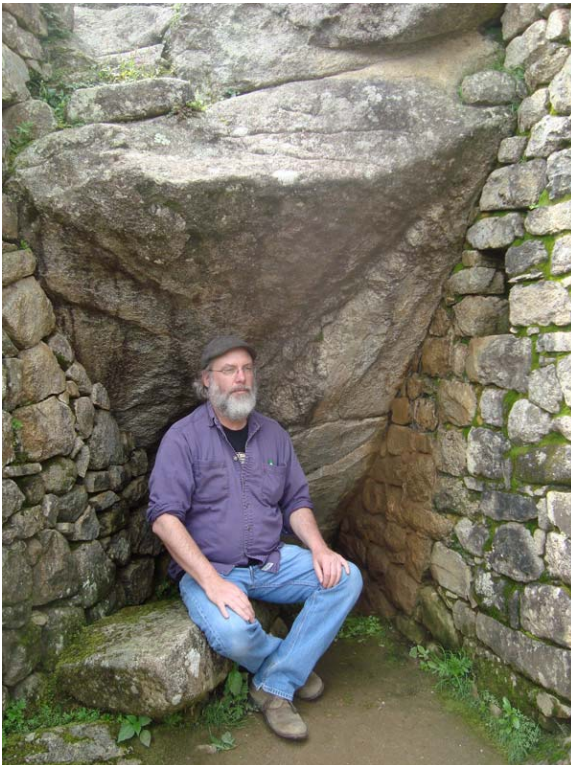




The December solstice window at Machu Picchu, facing the eastern horizon



Machu Picchu and Huanay Picchu from far away, at the Intipunku (Gate of the Sun)



The Moon Shrine (above)



This photo (above) shows the crystal rock that Teol brought from Ireland as an offering at the Moon Shrine above Machu Picchu, on the trail to the Gate of the Sun. We were astounded to find that it forms a perfect miniature replica of the distant peak of Huanay Picchu. We visited the site on December 31 and January 2. On January 1 we walked to the Botanical Jardine, a beautiful spot in the forest with streams and a waterfall.



On January 3rd we left by train and went to the market at Pisac before continuing to Cusco by early afternoon. Myself and several others in our group immediately went by taxi to the enchanting site of Tambomachay:



Our group, as will often happen on tours, had been through a process characterized by sharing, agreements, laughter, and disagreements. To some extent there was a bifurcation that occurred, with two factions emerging with different levels of concern for events taking place and not taking place according to the itinerary. We were all different people, but united by the shared experience. This was dramatically underscored on the final day of the tour (January 4), the day after we arrived in Cusco. The plan was for all of us to visit the amazing site of Sacsayhuaman above Cusco, a short ride in two taxis.



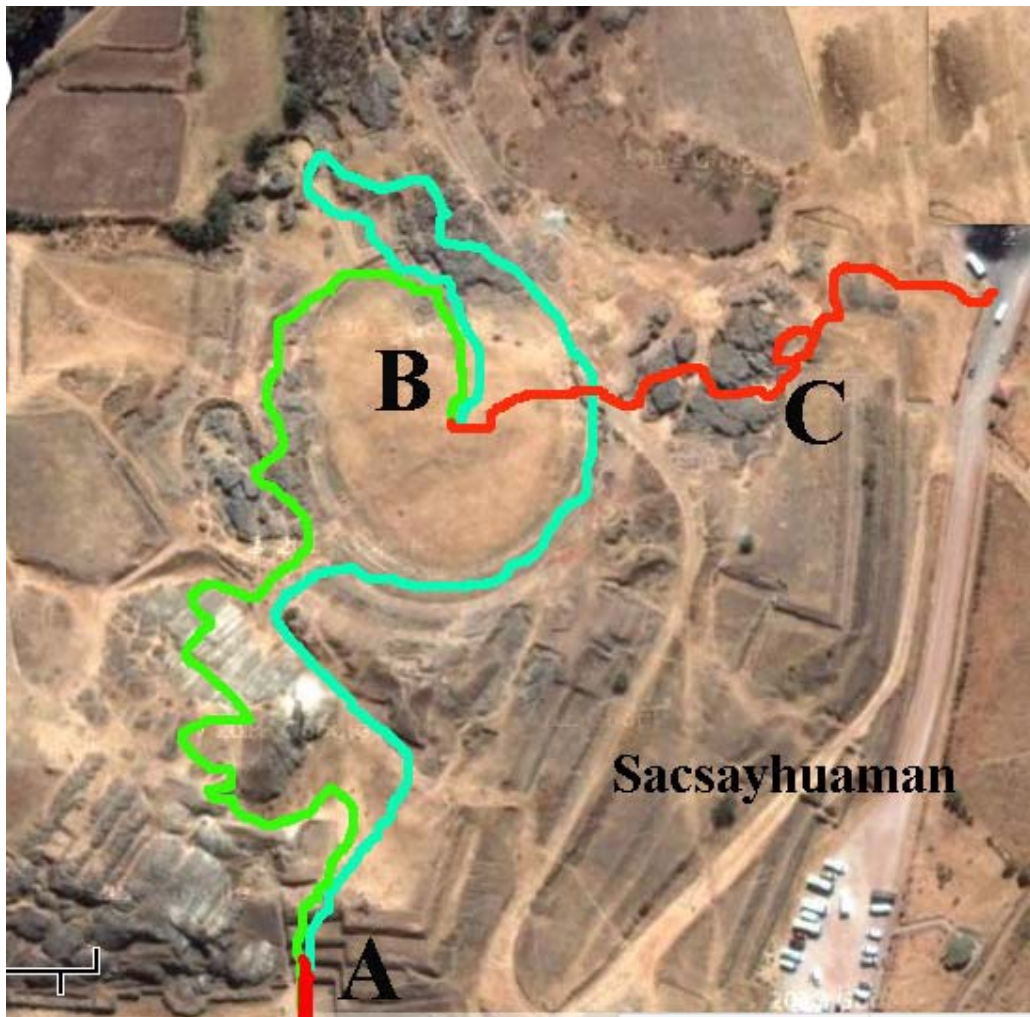


On the far side of the site of Sacsayhuaman, there is a striking circular construct which can be seen reconstructed in this aerial view of the site:



Our group first climbed through the section of Sacsayhuaman overlooking Cusco town. There was a reflective mood and the strings linking us became loose. Some departed quickly to cross the grounds and approach the far side where the circle is. I didn't even

know there was such a construct there, and lingered at the overlook. My sister and others made their ways separately. Eventually I followed suit, and could see several of our group on the far plateau. But they had continued on by the time I got there. As it happened, our group basically took two opposite directions around the big circular construct. Somehow, after at least an hour of separate wanderings we spontaneously regrouped at the far side of the circle. An Inca shaman had appeared and led some of us to a meditation area. Myself and Teol approached silently from different directions and the shaman indicated where we should sit. We all meditated for ten minutes, then we all got up and followed the shaman into the center of the circle, where we all lay in the grass for a while. We then went off to the side with the shaman, who led us into a narrow cave that went for some distance, becoming pitch dark while we felt our way through. In five minutes we were out the other side, all together now in a little shrine place open to the skies with little seats cut in the rock. We all shared laughter at coming together at the end of our journeys, sharing a symbolic rebirth. Later, looking at a site map, I realized we had replicated in our pathways the separation and reunion of the catch-and-release symbol:



The blue and green lines indicate the splitting paths of our group, in different directions around the circle. We rejoined on the far side and laid in the center of the circle. Then, together (red line), we were led through the birth cave and exited the far side of the site.



**Inca Alchemy, the Catch-and-Release Symbol:
From Unity to Multiplicity to Unity Again**

And so our journey came to an end with a festive dinner in Cusco. We came together, drifted apart, and joined together again at the end. We are all joined at the root, though we sometimes forget this as we get distracted by superficial differences. Blessings and peace. Gratitude for all who were there to share with me the wonder of new discoveries and the magic of ancient latitudes.

Overlooking Cusco town
from Sacsayhuaman
I see a future living here
way, way, down
the sky is clear
Where I can be ... John

Cloudscapes over ancient stones
megalithic mystery
Unbelievably ancient lore
hidden in bones
beneath the floor
Of consciousness's history

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Photo Gallery: <http://alignment2012.com/Peru-Gallery.pdf>