

ANDEAN PRACTICES OF DIVINATION IN THE INCA AND EARLY COLONIAL TIMES

This article explores Andean fortune-telling practices within a broad cultural and religious context. The historical scope of the study is determined by the characteristics of the available sources. Historiographical works on the subject are mainly focused on oracles, while other forms of divination have been studied almost exclusively as part of a broader analysis of religious beliefs of the corresponding period. Based on a range of written sources, including chronicles, reports, treatises, and documentary evidence (including unpublished materials), the author analyses the main types of divination in the Inca and early colonial times, such as cleromancy, oneiromancy, haruspicy, astrology, and oracles. Other forms of divination were also practised, but sources record them less frequently. Therefore, the types of divination in the Andes shared similarities with those found in other cultures, albeit with some distinctive features. Obviously, all Andean fortune-tellings have both “state” and “local” dimensions. However, some types of divination tend more towards one of these poles. For example, haruspices and astrology were more prevalent at the state level, as they required appropriate costs, equipment, and special knowledge. On the other hand, cleromancy, oneiromancy, and oracles can easily be practiced within the local religion and continued to exist in the early colonial era when the Inca state religion ceased to exist. Additionally, the close connection between Andean divination, sacrifice, and the cult of huacas is evident. Therefore, we can conclude that Andean fortune-telling is closely linked to other aspects of the religion.

Keywords: Incas, Andean civilization, divination, oracles, idolatry, Christianization

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