



MUSEO PEDRO DE OSMA

GALLERY TEXTS

ART FROM THE SOUTHERN ANDES GALLERY

(ENGLISH)



Hall 12

Art from the Southern Andes: Tiwanaku-Inca-Viceroyalty (5th-19th Centuries)

General information

This hall displays a selection of pieces from the cultures Tiwanaku and Inca, part of a private collection from Cusco, as well as paintings from the height of the Viceroyal period in Cusco belonging to the Pedro de Osma Museum. The latter are local artworks which underscore the relevance of indigenous issues and demonstrate the particular style that evolved from the blend of Western style and the ancient cultural tradition of the Southern Andes.

The Southern Andes were the main stage for political life in Peruvian history, from Pre-Columbian times to the Viceroyalty. The pieces in this exhibition allow us to delve into local traditions, as well as achieve a better understanding of the extended and complex artistic and cultural process that unfolded in the region.

The quero is a recurring theme throughout the exhibition, both as support and vehicle for the iconography of each specific moment in the Southern Andes. Although this vessel originated with the first cultures that arose in the Andean Highlands, it acquired a greater significance during the Tiwanaku period. It is essential to bear in mind that the quero played a prominent role in Andean ritual, was adopted by the Inca and, with revamped polychrome iconography, maintained its significance during the Viceroyalty. It remained in production throughout the Republic and its use persists to the present day.

This exhibition, which highlights artworks preceding the Viceroyalty, allows us to explore the Pedro de Osma Museum collection from a fresh perspective, giving it a temporal dimension that goes back to the origins of the great cultural traditions of Ancient Peru.





Hall 12.1

Tiwanaku (5th-12th Centuries)

General information

In olden times, several settlements arose in the Andean Highlands. Their wise use of natural resources allowed them to prosper in spite of the harsh living conditions, especially extreme altitude and cold. In the process, these highland communities achieved high levels of organisation, as is evident in the degree of complexity and structure attained by cultures such as Tiwanaku.

The mighty state of Tiwanaku was the result of local cultures such as Pucará and Chiripa. Tiwanaku, the ceremonial and political centre, was established to the South of Lake Titicaca, 20 km from the present boundary between Peru and Bolivia. Progress in agriculture and a more solid social-political situation enabled the Tiwanaku to expand to other territories; the coasts of Moquegua and of Atacama became important enclaves for the management of different ecological areas. The territorial extension of Tiwanaku led to an intensive exchange of goods and cultural contributions along the Southern Andes. Sophisticated vessels such as the quero and incense burners became essential to the transmission of their religious system.

The harsh climate and the uniformity of the highland landscape - in both the lake and the sweeping plains of Collao - forged the character and influenced the aesthetics of the Tiwanaku people. Generally speaking, its art shows a penchant for symmetry and regularity. The characteristics of the buildings in the Tiwanaku site are mirrored in artistic disciplines such as sculpture, pottery and textiles, with their rigorous design and impeccable finishes. The great figures of the Andean pantheon stand out among the representation motifs: felines, birds, camelids, snakes and the god of staffs. The pinnacle of the latter's frequent appearances is the renowned Gate of the Sun, in the Tiwanaku site.





Hall 12.2

Myth

General information

Origin myths usually relate fantastical events related to the history of a civilisation's foundation and justify its authority over the peoples under its power. The Inca were no exception. According to Spanish chroniclers during the Conquest, the Inca explained their origin through two myths: Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo, the couple who emerged from Lake Titicaca, and The Ayar Brothers, who came out of a cave in Pacaritampu mountain. In both, civilising heroes from the Southern Andes march North to found the city of Cusco and teach the natives the different arts and crafts.

In both myths Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo are the founding couple of the Inca dynasty. They come from ancient Tiwanaku lands, more precisely from Lake Titicaca, where an ancient sanctuary to mark the Sun's birthplace stands at Titicaca island. It has been noted that this myth grew in strength and importance during Inca Pachacutec's reign. The great reformer of Tahuantinsuyo had a great interest in establishing a link between the founding couple and this ancient and powerful huaca (an object or place of worship) in the Southern Andes, associated not only to the lake but also to the Tiwanaku site. From this moment on, the progeny of the Inca royalty were venerated as legitimate children of the Sun. With this cult to the principal deity their political and religious power was established.





Hall 12.3

Inca (15th-16th Centuries)

General information

Heirs of a unique cultural development in the Andes, the Inca established a powerful and organised state, after a brief but extensive campaign in which they conquered land from the South of Colombia to the North of Argentina and central Chile. Inca prevalence in this wide territory is evident in the important infrastructure built in the annexed regions and in the Qhapaq Ñan, the extraordinary road system that begins in Cusco, capital of the Empire, and traverses the entire Tahuantinsuyo along the coast and the Andes. The administrative system was also upheld by a solid hierarchy ruled by the Inca. This complex network of alliances resulted from an elaborate system of exchange of goods and people throughout the land. The figure of Inca Pachacutec is essential; it was he who began the great reforms that, through military power, administrative prowess and religious means, sustained the unchallenged authority of the Inca dynasty as children and direct heirs of the Sun.

The legacy of ancient Andean civilisations became the platform for their development and the basis of their outstanding ascendance: Tiwanaku bronze, Northern goldsmithing, the hydraulic and agricultural technology perfected along the centuries. Among the art pieces here shown, the great pottery collection stands out, from small format pieces (bowls and platters) to large aríbalos, giving us an overview of almost all the shapes and styles in Inca pottery. Some traditional shapes, such as the quero (widely used during the Tiwanaku era) remained relevant during the Inca period, where it adopted Inca aesthetics; specifically, the characteristic strict geometry, whether they were made of wood, metal or clay. The striking collection of Inca conopas show an impressive variety in design, shape and material.

We can also see tupus, sharp pins with an ornamental head, which both adorned and held in place womens' cloaks. Tupus were made of copper or bronze, but mostly of silver, the metal associated with the goddess of the Moon. As was the case with traditional Andean queros, tupus remained in use throughout the Viceroyal and Republican eras.

Towards the end of the visit we can appreciate a vast collection of stone and bronze weapons of war. Several still have their original hilts, carved from hard wood from the Amazon.





Hall 12.4

Viceroyalty (16th-19th Centuries)

General information

During an extended period of independent development, Andean settlements evolved a political and economic system that reached its zenith in the Tahuantinsuyo, led by the Inca dynasty. The arrival of Pizarro's troops led to the collapse of the local administration and the beginning of a new episode in the history of Peru and a large part of South America. During the troubled era of Spanish conquest and dominance the foundation was laid for a new way to lead the destinies of the local people. Military actions and treaties with the Inca elite and local groups consolidated the power of colonial authorities.

The collapse of the Inca rule throughout the wide territory of Tahuantinsuyo unleashed a process in which local and regional traditions adapted to the new cultural models promoted by the Spanish Crown. This constant change and cultural adaptation persists to the present day, and is part of the wider phenomenon of acculturation and syncretism that inevitably arises whenever two different civilisations clash. Peru's process was, however, one of a kind, since it took place between two cultures previously unknown to one another. The survival of ancient traditions is reflected in the adaptation of certain elements, such as the tupu and the quero. The latter contributed to the preservation of the tradition of toasts using pairs of vessels, and become a vehicle for the transmission of the old glories and customs of the Inca to their descendants.

The fall of Tahuantinsuyo led to a process of adaptation and alliances between local inhabitants, with their different regional traditions, and conquistadors, who brought their own cultural mores. Although the native population was forced to accept the new political, economic and religious rules, it also managed to preserve many of its beliefs, images and customs. The Inca elite, which during the Viceroyalty held a privileged position, continued its use of elements that partly defined its identity and hierarchy. Similarly, the native population preserved its religious images and Andean rituals under Western devotional forms. Two paintings in this hall illustrate this process: Union of the Descendants of the Imperial Incas with the Houses of Loyola and Borja and The Corpus Christi Procession.

