



At Home with the Sapa Inca: Architecture, Space, and Legacy at Chinchero (Recovering Languages and Literacies of the Americas)

Stella Nair

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By examining the stunning stone buildings and dynamic spaces of the royal estate of Chinchero, Nair brings to light the rich complexity of Inca architecture. This investigation ranges from the paradigms of Inca scholarship and a summary of Inca cultural practices to the key events of Topa Inca's reign and the many individual elements of Chinchero's extraordinary built environment.

What emerges are the subtle, often sophisticated ways in which the Inca manipulated space and architecture in order to impose their authority, identity, and agenda. The remains of grand buildings, as well as a series of deft architectural gestures in the landscape, reveal the unique places that were created within the royal estate and how one space deeply informed the other. These dynamic settings created private places for an aging ruler to spend time with a preferred wife and son, while also providing impressive spaces for imperial theatrics that reiterated the power of Topa Inca, the choice of his preferred heir, and the ruler's close relationship with sacred forces.

This careful study of architectural details also exposes several false paradigms that have profoundly misguided how we understand Inca architecture, including the belief that it ended with the arrival of Spaniards in the Andes. Instead, Nair reveals how, amidst the entanglement and violence of the European encounter, an indigenous town emerged that was rooted in Inca ways of understanding space, place, and architecture and that paid homage to a landscape that defined home for Topa Inca.

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