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Inca Empire, the new story

A 90' film

Directed by **Thibaud Marchand**

Produced by **Arte France & Tournez S'il Vous Plait**



Pitch

It is one of the greatest puzzles of contemporary archeology. In the 15th century, in the waters of Lake Titicaca, a colossus with dazzling fate was born. A bloodthirsty giant with feet of clay: the Inca Empire. History tells us that in just a century, the Incas would have conquered a boundless land of more than a million km² stretching from the desert plains of the Pacific to the borders of the Amazon, becoming the first superpower in America. It would have collapsed like a vulgar house of cards against Spanish Conquistadors. An official thesis, which today seems to falter in the light of the latest discoveries.

From Cuzco to Brussels, from Berlin to the unexplored cavities of Machu Picchu,

archaeologists specializing in the Inca world are completely rewriting the history of this legendary civilization.

Sabine Hyland, North American archaeologist: *"It was said of that civilization that it was the only one in the world not having writing, but I am proving that it is probably false. On the contrary, it seems that the Incas mastered a rather incredible writing technique."*

Who really were the Incas capable of conquering such an Empire? How did they appear? Were they really ferocious writhingless invaders? And how did they finally disappear?

Synopsis

A few decades ago, here is what we thought we knew about this mythical people, considered as a bloodthirsty giant with feet of clay. Born on the shores of Lake Titicaca in the 14th century, the Incas would have conquered, in just a hundred years, a boundless land of more than a million km², comparable to the Roman Empire. Valley after valley, mountain after mountain, the Incas would have tamed the whole of the Andes.

This ruthless Empire, not possessing writing, and run with an iron fist by the Inca, the Son of the Sun, inflexible and cruel sovereign, would then have collapsed like a vulgar house of cards against a handful of Conquistadors. These are the preconceptions that have long prevailed, and which archeology is working to rectify.

A traveling investigation

Inca Empire: a giant is revealed is above all a field survey which, over the course of the story, will help clarify the course of history of the Incas by answering 3 main questions:

- **What are the origins of the Incas:** Were they really born on the banks of the mythical Titicaca? Is Pachacutec really the founder of the Empire?
- **How did the Inca giant develop:** Was violence the only weapon of the Incas? How could they rule over such a vast empire without writing?

- **How did the Inca Empire collapse:** How was their resistance organized? Where is their last stronghold?

Through these questions, which will govern the story, the movie will ultimately answer a big question: **who was the Inca giant?**

Why this film?

The commonly accepted history of pre-Columbian peoples, particularly that of the Incas, with whom the Spanish Conquistadors were directly in contact, is often contaminated by texts of the latter. Magnifying their courage, exalting their power, conveying their misunderstandings, the stories of the victors have long served as a reference for writing history.

Archeology, which is based on «the facts, only the facts», therefore depends on sorting between the good grain and the tares. Research carried out for more than a century on the territory of the former Inca Empire thus made it possible, little by little, to free oneself from the texts, and to refine the knowledge that one had of this civilization.

During last decade, numerous archaeological missions have succeeded one another on the Inca territory: guided by a very precise quest, or brought to light in an entirely fortuitous way, the latest discoveries have shed an entirely new light on the epic of the Inca Empire.

Visual style

The archaeological sites that we'll have the privilege of discovering are among the most beautiful in the world and constitute an invitation to travel and a change of scenery. Fixed shots, or with light traveling shots, at the foot, will of course be privileged, and the use of **drone will prevail, it will open times of discovery of places, and will allow a fluid sequence with 3D renderings.**

These 3D renderings will allow us to show sites at the time of the Incas. We will use animated maps, to particularly illustrate the expansion of the Incas, and we will be guided by the remarkable period drawings that have come down to us, thanks in particular to Guaman Poma. This native, descendant of a family of noble Incas, wrote one of the most famous illustrated chronicles intended for the King of Spain in person. In total there are at least a hundred that we can use.

We will use these illustrations to turn into images the myths and legends conveyed by the Incas themselves, then relayed by the Conquistadors, some of which are the origin of the ideas received today on the Incas. When our subject cannot be illustrated by Guaman Poma's drawings, we will call on a designer to create a drawing «in the manner of». All these drawings will then be animated by Antoine Laugier, specialist in 2D animation.



Participants

Peter Eeckhout

Belgian archaeologist Peter Eeckhout, co-author of the film, will provide scientific direction for the film.

Brian Bauer

American archaeologist at the University of Illinois, Chicago. Inca specialist.

Alan Covey

American archaeologist from the University of Austin, Texas. Inca specialist.

Christophe Delaere

Belgian archaeologist from "l'Université libre de Belgique." Specialist in Lake Titicaca and underwater excavations.

Béthany Turner

American archaeologist, specialist in Macchu Pichu.

Sabine Hyland

American anthropologist at the University of Illinois, Chicago. Specialist in Inca khipus. She will publish her results at the end of the documentary in the journal Nature.

Javier Fonseca

Peruvian archaeologist, specialist in Vilcabamba.

Milton Lujan

Peruvian archaeologist, specialist in Pachacamac.

Rocio Vilar

Peruvian archaeologist, specialist in Pachacamac.

Lucy Salazar

Peruvian anthropologist at Yale University, specialist in the Incas.

Chapter 1: the vanished Inca's mystery - Vilcabamba

After a two-day expedition, archaeologists Brian Bauer and Javier Fonseca moved through the rainforest and tried to reach Vilcabamba, a site forgotten by history that would be the last Inca stronghold. It would have sheltered, for more than 30 years, the last resistance fighters of the Spanish invasion led by Pizarro in 1532. The American Hiram Bingham had already gone after it in 1911. He is the first to discover the site, but is it really the last bastion?



Chapter 2: the fall of the Incas - Pachacamac

Peter Eeckhout has been digging for 25 years at Pachacamac, a fabulous sanctuary on the Pacific coast. It is a sacred place of pilgrimage for the Incas. According to legend, the god Pachacamac was gifted with healing power. Pilgrims therefore came to this site, hoping to be freed from their ills, but most died near the sanctuary. This explains the high concentration of mummies: there would be about 80,000 of them. Indeed, in one of the buildings, they uncovered a ground strewn with offerings methodically broken during a single and same event. According to their observations, the pieces of these broken offerings were then scattered in every corner of the building. They date from the very end of the Inca period, at the time of contact with the Spanish. So what really happened here?



Chapter 3: Cuzco: real cradle of the Incas

According to legend, the Incas emerged from the waves of Lake Titicaca and then, led by Pachacutec, would have reached the city of Cuzco and founded their Empire starting in 1438. But by observing the foundations, the archaeologist Alan Covey realized that it was a structure whose style had nothing to do with the other vestiges already excavated in Cusco. It would have been founded before their supposed arrival. But by whom?



Chapter 4: Titicaca - the winning of hearts

According to Christophe Delaere, there is no doubt: the Incas annexed the huacas of conquered peoples to secure the submission of the populations who lived in these territories. They even amplified these beliefs for their benefit by spreading the myth that their people would come from the Lac's waters. We can speak of a real political and religious strategy.

As the texts relate, violence was certainly used, but the Incas also seem to have managed to assert their authority in a much more gentle and controlled way, by conquering hearts.





Chapter 5: Khipus or the discovery of the writing of Incas?

Among the nearly 2 million pieces exhibited at the National Museum of Lima, there is a set of knotted cords named «khipus» that caught Sabine Hyland's attention. If 4/5th of them are considered accounting instruments, 1/5th could actually represent much more than that. Sabine Hyland is working on this last category of khipus, and obviously they are very different from those used to keep the accounts. She has long wondered about their usefulness. It was in San Juan de Collata that she found the missing

link in this enigma: a parish register. The latter has written names on one side and khipus on the other. Thanks to this double inscription, it became possible to pronounce the words and syllables figured by such or such a node. All things considered, these parish registers can be considered as Inca's Rosetta Stone. Furthermore, mastery of writing is the key moment in the passage of a civilization from prehistory to history. This discovery therefore means that the Inca Empire, contrary to what was taught until now, was

not the last great prehistoric civilization. However, scientists have expressed reservations about the results of Sabine Hyland. To demonstrate that the Collata khipus are not an exception, and to reinforce the thesis of the Inca script, Sabine Hyland will investigate in Berlin in search of a fundamental object: a catechesis khipu. Will it allow her to confirm her theory?



Chapter 6: The Truth About Machu Picchu

American archaeologist Bethany Turner may have found the answer in the site's secret caves, a strictly prohibited area where no cameras have entered, until today. These vast caves were used to store remains. Furthermore, the material found in these graves was not in the Cuzco style. Scientists first assumed that the remains of the bodies in these graves were of separate social status. But it had to be proven. That's why Bethany Turner analyzed the bodies.

To shed light on the mystery of the Macchu Picchu caves, the implementation of a whole new scientific discipline allows spectacular advances on this issue. This is bioarcheology, based on the study of stable isotopes. This revolutionary process allowed Bethany to establish that the individuals found in the cave were members of the people, and that they came from all over the Empire. But why were they buried here? Why did they choose to bring slaves from distant lands of the Empire?

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