

Gender Roles in Inca Society (Edited)

Although both men and women worked together for survival, gender was specifically divided into two separate worlds...[This]...provided stability in the Inca civilization and brought a harmonious relationship between both genders. Because many aspects of Inca life were gender divided, where “men were thought to be descended from a line of men, while women were descended from a line of women”. This concept framed the structure of indigenous life according to males and females’ tradition.

Marriage

While the Inca society held the division of gender roles in high regard, marriage was still a ritual that they held to be sacred and necessary. [Academics] point out that marriage signified a sense of maturity into adulthood... As opposed to the upper class, the common people of the Inca society often held monogamous relationships and could not risk having more children or wives than the husband could afford.

Upper Class

Marriage was approached slightly different to the elite group of the Inca society known as *curacas*. Men in high society were able to marry into polygamous relationships, in which they had many wives, being that they can afford it. Although generally women and men were both needed equally in Inca society, the upper class did value men to be more powerful than women....

...Inevitably, it led to Inca noblemen having extreme power over a group of women called the *ac/lla*... Women who were recruited and forced to enter the *ac/lla* were known for their beauty and celibacy. They were to be pure virgins and learn tasks in order to either be completely devoted to the gods that Inca society believed in or be of service as wives to elite Inca noblemen...

Duties

After a couple established their marriage, there was a distinct gender division of labor between the male and the female, but it still formed, nonetheless, a team. "...Andean peoples had clearly understood, long and before the rise of the Inca state, that women’s work and men’s work were complementary and interdependent, that the group’s economic subsistence could not be attained in the absence of one or the other"

In terms of household, women took on tasks such as childcare and cooking, while men took on roles that required more physical strength... Inca women’s role during this time was vital in more ways than one to the civilization, proving that they were capable of holding their end of the workload. Two significant tasks that Inca women focused on extensively were weaving and agriculture, which were both considered to be extremely important to Inca society, especially the upper class. Weaving was known to be crucial because of the fact that many women, especially from the lower class, “were primarily responsible for the tribute in cloth owed to the State”.... Besides weaving, agriculture was something women and men did mutually.

Impact on Peruvian-American Women [Today]

Women of the Inca society generally exemplified the actual union of male and females working together for economic and social survival. Because women have a common stereotype to be labeled as unknowledgeable or helpless without men, it was ironic that in the Inca society, men could not function without the help of women in daily life. Although both genders were expected to work together and share equal amounts of tasks, women were still always inferior to men, especially in the political aspect of the Inca life.

Still, females, however gained many positions both in religion and politics which was completely unheard of in regions such as Europe during the 13th to 16th century... Women as a whole in the Inca society were to be valued highly because of the fact that they participated in so much of the Incan empire's success.

In the world we live in today, it is pleasant to notice that in a way, [Peruvian] society has gone back to the ways of the Inca society, in which both females and males are participating to make the civilization better equipped as well as stronger.... Peruvian-American women ... who have migrated to the U.S. have taken the mindset that the Inca women used to have....

Many families share the workload between husband and wife, both having careers/jobs and providing for the household. In the United States today, Peruvian-American and Peruvian women have come to new levels of education and professionalism while still upholding the traditional and important values such as family. While the rights for women compared to men are still a bit skewed, especially in the Latino culture, Peruvian-American/migrated Peruvian women in general have succeeded in breaking barriers and building opportunities for themselves.

Vocabulary:

Descended- To pass from higher to lower

Indigenous- Natives peoples

Polygamous- The practice of having more than one wife

Celibacy- Choosing not to engage in sex

Tribute- Payment made to a ruler

Word Cited

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