

# CORICANCHA



CORICANCHA / SUN TEMPLE, CUSCO. T ROSCOE

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4. H WARD

## BACKGROUND

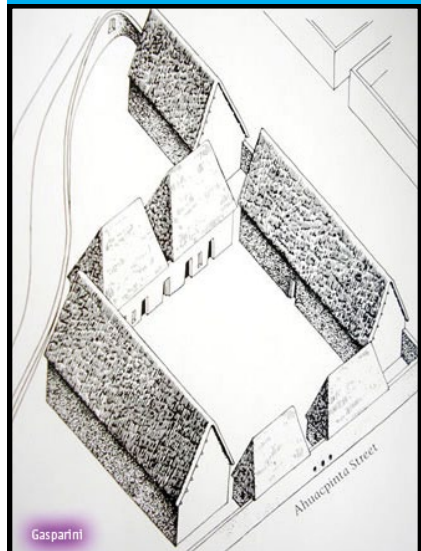
Coricancha, Qorikancha. Sun Temple. "The Golden Enclosure." Coricancha was the 'center of the center of the universe'.<sup>8</sup> Temple of the Sun walls were plated with gold. The site is an example of the Inca's perfect masonry. George Squier drew the first plans. Also studied and excavated by Max Uhle and John Rowe.<sup>4</sup>

Said to have been built by [Manco Capac](#).<sup>6</sup> Major buildings: Sun, Moon, Stars, Lightning, Rainbow, chapter house for priests. The building was covered in massive gold plates, each weighing 4–10 lbs and gold straw was worked into the roof to catch sunlight.<sup>9</sup> 700 plates of gold were removed by the Spanish, each 2 hand widths wide. Each weighed 4.5lbs after being melt down.<sup>4</sup> Golden garden and walls possibly made by Chimú.<sup>1</sup>

The body of the dead Incas were kept here. They stayed dressed as normal. (Bodies of Viracocha, Tupac Inca Yupanui, and Huayna Capac were moved to Lima, and lost.)

The western wall held a golden representation of the sun, a human face looking out of its center: engraved on a huge gold plate decorated with emeralds and precious stones. It was directly across from an easterly window, so the rising sun would strike it and light up the whole room. The image of the Sun was taken by the Spaniard [Lequizano](#). He lost it gambling in a single night. Thus the Spanish proverb "Juega el Sol antes que amanezca." He plays away the Sun before sunrise.

The moon had a dedicated room, covered in

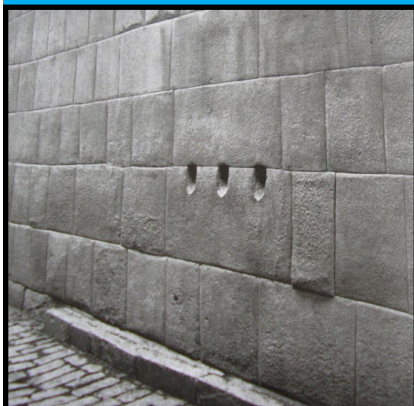


RENDERING. GASPIRINI

silver, the mother of the Incas. Other rooms were dedicated to the stars, sister of the sun; thunder and lightning, ministers of vengeance; and the rainbow.<sup>6</sup>

Ayar Auca (enemy), an ancestor of the Incas, flew down to Cuzco to take possession of it. On landing at the site of Temple of the Sun he was turned into stone and called cozcó – local language for heap of stone.<sup>7</sup>

A tunnel is said to connect Coricancha to [Sacsahuaman](#).<sup>Poma</sup>



5. HEMMING, RANNEY



2. D ROSCOE



3. R ROSCOE

## DESCRIPTIONS

**1. MAIN TEMPLE.**<sup>4</sup> Hall G. Foundations were found showing a building here.<sup>10</sup> The walls were plated with gold to catch the rising sun. The original Dominican church was built directly ontop.<sup>11</sup>

**2. THUNDER CHAMBER.** Hall C. Dedicated to **thunder**, and lightning. Walls were covered with gold.<sup>4</sup>

Two rooms along **Ahuacpinta St.**, “possibly held the hostage idols from around the empire.”<sup>3</sup> Two rooms to the right of the courtyard are thought to be dedicated to the Moon and lightning.<sup>3</sup>

**3. RAINBOW CHAMBER.** Hall E. “cuichu”. Dedicated to the Rainbow. Decorated with a colored arc.<sup>8, 4</sup> [See 2](#) for more info.

**4. COURTYARD. BASIN.** Octagonal Porphyry basin—in center since 1600, but looks colonial.<sup>4</sup>

**COURTYARD.** 4 tabernacles in the walls faced into the courtyard. Each were gold plated and had molding around the edges. Inset into the molding were emeralds and turquois. The sapa inca would sit here to watch festivals.<sup>8</sup>

**SUBARAURA** was the chief of the **Pururaucas** stones, that rose up to help Pachacuti defeat the Chancas. Removed by Spanish priests. It was in the courtyard of Santo Domingo.

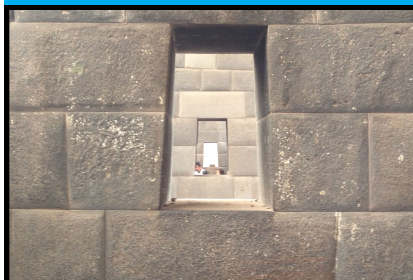
**5. THREE CHANNELS ON AHUACPINTA ST.** Theories: drains for sacrificial blood or water, drainage, or for sound: when struck it produces the sounds re, la, mi.<sup>4</sup>

**6. SIDE ALCOVE.** The stone in the center is fake, was placed by Dominicans and is transitional style, and upside down.<sup>3</sup>

**7. LARGEST CHAMBER.** Building is now gone but foundations have been found.<sup>4</sup>



3. NICHES. R TADLOCK



3. LOOKING N. R ROSCOE

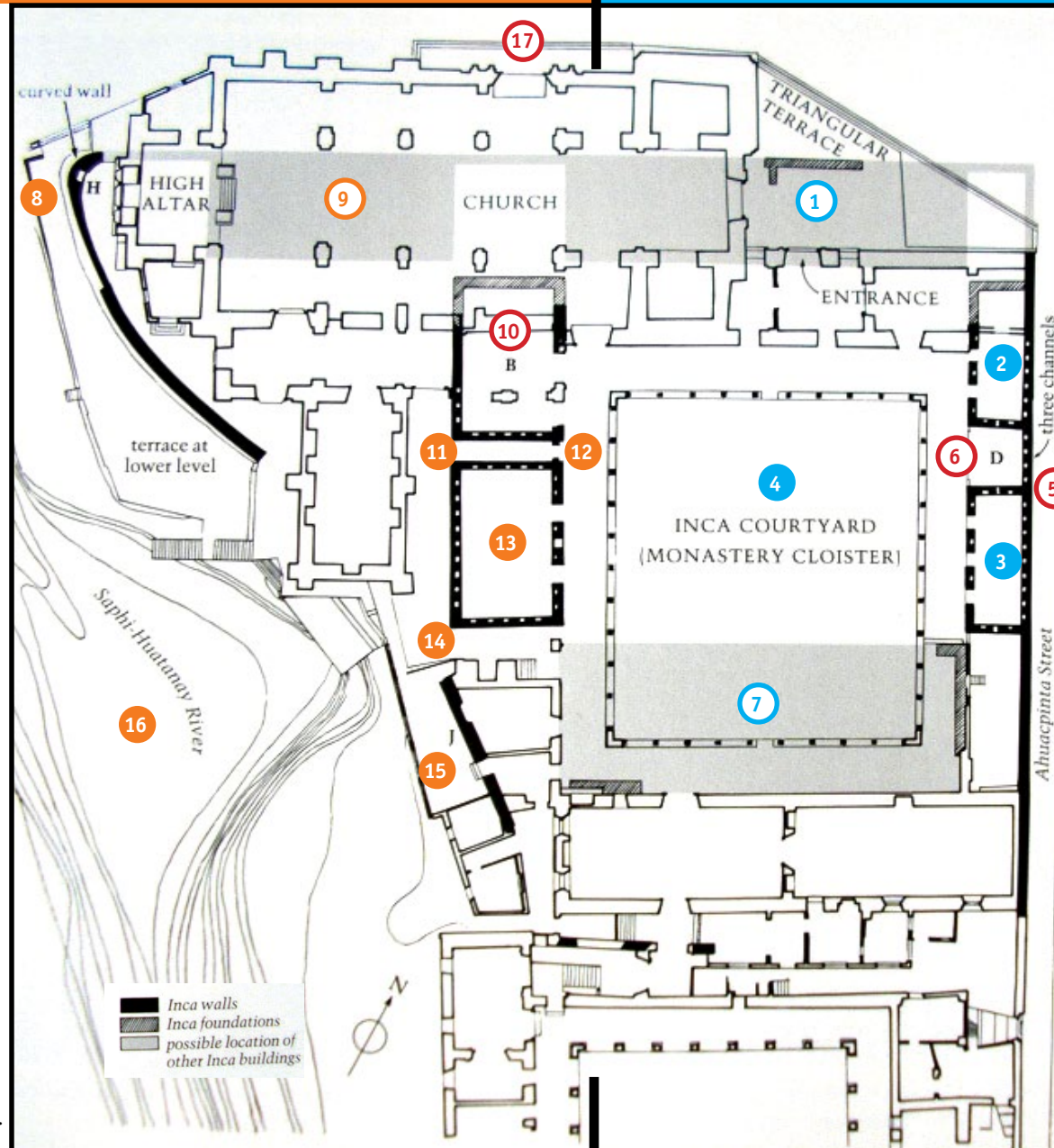


- 8. CURVED WALL
- 9. UNDERGROUND BUILDING
- 10. CHAMBER B
- 11. HALLWAY
- 12. DOUBLE-JAMB DOORWAY
- 13. VENUS CHAMBER
- 14. CORNER WALL
- 15. OUTSIDE WALL
- 16. GARDEN
- 17. ENTRANCE

- 1. MAIN TEMPLE
- 2. THUNDER CHAMBER
- 3. RAINBOW CHAMBER
- 4. COURTYARD
- 5. THREE CHANNELS
- 6. SIDE ALCOVE
- 7. LARGEST CHAMBER

- LEGEND**
- 7 Location without photo.
  - 6 Location with photo.
  - 5 Location with needed photo.

Map by Gasparini, Hemming.





7. R TADLOCK

## DESCRIPTIONS

**8. CURVED WALL.** An earthquake leveled the original church, which was then rebuilt. The actual sun temple is destroyed except for the curved outer wall, best seen from Pulluchapata St.

**9. UNDERGROUND BUILDING,** Hall I, under church.<sup>4</sup>

**10. ROOM B.**<sup>4</sup> The room was painted gray with a 3in black band circling it. It mirrored Room A.<sup>11</sup>

**11. HALLWAY.**

**12. DOUBLE-JAMB DOORWAY.** Early imperial style doorway between two buildings on W side of courtyard.<sup>12</sup>

**13. VENUS CHAMBER,** Hall A. Dedicated to the planet Venus, Pleiades, and other constellations. To match Room B, it was probably also painted gray with a black band.

**LARGE NICHE,** “tabernacle,” is in the center of the E wall. Moldings were cut into the stones in order to hold jewels.<sup>11</sup> The sapa Inca sat here to watch the rising sun. The graves of Tupac Amaru I, Sairi Tupac, Juan Pizarro are said to be here.<sup>11</sup>

**PLASTERING** is from the original colonial pattern.

**14. CORNER WALL.**

**15. OUTSIDE WALL.**

**16. GARDEN.** This is not the Intipampa, which was north of Coricancha.

**17. ENTRANCE.** This was mostly likely the original entrance to the Coricancha. The original church was built directly on the Sun Temple and probably used its original entrance.<sup>11</sup>



7. INSIDE, NICHE. R TADLOCK

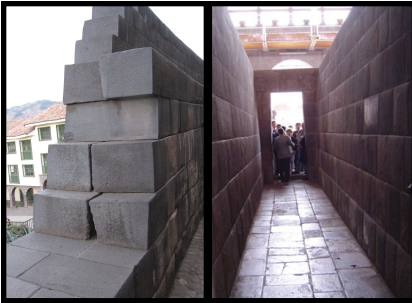


12. PLASTERING. D ROSCOE



12. WEST WALL. D ROSCOE





7. BLOCKS, M TADLOCK

10. D ROSCOE



13. D ROSCOE

## HISTORY

The Coricancha was the Incas' most sacred building. First built in 1100s and then enlarged by each new Inca. Became largest building in Cuzco. Sanctuary of the Sun, Chapel of the Moon, Chapel to the Stars, Chapel of Lightning, Chapel of Rainbow, and residence of keepers of temple. Many walls, completely covered in gold. The temple held 4000 priests and attendants.<sup>3</sup> The Coricancha was rebuilt by [Pachacuti](#) after his vision at the shrine, [Susurpuquiu](#). A god dressed in puma skins, serpents, and earspools with a headress of sun rays. The god told Pachacuti of his divine kinship and predicted his victory over the [Chancas](#).<sup>Molina, Sarmiento, Betanzos, 2</sup> [Hernando de Soto](#) and 2 soldiers were the only Spanish to see it in original state.<sup>9</sup>

[Francisco Pizarro](#) entered Cuzco 5 months after executing [Atahualpa](#) and went to the Coricancha. [Villac Umu](#), chief priest, said they must fast for 1 year, be barefoot, and carry a symbolic load. They entered anyway. Villac Umu continued the daily ritual. Inca mummies were taken to the square and offered food and drink. Villac brought the sun idol. Food was burned for the idol and a voice called out. All who heard, sat silently until complete. Then the mummies and idols returned to Coricancha.<sup>4</sup>

At night the sun idol was kept in a room with many mamaconas, who claimed sex with the sun.<sup>Pedro Pizarro</sup> The golden child effigy was taken to Spain and on Charles V command, it was melted down to form coins.<sup>4</sup>

### El Convento y Templo de Santo Domingo.

[Juan Pizarro](#) was given the Coricancha and he willed it to the Dominicans. [Sayri Tupac](#) was instructed in Christianity and attended Mass at Santo Domingo. He was accused of worshipping the sun instead. He willed a chapel to be built here and was buried here along with his wife-sister. [Tupac Amaru](#) was also buried here after his execution.<sup>4</sup> Juan Pizarro's body is held here.<sup>5</sup>



14. R ROSCOE



11. M TADLOCK

12. DOOR, R ROSCOE



12. BLOCK, D ROSCOE

**1533, MAR-APR.**  
Martin Bueno and Pedro Martuide Moguer, illiterate soldiers and Juan Zarate, notary — traveled to Cuzco at Atahualpa and Pizarro's request to encourage the



12. LARGE NICHE, D ROSCOE



OUTSIDE. R ROSCOE



15. GARDEN. M TADLOCK



16. N ENTRANCE. R GOOGLE

removal of gold. See [Cuzco History](#) for more. The Spaniards went to the Qoricancha and removed the 700 gold plating around its outside walls. Each 2.5ft in length and weighing 4.5lbs — about 9 years of wages each. The spaniards returned to Pizarro with 178 loads of gold.<sup>5</sup> They also collected a 190lbs gold altar, and 120lbs gold fountain.<sup>3</sup>

**1538 JULY 8.** Hernando de Soto has Almagro garotted in his cell at the Sun Temple.<sup>5</sup>

## OTHER MAPS

### CUSCO AND THE SACRED VALLEY

[Cusco Guide](#) – capital of the Incas.

[Cusco History](#) – history of the capital.

[Cusco ceque map](#) – holy lines / sites.

[Sacsahuaman](#) – fortress near Cusco.

[Ollantaytambo](#) – fortress in Sacred Valley.

[Pisac](#) – major Inca site in Sacred Valley.

### OTHER RESOURCES

[Glossary of Quechua](#)

[Inca rulers](#)

[Historic names](#)

[Religion](#)

## MINI-BIBLIOGRAPHY

If you'd like to contribute photos, I'd love to have your help, [andy@andyroscoe.com](mailto:andy@andyroscoe.com)

Photography: Google Street View, Patrick McGarey, Tricia Roscoe, David Roscoe, Robert Roscoe, Maria Tadlock, Richard Tadlock, Hal Ward.

See [Full Bibliography](#) at website.

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