

**Review of :**

*Capacocha:*

The social and political significance of human sacrifice in the Inca Empire.

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- Ph.D. dissertation Dissertation prepared under the supervision of Prof. dr hab. Mariusz Ziółkowski Center for Andean Studies, University of Warsaw

**Reviewer :** Steve Bourget (Ph.D.) – Curator for the Americas.

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**Main comments :**

- 1- Overall, the thesis is well organized into 14 chapters. It includes a description on the general organization of the Inca Empire Chapters 2 and 3
- 2- Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the practice of human sacrifice and more precisely on the description of Capacocha in ethnohistorical sources. This part is discussed more fully in Chapter 5. The author describe at great length the information on the subject contained in the main published sources. In this section, a critical review of the literature at the end of the chapter would have been welcomed. As it stands, it gives equal importance to information of vastly different nature and quality.

- 3- The main subject of the thesis is dealt with in Chapters 6 to 12.
- a. Chapter 6 presents the archeological contexts of Capacochas know so far. It would appear that the author has covered most of the sources. The chapter is also well illustrated.
  - b. Chapter 7 also deals with the archeology but only on four expeditions: Ampato, Pichu Pichu, Sara Sara and Misti. The treatment is the same as in Chapter 6.
  - c. Chapter 8 describe the material culture found with these sacrificial contexts. It is interesting to note that these contexts are not too different from regular burial contexts without the ritual aspect of sacrifice. It is perhaps in the nature of the objects that these differences are the most apparent. Therefore, it would have been interesting to present some burial contexts to highlight these differences and/or similarities.
  - d. The physical anthropology of the human remains is discussed in Chapter 9. The subject is fairly well covered and illustrated.
  - e. Chapter 10 on the diet of the sacrificial victims consist largely of a lengthy description of the techniques used in these types of studies including: study of carbon and nitrogen stable isotopes, strontium, oxygen and lead isotopes and, keratin and collagen. The results are interesting but limited as the sample of individuals is fairly small.
  - f. Chapter 11 discusses the origins of the victims of Capacocha. From the onset the author admits that the genetic material from the sample was in poor condition severely limiting the quality and the scope of the observations. The main result is that they all came from different places. The author believe that “These results support the idea of one (or several) gathering center from which the victims were sent further on their pilgrimages.” Concerning this assertion, I suggest that – in the case of a future publication – the author should be careful, and also contemplate alternative hypothesis, as the sample is small and that some of these results could be interpreted differently. For example, the author mention on page 288 that “The high values of  $\delta^{18}O$  for the bones of the Misti victims show ratios typical for this region.”
  - g. Chapter 12 covers a number of toxicological analyses of keratin from hair and fingernails. The main substance detected in all the samples is cocaine. It was to be expected as coca leaves were extensively used to counter the effects of high

altitude, hunger and cold. Also the leaves are often left as offerings with the victims. Perhaps, one of the most intriguing results is the presence of traces amount of drug compound perhaps pertaining to the *Banisteriopsis* spp. The authors state that it is unclear how this product was used. It would warrant further studies with other data samples.

**Other Comments:**

- 4- It would have been interesting to carry out a series of radiocarbon dates on the samples.
- 5- I will not list all the comments that I have made during the reading of the thesis. They will be found throughout the manuscript as comments. They largely address issues that could easily be dealt with during the cleaning up of the manuscript.
- 6- Perhaps the main concern apart from the recommendations and the comments in the body of the text is the written English. The manuscript contains many grammatical errors and generally show a poor understanding on the proper use of prepositions and so forth. I believe that it needs proper editing before it could be turned in for registration. I have only highlighted some of the mistakes but the problem is much more extensive. Sometimes, it even renders the meaning of the author unclear.

**Assessment of the Candidature of Madame Socha:**

Despite the comments listed in this review and throughout the manuscript, I consider that Dagmara Maria Socha **can proceed to the next stage of the doctoral process at her university. Therefore, I believe that this thesis manuscript can be submitted as it is at the present. The flaws noted in my report can easily be addressed by the applicant in the case of a future publication for example.**

Steve Bourget



Paris, 25 april 2023