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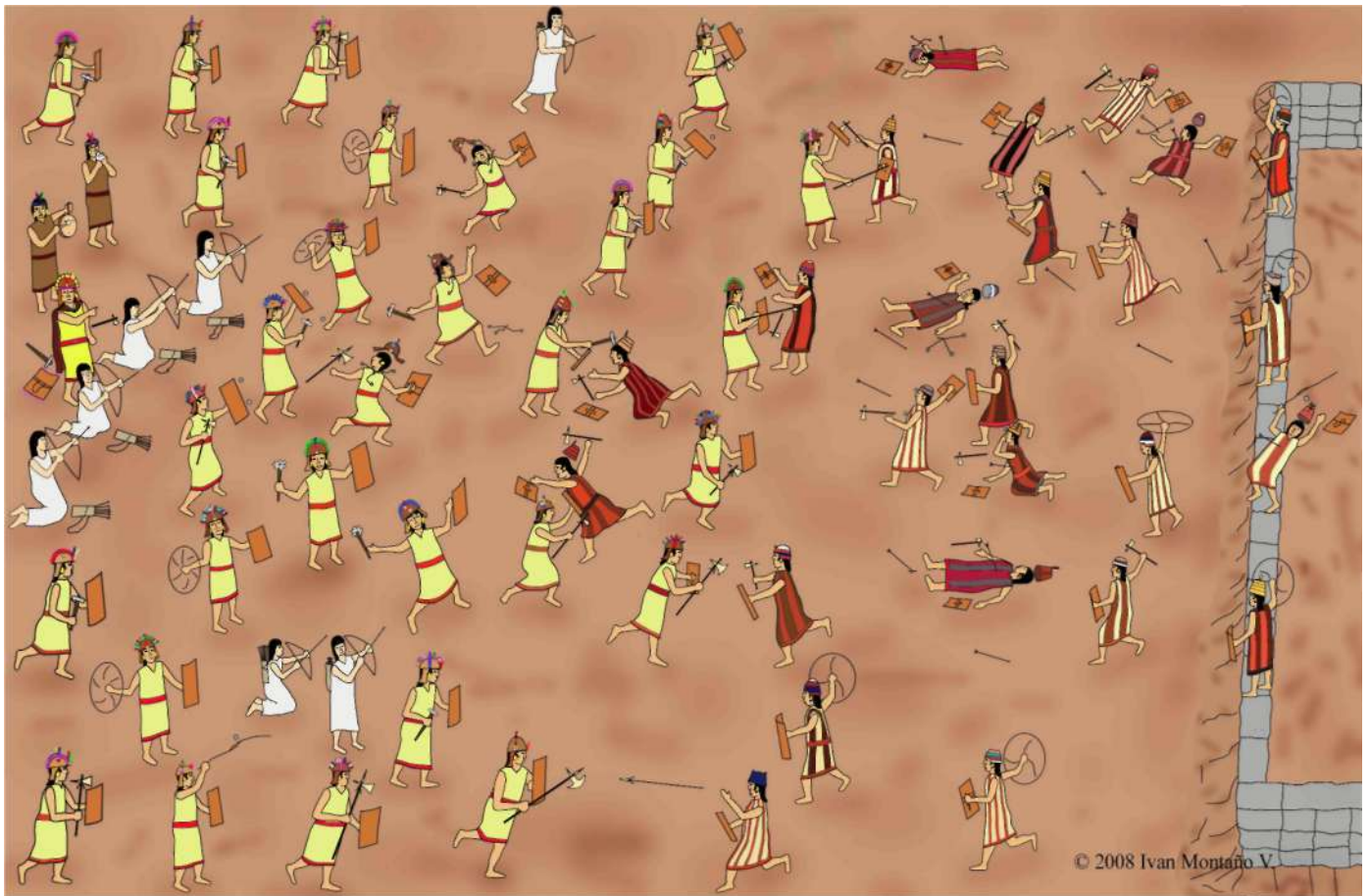
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Título: HUMAN DRUMS

Año: 2008

Human Drums

Reciprocity, harmony and public generosity, were three main concepts of how the Incas interpreted society.



Fight between Incas and defenders of a pucara (fort).

According to Louise Baudin, the Inca State appeared to be occupied by a "group of happy men", where conflict, abuse and submission did not exist.

Looking more deeply into the sources and documents, Incan history is full of conquests and wars. The use of violence was so recurring that the Tawantinsuyu needed a stable army of men belonging to the more aggressive ethnic groups of the

region. These men were responsible for safeguarding the limits, controlling within the limits and campaigning for conquest.

How can we understand the war of the Andes? Fray Alonso Ramos Gavilan, in his *Historia de Nuestra Señora de Copacabana* (1621), suggests that the Incan concept of war did not only entail defeating the enemy, but also capturing the local Gods (wak'a or guaca) that were taken "prisoners to Cuzco" and placed in the "general temple for all types of Gods". With the approval of local idols, the Inca ritually rose above them, appearing as an almighty and powerful God and "Señor of (all) the guacas" and passed to control the people by controlling their own beliefs or Gods.

From writers, we know that the Incas used instruments such as trumpets and shell horns during their wars. The drums (tinya) were also used at the front of the battlefield. For example, Fray Martin de Murua writes in his *Historia General del Peru* (1616), "To sound the alarm" the Incas "used a kind of kettledrum and drumsticks... made of silver."

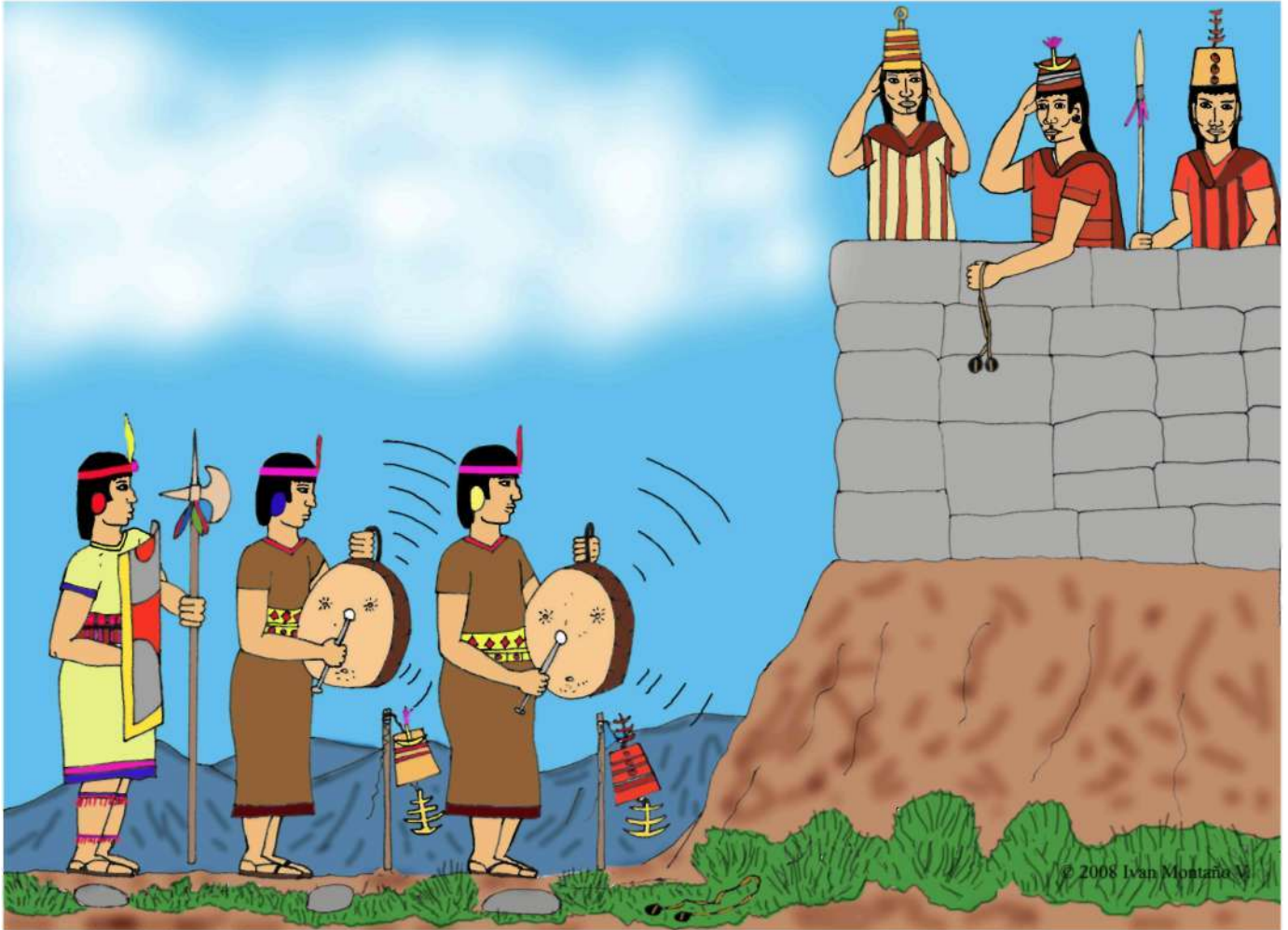
An exceptional drum, characteristic of the warriors, was the runa-tinya (man-drum). Guaman Puma de Ayala in his *Nueva Cronica y Buen Gobierno* (1613), emphasizes that these drums were made to punish the chiefs that betrayed or rebelled "against the Incan crown and of the great lords, and those who rebelled against the sun and those who went against the laws of the Inca were punished". Therefore, "from the head, they made a cup to drink chichi, from the teeth and molars they made necklaces, from the bones they made flutes, from the skin they made drums called runatinya".

Murua also explains that the Inca Thopa Yupanqui, after defeating the rebel Collas of the Altiplano, "to warn and scare the entire empire, he had them skinned and their skin used to make drums that were used in war...to remind them from the frontline not to think about rebelling again". A similar incident occurred in Ecuador, when the cacique (chief) Pinto of the Cayambis was captured, "Huayna Capac ordered him to be skinned and his leather made into a drum, and sent to Cuzco, to be played during



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Inca Drummer playing the war drum (runatinya)



Guards at a pucara (fort), observing how the Inca drummers and their guard play two runatinya.

the taqui" (song-dance in honor of the Sun)."

Juan de Betanzos in his book, *Suma y narration de los Incas* (1561) reports that a captain sent by Atahualpa to Cuzco to meet with Huascar, was captured and "his skin made into a drum", this was interpreted by Atahualpa as a "disgrace" to his person.

What was the meaning of the practice of the runa-tinya? As it was not just any drum made of human skin, but of the chief or head of the defeated warriors, the political message was clear: treason or rebellion was paid by the disgrace or humiliation of being turned into an instrument. Murua explains two reasons for using these drums: 1. "in war"

and 2. during the taqui (song-dance) ritual dedicated to the Sun God. The later is confirmed by Guaman Poma de Ayala, who explains that the punishment was understood in all of the Tawantinsuyu by the sentence spoken: "*aucapc umanuan upyason quirona ualcarisun, tullumuan pincullusun, caranpi tinyacusun taquecusun*" (let us drink from the skull of the traitor, let us hang his teeth, play the flute from his bones; from his skin, make a drum and let us sing).

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 Infography: Ivan Montaña
 Archeological Museum, Universidad Mayor de San Simon