

On the Trail of the Qhapaq: Following the Prints

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1. The Qhapaq Ñan, or *way of the Qhapaq*, is a road uniting cities located along the length of the Andean corridor. The full dimensions of this pre-Inka trail across the continent are still unknown and, in addition to its well-known “foot path,” the Qhapaq Ñan has other characteristics and values worth analyzing.
2. Dr. Mary Scholten, a Dutch mathematician and resident of Peru, discovered in 1980 that the main Inka and pre-Inka cities are geographically aligned along a diagonal line at 45° relative to the Earth’s north-south axis (Drawing 1). This raises many questions: Who built these cities and temples along this line hundreds of kilometers long? How did they do it? And why? What was it for?

Drawing 1



3. Examining the terms *qhapaq* and *qhapaqkuna*, those builders and “pilgrims” of this straight road connecting the cities of the Andean world, we can find some answers to these questions. In Jorge Lira’s Quechua-Castellano Dictionary (Lira A. Jorge, 1982), *k’apah* or *kkhápakk* means “fair, exact, and just,” translations quite indicative for our objective. Lira then highlights another Runa Simi term: *k’apah kay*, which means “condition or quality of what is exact.” With these we can make an argument on the character of this magisterial alignment of Inka “city-temples,” it is fair to reaffirm this proposal of the *way of the qhapaq* as the *way of the just* or *path of wisdom*. In the dictionary cited, page 158, word #44: *kkh’apakk* is defined as “*adj.* Sacred, dedicated or related to divinity or its worship.”
4. Let us make our first hypothesis: Qhapaq Ñan means Path or Way of the Just, of the Fair, of the Nobles and the Saints, since in the Puquina language – ancestor to Quechua and Aymara – *khapaj* means, “saint or “noble” (Frederico Aguilo, 1983: 80). To complement our hypothesis, we can say that along this Andean corridor we have a sort of Andean Tao (worth the general comparison). (See drawing 7.) The Asian Tao, as the guiding discipline of oriental philosophy, means “conscious way” in popular tongue, and “sense” in the cultural circles of Chinese philosophers (Lao Tse, 1983). We can summarize Tao as the sense or “way of one’s self-discovery” or “with one’s truth” (Jung C.G., 1983). With good reason Mary Scholten asks: *Imataq ch’ekkari?* (What is truth?) And why is the diagonal (*ch’ekkalluwa*) the line of truth in our Andean culture? This leads us to the fundamental question of this book: *Is the Qhapaq Ñan the great road that shows us the path of wisdom and understanding in the American Andean culture? And is the Qhapaq Kuna, therefore, the Inka civilization’s school of wisdom?*
5. It would be difficult to accept that these cities were built along a straight line and at 45° to the north-south axis by chance. And if we postulate that this path was constructed by a god, for the believers, or by aliens – for a different kind of believers – we would still have to wonder what they were trying to tell us or indicate with so wondrous an alignment. But we should wager on what is ours and believe in the greatness of our Andean ancestors. To develop our hypothesis, let us accept for now that the Qhapaq Ñan was created with their wisdom, scientific discipline, and superior technology, which has yet to be fully uncovered and properly studied. Being a path, it is only in the walking of this path where we discover that *its steps reveal its mysteries*, and only by following this route can we learn its wisdom and recognize it. Let us now follow the prints of the qhapaq along their great road.