



Figure 1. Machu Picchu has endured for centuries because of the care taken in its construction. This National Geographic Society photograph was used for their AD 1530 reconstruction of Machu Picchu map that appeared in the May 2002 issue of the National Geographic magazine.

A Visit to a Prehistoric Construction Site

First of six pages.

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ANCIENT STONEMASONS are the friends of history scholars because it is the long-ago work of this noble profession that tells modern historians what prehistoric people were like, how they lived, and what standard of care they practiced.

The Inca of 500 years ago had no written language, no iron or steel, and they did not have the wheel. It is the stonemasonry at Machu Picchu that we can use to learn about these early talented Americans; people who had a great civilization long before Columbus sailed for America!

The Research of Wright Water Engineers, Inc. at Machu Picchu started in 1994. Since then, their engineers have answered many questions about how Machu Picchu was built and how it functioned. What we learned was that the Inca were good engineers and that their stonemasons practiced a high standard of care; no detail was overlooked.

The Machu Picchu we see today was never finished. It was still very much a work in progress when Inca workers packed up their tools in 1540 AD and went home. While working at Machu Picchu, we didn't realize, at first, how many buildings were still under construction. In fact, what we found was mind boggling and even surprised or colleague, Dr. Alfredo Valencia Zegarra, a veteran local archeologist who grew up with Machu Picchu and who we consider the world's leading expert on the site.

There is abundant evidence that work in progress had been interrupted. For instance, we found a temporary construction ramp near the Sacred Rock. Sloping 30-degrees, this ramp served to lever huge stones up onto a high wall. Nearby, a large stone has been left on the wall. It is tilted at a 45-degree angle so that the bottom could be shaped to make it nestle snugly onto the stone below.

The huge stones of the Principal Temple were still being

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