



# Of Summits and Sacrifice: An Ethnohistoric Study of Inka Religious Practices

*Thomas Besom*

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In perhaps as few as one hundred years, the Inka Empire became the largest state ever formed by a native people anywhere in the Americas, dominating the western coast of South America by the early sixteenth century. Because the Inkas had no system of writing, it was left to Spanish and semi-indigenous authors to record the details of the religious rituals that the Inkas believed were vital for consolidating their conquests. Synthesizing these arresting accounts that span three centuries, Thomas Besom presents a wealth of descriptive data on the Inka practices of human sacrifice and mountain worship, supplemented by archaeological evidence. "Of Summits and Sacrifice" offers insight into the symbolic connections between landscape and life that underlay Inka religious beliefs. In vivid prose, Besom links significant details, ranging from the reasons for cyclical sacrificial rites to the varieties of mountain deities, producing a uniquely powerful cultural history.

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