

# Qhapaq Ñan, Monument of Regional Integration and Cradle of Living Cultures

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Qhapaq Ñan is a road network built during several centuries by the Incas, who partially took advantage of existing pre-Inca infrastructures. In fact, the Incas inherited this territorial system built by the first Andean civilizations that preceded them. Seven centuries later, they articulated it within the milestone of an integrating and expansionist political project of continental reach named Tawantinsuyu.

This road network was built with the objective of facilitating communications, transportations, and trade, but also with defensive purposes. The route spread over six South American countries: Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Colombia. Led by Peru, in 2001, these six countries joined forces and worked together to inscribe Qhapaq Ñan – Andean Road System on the UNESCO World Heritage List. It was finally inscribed under criteria (ii)(iii)(iv)(vi), by the World Heritage Committee on June 21, 2014, in Doha, Qatar.

The use of criterion (vi) in this inscription, resulted from the mobilization and negotiation of representatives from the six countries. They insisted on conducting a detailed evaluation on intangible aspects associated with Qhapaq Ñan. Finally, the evaluation concluded recognizing that this monument is associated with living manifestations, beliefs, and unique rituals that, unfortunately, were in danger of disappearing. The evaluators also recognized that intangible values are an inseparable part of the property. At the same time, they are still a key factor for preservation of the roads.

The initiative of preparing the nomination of Qhapaq Ñan to the World Heritage List resulted from a project that became an articulating element. It had a positive impact, in multilateral and bilateral aspects, as well as in the relations between the six countries involved. Since the first coordination meetings, the process of preparing the nomination dossier and its management system was developed in a consensual and participative work environment.

In the framework of this process, important diplomatic, technical, and institutional efforts were made. It is a testimony to a form of true cultural integration, through research, registration, and preservation of the exceptional universal values from the pre-Hispanic continental communication system in the Andes. This inscription highlights the important

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social and political function of the road network; the architecture and engineering masterpieces and connected infrastructures dedicated to trading activities, lodging and storage of goods; and sites with religious meaning.

These knowledge and cultural practices were inherited and transmitted from generation to generation and are currently part of the intangible cultural heritage from communities that live along Qhapaq Ñan. Anthropologist Richard Mujica testifies that

*these roads continue fulfilling the roles that originated them: integration, communication, exchange and flow of goods and knowledge. For inhabitants of these communities, the road, as well as the natural landscape surrounding them, comes to life in each of their activities. The road is another being in the vital environment and an important part of the way these populations see the world (Mujica, 2021).*

Qhapaq Ñan continues playing an important role in the organization of space and society. In a vast geographic area along the Andes, where the roads remain an important medium to share cultural values of exceptional intangible importance.

This path is the testimony to a shared common story of ancestral Andean cultural traditions that, despite technological transformations, stand in time. The cultural traditions from the communities endure to this day and include languages, religion, agriculture, music, dance, food, arts, habits, knowledge, world views, rituals, festivities, etc.

Qhapaq Ñan currently remains a vector of belonging and identity for local populations and allows them to transmit from generation to generation their cultural practices and expressions and traditional knowledge. The members of these communities base their understanding of existence in the unique Andean world view. This world view applies to all aspects of daily life.

This monument is directly associated with intangible values shared by communities from the Andean world. Such as, for example, traditional trade, ritual practices and the use of millennial technologies, which are living traditions and fundamental beliefs for the cultural identity of the communities involved.

The Andean Road network keeps this essential role of integration, communication, exchange and flow of goods and knowledge. Despite the current modern commercial and social changes, it maintains its relevance and importance throughout the centuries. As well as its role as a cultural benchmark that contributes to strengthening the identity of the Andean world. The value of the identity and knowledge from peoples is a fundamental component for integration of the Andean communities.

Next year, in 2024, it will be ten years since the World Heritage Committee from UNESCO inscribed Qhapaq Ñan to the World Heritage List. From Peru, we are committed to continue working to highlight its tangible and intangible components. Through the

organization of different activities, conferences, exhibits and, probably the celebration of the International Day of Languages from Qhapaq Ñan.

By organizing these events, we intend to highlight the relation between tangible and intangible heritages along Qhapaq Ñan. We also want to value native languages, dances, music, rituals, world views, etc., that the communities related to Qhapaq Ñan currently practice.

We expect to contribute to the awareness of the preservation, protection and management of both tangible and intangible components of Qhapaq Ñan. This will be achieved by approaching the general population, experts, the academic world and the diplomatic world, at local, national and international levels.

I invite UNESCO, the governments of the six countries involved, the communities and citizens in general to work together to ensure the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage linked to Qhapaq Ñan. This work needs to be made following the guidelines and procedures described in the 2003 Convention. I mean through identification, documentation, research, promotion, and valuing of this heritage, as well as to execute concrete actions to ensure their transmission and revitalization, especially through formal and non-formal education.

The Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the Andean Community held a meeting on June 15, 2023. They were called by Peru, in its capacity of *pro tempore* Presidency of the Andean Community, to celebrate the 54th anniversary of its creation. In this meeting, the representatives of the Andean countries agreed on the reactivation of the Andean Environmental Authorities Committee and the Andean Council of Environment and Sustainable Development ministers.

Undoubtedly, these actions will contribute to preserving Qhapaq Ñan, which in 2017 was declared as an Andean Community cultural heritage by the Andean Parliament. These activities will also have a positive effect on the sustainable development of the communities related to this property.

From UNESCO, I want to highlight that we are facing challenges to boost the Latin American integration in economic, commercial, environmental, energy integration and, of course, cultural integration topics.

I conclude with a paragraph from the Declaration of the 4th Andean Council of Ministers of Culture and Cultures, signed on 2021 in Loja, Ecuador, during the sixth edition of the International Living Arts Festival:

*...our commitment is to build a new culture of, one that redeems the ancestral wisdom from indigenous nations and people from Andean countries, [that] allows harmony between human beings and mother earth, strengthening our territories and cultures, and highlighting the importance of women, young people and different minorities in all processes.*