

Saint Dominic Priory - QORIKANCHA

Asociación cultural LAUDARE

SAINT DOMINIC PRIORY QORIKANCHA

GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE MUSEUM

For more than five centuries, the architectural complex known today as the Saint Dominic Priory – Qorikancha has been a part of Peruvian history. Originally the main shrine of Pre-Hispanic Cusco, it became the principal temple of the immense Inca empire of Tawantinsuyu, which stretched from the southern part of present-day Colombia to the north of Chile and Argentina.

Transformed after the Spanish conquest into a Catholic monastery, the old edifice retained its essential significance as a sacred building. The Pre-Hispanic forms of worship of Andean tradition were replaced by the practices and rituals instituted by the new faith. From the melting pot of this cultural fusion there emerged a new popular Andean religiosity; Catholicism enriched by a singular autochthonous context.

Today, the Saint Dominic Priory – Qorikancha is the most frequently visited museum in the city of Cusco. Its architecture reflects a unique blending of styles and epochs. Its different constructive phases can be distinguished in its overall structure: Inca, colonial, republican and contemporary.

The monastery continues to be the home of the Dominican friars of the Province of Saint John the Baptist – Peru, and it also accommodates the International Novitiate of the Order, where friars of the future from many South American countries are trained.

*View of Saint Dominic Priory from the Saphi River, by Leonce Angrand (1847).
Photo: Courtesy of Edgardo Rivera Martínez.*

HISTORY

According to the chronicler Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, when they conquered the Cusco valley the founders of the Inca dynasty, Manko Qhapaq and his family, settled between the Tullumayu and Saphi rivers, at the place now known as Awaqpinta. One of the earliest constructions of this first Inca settlement was the temple they called Intikancha, or “enclosure of the sun” [*Inti*: sun; *kancha*: cloister, enclosure], located on the site now occupied by the Qorikancha.

The great imperial reformer Inca Pachakuti (or Pachakuteq), rebuilt the city of Cusco during the second half of the 15th century and ordered the construction of new buildings in the “House of the Sun”. Pachakuti endowed the shrine with fabulous riches and its name was changed to Qorikancha, which in Quechua means “golden enclosure” [*Coricancha* in its Spanish form and *Qorikancha* according to the accepted written form of present-day Quechua].

After the Spanish conquest in 1532, during the division of Cusco’s lands and buildings, the Qorikancha fell to Juan Pizarro, the brother of Francisco Pizarro. Before his death, Juan Pizarro elected to donate the Qorikancha to the Order of Preachers (Dominican Order), the first religious congregation in the history of the evangelization of Peru, for the Dominican friar

Vicente Valverde had accompanied Pizarro's expedition. The donation was received by Friar Juan de Oláz. Founded in 1534, Cusco's Saint Dominic Priory [*Convento de Santo Domingo*] was the first Dominican priory in Peru. In later years, a number of the descendants of the Inca ruling dynasty were interred in the Church of Saint Dominic, including Tupaq Amaru I.

In 1950, the priory was severely damaged by a powerful earthquake that left much of the city in ruins. Following a series of reconstructions, carried out over a period of several decades, the architecture of the complex acquired the aspect it has today.

*Curved wall of Qorikancha with the Church of Saint Dominic
(Engraving based on a photograph by George Squier, 1865-1877).*

INCA ARCHITECTURE

The old ceremonial complex of Qorikancha followed the typical layout of traditional Inca architecture and urban planning: it was an enclosed square space, with several buildings arranged around an interior patio, some of which were surrounded by a perimeter wall. Three of the four sides of the outer wall were straight, whereas the curved form of the fourth wall followed the course of the Saphi River (present-day Avenida El Sol). The path down to the river was reinforced with several layers of terracing, which have now been restored.

The Inca architectural structures of the Qorikancha which have survived to this day consist of two complete chambers and two others that have been partially destroyed. In addition, three large fragments of the perimeter wall can still be seen; one of these faces northeast, towards Calle Awaqpinta, while the other two face in the opposite direction (southwest), towards the terracing. All of these structures clearly display a stylistic unity and were probably built during the same period, during the reconstruction of Cusco ordered by Inca Pachakuteq. They are made from andesite.

The Qorikancha created by the Incas is one of the most outstanding surviving examples of Pre-Hispanic construction techniques. The strict alignment of the buildings indicates advanced knowledge of geometry. The perfect joining of the stone blocks and the inclination of the walls has enabled the structures to resist the destructive power of the seismic activity typical of the region, throughout the centuries.

The great monoliths of green diorite that can be seen today incorporated into the colonial-era walls of the priory may have belonged to an earlier Inca structure, predating the Pachakuteq period, which no longer exists. Archaeological excavations conducted during the second half of the 20th century revealed the foundations of Pre-Hispanic structures dismantled during the colonial period.

Qorikancha during the reign of Inca Pachakuteq (Drawing by Fernando Bolívar, 2008).

PRE-HISPANIC WORSHIP

Qorikancha is commonly referred to as the “Temple of the Sun”. However, several deities from the Inca pantheon were venerated here. The chroniclers of the colonial period provide us with conflicting accounts of the exact configuration of that pantheon.

In his “Royal Commentaries”, the celebrated mixed-race author Garcilaso de la Vega tells us that the main structure of the Qorikancha was a temple dedicated to the sun god (*Inti*), situated in the western part of the complex, where Saint Dominic church is now located. Around the interior patio were the chamber of the moon goddess (*Killa*), the wife of the sun; the chamber of the planet Venus (*Ch’aska*) and the stars (*Qoyllur*); and the chambers dedicated to the god of thunder and lightning (*Illapa*) and the rainbow deity (*K’uychi*), as well as the room occupied by the high priest (*Willaq Umu*).

In his book *Historia del Nuevo Mundo*, Father Bernabé Cobo tells us that the main image housed in the Qorikancha was known as the *P’unchau*: “It was a solid piece, said P’unchau, which means ‘the day’, and it was made entirely of the finest gold and with an exquisite display of jewels. It was shaped like a human face surrounded by sunrays, like we always depict the sun ourselves. The image was placed in such a way as to face east, and as the sun rose it would strike the image; and since it was a sheet of the finest metal, the sun’s rays would reflect off it, shining with such brightness that it looked like the sun. The Indians said that along with its light the sun transmitted its power”. Another Spanish author, Juan de Betanzos, affirmed that the image was that of “a boy cast in solid gold that would have been of the size and proportions of a year-old child and was naked”.

Together with these deities, in Qorikancha the mummies of the Inca emperors and their wives were venerated as the ancestors and protectors of the royal line and of the entire empire.

The capture of Inca Tupac Amaru I and the P’unchau idol by the Spanish in 1572 (Drawing by the chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, c.1615).

THE JOAN PACHACUTI DRAWING

Around the year 1613, the indigenous chronicler Joan de Santa Cruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamaygua, a descendant of the rulers of the provinces of Canas and Canchis, wrote the chronicle *Relación de antigüedades deste reyno del Piru*, accompanied by a drawing of the Qorikancha. The illustration provides an outline in the form of a diagram of the deities venerated at the principal temple of the Incas. The chronicle was created many years after native forms of worship at Qorikancha had been prohibited, and therefore the author could not have had firsthand experience of them. His information was based on the oral traditions of his own time. The drawing includes commentaries written next to each figure in three languages: Spanish, Quechua and Aymara.

According to Pachacuti, the principal deity venerated at the Qorikancha was the creator god *Viracocha*. Among the other deities worshipped were the stars and constellations: *Inti* (sun), *Quilla* (moon), *Chazcacoyllor* (the planet Venus), *Orcorara*, *Choque Chinchay*, *Catachillay* and *Chacana*. In addition, symbolic representations of a number of natural elements and phenomena are also featured: *Huchu* (summer), *Pocoy* (winter), *Yllapa* (thunder and lightning), *Cuychi* (rainbow), *Pacha Mama* (Mother Earth), *Mama Cocha* (Mother Ocean), the Pilcomayo River, *Pucyo* (natural spring), *Chuque Chinchay* (mythical feline), *Mallqui* (tree), *Ymaymana Ñaoraycunap Ñauin* (seeds, known as “the eyes of all things”). At the center of the drawing are the figures of a man and a woman.

There have been many interpretations of this drawing. Several authors see it as a faithful representation of the “main altar” or the façade of the Inca temple, with the figures decorating its surface. Some –like Roberto Lehmann-Nitsche and Gary Urton- interpret it as a general outline of the Andean worldview. Others –such as Ana Sánchez and Pierre Duviols- believe that it was inspired by the formal structure of Catholic altarpieces.

Deities and worship at Qorikancha (Drawing by Joan Pachacuti, c.1613).

QORIKANCHA LEGENDS: THE GOLD CORNICE

Many authors of the colonial period mention that the walls of the Qorikancha were covered in sheets of gold. One of the earliest chroniclers of the Spanish conquest, Cristóbal de Mena, describes the sacking of the temple: *“Then he sent them to some buildings of the sun in which they worshipped. These buildings were sheathed with gold, in large plates, on the side where the sun rises [...] The Christians went to the buildings and, with no aid from the Indians (who did not want to help, saying that they would die), the Christians decided to remove the ornamentation from these buildings with some copper crow-bars; and so they did, as they related it themselves”*.

Most of the chroniclers agree that these sheets of gold were positioned along the upper part of the walls, in the form of a cornice or border. Juan de Betanzos tells us that the Inca Topa Yupangue (Tupaq Yupanki) ordered them to be made, using gold brought from the conquest of Antisuyo. According to Betanzos, the cornice was two and a half hands wide (about half a meter) and the thickness of “a small tin plate”. It was fitted around the entire chamber of the sun, on the outer wall, between the stonework and the thatched roof. The gold sheets were probably fixed to the mud bricks that formed the upper section of the walls.

Later, the mixed-race author Garcilaso de la Vega, in his effort to stress the scale of the treasures housed in the temple, stated that the gold cornice adorned the entire perimeter wall of the complex: *“Along all of the upper part of the cloister there was a border made from a sheet of gold more than a vara [84 centimeters] wide which served to crown the cloister; to take its place the Spaniards ordered the installation [...] of another white border made from plaster and the same width as the one made from gold”*.

This is how the 19th century traveler Paul Marcoy imagined the Qorikancha of the Incas (Engraving by E. Riou, 1869).

QORIKANCHA LEGENDS: THE SUN DISC

One of the most well-known legends from the Inca period refers to a gold disc that represented the sun and was housed in the chamber dedicated to that deity. Garcilaso de la Vega had this to say about it: *“All four walls of the temple were covered from top to bottom with gold sheets and plates. In the front part (we call it the main altar) they had a figure of the sun made of a gold sheet twice as thick as the rest of the sheets that covered the walls [...] It was so big that it occupied the whole wall, from one extreme to the other”*. According to Garcilaso, in the division of the spoils among the conquistadores, the disc fell to a Spaniard named Mancio Sierra de Leguizamo, who lost it gambling that same night.

We cannot be sure if such a disc actually existed, or if the legend is the result of a confusion, given that many other authors mention the P'unchau idol as the principal representation of the solar deity, housed in its respective chamber. Father Reginaldo de Lizárraga –a Dominican priest and contemporary of Garcilaso- mentions in his writings that the gold object given to Mancio Sierra was in fact the lid of the ceremonial fountain that has been preserved to this day in the main cloister of the priory: *“There covered the opening of this fountain a sheet of gold, upon which the sun was sculpted. When the Spaniards entered this city it fell to one of the conquistadores whom I knew, named Manso Sierra [...] He gambled the gold and lost it [...]”*

Main cloister of the priory with the Inca ceremonial fountain (Engraving based on a photograph by George Squier, 1865-1877).

QORIKANCHA LEGENDS: THE GOLD GARDEN

Garcilaso de la Vega, the source of many enduring Cusco legends, describes at length the “garden of gold” which formed part of the Qorikancha of the Incas, mentioning human figures, plants and animals, all life-sized and fashioned in gold and silver.

The origin of this legend can be traced back to an agricultural ritual that was performed in the temple, and which was described by the chronicler Pedro Pizarro: *“Away from the room where the Sun was wont to sleep, they made a small field, which was much like a large one, where, at the proper season, they sowed maize. They sprinkled it by hand with water brought on purpose for the Sun, and at the time when they celebrated their festivals, which was three times a year - that is when they sowed the crops, when they harvested them, and when they made orejones-*

they filled this garden with cornstalks made from gold, with the ears and leaves as natural as corn, all made from very pure gold, which they kept to be displayed at these times."

Several decades later, Father Reginaldo de Lizárraga stated that this ritual practice continued still: *"The garden of our house [Saint Dominic Priory] was the Garden of the Sun [...]; at the appointed time all the Indians would come to work it, dressed in their finest clothes, and so it remained for some years, and I myself saw once how most of the Incas gathered [...] and they worked it and leveled it with great joy, and this was the last time, for it was objected to and quite rightly forbidden to them."*

Ritual of the first sowing performed by the Incas in the month of August (Drawing by the chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, c.1615).

QORIKANCHA LEGENDS: THE GREAT CHINKANA

The Quechua word *chinkana* means "place where one becomes lost, labyrinth". According to one of Cusco's most famous legends, since the time of the Incas there has existed a subterranean passage, with many side tunnels, connecting the fortress of Saqsaywaman with Qorikancha. At Saqsaywaman a carved rock can be seen, beneath which what is said to be the entrance to the Great Chinkana is located. It is said that countless treasures are hidden in the Chinkana.

Writing towards the end of the 16th century, the chronicler Martín de Marúa tells us that: *"They say that he [Prince Ausitopa], on the orders of his father [Topa Inga Yupanqui] made a path under the earth, from the fortress of the city of Cuzco, which dominates the city, to the famous temple of Curi Cancha [...] The mouth of this tunnel remains open to this today, and they call it Chingana, which means the place where one becomes lost, like that famous labyrinth of the island of Crete, although all has been lost now, for there is nobody who has succeeded in discovering where it leads [...] not even in the temple itself [Qorikancha] does anyone know. It is said that the Ynga ordered that it be closed and entirely walled up."*

In what is perhaps the most well-known local story, it is said that two students entered the tunnel at Sacsaywaman and disappeared. After several days, one of them managed to escape from the Chinkana, emerging at the other end, behind the main altarpiece of the Church of Saint Dominic, carrying in his hands a golden corncob, only to die a few days after his ordeal.

The many recent attempts to confirm the existence of the Great Chinkana have all ended in failure.

Outer wall of Qorikancha seen from Calle Awaqpinata (Engraving based on a photograph by George Squier, 1865-1877).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL STUDIES

In the 19th century, the Saint Dominic Priory was visited by a number of celebrated travelers and investigators, including Paul Marcoy, George Squier, Charles Wiener and Max Uhle, who subsequently discussed it at length in their writings. In 1865, the American George Squier took the first photographs of the priory and produced the first accurate plan of the main cloister, in which he marked the position of the Inca walls.

Archaeological studies of the Qorikancha began in 1939, with the excavations carried out by the American academic John Howland Rowe, the father of Cusco archaeology. After the catastrophic earthquake of 1950, new excavations were conducted during the reconstruction work, led by the Cusco-born architect Oscar Ladrón de Guevara. Over the decades that followed, a succession of Cusco archaeologists worked at the site, including Luis Barreda Murillo, José Gonzales, Raymundo Béjar, Arminda Gibaja, Alfredo Valencia and Roberto Flores. The archaeological remains found during excavation work form part of the collection of the Regional Historical Museum and other state museums.

In 2002, the Spanish historian María del Carmen Martín Rubio, with the support of Cusco archaeologists, attempted to find the remains of Inca Tupaq Amaru in the Church of Saint Dominic, but the project was unsuccessful.

In 2004, the American archaeologist Brian Bauer published a detailed compendium of archaeological and historical information, entitled *Ancient Cuzco*, in which he dedicated a long chapter to the Qorikancha that included many new details.

Plan of Priory of Saint Dominic showing the Inca walls (George Squier, 1865-1877).

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RECEPTION ROOM

The Reception Room is the part of the priory where in the past the friars of the religious community would receive visitors. The monumental wooden door which separates the room from the entrance hall is an excellent example of Moorish-style [*mudéjar*] art, and the only one of its kind in Cusco. Based on geometric forms, this Arab-influenced style developed in Spain employs the wood assembly technique of architectural decoration. The door of the Reception Room is made from three different types of wood: Nicaraguan cedar, alder and yellowwood. The door was restored from 2009 to 2010.

The most remarkable detail of the Reception Room is the vaulted ceiling painted in the 17th century with scenes from the Passion of Christ and ornamental motifs. On the rear wall the original Inca stonework of the perimeter wall of the Pre-Hispanic complex has been left uncovered.

A scale-model of the priory is located here, showing the area of the main cloister, open to the public, as well as the second cloister, which currently houses the residence of the Dominican friars and the International Novitiate.

1. *Moorish-style door. Fragment of the decoration.*
2. *Model of the priory.*
3. *Detail of the decorated roof.*

Photos: Jorge Luis Baca.

Reception Room (Photo: Jorge Luis Baca)

MAIN CLOISTER

The architecture of the main cloister of the priory, located on the site of the principal patio of the temple of Qorikancha, combines the walls of Inca structures and colonial arcades.

The ceremonial fountain occupies the center of the cloister. It dates from the Inca period, when it was used during Pre-Hispanic religious rites. During the early 17th century, Father Reginaldo de Lizárraga wrote: *“There is in our monastery a great fountain made from stone, the outer part of which is octagonal [...] Into this fountain they would pour a quantity of chicha [a native alcoholic drink made from fermented corn], chosen from that which the Inga drank, so that the Sun might drink, and that which was poured into this fountain was said by these barbarous people to have been drunk by the Sun; they covered the opening of this fountain with a sheet of gold, upon which the sun was sculpted”*.

In the upper part of the walls of the cloister are arranged, in accordance with the traditions of the Dominican Order, a series of canvases that narrate the life of the founder of the order, Saint Dominic de Guzmán (1170-1221). The author of these paintings was José Espinoza de los Monteros, one of the most renowned artists of the celebrated Cusco School of 17th century viceroyalty period art.

1. *Arcades of the main cloister.*
2. *Inca ceremonial fountain.*
3. *José Espinoza de los Monteros: Life of Saint Dominic de Guzmán (Oil on canvas, 17th century).*

Photos: Krystian Bielatowicz, Jorge Luis Baca, Vera Tyuleneva.

Main cloister (Photo: Krystian Bielatowicz).

SMALLER INCA CHAMBERS

On the northeastern side of the cloister, to one side of the Reception Room, a large section of the perimeter wall of the temple of Qorikancha has been conserved, facing Calle Awaqpinta, together with two small adjacent chambers. The two chambers were identical in shape and size, and each one had three high trapezoidal doorways. One of the two structures is in a good state of repair, while the other is only partially preserved. The side walls of the two chambers each possess three perfectly aligned windows. The niches in the walls were probably used to hold offerings and objects intended for ceremonial use.

The roofs of the buildings have not survived, but according to the descriptions left to us by the chroniclers Juan de Betanzos and Garcilaso de la Vega they were made of wood, reinforced with mud, covered with thatch, and of a four-sided, hip roof, design.

In the space between the two buildings is the so-called “open chamber”, formed by the two side walls of the two neighboring structures and the perimeter wall. This space has no front wall, but it was probably roofed. At the rear, on the wall that faces Calle Awaqpinta, at floor level there are three orifices which would have served as drainage for the main patio of the complex.

The original names or exact purpose of these Inca chambers is not known, although they are popularly known as the Temple of the Rainbow and the Temple of Lightning.

1. *Three aligned windows of the smaller chambers.*
2. *Temple of Lightning seen from the second floor.*
3. *Interior of the Temple of the Rainbow.*

Photos: Manolo Chávez, Jorge Luis Baca.

Smaller Inca chambers (Photo: Manolo Chávez).

PICTURE GALLERY

In the two rooms of the picture gallery, which in the past housed the priory’s refectory, or dining room, and the *De Profundis* room, the Order’s collection of colonial-era art is exhibited. Most of these works belong to the celebrated Cusco School and date from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Many of the members of this movement were indigenous or mixed-race artists.

The image which inspires the greatest popular devotion is the anonymous 18th century painting *Señor de los Temblores* [“Lord of the Earthquakes”]. It is a representation on canvas of the sculptural image of the crucifixion of Christ housed in Cusco’s cathedral. The Lord of the Earthquakes is considered the city’s patron saint, having been credited with saving Cusco from the great 1650 earthquake.

One of the most striking canvases in the collection is the large painting *Cristo ante el Sanedrín* [“Christ before the Sanhedrin”], one of the few paintings of the Cusco School which bear the signature of the artist. The name of the 17th century painter Juan Espinoza de los Monteros can be seen at the bottom of the canvas. Another exceptional work is the monumental composition by an anonymous artist, *Via Crucis* [“Way of the Cross”] with a portrait of the donor in the bottom left hand corner. The clothing and features of the donor identify her as an indigenous noblewoman.

The most outstanding work in the collection, extraordinary both in terms of its subject and iconography, is the late 16th century canvas by an anonymous artist entitled *El requerimiento* or

Encuentro de Francisco Pizarro con el Inca Atawallpa en Cajamarca [“The Requirement”, or “Meeting of Francisco Pizarro with the Inca Atawallpa in Cajamarca”]. The work was undoubtedly commissioned by the friars of the priory and was intended to highlight the major role played by the Dominican Order in the conquest of Peru. The Dominican friar Vicente Valverde accompanied Pizarro’s expedition and was present at the famous encounter in Cajamarca. The painting contains many idealized details, but what is most interesting is the accuracy with which the clothing and accessories of the Inca court are depicted.

1. *Picture gallery*
2. *Anonymous. “Lord of the Earthquakes” (18th century, oil on canvas).*
3. *Juan Espinoza de los Monteros. “Christ before the Sanhedrin” (17th century, oil on canvas). Detail.*

Photos: Jorge Luis Baca, Vera Tyuleneva, Daniel Giannoni.

Anonymous: “The Requirement”, or “Meeting of Francisco Pizarro with the Inca Atawallpa in Cajamarca”. 16th century, oil on canvas (Photo: Krystian Bielatowicz).

GUAMAN POMA DE AYALA ROOM

In this room reproductions are exhibited of drawings and texts from the *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, an indigenous Peruvian author active during the 16th and 17th centuries. His work, completed around 1615, is an extraordinary compendium of historical data regarding the Inca period and the colonial era, with three hundred and ninety-eight illustrations. The original manuscript is housed in the Royal Library of Copenhagen.

Guaman Poma’s text contains two calendars from the Inca period: the ritual calendar (pages 237-262) and the agricultural calendar (pages 1140-1177). Both are adjusted to the twelve months of the western calendar. In the museum’s exhibition, the panels featuring the ritual calendar are arranged to the left, while those from the agricultural calendar can be seen to the right. The drawings are accompanied by their respective texts, in extracts from the original document.

Some of the most important dates on the Inca ritual calendar are celebrations associated with the winter solstice (*Inti Raymi*) in June and the summer solstice (*Qhapaq Inti Raymi*) in December, *Qoya Raymi* (the fiesta of women and of symbolic purification) in September, and the celebration of the dead in November. In the agricultural calendar, the most important months are May (the corn harvest) and August (tilling of the fields and the first sowing).

1. *May: Agricultural calendar. Corn harvest.*
2. *June: Ritual calendar. Inti Raymi celebration.*
3. *August: Agricultural calendar. First sowing.*
4. *September: Ritual calendar. Qoya Raymi celebration.*
5. *December: Ritual calendar. Qhapaq Inti Raymi celebration.*

Guaman Poma de Ayala Room (Photo: Jorge Luis Baca).

GARDENS

Until the 20th century, along the route now occupied by Avenida El Sol, now the main street of Cusco's historic center, the Saphi River still flowed. It was one of two rivers that once ran through the heart of the city. Today, the Saphi River is channeled through subterranean structures.

In order to reinforce the side of the Qorikancha that faced the river, during the Inca period terraced embankments were built. These were restored and partially recreated during the last decades of the 20th century. The priory's gardens are situated on these terraces, and they are open to those members of the public who wish to view the variety of local plants. Native species include *queuña* (*Polylepis* sp.), a small tree found in the Peruvian highlands; several varieties of fuchsia, a South American shrub known for its bright flowers; and *qantu* (*Cantua buxifolia*), another shrub with a long, bell-shaped bloom considered Peru's national flower.

The stone blocks that can be seen in the gardens come from a number of Pre-Hispanic and colonial-era structures, dismantled during different periods as part of the process of architectural transformation of the Qorikancha and the Church of Saint Dominic.

1. *View of the garden.*
2. *Qantu.*
3. *Fuchsia.*

Photos: Manolo Chávez.

The priory's gardens (Photo: Jorge Luis Baca).

MAIN INCA CHAMBER

This chamber is the largest of the surviving structures from the original Inca temple. In popular tradition, it is known as the Temple of the Stars, although the members of the order know it as the Temple of the Moon. During the viceroyalty and republican eras, it was used as the chapterhouse (the room used by the order as a meeting place).

On the front wall of the chamber, between the two doorways, is the "ceremonial niche". The orifices around its edges may have served to secure a curtain or fine cloth, or to hang a door that would have covered the niche and its contents, or perhaps to hold decorative elements. The chronicler Pedro de Cieza de León, who visited the Qorikancha around the year 1550, believed it had been the Inca's throne: "*There were two benches in that wall, upon which the light of the rising sun fell, and the stones were carefully drilled and in the holes many precious*

stones and emeralds were placed. On these benches sat the kings and anyone else who did so was put to death”.

During the colonial period, the left half of this niche was dismantled and replaced by an archway marking the new entrance to the chapterhouse. After the 1950 earthquake, during archaeological excavations, stone blocks from the dismantled niche were found. The colonial arch was taken down and the missing parts of the original niche and the adjacent wall were reintroduced. Some blocks were added during the reconstruction process to fill the gaps.

On one of the interior walls, a fragment of the mural paintings that formed part of the decoration of the chapterhouse during the colonial period has been conserved. The mural was restored in 2005.

1. *Ceremonial niche.*
2. *Exterior of the main chamber.*
3. *Niches in the interior of the main chamber.*
4. *Detail of the colonial-era mural.*

Photos: Manolo Chávez, Jorge Luis Baca, Krystian Bielatowicz.

Interior of the main Inca chamber (Photo: Jorge Luis Baca).

DOUBLE-JAMB DOORWAY

To one side of the main chamber is a passageway with a trapezoidal, double-jamb doorway. In Inca architecture, openings of this kind are typically found in the most important buildings. It is believed that the interior section of the double-jamb served to support a wooden structure that functioned as a door. To the right of the doorway is the fourteen-angled stone, an example of the great skill employed by ancient stonemasons and builders.

In 1982, the anthropologist Tom Zuidema announced that the passageway was aligned with the point where the Pleiades rises, a constellation venerated by the Incas and associated with their beliefs regarding climatic changes and the success of the harvest.

To the right of the passageway are the remains of a semi-destroyed Inca chamber, adjacent to the present-day Church of Saint Dominic, which would have been of the same shape and size as the main chamber, and which probably possessed a similar ceremonial niche. The great arches of the colonial-era vaulted ceiling rest on the remains of the Inca walls.

On one of the walls, traces of the stairway that once led up to the second floor of the cloister have been preserved. This was dismantled after the 1950 earthquake in order to facilitate a panoramic view of the Inca chambers.

1. *Double-jamb doorway with passageway.*
2. *Semi-destroyed chamber.*

Photos: Jorge Luis Baca.

Double-jamb doorway (Photo: Vera Tyuleneva).

SACRISTY

Since the colonial period, this room has served as the sacristy of the Church of Saint Dominic. In the Christian churches of Europe, the sacristy is a room in which the objects used during mass are kept, such as liturgical vestments, the unconsecrated host, chalices, etc. The sacristy is used by priests and other celebrants as a place to carry out the necessary preparation and to dress before and after mass. Normally, the sacristy is located within the church, but it may also occupy an annex or separate building, as is the case of Cusco's Saint Dominic Priory.

The cabinets in the sacristy were once used as closets for storing liturgical vestments. Today, the finest vestments from the priory's collection are displayed here, including chasubles, dalmatics and stoles, decorated with fine embroidery and mostly dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. In the display cabinets to the right, the vestments of the images of the saints of the Church of Saint Dominic are displayed: the cloak of Saint Vincent Ferrer and the dress of Our Lady of the Rosary.

On the table in the sacristy the monstrance is exhibited (the vessel in which the consecrated Eucharist host is contained). It is made from bronze and dates from the 19th century. On the rear wall, to the left, is the imposing carved wooden bowl once used by priests and deacons to wash their hands before mass. The upper part of the walls is decorated with canvases from the 17th century Cusco School, depicting scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary, as well as a painting of Saint John the Baptist, patron saint of Peru's Dominicans.

1. *Cape worn by the image of Saint Vincent Ferrer (19th century).*
2. *Detail of embroidered chasuble (19th century).*
3. *Relief of Saint Dominic with Saint Paul (19th century).*

Photos: Jorge Luis Baca.

Sacristy (Photo: Jorge Luis Baca).

THE SOLAR DRUM

The area within the curved part of the Qorikancha perimeter wall is known as the Solar Drum. In the most prominent part of the structure are the remains of an extraordinarily large niche, which must have served to hold some kind of sacred object of great value and significance.

Today, the Inca wall of the Solar Drum is located a few meters from the rear wall of the Church of Saint Dominic. Before the 1950 earthquake, the church's altar wall was supported by Inca masonry. During the reconstruction of the church after the earthquake, the altar wall was moved a few meters inside the church, in order to relieve the excess weight on the Inca wall. The small barred opening in the wall of the church leads to the burial crypts located beneath the main altar.

It is well-known that the Church of Saint Dominic was built on the site occupied in Pre-Hispanic times by the main structure of the Qorikancha, the chamber dedicated to the sun, of which no clear traces remain. It is possible that the Solar Drum may have been part of that structure, and that the enormous niche, which faces east towards the rising sun, may have housed the P'unchau image of the sun god.

1. *Stonework of the Solar Drum.*
2. *Niche in the interior of the Solar Drum.*
3. *Detail of the wall.*

Photos: Krystian Bielatowicz, Jorge Luis Baca, Manolo Chávez.

Curved wall of the Sola Drum (Photo: Bernardo Nishiyama).

MILKY WAY

Several of the deities once venerated in the Qorikancha were personifications of heavenly bodies. The concepts of Inca astronomy have come to us through a few brief comments made by the chroniclers and the knowledge retained by Andean communities to this day. The Milky Way played an important role in ancient beliefs. The painting by the Cusco-born artist Miguel Araoz shows the Milky Way in the firmament over Cusco during the months of July and August, when the sky is clear and most of the heavenly bodies known to and venerated by the Incas can be seen clearly.

In the Andes, the Milky Way is known as *Mayu* (Celestial River). In contrast with the western concept of constellations, composed of groups of stars, in Andean culture it is more common to identify the dark patches that can be seen against the bright background of the Milky Way, and to see them as the silhouettes of animals that go to the river to drink, casting their shadows across its brightness. These patches are known in Quechua as *yanaphuyu* (black clouds). On the right side of the painting the *machacuay*, or great water serpent, appears. Towards the center, two small figures can be seen; these are the *yutu* (partridge) and *jamp'atu* (toad). They are followed to the left by the llama, with its two bright eyes (*llama ñawi*) corresponding to Alpha and Beta Centauri. Below the llama and upside down, is another small llama, her baby. The two llamas are being pursued by a red-eyed fox (*atoq*). In some communities, instead of a fox people see the figure of a shepherd holding out his arms towards the llamas.

In 1585, the chronicler Polo de Ondegardo wrote: “[...] *They worship two [stars] that they call Catuchillay and Urcuchillay, which are said to be a sheep and its lamb [...] They also worship another they call Machacuay which controls the serpents and snakes, so that they do no harm, and in general all the other animals and birds that are on the earth are believed to have their likeness in the heavens, which controls their procreation and growth*”. It is probable that when he spoke of these “stars” Polo de Ondegardo was referring to the *yanaphuyu*, a concept unknown to western astronomy, which he would not have understood.

1. Painting of the Milky Way seen from the passageway (Photo: Krystian Bielatowicz).
2. Diagram of the painting.

Miguel Araoz: Milky Way in Inca astronomy, oil on canvas (Photo: Miguel Araoz).

SEQES SYSTEM

In the Inca capital and its surroundings, a number of shrines, temples and sacred places were located, consisting of rocks, caves, springs, etc, which were venerated by the people of Cusco, who called them *wakas*, in Quechua. These *wakas* were connected with each other by imaginary lines called *seqes*. *Seqe* means “line”. The Qorikancha formed the hub from which all the *seqes* radiated. Around sixteen major *wakas* were located within its walls or in the immediate vicinity.

The fullest and most detailed description of the *seqes* system is found in the work *Historia del Nuevo Mundo* [History of the New World], by the Jesuit chronicler Bernabé Cobo, who copied the list of *seqes* from a manuscript, now lost, by Juan Polo de Ondegardo. On each one of the *seqe* lines, between three and fifteen *wakas* were arranged. The *seqes* were distributed among the four provinces of the Inca state. The provinces of Chinchaysuyu, Antisuyu and Qollasuyu had nine *seqes* each, while the province of Kuntisuyu had fourteen or fifteen *seqes*.

The painting by the Cusco-born artist Miguel Araoz shows the distribution of Cusco’s *seqes*. The center from which the lines radiate is the Qorikancha. The four colors correspond to the four provinces of the empire of Tawantinsuyu; the orange color marks Chinchaysuyu, the yellow is Antisuyu, the green Qollasuyu and the red represents Kuntisuyu. The lines indicate the *seqes*. The dots on the lines symbolize the three hundred and twenty-eight *wakas* arranged along the *seqes*.

In the 1970s, the anthropologist Tom Zuidema linked the *seqes* system to the Inca calendar. According to his hypothesis, each one of the *wakas* corresponds to a specific day of the year, when that *waka* would be worshipped and offerings would be made.

1. *The room where the paintings of Miguel Araoz are displayed (Photo: Jorge Luis Baca).*
2. *Diagram of the painting.*

Miguel Araoz: Cusco's system of seqes, oil on canvas (Photo: Miguel Araoz).

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION HALLS

Saint Dominic Priory - Qorikancha is one of the main cultural centers of the city of Cusco. In its rooms, exhibitions, concerts, talks, audiovisual presentations, book launches, theatrical events, festivals and artistic gatherings are organized. The priory has two temporary exhibition halls and each year it shows between ten and twenty-five contemporary art exhibitions featuring local, Peruvian and international artists. All the events are free of charge, for both the general public and participants.

The Main Temporary Exhibition Hall is located on the second floor. Here, exhibitions of painting, sculpture and conceptual art are held. From the balcony there is a panoramic view of the main cloister and the main Inca chamber.

Smaller in size, the Inca Hall is used for exhibitions featuring video art, graphic art, photography and other small format artistic media. Incorporated into the rear wall is a large fragment of the perimeter wall of the Inca temple.

1 and 2. Exhibitions held in the Main Hall in 2007 and 2009.

Photos: Vera Tyuleneva and Jorge Luis Baca.

Main Temporary Exhibition Hall (Photo: Jorge Luis Baca).

CONTEMPORARY ART HALL

Since 2004, the Church of Saint Dominic has been creating a permanent collection of contemporary art, both on religious themes and a broad spectrum of other subjects. The growth of the collection is based on acquisitions, commissions and art competitions. Currently, the priory owns more than one hundred works of contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, graphic art, photography, digital art, *objet d'art* and folk art. Part of this collection is permanently exhibited in the Contemporary Art Hall. Each year the exhibition is enhanced by new acquisitions. Here, the work of several generations of artists can be seen, from different cities in Peru and from abroad.

Every year the priory holds two art competitions. The main competition, with two acquisition prizes, brings together a range of artistic techniques and genres. It is held in August and dedicated to the feast day of the patron saint of the Order of Preachers, Saint Dominic de Guzmán. The theme of this competition varies each year.

The second competition is organized at Christmas and is divided into two categories: “*The toy as objet d’art*” and “*Images as contemporary art*”. This focus is inspired by the traditional fair, called *Santurantikuy*, which is held on Cusco’s Plaza de Armas every year on Christmas Eve, and where religious images are sold for nativity scenes, along with toys for Christmas gifts. The aim of the competition is to give an innovative twist to this tradition, thereby incorporating it into the world of contemporary art.

1. *Contemporary Art Hall.*
2. *Richard Peralta, “Immaculate Deception”, oil on canvas (2005).*
3. *The 2009 annual competition.*

Photos: Jorge Luis Baca.

Contemporary Art Hall with the 2009 annual competition exhibition (Photo: Vera Tyuleneva).

CHURCH OF SAINT DOMINIC

The Church of Saint Dominic does not form part of Cusco’s museum circuit. Instead, it is open free of charge every day for worship and visits by the general public.

The church was rebuilt and transformed over several stages, across many decades. According to Garcilaso de la Vega, initially the church was installed within the main chamber of the Qorikancha, the chamber of the sun, of which no trace remains today. Subsequently, the church was enlarged and rebuilt. The most outstanding architectural detail is the 18th century bell tower, lavishly decorated with carved stone.

Inside the church, on the walls near the entrance, is a series of canvases by the most distinguished master of the 18th century Cusco School, Marcos Zapata (Sapaca). The paintings narrate the life and miracles of Saint Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419), a Spanish Dominican saint.

In addition to its colonial art, the church also houses works of contemporary religious art from the first decade of the 21st century, by the artists Richard Peralta (the series Archangels, The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary and Way of the Cross) and Carlos Bardales (the series Peruvian Saints). It is the only church in Cusco to have incorporated contemporary art into a baroque architectural context.

1. *Carved pulpit.*
2. *Marcos Zapata, “Life of Saint Vincent Ferrer”, oil on canvas, 18th century.*

3. *Richard Peralta, "Archangels", oil on canvas, 2007.*

Photos: Jorge Luis Baca.

Church of Saint Dominic (Photo: Jorge Luis Baca).

ADDRESS AND OPENING HOURS

MUSEUM OF THE CHURCH OF SAINT DOMINIC-QORIKANCHA

Director: Father Luis Enrique Ramírez O.P.

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E-mail: charlie.quispe@yahoo.com

Website: www.qorikancha.org

Opening times: Monday to Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Sundays from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Entrance prices: General ticket 10 soles; students 5 soles.

Entrance is free for children under the age of 10 years. Entrance is free for all residents of Cusco.

Network of Dominican Museums in Peru: www.museosdominicanosperu.org

CHURCH OF SAINT DOMINIC

Opening times: Monday to Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; Sundays from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Mass: Monday to Saturday 7:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Sundays 7:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; children's mass is held on Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

Entry: Free

LIBRARY

Opening times: Monday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Entry: Free

Outer wall of the Qorikancha seen from Calle Awaqpinta (Photo: Krystian Bielatowicz).

BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY

