

Excerpts from "An Account of the Conquest of Peru,"
written by Pedro Sancho, Secretary to Pizarro

.... Caxamalca. This land, from Tumbez to Chincha has [a width of some] ten leagues, in some places more, in others less; it is a broad, flat, sandy land in which no grass or herbs grow and where it rains but little; it is fertile in maize and fruits because the people sow and irrigate their farms with water from the rivers that come down from the mountains. The houses which the laborers use are made of rushes and branches, because, when it does not rain, it is very hot, and few of the houses have roofs. They are a wretched folk, and many of them are blind on account of the great amount of sand that there is. They are poor in gold and silver, and what they have is because those who live in the sierra exchange it for goods. All the land beside the sea is of this description as far as Chincha, and even fifty leagues beyond there. They dress in cotton and eat maize both cooked and raw, and half-raw meat. At the end of the plains which are called Ingres are some very high mountains which extend from the city of San Miguel as far as Xauxa, and which may well be one hundred and fifty leagues long, but have little breadth. It is a very high and rugged land of mountains and many rivers; there are no forests save some trees in places where there is always a thick mist. It is very cold because there is a snow-capped mountain range which extends from Caxamalca to Xauxa and on which there is snow all the year through. The people who live there are much more advanced than the others, because they are very polished and warlike and of good dispositions. They are very rich in gold and silver because they get it from many places in the mountains. None of the lords who have governed these provinces have ever been able to make any use of these coast-people, as they are such a wretched and poor folk, as I have said, that they are fit to be used for nothing else than to carry fish and fruits [up into the highlands], for as soon as they come into the mountainous regions, their own land being very hot, they sicken for the most part; and the same thing happens to those who inhabit the mountains if they go down into the hot country. Those who dwell on the other side of the land, beyond the summits of the mountains, are like savages who have no houses nor any maize save a little; they have very great forests and maintain themselves almost entirely on the fruit of the trees; they have no domicile, nor fixed settlements that are known; there are very great rivers, and the land is so useless that it paid all its tribute to the lords in parrot feathers.

The mountainous region being the chief part of the country, and being so narrow, as well as being torn by the wars that have been there, settlements of Christians cannot be made there, for it is a very remote region. From the city of Xauxa along the Cuzco road, the country keeps getting more shut in by mountains and the distance from the sea is greater. And those who have been lords of Cuzco, their own dwelling being in Cuzco, called the rest of the land, in the direction of Quito, Cancasuetio, and the land beyond [Cuzco], called Callao, Collasuyo, and, in the direction of the sea, Condisuyo, and the interior Candasuyo; and in this way they gave names to these four provinces, disposed like a cross, which contained their empire. In the Collao they know not of the sea, and it

is a flat land to judge from what has been seen of it, and it is large and cold, and there are in it many rivers from which gold is got. The Indians say that in the province is a large lake of fresh water which, in its centre, has two islands. In order to learn the state of this land and its government, the Governor sent two Christians to bring him a long report of it; they set out in the beginning of December. The region of Condisuyo, toward the sea from Cuzco is a small and delectable land, although it is all of forests and stones, and the inland region is so likewise. Through it [the Antisuyu] run all the rivers which do not flow into the western sea. It is a land of many trees and mountains and is very thinly populated. This sierra runs from Tumbes as far as Xauxa, and from Xauxa as far as the city of Cuzco. It is stony and rough; if there were not roads made by hand it would not be possible to travel on foot, still less on horseback, and for the roads there are many houses full of materials for repairing the pavement, and in this matter the lords had so much firmness that there was nothing to do but keep it in order. All the mountain fields are made in the guise of stairways of stone, and the rest of the road has no great width because of some mountains that hem it in on both sides, and on one side they had made a buttress of stone so that one day it should not slide down [the mountain], and there are, likewise, other places, in which the road has a breadth of four or five human bodies, all made and paved with stone. One of the greatest works the conquerors saw in this land was these roads. All or most of the people on these slopes of the mountains live on high hills and mountains; their houses are of stone and earth; there are many dwellings in each village. Along the road each league or two or nearer, are found the dwellings built for the purpose of allowing the lords to rest when they were out visiting and inspecting their land; and every twenty leagues there are important cities, heads of provinces, to which the smaller cities brought their tribute of maize, clothes and other things. All these large cities have storehouses full of the things which are in the land, and, because it is very cold but little maize is harvested except in specially assigned places; but [there is plenty of] all the many vegetables and roots with which the people sustained themselves, and also good grass like that of Spain. There are also wild turnips which are bitter. There is a sufficiency of herds of sheep which go about in flocks with their shepherds who keep them away from the sown fields, and they have a certain part of [each] province set apart for them to winter in. The people, as I have said, are very polished and intelligent, and go always clad and shod; they eat maize both cooked and raw, and drink much chicha, which is a beverage made from maize after the fashion of beer. The people are very tractable and very obedient and yet warlike. They have many arms of diverse sorts, as has been told in the relation of the imprisonment of Atabalipa which was sent from Caxamalca, as was said above.