

# Inca successes, mistakes light our way

Andean condors are such a commanding symbol of independence and endurance that their image is on the Ecuadorian and Bolivian flags — pretty cool for a 30-pound vulture.

Despite their menu preferences — big rotten animal corpses — condors do possess charisma. I've watched as many as eight in the air at once soaring along ridge tops in isolated valleys. Like witnessing a total eclipse of the sun or a meteor shower, they are proof the world doesn't revolve around us. Flying a mile or two above valley floors, it would be nice to think condors are safe and eternal. But that, of course, is merest fantasy.

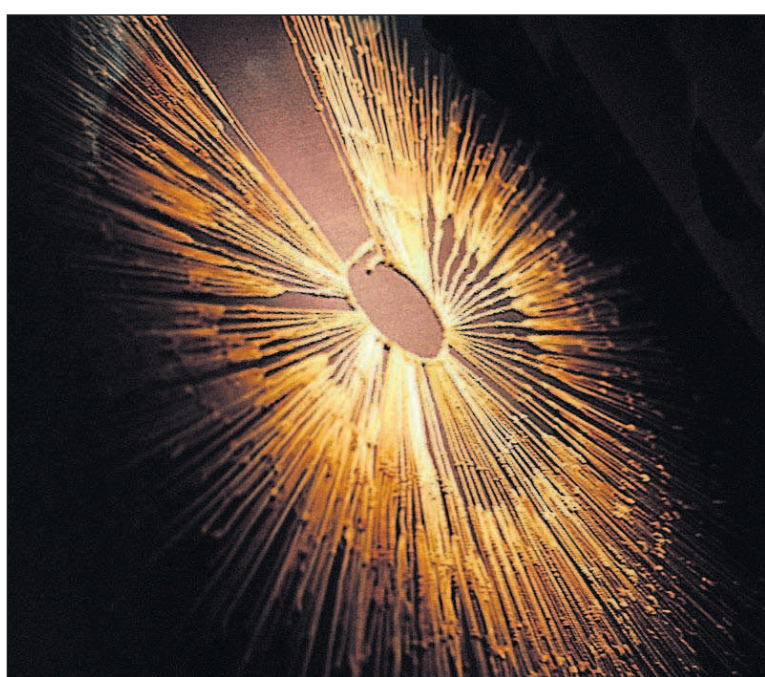
They are in trouble in South America due deadly interactions with humans and habitat loss. The Andean countryside is emptying out as desperate campesinos crowd into the despicable slums of Lima, Peru, and other cities, but unregulated logging and threats like predator poisonings nevertheless eat away at the condors' future.

1904 was the last time a North American condor was seen in Oregon, 99 years after the Lewis and Clark Expedition shot one near Ilwaco as it fed on a whale carcass on the Columbia River's north shore. (Killing something to study it is one of science's cruel ironies.) Nowadays, we're fortunate even to observe turkey vultures around the Columbia. The other day, a kettle of vultures over the swamps beyond Chinook, Washington, told me there must be a delicious drowned deer somewhere in the brush.

There is little chance condors will again fly in Oregon or Washington,

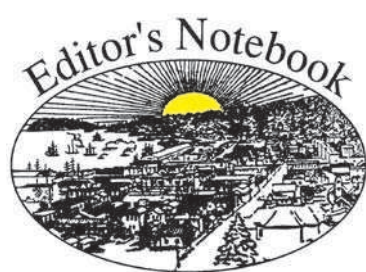


Matt Winters



Matt Winters/EO media Group

A khipu, or Inca string book, is displayed in the National Museum of Archaeology, Anthropology and History in Lima, Peru. For many decades, there was little hope that the information captured in these objects would ever be understood, but there has been a recent break in the case and decoding them is becoming more likely.



though the conservation group Oregon Wild does dedicate a Web page to the concept. The Oregon Zoo says condor restoration "will require us to think in terms of the restoration of whole ecosystems, including healthy salmon runs, viable mammal populations, and even the vitality of our own cultures and ability to coexist with and regenerate natural systems." There is scant chance of this. But the zoo deserves credit as one of four facilities that has captive-bred condors for

release in California and Arizona.

South America came to mind recently as news emerged of a remarkable discovery in Peru's desolate Lunahuana Valley, a place I drove through many years ago. Thanks to dry conditions, dozens of Inca khipus — string books or "talking knots" — have been recovered, some still in context with the stored foods they were used to count and record.

Khipus are thought-provoking. They preserve lost details about the mighty Inca empire before it was destroyed by Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro and others. (Remains purported to be Pizarro's sit like a carnival sideshow attraction in a thoroughly unloved display case in the national cathedral.) The Spanish burned all but about 600 surviving khipus and did not record how to read them, so they are like ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs were before the Rosetta Stone allowed translation. For any lover of language and facts, the inability to understand khipus is deeply frustrating.

Though largely regarded as an accounting tool, some khipus have a Byzantine complexity and may encode more sophisticated types of communication. There is a "depth of information contained in non-numeric, struc-



Matt Winters/EO media Group

Inca engineers displayed a playful sense of water management, turning rain-drainage channels below Machu Picchu into a form of abstract art.

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tural elements of khipu," according to researcher Gary Urton. (See [www.tinyurl.com/KhipuDatabase](http://www.tinyurl.com/KhipuDatabase))

This new find of khipus might just be the key to eventually unlocking their mysteries. A breathtaking one is on display in the National Museum of Archaeology, Anthropology and History on an obscure street in Lima. It glows with potential. For decades, I've hungered to know what it says.

Lima is one of my least favorite metropolitan areas — 10 or 11 million people, most abjectly poor. When fellow Americans bad mouth our country, I wish I could plop them down on the edge of Lima for a few days. A taxi trip from a nation's main airport to the heart of its capital used to involve driving around tire fires and narrowly avoiding collisions at intersections because nobody obeys stoplights. After such experience, you know you're awfully lucky to live where we do instead of in Peru — or any number of similar places.

But Lima's close to unavoidable if you're going to spend much time on the continent's west side — usually a prerequisite to visiting the Inca capital of Cuzco, from which a train delivers visitors to Machu Picchu. These are places that make the ugly slog through Lima worthwhile.

Visits to the foremost Inca sites are

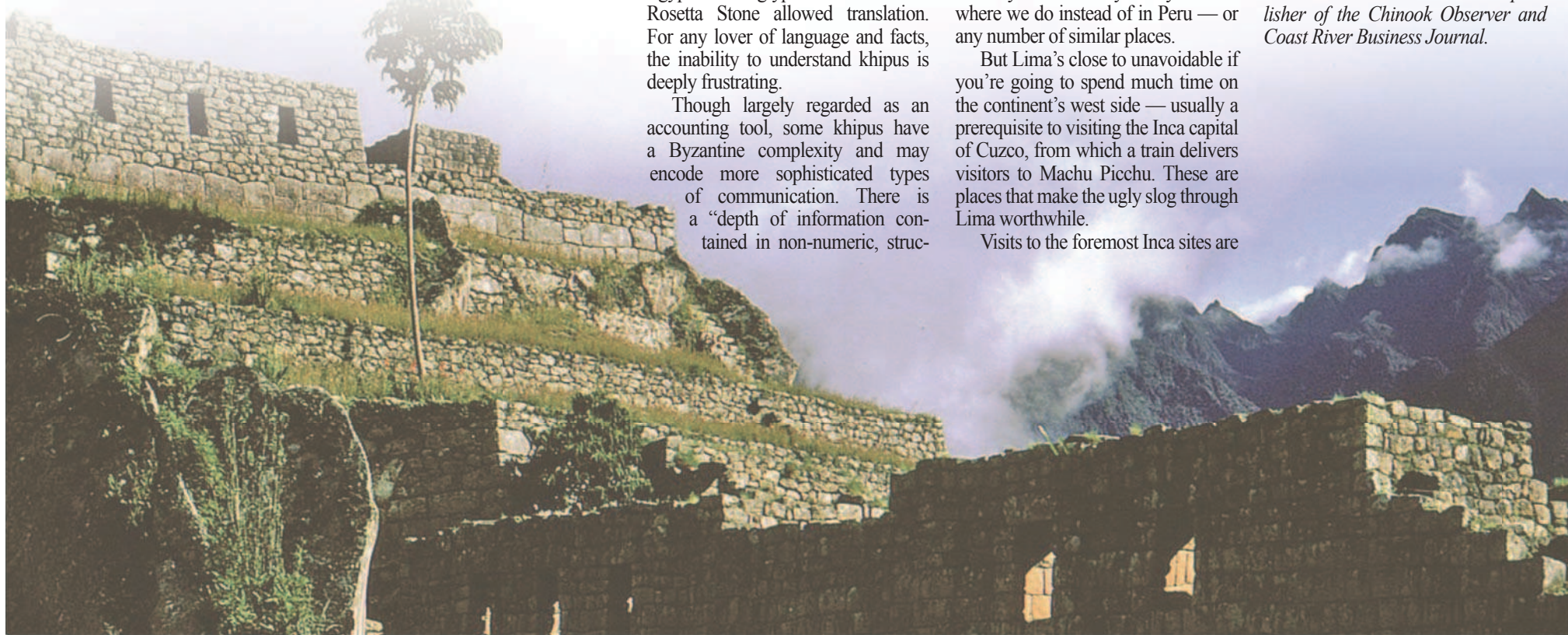
life-changing. They were brutal conquerors of other native peoples, but their creativity was wondrous.

In seldom-seen terraces below Machu Picchu, for example, there's a playful sense of water management I'd love to see emulated here in our similarly wet region. Water is led through channels precision-carved in the natural rock. A huge boulder near Cuzco has similar features, supposedly to drain away sacrificial blood — though I hope that's just a story told for tourists.

Preserving or losing memories, handling even mundane chores like stormwater drainage with elegance, avoiding being conquered, being serious about urban planning and population control, conserving wildlife — these all are lessons we ought to absorb from the Inca and their descendants.

—M.S.W.

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Matt Winters/EO media Group

The largely intact Inca palace Machu Picchu is a place of enduring interest for tourists and archaeologists, but the Andes are generously sprinkled with other compelling prehistoric sites that receive a small fraction of the attention lavished on Peru's star attraction.

# Magic sells for Trump, Sanders campaigns

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — The New Hampshire results have solidified the reigning cliché that the 2016 campaign is an anti-establishment revolt of both the left and the right. Largely overlooked, however, is the role played in setting the national mood by the seven-year legacy of the Obama presidency.

Yes, you hear constant denunciations of institutions, parties, leaders, donors, lobbyists, influence peddlers. But the starting point of the bipartisan critique is the social, economic and geopolitical wreckage all around us. Bernie Sanders is careful never to blame Obama directly, but his description of the America Obama leaves behind is devastating — a wasteland of stagnant wages, rising inequality, a sinking middle class, young peo-

ple crushed by debt, the American Dream dying.

Take away the Brooklyn accent and the Larry David mannerisms and you would have thought you were listening to a Republican candidate. After all, who's been in charge for the last seven years?

Donald Trump is even more colorful in describing the current "mess" and more direct in attributing it to the country's leadership — most pungently, its stupidity and incompetence. Both candidates are not just anti-establishment but anti-status quo. The revolt is as much about the Obama legacy as it is about institutions.

Look at New Hampshire. Hillary Clinton had made a strategic decision, as highlighted in the debates, to wrap herself in the mantle of the Obama presidency. Big mistake. She lost New Hampshire by three touchdowns.

Beyond railing against the wreckage, the other commonality between the two big New Hampshire winners is in the nature of the cure they offer. Let the others propose carefully budgeted five-point plans. Sanders and Trump offer magic.



Charles Krauthammer

Take Sanders' New Hampshire victory speech. It promised the moon: college education, free; universal health care, free; world peace, also free because we won't be "the policeman of the world" (mythical Sunni armies will presumably be doing that for us). Plus a guaranteed \$15 minimum wage. All to be achieved by taxing the rich. Who can be against a "speculation" tax (whatever that means)?

So with Trump. Leave it to him. Jobs will flow back in a rush from China, from Japan, from Mexico, from everywhere. Universal health care, with Obamacare replaced by "something terrific." Veterans finally taken care of. Drugs stopped cold at the border. Indeed, an end to drug addiction itself. Victory upon victory of every kind.

How? That question never comes up anymore. No one expects an answer. His will be done, on earth if not yet in heaven. Yes, people love Trump's contempt for the "establishment" — which as far as I can tell means anything not Trump — but what is truly thrilling is the

promise of a near-biblical restoration. As painless as Sanders'.

In truth, Trump and Sanders are soaring not just by defying the establishment, but by defying logic and history. Sanders' magic potion is socialism; Trump's is Trump.

The young Democrats swooning for Sanders appear unfamiliar with socialism's century-long career, a dismal tale of ruination from Russia to Cuba to Venezuela. Indeed, are they even aware that China's greatest reduction in poverty in human history correlates precisely with the degree to which it has given up socialism?

Trump's magic is toughness — toughness in a world of losers. The power and will of the caudillo will make everything right.

Apart from the fact that strongman rule contradicts the American constitutional tradition of limited and constrained government, caudillo populism simply doesn't work. It accounts in a large part for the relative backwardness of Africa and Latin America. In 1900,

Argentina had a per capita income fully 70 percent of ours. After a 20th century wallowing in Peronism and its imitators, Argentina is a basket case, its per capita income now 23 percent of ours.

There certainly is a crisis of confidence in the country's institutions. But that's hardly new. The current run of endemic distrust began with Vietnam and Watergate. Yet not in our lifetimes have the left and right populism of the Sanders and Trump variety enjoyed such massive support.

The added factor is the Obama effect, the depressed and anxious mood of a nation experiencing its worst economic recovery since World War II and watching its power and influence abroad decline amid a willed global retreat.

The result is a politics of high fantasy. Things can't get any worse, we hear, so why not shake things up to their foundation? Anyone who thinks that can't get any worse knows nothing. And risks everything.

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THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

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