

The traditions of the Peruvians, which have been preserved, seem to extend no farther back than their civilization. They commence with a rude, savage people, already inhabiting the country. Over these, certain bearded whitemen from lake Titicaca gained ascendancy and conferred on them, the blessings of civilization. It is not probable that these strangers were very numerous, or gained their ascendancy by force, but more probably it was the natural result of their superior knowledge and benevolent endeavors to improve the condition of the people. That a small community of civilized men once inhabited the shores of lake Titicaca, is attested by ancient ruins still found there. That they could not have been numerous when they joined themselves to the original Peruvians seems further probable from the fact that no distinctive traces of them were visible at the time of the Spanish conquest, unless they were identical with the Incas.

Subsequent to these (if not identical with them) came the Incas—a people quite distinct from the tribes incorporated into the Peruvian empire. They were distinguished, even at the time of the conquest, by peculiar dress and insignia, as well as by language and complexion. They claimed to be children of the sun and to have sprung from a single pair. Manco Capac and Mama Oello Huaco, who were brother and sister, and husband and wife. They are represented to have advanced from the South, along the high plains, by lake Titicaca, to the valley of Cuzco. They represented to the natives that out of compassion to their degraded condition, the Sun, the great parent of mankind, had sent them to gather their brethren into communities and teach them the arts of civilized life.*

That this singular race sprung from one pair upon the continent, and they a brother and sister, who had, by some chance, become isolated from the rest of mankind, is probable, not only on the authority of a distinct tradition, but also from the fact that the unnatural union of brother and sister as hus-

* Prescott's Conquest of Peru, vol. 1, chap. 1.