In writing a book on one aspect of a culture it is difficult to proceed without presuming that the reader knows the background. This is an entirely unreasonable, but necessary, assumption. Otherwise the book must repeat at length what is amply discussed elsewhere. Though I have not left the reader utterly to his recollection of Inca culture, the Introduction includes only the briefest of general descriptions.

Those who would like more background material on the Inca are referred to the account by John Howland Rowe in the Handbook of South American Indians. It is by far the best modern summary of Inca culture. While not comparable to Rowe as a reference work, Prescott's classic History of the Conquest of Peru has the advantages of readability and accessibility. There are such a number of other general books on the Andes and the Inca that they cannot be discussed critically here. Suffice it to say that few are wholly satisfactory.

As for works on Inca law, three contemporary writers ought to be mentioned: Hermann Trimborn, Jorge Basadre and Horacio Urteaga. Urteaga's "La organización judicial en el imperio de los Incas" is a very brief, barely annotated and wholly conventional summary. Jorge Basadre has written a much more extensive book, the first volume of a series, entitled Historia del derecho peruano. Basadre’s book, though it contains good material, is somewhat inconclusive and diffuse, and relies very heavily on secondary sources. He is discursive and given to debating such questions as whether the Inca ruler was a despot or a tyrant. Hermann Trimborn is well-known to anyone interested in the Inca. He is a careful scholar who over a period of many years has produced numerous well-annotated articles
on the Inca, some of them particularly concerned with Inca law. Even if one finds his Kulturkreis framework unpalatable and disagrees with other aspects of his approach, one cannot but be in his debt.

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