

monstrous, becoming vessels of the magical forces, and, depending on the circumstances, revered or feared by the yearning of souls. In this central region of Peru the principal elements of worship are the Gods who control the annual seasons, bringing the waters, and subsequently the divinities of fertility.

To step on the top of this pyramid is to satisfy secret longings, to join and breathe in divine space, to prove through the senses the existence of natural divinity full of rocky images, distributed like a celestial crown. Rational logic is challenged by way of historical footprints in one of the most difficult geographic areas on earth. A rich pharmacopoeia of medicinal plants, the bounty of the mesa, provided the ancient healers remedy for physical and spiritual ailments. The man of Markawasi succeeded in dominating his inner being with technological knowledge, art and spirituality, in compliance with the gods and goddesses, for the purpose of managing the earth, the water, and time itself.

An Earthly Paradise

Entering the mesa through any one of the six entrances is akin to arriving to an earthly paradise wherein soft morning breezes envelope like a sleep-induced cocoon, inviting one to supper with the celestial Gods. A tenuous drizzle welcomes the visitor with sparkling rays, sifting through the invisible realm, cleansing the soul. During the rainy months (December through March) one enters on carpets of

flowers. This is the spiritual scene where the ancient Markawasi chose to build a hydraulic metropolis—the kingdom of the Sons of the Ray near the celestial Gods, from where the water emerges hidden within the earth.

From the mountain the landscape diminishes into the distance, calling attention to the abysses and plummeting stairways, shrouded in mist. On clear nights, the stars descend so close that

one could nearly touch them. From the West, brilliant rays reflect off the sea. There are other atmospheric phenomena of which there is no explanation. Certainly they present themselves at any moment with elongated, circular or oval form, and sometimes emanate strong lights that blind the eyes.

Incredibly, it is the animals that are the ones who sense the phenomena first. When

