

# The Legend of Yacana

*(La leyenda de Yacana)*

Based on Inca stories of the sky

Antonio Claret

The llama is one of the most important animals for the Incas. Its silhouette appears in the dark areas between the stars. For this reason llamas with black fur were very important in the Inca religion. Two very bright stars in the constellation of Centauri (alpha and beta) represent the black Llama's eyes.

The Inca legend tells us that Yacana (the llama) was wandering with her baby along a river that crossed the entire sky (the Milky Way). The more she walked, the blacker she got. Her baby accompanied her throughout the sky. When the baby became hungry, Yacana fed it. When Yacana woke up, it became daytime. It is said that the man who finds himself in a place where Yacana has fed her baby will have good luck for the rest of his days.

But Yacana was just and treated everyone equally. She would not give happiness merely to one man or one woman. At night, when nobody was looking, she used to go and drink water from the oceans. She drank the water of pain, the water of sadness, the water of thirst and hunger. She drank the water of the tragedy of humankind and prevented the seas from overflowing and flooding the earth.



## Interstellar Clouds of Dust and Gas

To find our way in the sky, it is convenient to imagine that the stars can be joined together to form figures and shapes representing people and animals. These figures are constellations. In contrast to other civilizations, the inhabitants of South America saw figures in the shapes of the dark spaces between the stars of the Milky Way, which they could see clearly. These dark regions in the sky are in fact enormous clouds of dust that absorb the light coming from the stars behind them.

Rosa M<sup>a</sup> Ros



maria vidal