In 1500 C.E. the Inca empire covered most of South America's Andean region – nearly all of coastal and highland Peru, as well as large portions of Ecuador, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. That empire's leaders first met Europeans on 15 November 1532, when a large Inca army confronted Francisco Pizarro's band of 168 soldiers at Cajamarca, Peru. There in the harsh daylight of the highland Andes, the Inca royal court was in the fullness of its powers, while the impulses of European expansionism were ascendant. At few other moments in its history would the Inca royal leadership so aggressively expound its claims to moral authority and political power. At no other point would European observers be as attentive to that cultural expression, or so assiduous in committing their impressions to writing. *Vision at Inca Cajamarca* takes a fresh look at the encounter at Cajamarca, using that episode to offer a new art-historical interpretation of Inca culture and power.

A day after their arrival at Cajamarca, Pizarro and his men ambushed and massacred the royal Inca entourage on the Inca settlement's central plaza. Not surprisingly, this action figures prominently in both triumphal and revisionist histories of the Americas. It is framed alternately as a defining chapter in the advent of the modern European *mentalité*, or the bloody induction of a native Andean society into the West's incipient global hegemony.¹ Either way, the meeting ushers the Inca into the grand narrative of the West: Cajamarca's events consign the pre-contact Inca cultural order to an irrecuperable, prelapsarian past. The Incas' heirs were now left to negotiate the myriad disenchantments of emergent global modernity. Such may be the case, though those narratives continue to push aside alternative accounts of power and cultural experience at Inca Cajamarca.

In examining the problem of vision at Inca Cajamarca, I hope to bring forward part of that other history. My analysis takes up five episodes of visual experience that took place over those twenty-four hours at Cajamarca: a sudden prospect onto animals grazing in a distant valley; the haze of a semitransparent cloth; the patterned resplendence of an oncoming army; sunlight off yellow metal; and the glint of a stray human hair. Pizarro's men reported all these as so many anecdotal asides, each one irreducible in its singularity. And so historians have since understood them: reduced to historical marginalia, these eccentric

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details do not question or displace a narrative driven by European cultural trajectories, modes of signification, and aesthetic criteria. In the present study I consider them as more consequential forms of cultural expression and experience. Restored to inquiry, these spectatorial encounters vest the episode at Cajamarca with new historical and ethical dimensions. They also compel revised understandings of pre-contact Inca visual art, spatial practice, and bodily expression.

At Cajamarca, the Inca royal leadership confronted foreign enemies and technologies. They responded with their own array of technical aptitudes and social disciplines. Those native Andean technologies of power were many – and they invite further inquiry, whether the logistics of camelid pastoralism or the ballistics of Andean sling-stones. Prominent among them, and the guiding interest of this study, was a regime of perception, a coordination of bodily experience with the symbolic structures of myth and cosmology.² That order of culture was based on the sensory functions and cognitive mechanisms of the human organism. As a "regime" it was also a cultural construct, a politicized, complexly situational inflection of human perceptual faculties. The vision cited in this study's title thus gestures to a biological capacity of the human body, and to a cultural negotiation of ideology and power. Among the Inca leadership, seeing was cultural being: the sensory, moral, and social capacities of vision were staged across landscapes, in the confines of architectural spaces, and in performative tableaux of mass action.

This is to say that the Incas' actions at Cajamarca were not just visible to non-Inca observers: they were visually *discursive*. The Inca systematically enacted society and culture as visible fact, such that sight itself operated a means of argument and analytical reasoning. The Inca leadership's supremacy – military, political, mythic – was constituted as a set of visible encounters. In those bodily perceptions the Inca made their cultural system not just sensible, but incontrovertible.

THE SPANISH ARRIVED AT CAJAMARCA LATE ON A FRIDAY AFTERNOON. Francisco Pizarro's band had marched from the Pacific over the previous weeks, moving through coastal deserts and bitterly cold mountain passes.³ They arrived at Cajamarca cold and wet. The scale and monumentality of the Inca settlement immediately impressed them, though they found the place nearly deserted. The Spanish seized and interrogated a lesser Inca official who came forward to meet them. The man informed the Spanish that a large Inca army was camped on the opposite side of the Cajamarca valley. In its midst, the Spanish were told, was the Inca monarch himself, lodged with his retinue at a complex of stone buildings near a prominent spur of rock (*peñol*). The

native king would be known to the Europeans as *Atabaliba*, or *Atabalipa* – and among specialists today as *Atawallpa*.

Pizarro and his soldiers regarded the Inca encampment. "For a league [five kilometers] around that building the fields were everywhere covered with white tents."⁴ The Europeans estimated the Inca army's size to be at least 40,000; some accounts reported double that number. Two decades later, the Inca nobles of Cuzco recalled that it numbered around 87,000 fighting men, along with 30,000 male camp attendants – this not including wives and female servants, who probably numbered in the tens of thousands.⁵ The Inca camp was made up of well over 100,000 people, as well as tens of thousands of pack animals. The Inca encampment outside of town was less an army than a fully constituted society unto itself: populous, organized, provisioned, governed.

Pizarro quickly sent ahead a party of horsemen to meet the native ruler. The bold move would show Spanish fearlessness – to their Andean antagonists, and to the European party itself, now badly outnumbered. The Spanish embassy also served another, more important purpose. The soldiers were to convince the Inca ruler to descend into town to meet with the Spanish captain. It was a ploy, of course, a stratagem employed for decades by European slavers and bush fighters in the Americas. Pizarro sought to lure Atawallpa into close quarters, then capture or kill him outright with a surprise attack. At a stroke, the Inca leadership would be decapitated: the small Spanish force would seize the initiative, and the Incas' vast armies would be left paralyzed, perhaps for weeks. Central Cajamarca was perfectly suited to the Spanish ruse: its confined spaces would restrict the Incas' ability to react and maneuver, and so render them doubly vulnerable to ambush.

About twenty soldiers made the trip to the palace east of town. Pizarro's emissaries took their measure of the Inca army camped there, before being admitted into the Inca palace. The riders were made to wait for some hours in the outer courtyards of the Inca complex. After this delay the Spanish were allowed to pass deeper into the structure, where they were led into the presence of the Inca ruler. They met with Atawallpa, and then they were allowed to return to central Cajamarca unharmed.

Whatever communication took place between the Inca king and the Spanish horsemen, the Inca ruler made the trip to Cajamarca's main plaza late the next afternoon. Borne on an elaborate palanquin, he entered the plaza with many thousands of guards and attendants – a retinue of as many as 6,000. The Spanish engaged in a scripted legal parley – the *requerimiento*.⁶ By it, the native ruler was invited to submit to Spanish legal and religious authority. Predictably, the Inca king was impassive. The Europeans summarily deemed the offer rejected. Pizarro's men then attacked by surprise. Cannon were touched off, horsemen surged forward. An ugly scrum took place on the plaza

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as Atawallpa's guards fought off the Europeans' attempt to pull the Inca ruler from his sedan chair. The Inca lost that struggle, and Atawallpa was seized alive. The wider fight gave way to a massacre. Atawallpa's entire retinue, some five or six thousand men and women, died on Cajamarca's plaza. Some members of the Inca entourage managed to elude the slaughter. Fleeing through the fields outside the settlement, they were chased down and killed by Pizarro's horsemen.

The Spanish would hold Atawallpa hostage for nine months, during which time the Spanish demanded a large ransom in precious metal. After many months of tension, the Inca delivered the stipulated amount of metal. At that point the Inca ruler was executed on pretext: Atawallpa was garroted on 26 July 1533. Pizarro's force left Cajamarca on 11 August 1533, moving along the highland Inca road that led south to the Inca capital of Cuzco. After several battles with Inca armies, Pizarro's force would capture the Inca capital about three months later, on 15 November 1533. The Incas' ancestral capital was looted. Pizarro would refound Cuzco as a royal Spanish town on 23 March 1534. Cuzco's finest properties - its palaces, residence compounds, and temples were repartitioned among Pizarro's soldiers. Inca generals made concerted attempts to retake the city over a year of bitter fighting in and around Cuzco in 1536/7.7 The city was severely damaged, though it did not fall back into the Inca leadership's hands. After that, the campaign entered a decades-long strategic phase that is widely underacknowledged by Western historians. In the southern highlands, Inca leaders pulled back into mountainous country and there retrenched; in the far north, Inca generals actively fought on, extracting a heavy toll from the Spanish and their native allies. The last Inca ruler capitulated to the Spanish viceregal administration only in 1572, by which time Inca nobility's political loyalties were complexly divided between the Inca and Habsburg dynasties. Throughout those decades, the ancestral capital of Inca dynastic authority never returned to the control of the independent Inca leadership.

THE BROAD HISTORICAL OUTLINES OF THE MEETING AT CAJAMARCA ARE WELL known to history, though the episode's particulars are less well understood than generally acknowledged. Those details significantly reshape the narrative of the encounter: they lend this study its overall structure.

The four main chapters of my analysis move chronologically through the events of 15–16 November. They begin with the Europeans' arrival in the Cajamarca valley late in the afternoon of Friday 15 November (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 addresses the Spanish embassy to the Inca camp outside Cajamarca that same day. Chapters 3 and 4 treat the Incas' approach and entry to Cajamarca's central precincts the following day, 16 November. A concluding

chapter returns to Atawallpa's chambers on the afternoon before the Incas' defeat; there I offer final thoughts on Inca art and bodily experience. In the aggregate, the study reexamines the historical narrative of 15–16 November 1532; with it I hope to recuperate the sensory dimensions of Inca authority and political prestige.

Chapter I, "Llamas and the Logic of the Gaze," takes up the Europeans' first impression of Cajamarca from the northern rim of the valley. "There we were given to find many pastors and llamas," commented Cristóbal de Mena (*y hallamos muchos pastores y carneros*). Mena and his companions brought with them so many naturalized cultural conventions of landscape and power. At Cajamarca they confronted an altogether alien landscape: a valley overrun by llamas. Those animals were not part of the Andes' natural environment. Ecologically intrusive, economically disruptive, and menacingly aggressive, Cajamarca's llamas were creatures of empire and instruments of cultural power. Offering a close look at Inca camelid pastoralism, Chapter I introduces landscape and the logic of the gaze at Inca Cajamarca.

Chapter 2, "Under Atawallpa's Eyes," examines the first meeting between Pizarro's men and the Inca leadership at the architectural complex outside Cajamarca later on the afternoon of 15 November. When the Europeans first saw the Inca ruler, they found him seated in a small courtyard among his retainers. "No one could see him directly," wrote one Spanish soldier later, "for he was completely obscured by a thin veil held up before him by two women." In Chapter 2 I consider the role of eyesight within Inca discourses of moral authority and political prestige. My analysis examines the veil as architectural element, as theatrical act, and as means of cultural production. At once seen and seen through, the raised cloth serves to introduce the cultural construction of sight among the Inca leadership. Chapter 2 brings forward the cultivated visualism of Inca courtly life.

On the day after the Europeans' arrival in Cajamarca, the Inca ruler and his entourage traversed the distance between their camp and town. "They wore costumes like chessboards," wrote several Spanish soldiers.⁸ "So they began to march, blanketing the fields," wrote another.⁹ Chapter 3, "Chessboard Landscape," considers the Incas' march to Cajamarca. That forward advance, I argue, paraded both the Inca leadership's fighting strength and its ideological assumptions. That movement demonstrated the Incas' military order and discipline – the native army's will to close with the enemy, and their resolve to fight hard once in striking distance. The royal Inca retinue's progress toward Cajamarca also offers a lesson in visual expression and the performative construction of space, temporality, and military power. As their enemies watched, the Inca sign-system – a body of cultural truth and a way of knowing – was enacted. Chapter 3 offers an analysis of Inca design patterns in motion and in the political moment.

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The Inca ruler and his retinue entered Cajamarca in a blast of noise and reflected light: *rreluzia con el sol*, wrote one Spanish observer, "how all their gold gleamed in the sunlight." I examine the Incas' sensory energy in Chapter 4, "*Quri*: A Place in the Sun." My analysis interprets the Inca entry into Cajamarca as an elaborate ceremony of possession: Atawallpa and his entourage processed into the town's central plaza, and there went about the rituals of patronal authority and communal obeisance. The entry was a rite of sensory intensification, a staged performance of shining costumes and regalia, song and drumming. Glittering, loud, and kinesthetic, the entry generated the violently sensible energies of Inca sacral authority. Disorienting and alluring to Andean observers as well as European eyes, *quri*, "gold," was a defining signature of that triumphalism. My discussion explores the cultural phenomenology of light, color, and optical brilliance among the Inca leadership, bringing forward the performative and synesthetic dimensions of Inca metalwork. Chapter 4 engages the sensory materialism of Inca cultural experience.

The Inca ate Atawallpa's hair: while in Atawallpa's presence, Pizarro's men saw female attendants eat stray hairs they plucked off the Inca ruler's clothing. "Fount of Beauty" closes the study with a brief consideration of Inca materiality, memory, and embodied experience.

THE PEOPLE WHO MET THE EUROPEANS AT CAJAMARCA ARE DIFFICULT TO reckon as historical actors. The Incas' ethnic origins, sociological makeup, and political emergence all remain imperfectly understood. From the sixteenth century onward, native Andeans as well as European settlers, evangelizers, and administrators produced a rich corpus of writings on the pre-contact Inca past. Those reports and accounts may be discursively rich, but they are hardly the stuff of Rankean historical empiricism. In the aggregate they offer a narrative of divine (or politically deceptive) foundation, rapid rise, and, finally, teetering political instability, all of it unfolding over a span of perhaps a century. Recent archaeological work and historical interpretation offer a more plausible story than this. It is now clear that the Inca emerged in the highland Andean region of Cuzco, Peru, in the thirteenth century C.E.¹⁰ They were a people of complex polyglot origins: the Inca leadership appear to have spoken some combination of the Quechua, Aymara, and Puquina languages. The Inca were just one of many groups active in the central Andes after the decline of the Wari empire around 1000 C.E. They went on to dominate Andean South America by about 1500, folding the Andes' diverse lands and ethnicities into a closely administered imperial order.

Scholars now recognize the Inca leader who met the Europeans at Cajamarca as *Atawallpa*, "Favored in Battle," or "The Victory-Destined." (Sixteenth- and seventeeth-century Quechua speakers also identified the name as *gallo*,

"fighting cock."¹¹) To his subordinates he was *Sapa Inka*, "the one-and-only," or "peerless leader," or more directly from the Incas' Aymara- and Puquinainflected Quechua language, "the pure-Inca" or "most-*Inka* Inca."¹² Atawallpa thus shared the defining identity of the broad Inca leadership under him; but he was the essence of the Inca state, its very pith. He was *the* Inca, *El Ynga*, as the Spanish would colloquially – and in fact properly – refer to him.

Atawallpa was no stranger to the northern highlands. He was Ecuadorian by birth, a product of the Inca expansion into Ecuador in the decades after 1450. Atawallpa had come to power after the death of his father, the previous Inca ruler Wayna Qhapaq. Both strident militarist and strong administrator, that king had been among the Incas' most successful monarchs. A succession conflict followed Wayna Qhapaq's death in the mid-1520s. A northern, Ecuadorian dynastic faction was pitted against another from Cuzco, the traditional center of Inca governance in the southern highlands. Atawallpa was the representative of the northern party; a half-brother, Waskhar, protagonized the Cuzco faction. Much of this civil war among the Inca leadership appears to have played out as a bloodless political contest. Both sides sought to enlist allies among the Inca nobility and regional client-leaderships across the Inca realm. The conflict seems to have lasted several years, escalating to outright warfare between large armies. Atawallpa and his advisors prevailed, ensuring their success with a military victory in the southern Peruvian valley of Abancay in early 1532.13

Pretender, rival, usurper: Atawallpa was all three before he became king. And king he may never have been in the strictest sense. Indeed, the case has long been made that Atwallpa was an illegitimate ruler. He had no right to the Inca kingship, this argument goes, nor had he undergone the ceremonies of accession by which that power was ceremonially invested. So claimed large portions of the Inca leadership in the colonial era. Those nobles had longstanding grievance with Atawallpa and his faction, having numbered among his opponents in the war of dynastic succession. Francisco Pizarro and his political allies also contended that Atawallpa was not the Incas' true king.¹⁴ Their arguments are to be trusted even less. Francisco Pizarro had given the order to execute Atawallpa in July 1533, a move that even in the event appeared to many as hasty and altogether unprovoked. Pizarro's apologists were eager to cast Atawallpa as a usurper. Were Atawallpa not the rightful Inca monarch, Pizarro and his men would be absolved of regicide in the eyes of Spanish law; moreover, their peremptory act of execution would be recast as the delivery of justice.15

It is the case that Atawallpa gained the title of *Sapa Inka* only through prolonged factional conflict. It is also true that he had not been invested with the office of kingship in a ceremony in Cuzco. Even so, there is no evidence that such a succession crisis was out of the norm for the Inca high leadership.

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Factional struggle among royal pretenders brought short-term upheaval, but it also forced the kind of consensus and compromise on the wider Inca leadership that might not otherwise be accomplished. The contest for power also tended to favor the most aggressive party. That kind of aggression was admired in seated Inca kings: ferocity was all but required of the leader of the Incas' militarized, expansionist state. Further, such admiration was reaffirmed in dynastic lore. Pachakuti Inka Yupanki, remembered by the Inca as their greatest commander and administrator, assumed power during a military crisis; born a lesser son, Pachakuti seized power from both the seated ruler and more likely dynastic successors to assume the kingship.¹⁶ Atawallpa may not have been considered the legitimate Inca ruler by his rivals and enemies. Among his generals and retainers at Cajamarca, however, he was the Incas' rightful monarch, and so he is considered in the present analysis.

In important respects the biography of the Inca ruler is secondary to this study's analysis. This is not a study of "the behavior of Atahualpa" in the mode of traditional political or diplomatic history: my argument does not attempt historical biography, nor a study in comparative leadership, nor any consideration of the relative qualities of pre-contact Andean and early modern European mentalities.¹⁷ My analysis seeks to frame the episode at Cajamarca less as a contest between leaders – Francisco Pizarro and Atawallpa – than as a historically situated encounter between two distinct social and cultural organizations. This does not deny the Inca cultural agency; it rather seeks to recast their actions in terms of cultural institutions, rather than individual subjectivities.

Throughout the study I employ the phrase "the Inca leadership." My use of the phrase corresponds roughly to what cultural anthropologists describe as "political society": that is, it gestures to a more or less cohesive subcategory of Inca society characterized by elevated social status and mythologically endowed authority.¹⁸ But who, exactly, constituted "the Inca leadership"? That question is not easily answered. It included Atawallpa's inner circle of courtiers and retainers, certainly, as well as advisors, religious specialists and custodians, administrators, and military men. They were drawn from Atawallpa's royal kingroup, or panaga, and they likely included many close blood relatives. Beyond Atawallpa's immediate retinue, the Inca leadership was constituted by leaders drawn from the Incas' traditional heartland in the Huatanay River Valley of the southern Peruvian highlands.¹⁹ By the time of the Spanish invasion, Inca ethnic identity was not so easily tied to geographic origin: Atawallpa himself, very much an ethnic Inca, was born and raised 1,500 kilometers north of Cuzco, in an Inca-dominated province of Ecuador. Even as the social institutions of the Inca leadership took traditional ethnic Inca far afield, so too did they remake members of the Andes' non-Inca ethnicities into "Incas."

The Quechua word Inka was less an ethnic identity than a term of dynastic affiliation and political hegemony. Inka, "leader" or "noble," indicated

an ancestral tradition of ruling authority that was traced back to the mythic founder Manqo Qhapaq. In the ethnic heartland around Cuzco, friendly leaders of neighboring peoples were inducted into the Inca ruling hierarchy as "Incas-by-privilege." As the Incas' realm expanded, its leadership came to include nobles drawn from the Andes' various regional ethnicities. Inca political organization actively sought to bind provincial nobles to the higher Inca administrative apparatus. The Inca's far-flung clients submitted to and in turn replicated what one scholar of the Inca empire's provincial elites characterized as "the [Inca] state's largesse and civilizing influence, the teaching of Inca cults, and the establishment of idealized political structures in the likeness of Cuzco."²⁰

The word *Inka* itself was the most junior rank in a flight of male titles that denoted relative degrees of prestige: *inka* ("ruler"), *pawllu* ("second"), and *qhapaq* ("royal").²¹ It was thus the lowest common denominator among the "Inca" leadership, something like a privileged status rather than a degree of rank. The ruler's title, *Sapa Inka*, at once recognized this commonality among Cuzco's leadership and superseded its ascending degrees of rank: *Sapa Inka*, "unique," or "peerless ruler," or better, "Among all the Inca, first."²² Inca, then, may be considered to refer to "a signifying system," that is, to a cultural order "through which necessarily (although not exclusively) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored."²³

IF THE ART AND CULTURE OF THE INCA LEADERSHIP ARE THE SUBJECT OF THIS inquiry, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European historical accounts are its backbone. The Pizarro expedition was manned by ambitious provincials, men who were resilient on campaign and, in time, also dogged litigants. They were not Renaissance figures of erudition and deep insight. Instead, they were men drawn from Europe's outlying regions - the dusty Castilian province of Estremadura, most of them, though also a few from such places as Crete and England.²⁴ They are called soldiers in this account - and in the field, soldiers they were - though they were of diverse social origins and professions. In joining Pizarro's risky, violent endeavor, they were intent on winning social privilege. In writing of their experiences, they were equally determined to protect the gains they had won. These men were knowing inhabitants - aspiring protagonists – of Spain's new administrative culture of writing and literacy. Many could themselves write, though hardly with eloquence; the illiterates employed professional notaries. Sharpened self-interest and sufficient technical competency among Pizarro's men combined to produce an unusually deep body of written reportage and commentary.

Seven members of Francisco Pizarro's company produced reports of the experiences at Cajamarca.²⁵ Those accounts were rough-hewn and maladroit,

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all awkward diction and quarrelsome self-assertion. They participate in what Carlo Ginzburg has described as early modern Europe's "different culture" of literary production – the miller's sermons, witches' confessions, and thieves' argot against which so much humanist writing of the period would define itself.²⁶ It is no surprise then that from the 1550s onward, Peninsular humanists would write the soldiers' notices out of their finely spun histories of the New World.²⁷ The campaigners' clumsy reportage was deemed irrelevant to the grand literary project of European self-reckoning.

The soldiers' narratives do not offer "eye-witness testimony," nor do they "chronicle" the Peruvian campaign's events.²⁸ They cannot claim the historical authority such labels would bestow. The reports of Pizarro's soldiers are complicated documents - determined by the vagaries of memory and desire, and no small degree of polemical inflection. Produced over a span of forty years, they were written in very different circumstances, by men with very different motives. Some were set down soon after the events they describe: Cristóbal de Mena's sensationalized narrative circulated through Europe in several printed editions after 1534. The contemporary account of the notary Francisco de Xerez sought to emphasize the legal diligence of his employer Francisco Pizarro. A decade later, the soldier Juan Ruiz de Arce propounded the rectitude of his conduct in the Peruvian campaign; Ruiz never intended his account to be read by any but his descendants. Other reports were produced decades later, well after political struggles between and among Pizarro's soldiers and crown officials had been settled: Pedro Pizarro and Diego de Trujillo set down their accounts in the early 1570s, by which time they were old men settled into comfortable lives on the edges of the Habsburg empire.

There can be no doubt that all these accounts are unusual and in many ways suspect objects of historiographic rehabilitation. They present sharply distinct versions of the Peruvian campaign, so as to confront the reader with significant discrepancies of fact, timing, and responsibility. Real issues hang in the balance: was the massacre on Cajamarca's plaza triggered by Inca aggression or European deceitfulness? Was Atawallpa's execution a year later legally sanctioned? Was it morally justified? Those are questions that administrators and theologians grappled with in the sixteenth century; they remain unresolved to the present day. Any answers significantly shape the master narrative of European expansion into the New World and substantially affect more fine-grained assessment of sixteenth-century Habsburg politics. It is little wonder that the soldiers' accounts have been treated with suspicion, for they cannot be trusted to provide answers to the broad historical questions they themselves raise.

Those are problems for other scholars and other arenas of historical inquiry. The history told here is ostensibly smaller and more immediate in scope. It is a story built from signal turns of phrase and the telling non sequitur. Such is the nature of experience and recollection, and such is the nature of the