In Pursuit of the Sacred: Understanding Inka Colonialism in the Andes

Félix A. Acuto / Iván Leibowicz

ABSTRACTS

Das Inka-Reich (Tawantinsuyu) war das größte Reich in den Amerikas vor Ankunft der Europäer. Während des 15. und der ersten Jahrzehnte des 16. Jahrhunderts gelang es den Inkas, weite Regionen der südamerikanischen Anden zu erobern und eine Vielzahl von Gruppen und Gemeinwesen zu unterwerfen. Die Inkas dehnten ihr Reich jedoch nicht aus dem alleinigen Grund aus, Ressourcen abzuschöpfen und Reichtum anzuhäufen. Sie entwickelten zudem, wenn auch in unterschiedlichem Maße, ein koloniales Projekt, das darauf abzielte, die politischen, wirtschaftlichen, kulturellen und religiösen Institutionen und Praktiken der Kolonisierten umzugestalten. Ohne Frage war der Inka-Kolonialismus unter anderem geprägt von Zwangsarbeit, der gezielten Umsiedlung von Menschen sowie der Abschöpfung und Produktion von Grundnahrungsmitteln und Luxusgütern. Dennoch vertreten wir in diesem Aufsatz die These, dass die Expansion in die Andenregion den Inkas vor allem dazu diente, dem Heiligen zu begegnen und sich mit ihm zu verbinden. Das Expansionsbestreben der Inkas war eine besondere Art der Gralssuche, durch die sie ihre Macht aufbauten und ihre Herrschaft legitimierten.

The Inka Empire, or Tawantinsuyu, was the largest ancient empire in the Americas. During the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth century, the Inkas managed to conquer vast regions of the South American Andes, subduing a variety of groups and polities. But the Inkas did not expand their realm for the sole purpose of extracting resources and accumulating wealth. To various degrees, they developed a colonial project that aimed at reshaping the political, economic, cultural and religious institutions and practices of the colonized. There is no doubt that Inka colonialism involved, among other things, corvée labour, the strategic relocation of people(s) and the exploitation and production of staple crops and luxury goods. Nevertheless, we argue in this paper that, above all, the Inkas expanded into the Andean region to meet and relate to the Sacred. Inka expansionism was a sort of religious quest through which the Inkas built up their authority and legitimized their rule.

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1. Introduction

During the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth century AD, a small polity from the Cuzco region, in the Andean highlands of south Peru, managed to expand over a wide territory to become the largest ancient empire of the Americas. When the Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro and his men arrived on the north coast of Peru in 1532, looking for the kingdom of "The Birú", according to the information they had gathered in Panama, Pizarro realized that this "kingdom" was actually larger and more powerful than he had first thought. Tawantinsuyu, as the Inkas called their empire, stretched for more than 4,200 km: from south Colombia to central Chile and Mendoza province in Argentina, and from the Pacific coast, through the Andean highlands, to the eastern wooded lowlands.

Students of Tawantinsuyu have always wondered what motivated the Inkas to advance over foreign lands and to dominate other indigenous societies. We address this issue in the first section of the paper, discussing how scholars have typically explained Inka expansionism. But what happened once the Inkas conquered and subjugated other regions and their inhabitants? In the second section, we describe the principal strategies that the Inkas employed to occupy different lands and to control a variety of political organisations across vast regions of South America. We must take into account that Tawantinsuyu was not simply an imperial force going to war against other groups, conquering their territories and taxing them and/or extracting resources from their lands. Rather, the Inkas implemented a complete colonial project. It would be germane at this point, then, to briefly discus the differences between imperialism and colonialism.

While imperialist endeavours occupy lands principally in order to extract (and to secure the extraction of) resources to support the core of the empire, colonialism implies a more complex relationship between foreign invaders and local subjects. In contrast to imperialism, which does not profoundly involve itself in local affairs, colonialism includes: 1. the direct territorial occupation of the conquered lands and the installation of administrative infrastructure, 2. strategies oriented towards the re-structuring of indigenous political organisations and institutions, 3. the re-organisation and re-orientation of the local economy, especially the transformation – and usually the intensification – of production, the co-option of native labour and intervention in the redistribution of resources, 4. the development of policies focused on the cultural transformation of the subject, or at least of certain key strata within local society. This last element is probably the most important facet of colonial domination. Through the diffusion of their cultural practices and interactions, their worldview and their knowledge, which are presented as being superior to indigenous ones, colonial rulers seek the identification of their subjects with those who control and oppress them. In theoretical terms, whereas imperialism involves the use of power in a Weberian sense – that is, the capacity to impose one's imperial will despite resistance – colonialism is characterized by strategies of domination, which require obedience and a certain degree of voluntary submission to authority, without the need for coercion and repression – although symbolic and ritual violence can be employed.

As Antonio Gramsci has discussed – using the concept of hegemony – colonial forces seek to gain consent and legitimacy through cultural and ideological strategies, which intend to present the goals and interests of the rulers as those of the subjects. In other words, colonialism involves the attempt to impose upon the bodies and minds of the colonized the ways, ideas and categories of their rulers. Successful colonial domination is achieved when subjugated peoples perceive themselves through the categories and forms of knowledge imposed by those who dominate them.

The third section of this paper is oriented in this direction, emphasizing the cultural, symbolic and, especially, religious aspects of Inka colonialism. We claim that searching and connecting with the sacred were the principal motives that drove Inka expansion across the Andes. The Inkas sought to create narrow links between them and the supernatural entities that dwelled in the Andean landscapes alongside human communities, to appropriate, transform and Inkanize their cult, as well as to mediate the relationship between their subjects and the sacred by incorporating all supernatural entities into a large network under Inka control. Finally, in the conclusion, we discuss the reasons why the Inkas pursued this goal, arguing that this is how they built up their authority and legitimated Tawantinsuyu's position and dominance in the ancient Andean world.

2. Discussing Inka Expansion

Three main reasons are evoked to explain why the Inkas left the Cuzco area to advance into and dominate different regions in a quite short period of time. A number of scholars have argued that security was what fostered Inka expansionism.[1] At different moments throughout Tawantinsuyu's history, the Inkas found themselves threatened by other groups, some of which had developed a significant degree of political complexity. During the Late Intermediate Period (1000–1438 AD), the Inkas were an emergent political organisation, struggling for power and lands in the south Andes of Peru. There were other groups, such as the Chankas, Canchis, Canas, Qollas, and Lupacas, who also participated in this dispute, some of which were even more powerful than the Inkas. Each of these groups attempted to progress by establishing alliances with certain of their neighbours and engaging in hostilities with certain others. This situation of alliance building and escalating struggle constituted fertile ground for the emergence of broad and powerful military coalitions.[2] It was in this context of political and military instability and tensions that the Inkas began their expansion, first, over areas near Cuzco, the capital of the Inkas, in order to secure the wellbeing of the city and its inhabitants. The war and the ensuing victory over their neighbours the Chankas, which would later be-

1 J. Rowe, Inca Culture at the Time of the Spanish Conquest, in: J. Steward (ed.), Handbook of South American Indians, Vol. 2: The Andean Civilizations, Washington, DC 1946, pp. 183–330; also see R. A. Covey, How the Incas Built their Heartland, Ann Arbor 2006.

2 G. Conrad / A. Demarest, Religion and Empire: The Dynamics of Aztec and Inca Expansionism, Cambridge, UK 1984, p. 280.

come a mythical episode in the history of Tawantinsuyu, was a watershed in this process. The Inkas emerged strengthened from this foundational event, which allowed them to face down the powerful Qolla, Lupaca, and Pacajes chiefdoms of the Titicaca region, who represented a major threat to the Inkas. The triumph over these three large political organisations, the occupation of their lands and the appropriation of their shrines and mythical places of origin, catapulted the Inkas to a dominant position in the south Andes. New threats to Inka power would eventually emerge from other regions and groups (for example, from the coast and the north Andes), threats to which the Inkas – now with a large and well-organized army – would respond in the same way: by striking the first blow, defeating these groups and expanding the borders of Tawantinsuyu.

Some years ago, Conrad and Demarest proposed a very interesting explanation for Inka expansionism.[3] According to these scholars, it was a system of split inheritance that motivated and propelled Tawantinsuyu's growth. After the death of an Inka ruler, one of his sons, usually the one who, in addition to having been conceived by the ruler's sister and principal wife, displayed better aptitude for leadership, was appointed as the new emperor or *Sapa Inka*. However, the new ruler did not inherit his father's possessions. He was not entitled to his father's palaces in Cuzco, his servants or his royal estates in nearby valleys.[4] All of these properties went to the royal family, or *panaca*, of the deceased emperor, which included all of his offspring through the male line. As a matter of fact, the real owner of these possessions was still the mummy of the dead emperor, and the main function of his *panaca* was to serve as his royal court, to conduct festivities and rituals in his honour and to protect his mummified body. Stripped of the lands, palaces, servants and material goods that would allow him to live according to his rank, and without even a royal family of his own, the split inheritance system forced the new emperor to found his own *panaca* and to acquire new arable lands, resources and subjects who would pay tribute and deliver material goods to him and his recently created royal lineage. Insofar as the lands surrounding Cuzco and the people who lived in them had been seized and subjugated by previous emperors, and thus belonged to their powerful *panacas*, newly appointed *Sapa Inkas* had no other solution than to conquer new territories and to seek out lands, resources and servants in more distant areas.

A third way in which Inka colonialism has been explained has emphasized the economic and logistical aspects of imperialism. Drawing on functionalist approaches and cost/benefit models – and taking into account the fact that there is an intimate link between the evolution of social complexity and increasing energy capture – a group of scholars has claimed that some sort of inertia produced Tawantinsuyu's expansion.[5] When the Inkas

3 Ibid.

4 See T. A. Abercrombie, Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History among Andean People, Madison 1998, p. 632.

5 T. D'Altroy / T. K. Earle, Staple finance, wealth finance and storage in the Inka political economy, in: T. LeVine (ed.), Inka Storage System, Norman 1992, pp. 31–61; T. K Earle / T. D'Altroy, The Political Economy of the Inka Empire: The Archaeology of Power and Finance, in: C. Lamberg-Karlovsky (ed.), Archaeological Thought in America, Cambridge, UK 1989, pp. 183–204.

were just another small chiefdom competing for lands and resources in the south Andes of Peru, their limited political and social structures did not require the expenditure of large quantities of energy. But, with every new territory that they conquered, the Inkas became involved in a series of commitments that required the capture of more and more energy. The security, control, and administration of the newly absorbed territories, the extraction of natural resources and local labour, the construction of imperial settlements and roads, the development of Inka-sponsored projects and, finally, expenditures relating to ritual activities and feasting in order to lubricate the relationship with local elites, required great quantities of energy that the Inkas could only obtain by conquering new lands and subduing other groups. In other words, the ever-growing imperial machinery seems to have forced the Inkas to continually expand the frontiers of Tawantinsuyu and thus to find the resources needed to finance and consolidate their authority over already-occupied lands.

3. Inka Colonial Strategies

Tawantinusyu's colonialism was not just about expansion, but also about the development of policies designed to cementing Inka rule. Historical and archaeological scholarship on Tawantinsuyu has discussed the different strategies the Inkas employed to secure their domination, to develop activities and projects and to control subjected groups. One of the most remarkable of these strategies was the extraction of indigenous labour through the *mit'a* system.[6] Once the Inkas conquered a region, they declared their ownership of all land and all resources, before immediately returning them – in an act of apparent generosity – to indigenous communities, while keeping for them and for the Sun, their principal deity, some lands and certain key resources. As new rulers, they demanded that native communities reciprocate Tawantinsuyu's generosity by sending people to work on Inka lands or at different tasks, which included military services, craft production, herding, construction and attending to Inka facilities, among others. Even though some people became directly attached to Tawantinsuyu, becoming full-time workers, and although the Inkas allowed coastal groups to pay their tribute in material goods, there is general agreement that the Inka economy was based on corvée labour.[7]
The forced relocation of ethnic communities was another common Inka colonial policy.[8] The Inkas divided rebellious societies, resettling part of them in faraway regions. These displaced families were, in turn, replaced with allied groups. This constituted a two-fold

6 T. D'Altroy, The Incas, Oxford 2002, p. 408; J. Murra, La organización económica del Estado Inca, Buenos Aires 1978, p. 270.

7 M. Rostworowski, Redes económicas del Estado inca: el "ruego" y la "dádiva", in: V. Vich (ed.), El Estado está de vuelta: desigualdad, diversidad y democracia, Lima 2005, pp. 13–47.

8 J. Murra, La organización económica del Estado Inca, Buenos Aires 1978, p. 270; F. Pease, The Formation of Tawantinsuyu: Mechanisms of Colonization and Relationship with Ethnic Groups, in: G. Collier / R. Rosaldo / J. Wirth (eds.), The Inca and Aztec States, 1400–1800, New York 1982, pp.173–98.

strategy. On the one hand, the Inkas pacified a region by disassembling native resistance and by affecting the social reproduction of these communities, while, on the other hand, they obtained full-time labour. These resettled populations, known as *mitmaq-kuna*, found themselves away from their territories, as well as their obligations toward their communities and political leaders, becoming attached personnel for the Inkas. There were even regions, such as the Cochabamba Valley in Bolivia, that were fully vacated and whose population were replaced with *mitmaq-kuna* communities.

Inka domination throughout the Andes was secured, in the majority of the cases, through the direct and effective occupation of provincial lands, which entailed the construction of large administrative centres, ritual facilities, productive enclaves and two highly important material structures: an extended network of roads, also known as *qhapaqñan*, and storerooms, or *qollqas*.[9] The use of *qhapaqñan* was forbidden to non-Inka people. Only Inka nobility, officials, messengers and the army were permitted to use it. The Inka road system also included resting places, or *tampu* – located approximately one day's travel away from each other– where travellers could find accommodation and provisions. *Qhapaqñan* played a highly significant role in the mobilisation of the Inka army and in holding Tawantinsuyu together. *Qollcas*, too, were key to Inka colonialism. Rows of storerooms, where the Inkas kept a variety of material goods, were present in every major Inka centre and in every *tampu*. Food – for supporting *mit'a* workers and imperial officers or for offering during ceremonial activities – tools and raw materials for craft activities (textile, ceramic, lithic, metallurgy, etc.), weapons, construction materials and other such items were the plethora of things the Inkas stocked up to use in their colonial activities.

In order to lubricate relations with subjugated communities, especially with native elites, the Inkas hosted ceremonial events where they toasted with brewed corn beer or *chicha*, offered generous quantities of food and distributed presents among the participants.[10] These acts of hospitality and generosity were not only necessary, but expected because they fulfilled the mandatory reciprocity that has characterized Andean sociality. The exchange of help and care – between relatives, members of a community, members of a political unit, or between people and supernatural entities – has been a key structuring principle of Andean social life.[11] But requesting the aid or services of another implies, first, offering something in return and, second, the obligation of eventual repayment with the same type of aid or service. The Inkas could not avoid this rooted system and, although they were a dominant force, they were able to extract local labour only when they engaged in this game of reciprocal exchanges. Many studies on Inka colonialism have focused precisely on the interactions the Inkas established with subordinate elites,

9 J. Hyslop, The Inka Road System, New York 1984, p. 377; J. Hyslop, Inka Settlement Planning, Austin 1990, p. 393; T. LeVine (ed.), Inka Storage System, Norman 1992, p. 385.

10 J. Murra, On Inca political structure, in: V. Ray (ed.), Systems of Political Control and Bureaucracy in Human Societies, Seattle 1958, pp. 30–41.

11 C. J. Allen, The Hold life Has: Coca and Cultural Identity in an Andean Community, Washington, DC 1988, p. 312.

in order to extract labour and to obtain other favours from provincial communities and political organisations.[12]

4. Sacred Entities and Inka Colonialism

Although there are interesting arguments about Inka expansionism, and albeit we agree that the extraction of local labour, the relocations of ethnic communities, the sponsorship of ceremonial events, the distribution of food and gifts among local elites and the construction of infrastructure that guaranteed the effective occupation of provincial lands were all Inka colonial strategies of paramount importance, in this paper we formulate an alternative explanation.

Since ancient times, human communities in the Andes have shared their world with a variety of sacred entities known as *wak'as*. From the perspective of Andean animist ontology, landmarks that stand out from the surrounding landscape due to their unique features (i.e. prominent mountains, volcanoes, caves, lakes, confluences of rivers, salt flats, strange boulders, waterfalls and springs), but also certain human-made structures (such as funerary monuments, ancient ruins, temples and mummified bodies), are supernatural beings that dwell alongside people in the Andean territories.[13] These entities possess human-like characteristics, such as animacy, agency, volition, personality and moods, and have specific abilities, for example divination, power over the weather and over certain animals or natural resources. Some of these entities are protectors of specific human communities, providers of water or givers of fertility. The latter is precisely the case of Earth Mother, or *Pachamama*, the most important and overarching of the Andean *wak'as*. People acknowledge the powers and prowess of *wak'as*, and they know that they benefit human communities, but they also know that, when upset, *wak'as* can be dangerous and are capable of harming people or their possessions. It is therefore very important to maintain a harmonious relation with them. People must treat *wak'as* with respect and affection. They must nurture them, request their permission, feed them and pay homage to them.

12 C. Costin / T. K. Earle, Status Distinction and Legitimation of Power as Reflected in Changing Patterns of Consumption in Late Prehispanic Peru, in: American Antiquity 54 (1989) 4, pp. 691–714; T. D'Altroy / C. Hastorf (eds.), Empire and Domestic Economy. New York 2001, p. 378; Earle/D'Altroy, The Political Economy of the Inka Empire; C. Morris, The Infrastructure of Inka Control in the Central Highlands, in: G. Collier / R. Rosaldo / J. Wirth (eds.), The Inca and Aztec States, 1400–1800, New York 1982, pp. 153–70; among others.

13 T. Bray, Andean Wak'as and Alternative Configurations of Persons, Power, and Things, in: T. Bray (ed.), The Archaeology of Wak'as: Explorations of the Sacred in the Pre-Columbian Andes, Boulder 2015, pp. 3–20; Z. Chase, What is a Wak'a? When is a Wak'a?, in: T. Bray (ed.), The Archaeology of Wak'as: Explorations of the Sacred in the Pre-Columbian Andes, Boulder 2015, pp. 75–126; R. Randall, Qoyllur Rit'i, An Inca Fiesta of the Pleiades: Reflections on Time & Space in the Andean World, in: Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Études Andines 11 (1982) 1–2, pp. 37–81; M. van de Guchte, The Inca Cognition of Landscape: Archaeology, Ethnohistory, and the Aesthetic of Alterity, in: W. Ashmore / B. Knapp (eds.), The Archaeologies of Landscapes: Contemporary Perspectives, Oxford 1999, pp. 149–168.

In this paper, we claim that what drove the Inkas to conquer other territories was not the desire to acquire lands for royal families, to seize natural resources, to co-opt indigenous labour or to secure their possessions against aggressive competitors. We maintain that it was these sacred entities that motivated expansion and shaped Inka colonialism. More specifically, Tawantinsuyu's quest was: 1. to establish a direct, physical relationship with these sacred entities, 2. to appropriate, transform and Inkanize the cult of *wak'as* and 3. to incorporate all *wak'as* into one large network under Inka control. Inka colonialism orbited around these main goals and every colonial strategy was subsidiary to it. Put bluntly, the Inkas were not particularly interested in military achievements, in conquering new lands, in controlling resources or in establishing any kind of relationship with other indigenous groups. These were necessary steps they had to take in order to achieve their main purpose: creating a close link with the sacred.

Early colonial historical documents registered the profound interest that the Inkas had in the sacred entities of the Andes. During the second half of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century, the Spanish Catholic Church, following the procedures of the Inquisition, sent priests to the New World to find, report and destroy cultic objects and idols. These priests, who travelled the Andes searching for *wak'as*, gave testimony of the connection between sacred places and objects and the Inkas. This is the case of Father Cristobal de Albornoz who, in his report about the Andean *wak'as*, writes:

> *After the Inkas* […] *conquered all provinces including from Chile to Pasto* […] *they tried to know the amount of people in the province and the things that supported them, their possessions, gold and silver and clothing they had, they tried to know about the* wak'as*, the shrines they worshiped and the order they had to offer and make sacrifices to them* […] *And many of these* wak'as [the Inkas] *honoured with many services and livestock and cups with gold and silver, offering themselves in the shape of gold and silver figurines and other figurines of rams* [llamas] *and other animals and gold and silver birds, and offering them and burning all the provisions they used, and giving them rich dresses that they sent to make for the occasion*.[14]

The principal tactic that the Inkas employed to establish a narrow relation with *wak'as* was to bring them to Cuzco. According to Rowe's historical studies, "Each province of the empire was required to send one of its principal cult objects to Cuzco every year. The provincial cult objects were installed in all honour in the chief temple of the state religion, where they served at the same time as hostages for the good behaviour of their worshippers and as remainders that Cuzco was a religious centre for the entire empire."[15] When provincial *wak'as* were impossible to transport to Cuzco, such as in the case of

14 C. Albornoz, Instrucción para descubrir todas las guacas del Pirú y sus camayos y haciendas, in: Journal de la Societe des Americanistes 56 (1967) 1, pp. 17–39, at 17.

15 J. Rowe, What kind of settlement was Inca Cuzco?, in: Ñawpa Pacha 5 (1967), pp. 59–75, at 63.

natural features, the Inkas used a different strategy. In these cases, they sought to settle right next to them, on top of them or to place them inside a building compound.[16]

While indigenous communities generally honoured sacred entities from afar, due to the risks that being near them involved, the Inkas travelled and settled in *wak'as*' territories. *Wak'as* had (and still have) their lands and possessions (for example, animals such as foxes, hawks, condors, pumas or vicuñas). But because these territories are rugged and untamed, visiting and traversing them was, and still is, a quite dangerous enterprise that people have usually avoided. There a numerous tales in the Andes of reckless individuals who entered a *wak'a*'s realm without asking permission and without the necessary protection, and who were swallowed by the sacred entity never to be seen again. Due to this situation, Andean indigenous communities and persons have preferred to interact with these supernatural beings from a safe distance, naming them during rituals (naming them implies inviting them) and employing, in the safety of their settlements, miniatures (which are considered extensions of the *wak'as* themselves) to praise them. However, this was not the case with the Inkas, who not only visited the *wak'as*' lands, but also materially transformed these lands with roads and buildings.

This is the case with mountains, especially those that, due to their imposing height and permanently snowy summits, stand out in the landscape. Andean indigenous communities considered that the summit of these special mountains were *pacarinas*, places of origin of their mythical ancestors, founders of local communities and lineages.[17] In some cases, mountains themselves have been considered powerful ancestors, or *Apus*. On almost every prominent mountain in the Andes – mountains that indigenous people still recognize as tutelary entities today – there is an Inka road leading to the peak. On the summits of these mountains, which are considered the very head of the *Apu*, archaeologists have identified Inka architecture and offerings of various kinds, including sacrificed and buried children dressed in exquisite Inka-elite clothing.[18]

Inka architecture, artefacts and symbols have been found in close association with other paramount Andean sacred places, such as, to name a few, the sculpture of the god Viracocha (the creator) in Cacha in the south Peruvian highlands; Titikala, the sacred rock in the Island of the Sun in Lake Titicaca, out of which – according to Andean indigenous mythology – the Sun, the principal deity and ancestor of the Inkas, first emerged;[19] the wooden idol at Pachacamac, one of the most prestigious Andean oracles and religious centres of the Peruvian south coast;[20] Lake Chinchaycocha in the Junín region of Peru, a lake that natives considered their *pacarina* and on whose shores the Inkas built a huge provincial capital of 79 ha, in an area poor in resources and isolated from native

16 J. Reinhard, Machu Picchu: Exploring an Ancient Sacred Center, Los Angeles 2007, p. 200.
17 T. Besom, Of Summits and Sacrifices: An Ethnohistoric Study of Inka Religious Practices, Austin 2009.
18 Ibid.
19 B. Sillar, Caminando a través del Tiempo: Geografías Sagradas en Cacha/Raqchi, Departamento del Cuzco (Perú), in: Revista Andina 35 (2002), pp. 221–245.
20 M. Rostworowski, Pachacamac y el Señor de los Milagros. Una Trayectoria Milenaria, Lima 1992, p. 214.

settlements;[21] Samaipata, a large carved rock saddle (300 metres long and 60 metres wide) located in eastern Bolivia, in the transition between the highlands and the great plains of the eastern Amazonian lowlands;[22] and the important Cañari *wak'a* at Ingapirca at the northern edge of Tawantinsuyu, an astronomically aligned rock stela, painted red and associated with a collective ancestral tomb, the resting place of a Cañari priest and ten other people.[23] In the first case, the Inkas surrounded the *wak'a* with a series of monumental buildings. On the Island of the Sun, at Pachacamac and in the Junín region, they installed conspicuous ceremonial facilities right next to the sacred objects/entities. In the case of Ingapirca, the Inkas absorbed the Cañari shrine within a major Inka centre. Even the *wak'as* themselves were modified by the Inkas. This happened with the rock saddle of Samaipata – where, following the local tradition of carving the rock, the Inkas sculpted their own symbols – and with Titikala – which the Inkas clothed in a richly decorated textile.

But the Inkas' presence has not been detected only at these highly prestigious and widely revered sacred places. The Inkas also interfered with more modest *wak'as*. For instance, a few years ago Chilean archaeologists reported the case of a Diaguita rock art site associated with a burial ground that underwent transformations during the Inka occupation of the area. In this case, the Inkas took great care to incorporate their own symbols into this site, to which local communities had assigned sacred meaning for centuries and which was connected with their ancestors.[24] In the Potosí and Chuquisaca regions of Bolivia, which were particularly rich in mineral resources, the Inkas seem to have been more interested in local shrines than in exploiting these resources.[25] Archaeological research in these two regions has verified the persistent articulation between Inka sites and native sacred places. On practically every consecrated hill in the region there is evidence of Inka presence. The Inkas appropriated and re-signified these native shrines either by setting up a solid ritual platform on their summits, by building a whole ritual centre in direct connection with them or by changing their names from the local Aymara to the Inka Quechua language.

The colonial advance of the Inkas across the Andes also entailed the reconfiguration and Inkanisation of the cultic activities associated with the *wak'as*. A radical strategy in this regard was the total (or the partial, but strategic) erasure of native presence.[26] Through

21 B. Bauer / C. Stanish, Ritual and Pilgrimage in the Ancient Andes: The Islands of the Sun and the Moon, Austin 2001, p. 330.

22 R. Matos, Pumpu: Centro administrativo Inka de la Puna de Junín, Lima 1994, p. 327.

23 A. Meyers/I. Combès (eds.), El Fuerte de Samaipata. Estudios arqueológicos, Santa Cruz de la Sierra 2015, p. 192. M. Ziolkowski/R. Sadowski, Informe acerca de las investigaciones arqueoastronómicas en el área central de Ingapirca (Ecuador), in: Revista Española de Antropología Americana 14 (1984), pp. 103–125.

24 A. Troncoso, El Arte de la Dominación. Arte Rupestre y Paisaje Durante el Período Incaico en la Cuenca Superior del Río Aconcagua, in: Chungará 36 (2004), pp. 553–561.

25 P. Cruz, Huacas Olvidadas y Cerros Santos. Apuntes Metodológicos sobre la Cartografía Sagrada en los Andes del Sur de Bolivia, in: Estudios Atacameños 38 (2009), pp. 55–74.

26 F. A. Acuto / I. Leibowicz, Inca Colonial Encounters and Incorporation in Northern Argentina, in: S. Alconini / R. A. Covey (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of the Incas, New York 2018, pp. 333–354; Z. Chase, The Inca State and

the destruction of local buildings and objects – especially ritual facilities – and their replacement with Inka ones, the Inkas not only redesigned and re-signified the cultic activities oriented towards a particular *wak'a* in their own ways, but they also re-wrote history. Like in other oral societies, memory and history in the Andes was (and still is) embodied in the tales and myths people narrate and transmit on different occasions, but they were also materialized and made visible in the landscape, recreated through monuments, shrines and objects (even mummified human bodies), bringing the past into the present.[27] By dwelling on and experiencing the territory, people became knowledgeable about their world and the achievements of their ancestors. Thus, when the Inkas wiped out material mnemonic devices, they denied indigenous communities access to their memories and, therefore, to their past. These communities were then erased from history. Nevertheless, the Inkas were not always able to enforce forgetfulness by destroying local architecture and material memories. In other cases, they chose to ignore the local presence by avoiding passing near indigenous areas or settlements. Scholars have noticed that in many regions the Inkas selected areas that were practically uninhabited, away from local towns, to settle their centres and infrastructure.[28] Strangely enough, these areas were poor in resources and logistically marginal. We have argued that the Inkas chose these empty and peripheral locations because they sought to construct, free from interference, their own colonial landscape.[29] This seemingly odd selection of areas scarce in resources, poorly connected and distant from the main native political, economic and cultural centres, enabled the Inkas to avoid indigenous influences on their colonial microcosms, on the activities they conducted there and on the people who lived at or visited the Inka sites. The Inkas preferred locations that served as a blank canvas, allowing them to build a landscape of their own, estranged from local social and cultural life and divorced from vernacular history.

A final relevant aspect of this process of the Inkanisation of the *wak'as* and the cultic activities oriented towards them was the transformation of the relationship between sacred entities and their worshipers. During Inka-sponsored ritual activities and pilgrimages to sacred landmarks, the Inkas became those who contacted, talked, summoned and paid homage to sacred beings, displacing local people and relegating them to a passive role.[30] Through the strategic use of architecture designed to impede indigenous people from

Local Ritual Landscapes, in: S. Alconini / R. A. Covey (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of the Incas, New York 2018, pp. 519–540.

27 L. Bengtsson, The Concept of Time/Space in Quechua: Some Considerations, in: Etnologiska Studier 42 (1999), pp. 119–127; C. McEwan/M. van de Guchte, Ancestral time and sacred space in the Inca state ritual, in: R. Townsend (ed.), The Ancient Americas: Art from Sacred Landscapes, Chicago 1992, pp. 359–371; S. Niles, The Shape of Inca History: Narrative and Architecture in an Andean Empire, Iowa City 1999, p. 344.

28 Hyslop, Inka Settlement Planning, p. 393; R. Matos, Pumpu: Centro administrativo Inka de la Puna de Junín, Lima 1994, p. 327; C. Morris, The Infrastructure of Inka Control in the Central Highlands, in: G. Collier / R. Rosaldo / J. Wirth (eds.), The Inca and Aztec States, 1400–1800, New York 1982, pp. 153–70.

29 F. A. Acuto, The Materiality of Inka Domination: Landscape, Spectacle, Memory, and Ancestors, in: P. Funari / A. Zarankin / E. Stovel (eds.), Global Archaeology Theory: Contextual Voices and Contemporary Thoughts, New York 2005, pp. 211–235.

30 Acuto/Leibowicz, Inca Colonial Encounters; Chase, The Inca State.

interacting directly with their own *wak'as*, Tawantinsuyu asserted its authority. During staged ritual performances, the Inkas – metaphorically and materially – assumed the role of intermediaries who linked indigenous peoples and their *wak'as* through their performative bodies and their ritual devices.

Not only archaeological investigations, but also early colonial documents confirm that the Inkas introduced important transformations into the ritual activities directed toward Andean sacred entities, both in terms of ritual performances and ceremonial infrastructure. The priest Bernabé Cobo, who visited the sanctuaries on the Island of the Sun, reported that

> […] *the people of the Island of Titicaca saw the Sun come up one morning out of that crag with extraordinary radiance. For this reason, they believed that the true dwelling place of the Sun was that crag, or at least that crag was the most delightful thing in the world for the Sun. Thus a magnificent temple, for those times, was constructed there and dedicated to the Sun, although it was not so magnificent as it was after the Incas enlarged it and enhanced its fame* […] *this Inca had many buildings constructed in order to enlarge and lend more authority to this shrine. The former temple was augmented with new and impressive buildings. In addition, it was ordered that other buildings be constructed for other purposes; these included a convent for* mamaconas [chosen women].[31]

A final important aspect of the relationship the Inkas intended to establish with the supernatural entities of the Andes was the creation of a large network that bound together, materially and symbolically, all of the *wak'as* and then bound these to Tawantinsuyu. Every *wak'a* that the Inkas incorporated into this network was connected through the *qhapacñan* and received high-quality, Inka-style material offerings. The Inkas took great care in constructing, in close connection with the *wak'as*, a specific set of ritual buildings, a sort of trademark of Inka colonialism. Everyone who undertook a pilgrimage to these sacred places found a ritual scenario bearing Tawantinsyu's stamp.

More important still is how the Inkas bound all of the *wak'as* together through a pan-Andean ritual known as *qhapachucha*.[32] Certain special occasions motivated the Inkas to travel to the different corners of their large empire to pay homage to every single *wak'a*. *Qhapachucha* began in Cuzco, where the Inkas planned the kinds of offerings that they would make to each *wak'a*, according to its relevance and power and the importance of its native worshipers to the Inkas' political strategy. Among these gifts were special children, who were prepared and ritually transformed into "sons of the Sun", the Inka's main deity and mythical ancestor, and who, in the process, became linked to the lineage of the Cuzco elite.[33] Once the preparations and celebrations in Cuzco were completed,

31 B. Cobo, Inca Religion and Customs, R. Hamilton (trans.), Austin 1990 [1653], p. 279, 91–93.

32 Besom, Of Summits and Sacrifices; I. Farrington, The Concept of Cusco in: Tawantinsuyu 5 (1998), pp. 53–59; McEwan / van de Guchte, Ancestral time.

33 Farrington, The Concept of Cusco.

pilgrimage parties left the capital and travelled simultaneously to nearby and to faraway regions to meet and honour the animated sacred entities.

5. Conclusion

Why did the Inkas pursue this systematic (and almost obsessive) search to connect with the supernatural beings that dwelled in the Andean landscapes alongside human communities?

The Inkas' core objective was to bring order to chaos.[34] We must take into account the fact that Andean identity came to be constituted in counterpoint to the identity of the "savage" peoples of the Amazonian lowlands. For the peoples of the highlands, and especially for the Inkas, the eastern, wooded lowlands represented the uncivilized past, the chaos and wildness that needed to be isolated and confined.[35] In front of the Spaniards, the Inkas presented themselves as the civilisers of the Andean world.[36] According to Inka discourses, everything was barbaric, unstable and out of control before Tawantinsuyu, and the Inkas came to bring order, wisdom, peace and prosperity. In order to avoid obscurity and chaos, and to prevent the Andean world becoming the uncivilized Amazonian lowlands, supernatural forces needed to be contained and organized.

When the Inkas travelled across the territories of the *wak'as*, when they branded these territories with their roads and buildings, when they settled next to or directly on top of sacred landmarks, when they constructed rock platforms and buried offerings at the summits of the most sacred tutelary mountains, when they surrounded these powerful non-human animated entities with buildings and when they clothed *wak'as* with fine textiles – all activities that local communities usually avoided due to their riskiness – the Inkas not only showed that they were able to tame and to bring order to these unstable and dangerous territories, but they also presented themselves as transcending humanity. Inka agency lay beyond human agency because they had the ability to be with and to manipulate the *wak'as* without any consequences or harm. This is precisely where Inka authority resided. We must take into account that people, *wak'as* and landscape were symbolically, socially and even physiologically entangled and interdependent.[37] Hence,

34 C. J. Allen, Ushnus and Interiority, in: F. Meddens/K. Willis/C. McEwan/N. Branch (eds.), Inca Sacred Space: Landscape, Site and Symbol in the Andes, London 2014, pp. 71–77; J. Jennings, The Fragility of Imperialist Ideology and the End of Local Traditions, an Inca Example, in: Cambridge Archaeological Journal 13 (2003) 1, pp. 107–120; S. Ramírez, Negociando el Imperio: El Estado Inca como Culto, in: Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Études Andines 37 (2008), pp. 5–18; Sillar, Caminando a través del Tiempo.

35 Randall, Qoyllur Rit'i.

36 P. Cieza de León, The Incas of Pedro Cieza de León, H.de Onis (trans.), Norman 1959 [1553], p. 516; Cobo, Inca Religion and Customs.

37 Allen, The Hold Life Has; J. Bastien, Qollahuaya-Andean Body Concepts: A Topographical-Hydraulic Model of Physiology, in: American Anthropologist 87 (1985), pp. 595–611; Chase, What is a Wak'a?; J. Earls/I. Silverblatt, La realidad física y social en la cosmología andina, in: Actes du XLII Congres International des Americanistes 4 (1978), pp. 299–326; G. Fernández Juárez, Enfermedad, moda y cuerpo social en el altiplano aymara: Un "boceto" de inspiración colonial sobre modelos de identidad en los Andes, in: Revista Española de Antropología Ame-

controlling the *wak'as*, or relationships with them, entailed controlling their human worshippers.

Finally, by materially and symbolically penetrating and marking the sacred landscapes of their subjects, the Inkas inscribed themselves into local mnemonic devices and, therefore, into indigenous history. History is cyclical in the Andes. In contrast to the Western worldview, people from the Andes understand that the past is in front of them, because it is visible, while the future lies behind, because it is unknown and cannot be seen.[38] The past is present in the Andean territories (in the double sense of being there and being in the temporal present). In this sense, when the Inkas transformed and embedded themselves in the sacred ancestral landscapes of their subordinates, in their material memories, they became a part of vernacular history: what was visible and, hence, known.

This was especially the case with holy mountains. As we explained, indigenous communities held that the summit of these mountains were their *pacarinas* (the places where their mythical ancestors emerged to found local communities and lineages, and where they returned to dwell as tutelary entities). The Inka occupation of these high-altitude areas implied, in some way, the appropriation of the mythical history of their subordinates. The construction of ritual buildings and the interment of "sons of the Sun" on the summits of sacred mountains metaphorically expressed that these places had become the permanent residence of the Inkas, who in this way supplanted local mythical ancestors. The pilgrimage from Cuzco to these sacred summits may have represented the return of the ancestors to their *pacarinas*. Through the symbolic and material appropriation of these summits, the Inkas seem to have affirmed that they had always been there and that they were part of the natural order of things – that is, part of nature and part of the supernatural order. Seeking to transform indigenous beliefs and history, the Inkas positioned themselves as a natural nexus between the past and the present. They thus legitimated their dominion by transforming themselves from foreign conquerors to returning ancestors.

ricana 28 (1998), pp. 259–281; C. Greenway, Objectified Selves: An Analysis of Medicines in Andean Sacrificial Healing, in: Medical Anthropology Quarterly 12 (1998) 2, pp. 147–167.

38 Allen, The Hold Life Has; Randall, Qoyllur Rit'i.