

Chapter 9

Dimensions of Place: The Significance of Centers to the Development of Andean Civilization: An Exploration of the *Ushnu* Concept

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Introduction

Andean scholars have long known about indigenous cultural and religious beliefs about the natural geography or what is referred to as sacred landscape. Some Spanish chroniclers in fact speculated that Native Andeans were descendants of the ancient Chaldeans who once lived on the Plain of Sennaar in the Persian Gulf because they worshiped natural features such as mountains, lakes and springs, as well as celestial bodies in the night sky (Valera, 1968 [1594]:153–154; Vega, 1966 [1609]:67–68, 76–78; cf. Hyland, 2003:96). Despite a large body of ethnohistoric and ethnographic literature on the topic of Native religious beliefs, archaeologists have rarely dealt with the Andean significance of “place” to the origin and creation of Sacred Places or *huacas* or their role in social inequality and cultural complexity. Native Andeans in fact have a distinct sense of place. When being introduced, it is commonplace for natives to mention where they are from even before giving their name (Condori Mamani and Quispe Huamán, 1996:21). This strongly infers that place, where a person is from, is very important to who a person is and how others perceive them. Many Native Andeans still traverse a sacred landscape under the watchful eye of the Sun Father (*Inti Tyata*) and Mother Moon (*Mama Killa*). They walk through the high mountain passes (*apachitas*), beside lakes (*quchas*) and cross the plains or *pampas*, down warm valleys (*qhiswa*), and on the eastern side of the cordillera, into the jungle valleys (*yunka*) in a mythic geography imbued with cultural meanings (Gelles, 1996:10).

The sacred nature of place and the importance it still holds is evident when noting that “centers,” both ancient cultural and ceremonial, and even certain places in the landscape, are still referred to in the vernacular as “*huaca*” a term meaning, extraordinary and sacred. More generally, anything that was given special attention through veneration could be referred to as a *huaca* (Salomon, 1991:14–19). The chronicler Garcilaso de la Vega conveyed the sense of this important term in 1609 when he said that *huaca* means:

... “a sacred place”... “a sacred thing” such as... idols, rocks, great stones, or trees which the enemy [Devil] entered to make the people believe he was a god. They also gave the name *huaca* to things they offered to the Sun, such as figures of men [figurines and statues], birds, and animals made of silver, gold or wood... *Huaca* is applied to any temple,

large or small, to the sepulchers set up in fields and to the corners in their houses where the Devil spoke to their priests... They use the same word *huaca*... to very high hills that stand above the rest as high towers stand above ordinary houses, to steep mountain slopes... All these things and others like them were called *huaca*, not because they were considered gods and therefore worthy of adoration, but because of their special superiority over other common run of things... they were regarded and treated with veneration and respect. (1966:73, 76–77)

Huacas can therefore be represented by a number of things, including places in the natural environment. *Huacas* are differentiated by some special quality, and refer to the crack (split) or mediation space where “communication” occur between the natural and supernatural (Classen, 1993:2, 14). The origins of *huacas* in the landscape are related to their symbolic association with Andean communities and to the belief that their extraordinary qualities embody spiritual essence and power.

During the Contact Period, the Inca in Cuzco recognized 328 *huacas* stretched out along 41 imaginary sight lines called *ceques*, which radiated out from the *Coricancha* in the Temple of the Sun (Zuidema, 2002:238). In addition to being objects of veneration, *huacas* in the surrounding valley (hills, mountains) were also used as visual markers for astronomical observations as a way of marking religious and agricultural cycles (see Zuidema, this volume). *Huaca* Sacred places, material manifestations of the sacred, and even departed ancestors, were in some instances called *huacas* (Zuidema, 1973, 1989:182; Salomon, 1991:16–17).

Stone sculptures, such as the Lanzón in the Old Temple at Chavín de Huántar, is one of the most dramatic *huacas* preserved from prehistory (Rowe, 1962:8; Burger, 1992a:Illustrations 126, 127, 1992b:Figures 6–7, 1992b, 265–266). *Huacas* such as the Lanzón and the oracle at Pachacamac were highly venerated and served as a communicative link to the spiritual realms. Garcilaso de la Vega (1966 [1609]:75–76) mentions that the oracle at Pachacamac, which he called the “unknown god” was worshiped inwardly even more than the Sun or “visible god” by the Inca.

The concept of *huaca* is so fluid as to become almost meaningless as an analytical tool unless it is defined specifically with reference to the topic at hand, that is, centers (Fig. 9.1). *Huaca* is also used here to refer to Sacred Places in the landscape, and how material objects, living things, including people, attain the status of *huaca* and have distinct symbolic meanings with reference to such places. Particular emphasis is given to how such Sacred Places are differentiated from secular space and the role(s) *ushnus* may play in status differentiation and sociocultural development.

Huaca shrines (*huacacuna*) were powerful social and political places, and as they gained legitimacy worshipers would build temples or platforms and make offerings. The oracle at Pachacamac, located near present day Lima in southern coastal Peru, was in fact so powerful and highly venerated throughout the coast and highlands that even the Inca built a temple to the Sun (*Inti*) and to the Virgins of the Sun (*mamaconas*) at that locality and made offerings of textiles, gold and silver (Salomon and Urioste, 1991 [c. 1598–1608]:Chap. 22, Sect. 277).

These cultural and behavioral patterns emphasize a close personal relationship between the spiritual and corporal world, between people, places and spiritual entities.

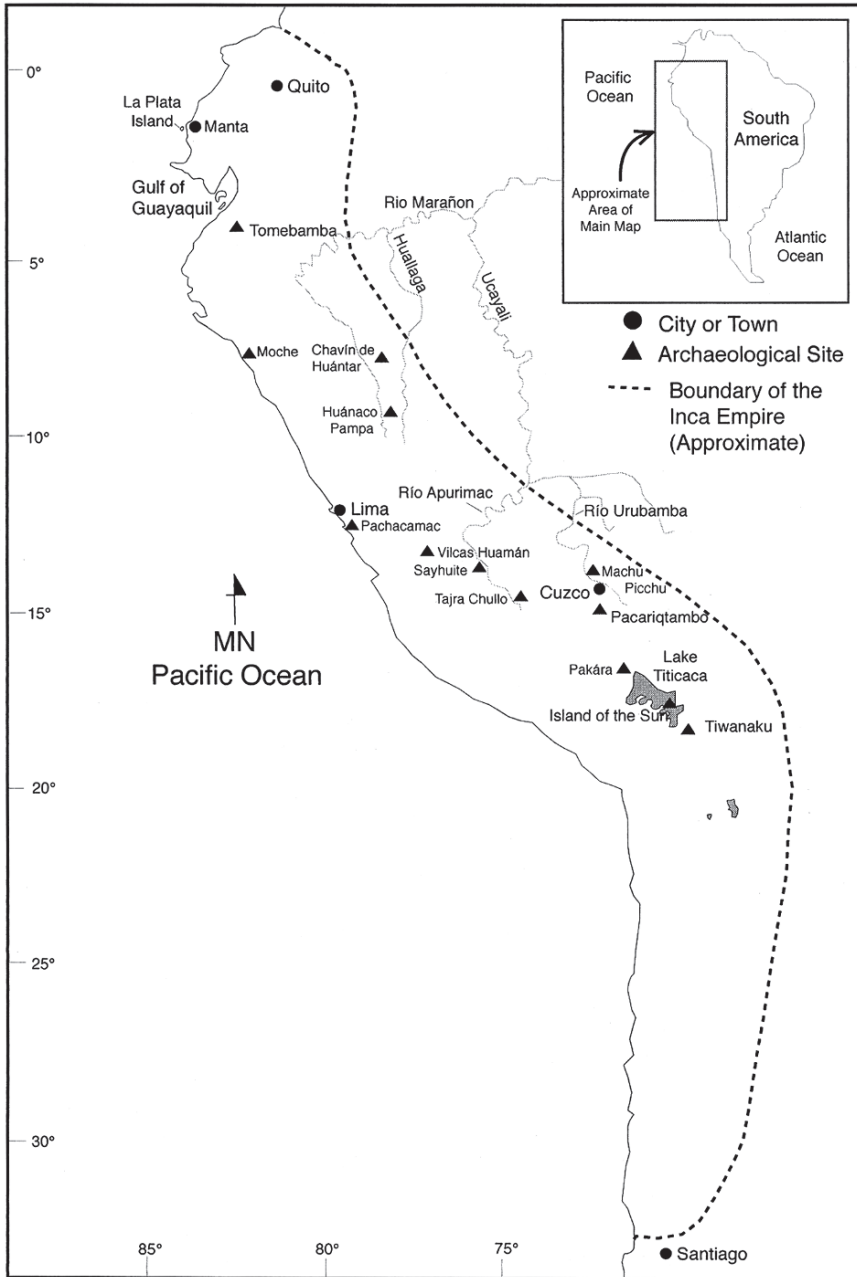


Fig. 9.1 Map showing the approximate boundary of the Inca Empire and some of the cities, towns, huacas and sanctuaries mentioned in the text

I begin with a consideration of Andean concepts of place and their significance and role to status differentiation, ethnic identity, and sociopolitical entities. A primary goal is to determine how Andean concepts of time and space may have affected or be expressed in the archaeological patterning. The analysis concludes with an exploration of the concept of *ushnu* and introduces comparative data on Inca and non-Inca *ushnu* centers. The significance of the *ushnu* concept is then considered through examples of sacred centers in earlier Andean civilizations. The evidence indicates the Inca were recreating an idea of place that had considerable chronological depth. The most apparent ideological shift in emphasis with regard to *ushnu* was the perpetuation of the solar cult and ancestor veneration as a basis for divine kingship. Archaeological evidence indicates that the *ushnu* concept was ideally suited to such sociopolitical and religious rationales and that this is indirectly apparent at major centers dated to well before the Late Horizon Period.

Andean Concepts of Place

Another fluid concept comes from the term “*Llacta*.” Narratives indicate *llacta* refers to a nucleated rather than dispersed settlement (Allen, 1988:260). It can also refer to a hamlet, village, city, a people, or country (*ibid.*). In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the term still had reference to earth spirits associated with a particular place, what Salomon (1991:23–24) calls “place deity” or “deity-locale,” the area or territory controlled by the local *huaca*. In other words, “cultural centers” (referring here to nucleated settlements) were intrinsically associated with and in most cases actually represented *huacas*. They had a spiritual identity that was directly related with that specific place or location and to the associated communities.

By the late seventeenth century colonial oppression and religious persecution had all but wiped out the traditional and symbolic relationships between communities, *ayllus*, and territory. Before this time however the relationships between nucleated settlements and the surrounding landscape was very different (Salomon, 1991:23). During the early 1600s the people saw the *pueblos viejos* (old villages) and stone houses of the dead of their parents generation all around them. While the colonial masters sought to reassert their religious beliefs every Sunday in the confined space of a church, the people lived and worked in a sacred landscape, which constantly harkened them back to the time of their ancestors (*ibid.*).

Llacta or nuclear settlements were entities that consisted of three distinct dimensions: (1) they were linked to a *huaca*, often a deceased and venerated ancestor, (2) who oversaw a territory, and at the same time, (3) the community or *ayllu* of that nucleated settlement (Salomon, 1991:23). *Llacta* in the seventeenth century therefore signified or was synonymous with the local *huaca* (Fig. 9.2). The *huaca* was the possessor of the *llacta* and at the same time possessed by the spiritual powers residing at that place. In the present day, *llacta* is essentially the name of a relationship, not of a type of settlement (Salomon, 1991:23). The concept of *llacta* as it once existed



Fig. 9.2 Felipe Guaman Puma depicts Ayamara of highland Bolivia venerating a *huaca*, in this case an *apu* or mountain spirit. The mountain has a mummy bundle, presumably a venerated ancestor, placed in a cave near the summit. Above the image he writes the “Idols and *huacas* of Collasuyu.” He shows a man and woman venerating the *huaca*, the man holding up his offerings while the woman holds a llama, upon which he wrote “*carnero negro*” that will be sacrificed to the *huaca*. At the bottom of the page, Guaman Poma wrote “*en el Callao*” in reference to a particular place. This image provides an example of how *llactas* were linked to their *huacas* and ancestors (Guamán Poma, 1980 [1583–1615]:244 fol. 106)

with respect to Checa societies is clearly brought out by Salomon in his introduction to the Huarochirí Manuscript:

The chain of human movements and transformations by which the Checa people explained their social organization emphasizes at every stage a pattern of *huacas* among whose territories human groups move and fight. *Huacas* might travel on the way to establishing their dwellings but once victorious they had — they were — their locales, and it was the deity-locale that gave wealth and identity to human groups. The Checa explained all changes both prehispanic and recent, with reference to the geography and the relative fortunes of *huacas*. (Salomon, 1991:24)

Traditional indigenous beliefs surrounding *llacta* and Iberian religious orthodoxy involve a syncretism regarding the association of certain places with Roman Catholic saints (Gelles, 1996:80). It is presently common to have certain towns, villages, communities etc., represented by a patron saint and other “lesser” saints, who play a critical role in communal identity (Fuenzalida, 1970). The pre-Hispanic association of certain places with *huacas* and earth spirits suggests that they were

sacred. The sense of kinship, belonging, and participating *in terms of place itself* infers a spiritual connection that bonds people together with their community (Gelles, 1996:9 [original italics]). The communal bond extends to the surrounding landscape and the spiritual powers that reside there including venerated ancestors, mountain lords and the earth. These spiritual powers have benevolent and malevolent qualities. Communication with the spiritual realm as it occurs in the *llacta* is related to the sacred center, a ceremonial center or temple (see e.g., Salomon and Urioste, 1991 [ca. 1598–1608]; Guamán Poma, 1980 [1583–1615]:236, 239, 357, 413).

Social Dimensions of Place

Priests and diviners (*hanpiq*) or sorcerers (*paquas*) were ritual specialists who communicated with oracles and *huacas* on behalf of their constituents, villages, communities, towns, and individuals, etc. (Valderrama and Escalante, 1977). In return for their advice on various matters the *paquas* and the *huacas* were given gifts and offerings veneration and if they were particularly powerful, developed a cult following (Allen, 1988; Topic et al., 2002). Thus, communication with the spiritual realm occurs between ritual specialists and their associated communities or *ayllus*. However, the Andean concept of *ayllu* is neither straightforward nor simplistic with regard to community or place. Salomon (1991:21–22) defines *ayllu* of the seventeenth century as a “named landholding collectivity, self-defined in kinship terms, including lineages but not globally defined as unilineal, and frequently forming part of a multi-*ayllu* settlement.” He goes on to say that the concept is one of relatedness and not an entity of any specific dimensions or limits of scale (Urton, 1990:22–23). Allen (1988:107, 257) adds that *ayllu* mates derive their well being from the “same locality” or place and through this shared relationship they are set apart as a distinct social unit. In this sense, *ayllus* shared a common focus. Thus, *ayllu* denotes a relationship between people that can be expressed through a place or locality, descent, or political affiliation (Gelles, 1996:8). Modern community members or *comuneros* also emphasize an identification with and membership in a particular community (Condori Mamani and Quispe Huamán, 1996:80, f. 17). Members of an *ayllu*, like *comuneros*, had claims on the *ayllu* resources — lands, camelid herds and on human energy in the form of labor services (*mit'a*). Agricultural tasks, the construction, maintenance and feeding of *huacas* etc., were carried out by *ayllus* but provisions of food and maize beer (*chicha*) were expected in return as a form of reciprocity (Murra, 1975[1972], 1980, 1982; Morris, 1979, 1993; Morris and Thompson, 1985). Reciprocity linked households, communities (*comuneros*), and their corporate kin groups to their leaders (*curaca*) and to the larger polity. Reciprocity and redistribution formed traditional ties that bound people into a social and economic unit (Rostworowski, 1977, 1999; Murra, 1980, 1985a,b; Zuidema, 1983). Communities and the larger polity were tied to *huacas* in some cases by “fictive” bonds. *Curacas*, ritual specialists and nobles of larger polities were considered to have access to these spiritual and supernatural domains

associated with a particular place in the geography (Zuidema, 1983:53; Urton, 1985:253, 255–257, 1990:24).

Spiritual and Temporal Dimensions of Place

The untranslatable Quechua word “*Pacha*” is a critical concept associated with place. *Pacha* generally refers to a moment or interval in time and a locus or extension in space (Salomon, 1991:14; Allen, 1988:64–66). It can also denote the world or earth. The earth is a personified female being or *Pachamama* (Earth Mother) that has metaphorical reference to fertility and fecundity. The oracle at Pachacamac includes this word and “*camac*,” which Salomon and Urioste (1991 [c. 1598–1608]:57) translate as the one “who charges the world with being.” Pachacamac is therefore the place or extension in space where the world (*Pacha*) is charged with being. *Camac* is the agentive form of the key verb “*camay*,” and may mean in certain contexts, to be “powerful” (Cummins, 2002:28; Taylor, 1974/76). Among Aymara speaking agro-pastoral societies, the term *camac* refers to a “vital generating principle,” an “animating essence,” or a “life force or essence” (Rostworowski, 1986:10; see also Staller, 2006:453). This life force presumably exists and permeates certain places in the natural landscape (Taylor, 1974/76; Carpenter, 1992; Kolata, 1996).

The term *Pacha* is also conceptually linked to another term, “*Enqa*,” which refers to the “source and origin of felicity, well-being, and abundance” (Flores Ochoa, 1977:218; Paternosto, 1996:177). Flores Ochoa (1977:84) suggests *enqa* is a deformation of the word *Inca*, which may be defined as, “the creative and ordering principle or power of the universe, the primordial moment of all being and becoming”. When Inca rulers or *Sapa Inca* assumed this appellative, they were attempting to center in themselves the metaphysical principle underlying this concept (Zuidema, 1983:54–56; Paternosto, 1996:177; Classen, 1993:36, 40). This essence or force is presumably embodied in *huacas*, at ceremonial centers, and at cultural centers. Such spiritual essences are both beneficial and malevolent and therefore must be venerated and propitiated through offerings, rituals, and ceremonial activities as a form of reciprocity.

Thus, Sacred Places, cultural centers and the ceremonial centers sometimes found within them embody or contain a “place deity” or “local deity” closely identified with the local population and the surrounding geography. *Huacas* and their associated cults were possessed by them and at the same time possessed them indicating an intrinsic link between the spiritual and corporal (Staller, 2006:453). *Huacas* were involved in containing supernatural power in the form of a life force or animating essence closely tied to the identity of the place in which they are situated. *Huacas* oversaw the surrounding territory and were closely identified with the communities, corporate ethnic groups or *ayllus* within such settlements. Communication and propitiation of such spiritual powers were essential to the survival and well being of the cultural center.

Sami or “*wasisami*” [Quechua] is another term for an “abstract vitalizing force” or “animating essence” that unites terms such as *Enqa* and *Pacha* [Aymara]. *Samay* (*sami*) is the life force, a kind of “soul breath” that animates and forms a bond between humans and animating forces in the environment (Custred, 1979:288–289). *Sami* and *enqa* are therefore a kind of “spiritual energy or power.” The exchange or circulation of *pacha*, *enqa* or *sami* occurs among dead ancestors, *huacas*, and *Pachamama* the Earth Mother (Tschopik, 1951:115; Zuidema, 1973, 1982a:151–153; Allen, 1988:207–208; Rösing, 1995:80; Dillehay, 1995:298, 303, Figure 4; Kuznar, 2001:42). One of the primary goals in the circulation of life force in the Andes is to control and “channel” it for the common good and for the fulfillment of some particular goal or desire. Movement of *enqa* or *sami* is most eloquently expressed by Catherine Allen,

The circulation of *sami*, or life force, underlies all cultural activities from religious ritual to economics to politics. In this worldview all existing things — people, llamas, mountains, potato fields, houses, whatever — are imbued with life. The life force can be transmitted from one living thing to another. The flow of *sami* depends upon a material medium; there are no disembodied essences in the Andean universe. In this, *sami* resembles the Polynesian *mana* and our own concept of energy. The flow is neutral in itself and must be controlled and directed so that all things attain their proper mode and degree of liveliness. All activity revolves around this central problem: controlling and directing the flow of life (1988:207–208)

Since Andean worldview assumes a mutual interdependence and an intrinsic interrelationship between culture and nature, the well being of *huacas* depends upon a constant flow of offerings from the living to deceased ancestors, and the spiritual domain as a form of reciprocity. Since life force is an essence that animates the world, brings wellbeing, abundance and thus can take on a variety of forms.

Spiritual energy or animating essence can be both hostile and friendly to humans (Allen, 1988:37, 44–54, 65–66, 207). Classes of spiritual energy are contained in cultural and ceremonial centers and also reside in the landscape, on mountain peaks, in ancient ruins, natural springs, caves, rivers, lakes etc., and are in some cases hierarchically ranked according to their presumed power (Bandelier, 1910:103, 155; Flores Ochoa, 1977:229–230; Isbell, 1978a:46, 1985:258–259; Urton, 1981:39–48; Reinhard, 1985b:414, 1995:340–342; Rostworowski, 1986:10–13, 31, 62). Ritual and sacrificial offerings are essential to maintaining cosmological equilibrium and facilitating the exchange or circulation of animating essence among these spiritual entities in cultural and geographic spaces (Buechler and Buechler, 1971:9; Allen, 1988:49–50, 207–208; Carpenter, 1992:122; Classen, 1993:14; Rösing, 1995:74–76, 80; Kuznar, 1999:84; Ceruti, 2004:104).

Between A.D. 1438 and the Spanish conquest in A.D. 1532 the Inca constructed over 100 ceremonial platforms and shrines (*villcas*) on the summits of the highest mountains in the empire (Ceruti, 2004:104). Spiritual forms and their symbolic connotations are therefore conditioned in part by the geography, and may also be extended to their associated biota (Isbell, 1985).

Natural features and the species (plants, animals, birds etc) adapted to such places may be seen as manifestations of the sacred and would in association with

huacas be temporally couched with reference to sacred rather than secular time (Turner, 1985). Natural places therefore are also the places of ritual performance, human sacrifices and their burials, and given offerings of precious material objects and natural species (Ceruti, 2004). The spiritual realm is sanctified and propitiated through ritual feasting and sacrificial offerings (Cobo, 1990:115–119 [1653]; Bandelier, 1910:94; Rostworowski, 1986:31, 62; Allen, 1988:44, 49–54).

Ethnographic and ethnohistoric accounts indicate that sacrificial offerings left at *huacas* are a form of reciprocity between humans and earth mother or *Pachamama*. Obsidian used in blood sacrifice, powerful shamanic tobacco, feathers from exotic birds, translucent quartz crystals, distinctively shaped or pebbles covered with ocher, ground marine shell, coca leaves, maize kernels or beer, animals (especially camelids), more rarely humans, and in some cases even mummy bundles were offered as sacrifice (Cieza de León, 1977:106–107 [1551]; Guamán Poma, 1980:244 [1583–1615]; Tschopik, 1951:207; Nuñez del Prado, 1974:243; Isbell, 1978a:154; Ceruti, 2004:103–104). Since all animate or inanimate objects with unusual properties are seen as an aspect of a single overriding unity, they are appropriate as sacrificial or ritual offerings.

The natural world exists in multiple temporal cycles, some tied to an annual subsistence round and others to the periodicity of sacred and mythological (epochs or world) cycles (Eliade, 1959:72, 92, 112, 1969; Leone, 1978:315–316; Zuidema, 1982a:159–161; Rostworowski, 1986:31; Classen, 1993:143, 194–195; Urton, 1999:40–44; Sullivan, 1996:27). Thus, multiple modes of a historical and mythological past are both “real” in the sense of conditioning behavior — they coexist and continually contribute to the ongoing process of life (Kramer, 1978; Zuidema, 1982a; Allen, 1988; Sullivan, 1987b, 1988; Rösing, 1995). Andean periodicities have particular references to *huacas* (rivers, caves, hills, mountains etc.) on the horizon and to celestial bodies associated with them particularly with the coming of climatic or seasonal events (Zuidema this volume).

Time among various Andean cultures is cyclical, and social relations and the meanings of temporal cycles are closely tied to the sacred rhythms and periodicity of the cosmos (Roe, 1982; Fabian, 1983; Turner, 1985; Sullivan, 1984a; Zuidema, 1997). Temporal and cosmological cycles are marked through ritual dancing, music, that generally involved feasting and sacrificial offerings (Sullivan, 1984a,b, 1987b, 1988; Harrison, 1989; Cummins, 2002). Feasts and feasting are ritual acts of reciprocity that reaffirm the social order and provide a communal means of venerating and propitiating animating essence and/or venerated ancestors (Cummins, 2002:41). The previously defined terminology particularly with reference to *Pacha* would further suggest that such spiritual communication takes place in sacred or mythological time as opposed to secular time (Sullivan, 1984a, 1987a; Turner, 1985). The propitiation of the spiritual realm through ritual sacrifice is closely embodied in Andean customs surrounding reciprocity (McEwan and Van de Guchte, 1992; see also Levi Strauss, 1963).

The concepts of *Llacta* and *Pacha* as well as earth deities are consistent with the origin and creation of *huacas* and beliefs surrounding a sacred landscape (Bandelier, 1910; Reinhard, 1983a,b; Urton, 1985). Andean concepts of an animating

essence however make terms like deity imprecise. Significantly, the chronicler Fr. Bernabe Cobo (1990 [1653]:22) observed that there was no proper noun for “God” in the Quechua language. All such words were metaphorical references. Animating essences and earth spirits are not particular beings or deities (gods) but rather are a combination and recombination of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and naturalistic forms that presumably have a special quality or “essence.” These forms have specific reference to particular *huacas*, and to ceremonial centers within nucleated communities (*llactas*). Previous descriptions regarding the pantheistic nature of Andean religion are based upon the mistaken impression that, like Indo-European pantheons, the symbolic correlates to supernatural power are references to beings.

An overriding concept that unites Andean religious belief is that of *Pachamama* or Earth Mother. This is of pre-Columbian origin and closely associated with the fecundity and fertility that resides in the earth (Valderrama and Escalante, 1988:129–130). *Pacha* also refers a moment or interval of “time”—not secular time, but sacred and mythological time. Since *Pacha* can refer to both time and a specific place simultaneously, Allen (1988:45) has suggested that “world mother” or even “life mother” may be more appropriate terms. However, spirit with reference to *Pachamama* is conceptualized as dwelling in the earth. Therefore, it may take on different manifestations, for example, mountains, uncultivated earth, earthen habitations etc. (Allen, 1988:37–67; Valderrama and Escalante, 1988:210–211).

Cosmological and Ideological Dimensions of Place: The Inca Example

The Inca Empire was called *Tawantinsuyu*, or the land of the four corners (Fig. 9.3). The Inca universe was referred to as *ayni*, a word meaning balance and reciprocity (Classen, 1993:11). The primary function of religion and ritual in Inca culture was to keep the universe in a state of balance and harmony. The idea of balance and harmony is closely tied to customs surrounding reciprocity and redistribution, concepts intrinsic to the relationship of the ruling polity to its subject populations. Inca cosmology perpetuated the idea that the underlying duality of all life was based upon the dialectic of structure and fluidity (Staller, 2006:454). Divinity was transferred through the senses within a certain prescribed sequence that ordered rather than obliterated the boundaries of the senses as a mirror of the duality embodied in the cosmos. The inherent duality and dialectic complementarities of structure/fluidity, male/female, were separate and not interchangeable (Classen, 1993:79–80; see also Isbell, 1985:305; Staller, 2006:454, 464–465). The conjugal pair metaphorically embodies potential fertility and reproductive capacity of Andean dualism. The symbolic referents of this dialectic complementarity extends beyond a structural logic for organizing the cosmos, or an ideology for social hierarchy and control, but also serves as a medium through which the fertility of the natural world is conveyed to the human realm (Sallnow, 1987:145).

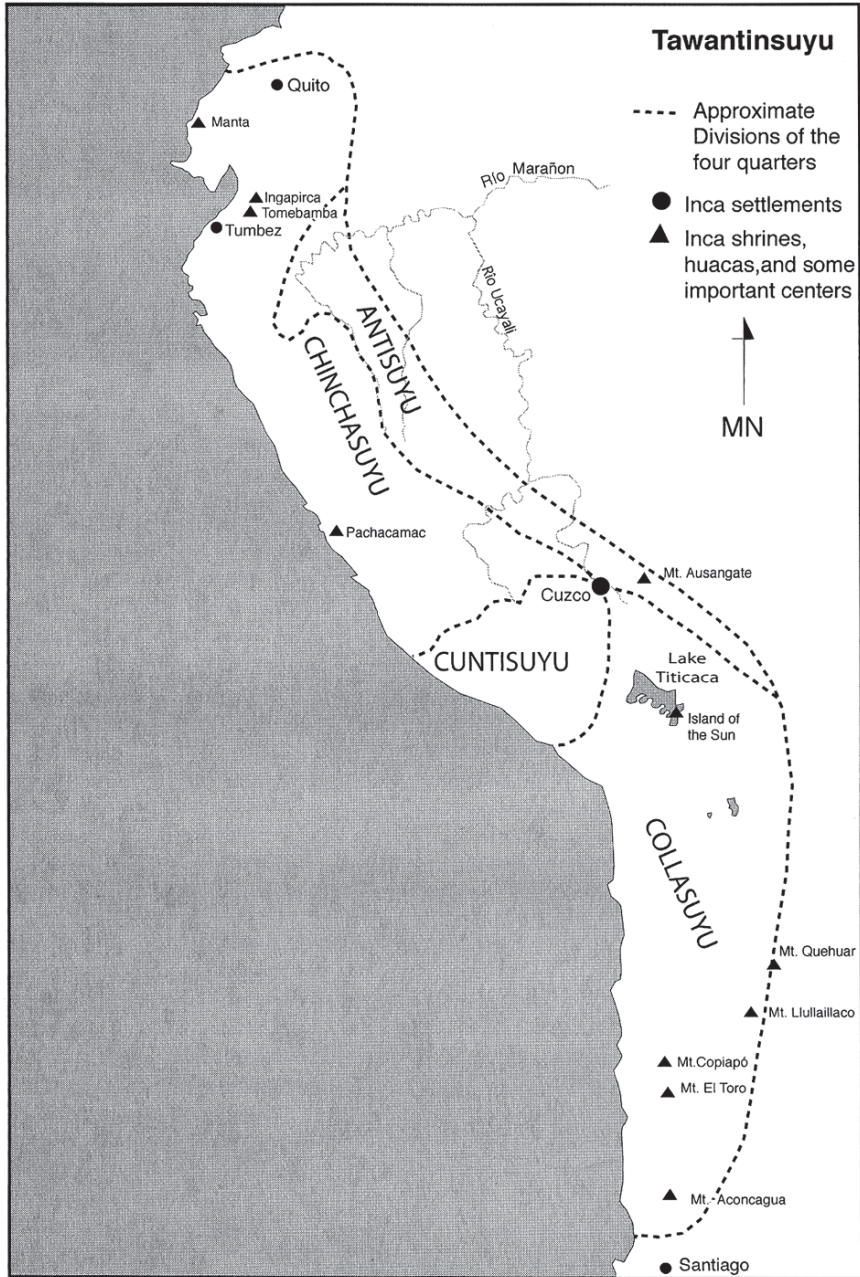


Fig. 9.3 Map of Tawantinsuyu, the land of the four comers showing the approximate boundaries of the *suyus* of the Inca Empire. The approximate locations of Inca settlements, *ushnus*, mountain sanctuaries (*apu* or *wamani*) important to *Capac Hucha* as well as important regional centers mentioned in the text

The primary object of veneration in the Inca Empire, the Sun (*Inti*), is conceptually opposed but at the same time complementary to Mother Moon (*Mama Killa*). The metaphorical importance of the sun and moon and their relationship to gender related ideology and sexual symbolism is well documented (Isbell, 1978a; Urton, 1981; Zuidema, 1977). Mother Moon was considered a supreme deity during Inca times. Its symbolic significance continued into the Colonial Period and to the present day, where it is closely tied to sexual symbolism and gender ideologies in the highlands (Condori Mamani and Quispe Huamán, 1996:28, 150, *f.* 22).

The underlying duality of all life was structured ideologically upon a hierarchy based primarily upon political status and ethnic affiliation. The ruler or *Sapa Inca* was at the top of this hierarchy followed by the nobility in descending rank by non-Inca elite related through marriage to Inca wives and called Incas by privilege, and the lowest level consisted of all others (Zuidema, 1964). The state imposed status hierarchy was maintained by military force or conquest, and it was sanctified and perpetuated by veneration to the Cult to the Sun and Dead. Sanctification of rule was rationalized by ritual, religious, ethic and moral codes of conduct readily comprehensible to Inca and non-Inca populations alike. The emphasis upon the solar cult and ancestor veneration constituted an appeal to mythological rather than merely political rationales.

Before the arrival of the Spaniards, status was also afforded to individuals or groups who possessed some particular skill or form of esoteric knowledge (Staller, 2000/02). This is evident linguistically by terms such as *camac* (Taylor, 1974/76). *Camay* is the key verb of the agentive form “*camac*” and it refers to the supernatural vitalization of all material things for which there is a supernatural prototype (Salomon and Urioste, 1991 [1598–1608]:57; Cummins, 2002:28).¹ Master craft specialists, weavers, woodworkers, and record keepers were given titles such as *cumbicamayuc*, *querocamayuc*, and *quipucamayuc* respectively. These titles include the term “*camayuc*” and therefore indicate a linguistic relationship between artisans and the material products they create. In the case of record keepers, a relationship to power from the esoteric knowledge and memory they possess (Fig. 9.4). Such skills and forms of knowledge therefore have an ontological component rather than merely a utilitarian function (Harrison, 1989).

The knowledge or capacity to physically produce an object of symbolic or social import also imbues a craftsman with a certain status or rank by occupation (Staller, 2000/02). Lechtman (1984) has related the concept of *camac* to metallurgy and weaving in terms of a crafter “revealing its inner structure” — each object substantiates *camay* in a visual form and reveals its substance or essence. The technology and construction of material objects have in common the fact that, like *Pacha*,

¹Sancho, Zaraté and others make reference to the Incas and their allies burning supplies to keep them from the Spaniards. Murra (1980:76) states that in preference to anything else, they will burn textiles and clothes to prevent these from falling into Spanish hands, also the native allies of the Spaniards attempt to take clothing off defeated enemies, and even to “kill” clothes of defeated enemies by hanging. These are very evocative references to the spiritual quality of textiles and their animating essence (Meddens, personal communication, 2005).



Fig. 9.4 *Quipucamayus*. in this drawing Guaman Poma depicts Condor Chagua the person in charge of the *quipus* of Tawantinsuyu. Below he states that Condor Chagua is the “*contador y tezorero*” the counter and treasurer. His headdress is emblematic of his status and rank (Guamán Poma, 1980:262 fol. 287 [1583–1615])

“they join *space* or the material (real) aspect of the world, with time, both historical and future events, in that they differentiate essences from interior states or conditions” (Lechtman, 1999:227). Indigenous beliefs regarding an animating essence may therefore be extended to finely crafted manufactured objects in various mediums

and forms of esoteric knowledge, particularly, since there was no form of writing, those that involved record keeping. Sacred places, ceremonial and cultural centers and the spiritual powers that reside there also imbue objects and things from that place, with cultural and religious significance.

Natural, Cultural, and Ceremonial Centers

A sacred center is critical to an ordered and meaningful universe because all cultural and natural elements in the heavens and on earth have their “proper” place (Levi Strauss, 1966:10, 1978:188; Sullivan, 1988:130). A “center” can be a fixed geographic place that orients a community with respect to *huacas* and the passage of temporal cycles, the organization of celestial bodies and channeling fluidity. It is through the center where cultural existence and interrelated symbolic realities are given meaning, but ironically, their relevance to the meaning of geographic and symbolic space depends upon their sacred quality (Eliade, 1959:20). A sacred center is where the qualities of being made manifest in space encounter one another, and therefore appear most fully, it is where all modes of being (primordial and temporal) converge, and where communication and passage among the cosmic layers occurs (Eliade, 1959:20–29; Sullivan, 1987a, 1988:130). Among cultures where the universe consists of multiple planes or cosmic layers of being, the center is where the various layers are penetrated (Zuidema, 1986; Sullivan, 1987a,b, 1988; Eliade and Sullivan, 1987). The sacred quality of the “center of the world” or *axis mundi* creates the possibility of viewing the universe as a coherent ordered system of symbolic, literal, and logical interrelationships. The *heterogeneity of space* is what permits an understanding of the landscape in terms of different modalities (Moore, 1984:129; see also Eliade, 1969; Levi Strauss, 1963, 1966; Eliade and Sullivan, 1987).

Andean Meanings of “Center”

Cuzco was the cultural and religious center of the Empire of *Tawantinsuyu* or the land of the four quarters. The Temple of the Sun or *Coricancha* (Golden Enclosure) was the most important religious and sacred center within the Imperial capital (Rowe, 1944:Figure 9). There were many distinct languages and ethnic groups before, during and after the Inca Empire, but of these languages Quechua became the *lingua franca* after the European conquest (Gelles, 1996:1, *f.* 3; Cobo, 1979 [1653]:39–42). Quechua served as the administrative language of the empire and served as a medium of communication for societies within the Inca state. The state promoted Quechua as a vehicle of linguistic homogeneity (Mannheim, 1991:64). It was the promotion of Quechua as the predominant language over most of the Andes that has played such a large role in making Andean worldview more comprehensive to social scientists. Despite the linguistic diversity of the Andean region

before the rise of the Inca state, many of the terms used by Quechua speakers relating to religion have concepts that are closely related to more ancient Andean customs and worldview as a whole.

The Inca cosmos consisted of three layers or tiers that represent permutations of the “internal” or underworld (*uchu pacha*), terrestrial (*cay pacha*), and celestial (*janan pacha*) realms (Roe, 1982:128; Urton, 1981:38, 40, 42, 63, 68; Zuidema, 1972:39, 1983, 1989, 1997). Andean concepts of center are complex and multidimensional. Quechua terms that give meaning to “center” include *ucumu* (straight down) or *cusca* (straight up) and particularly *allpa*, in this case, the dividing point of straight up and down (Sullivan, 1988:132). However, the meaning of the term *allpa* changes depending upon its context. Sullivan (*f.* 89, p.732) indicates that *allpa* in this sense designates; “the productive soil and clay used for pottery.” Transformation is implied by this definition, that is, the use of earth (clay), water, and fire, is used to be manufactured into something completely different. Therefore, center, in the Andean mind, has a horizontal geographic significance and a vertical dimension, and may infer transformation. Thus, the word *allpa* as the “dividing point” of straight up and down could have a metaphorical reference to verticality, penetration of the layers through a cosmic axis. This may be particularly relevant to *huaca* in that it can also refer to a crack (split, dividing point) or mediation space where spiritual communication (transcendence or transformation) occurs between the natural and supernatural, and where temporal cycles were reckoned (Classen, 1993:2, 14; Levi Strauss, 1963). The stone thrones or “seats of power” associated with *ushnu* centers, were places where ritual festivals and economic activities were overseen, where the Inca mediated the channeling of water to agricultural fields, and read the stars in the heavens.

Cuzco society embodied verticality and horizontality of center in a geographic sense by the terms “*hanan*” which means up, and the term “*hurin*” which means down, and horizontality by the terms *saya* and *suyu* (Zuidema, 1982a,b, 1997). The term *suyu* is in fact the suffix for the names of the four quarters (Urton, 1999:11). The name given the Inca Empire, *Tawantinsuyu* therefore embodies both a horizontal and vertical dimension (see Figure 3). The horizontal dimension of center is further reflected by the Quechua term *chaupo* and by *taypi* in Aymara (Gelles, 1995:715). Harris (1985) states that center is in this sense defined by what is on either side, which suggests it may be seen as a dividing or bisecting line — the place where two sides meet. These terms are particularly relevant to ritual combat (*Tinku*) or warfare, which has the general connotation of an “encounter” the confrontation of two forces or a commingling of energy whose ultimate goal is to bring balance order and equilibrium in the social realm (Harrison, 1989:30; Gelles, 1995:715). Ideas surrounding encounters and alternation, that is, alternate succession, performance or occurrence, are related to this aspect of center (Gelles, 1995:715). Center in this sense is particularly appropriate to consideration of the division of Andean societies into moieties and for ritual performance during certain rites of festivals (Harrison, 1989; Gelles, 1995).

Verticality and transformation are further implied by the term *allpa*. Zuidema (personal communication, 2004) has mentioned that *allpa* can also mean “white

and black.” Ethnohistoric sources infer an association of black with rituals during the month of *Camay Quilla*² (Cobo, 1990 [1653]). The color black has a clear hierarchical function and very specific role (Zuidema, 1992:23). It has metaphorical references to the ocean (*Ticcicocha*), where the water, ashes, pollution and disease went during the *Citua* ritual, and to the name given to two springs in the center of Cuzco (*ibid.*). Zuidema (1992:23) states that the ocean was seen as surrounding and supporting the earth and the since “*there are no clear cosmological ideas from Cuzco regarding the underworld,*” that black and llamas of this color were related to the night, to death, the ancestors and to the world outside Cuzco [emphasis mine]. The color black, therefore, has reference to the night, lunar aspects, possibly the underworld, while white may symbolically refer to daylight, the sun and celestial realm (*ibid.*). Significantly, special varieties of white maize were cultivated in the “Garden of the Incas” (Staller, 2006). The garden consisted of a series of cultivated terraces in the Urubamba Valley, and was renown for the white maize grown there. White maize used in purification rituals came from this sacred valley (Fig. 9.5).

The term *allpa* when used with reference to agriculture or farming means “productive terrain,” presumably in contrast to *puka-allpa* unproductive earth or terrain (Ballón-Aquirre et al., 1992:227). The term *ushñu-allpa* is defined as *tierra superficial* or “superficial earth” (*ibid.*:228). Thus, when *allpa* is preceded by the word *ushñu*, it refers to the soil near the surface, and implies something beneath or below it. Moreover, the Spanish term “*tierra*” may in this context have indirect reference to the all-encompassing concept of *Pacha* — and therefore by extension to “place” and “time.” The vertical and horizontal dimensions of the *ushnu* concept as it relates to center make it critical to an analysis of place and centers. The concept of *ushnu* also has reference to the “throne of the Inca” and to the channeling of fluids suggesting an important religious and political dimension.

The Concept of Ushnu: The Cuzco Model

Ushnus have been identified from Ecuador through Peru and into Bolivia, Chile and Argentina (Meddens, 1997:Figure 4, this volume; Hyslop, 1990:72–90). The origins of the concept remain enigmatic, but there are some reasons to suspect that the Inca

²Cobo (1990:166, Vol. I, Chap. 35) mentions that in purification rituals during the *Citua* festivals maize was used to purify living space and in healing rituals. The Inca would make a flour made first from black kernels and then white kernels. The walls and floors are then scrubbed with this maize flour while burning said flour at the same time. Curing rituals also involve maize flour made from white and black kernels that was mixed with crushed seashells of various colors. The flour mix would be put in a sick person’s hand, and then chanting certain words, they would blow it as an offering to the *huaca*. The transfer of divinity was through distinctly colored varieties of maize within a certain prescribed ordered sequence, by sight (color), touch and fluidity (smoke) mirroring a complementary duality in the cosmos (structure/fluidity) that maintains the boundaries of the senses. These data suggest that the conjunction of black/white possibly inferred divinity or access to different cosmic layers through a transference of divinity (see also Staller, 2006).

Fig. 9.5 Examples of the white kernel maize from the sacred valley of Urubamba northwest of Cuzco. White kernel and black kernel varieties were particularly important to Inca rituals because they had metaphorical reference to the celestial and underworld realms and therefore to concepts surrounding sacred center (Photo courtesy of the University of Illinois-Chicago)



were recreating an idea of considerable antiquity as a means of justifying and sanctifying their right to rule. *Ushnu* is closely associated with veneration rituals to the Sun and central to *Capac Hucha* or child sacrifice, and symbolically connected the sacred landscape to the Inca dynasty (McEwan and Van de Guchte, 1992:360). Archaeologists have maintained that the platforms, administrative and ceremonial centers associated with various *ushnus* are prevalent outside of the Valley of Cuzco and may be connected to an ancient coastal tradition (Agurto, 1987:70; Hyslop, 1990:72–73). Zuidema (1980:352–357) also emphasizes a close association with *ushnus* and conquered regions of the Inca realm (see Meddens, this volume).

Ushnus have generally been identified archaeologically as multi-tiered or truncated platforms with a staircase leading up one side (Hyslop, 1990; Meddens, 1997). The emphasis has generally been their function as viewing platforms and places where elites and nobility conducted important rituals (Bauer, 2004:115). Zuidema (1980) has a more multidimensional emphasis involving astronomy, the veneration of ancestors, and the channeling of fluids to both sacred places (*huacas*) and surrounding agricultural fields. Although the Inca did not emphasize solid earthen architectural constructions, they are common throughout the Andes and of great antiquity extending back to the Preceramic Periods (Conklin, 1986; Williams, 1985; Moseley, 1985). The general association of *ushnus* with ceremonial platforms and administrative centers is complicated by Inca forms of architecture and the fact they appear to have been recreating the concept in their own terms, while at the same time making it mythologically, politically, and symbolically meaningful to their subject populations (see Meddens, this volume).

Cuzco was the political and religious center of *Tawantinsuyu* (see Fig. 9.3). A number of sacred sanctuaries and centers whose cultural role and religious significance varied widely were included within the capital. They were symbols of the sacredness of Cuzco and its religious and political importance to the balance and harmony of the empire. Everything had its place and functioned at some level at making the landscape around it more meaningful. The *Coricancha* or as it was called by the Spaniards, *Templo del Sol* (Temple of the Sun), was the most sacred center in the capital and connected to the plaza called *Huacaypata* of Hurin-Cuzco (hereafter the main plaza) and accessible by three roads that ran north/south (Vega, 1966 [1609]:185; Bauer, 2004:139). Another street to the east of these also led to the *Coricancha*, thus, one could reach the temple by four roads. The largest and straightest road to the temple, called the Street of the Sun, ran to that sacred center from the middle of the main plaza (Vega, 1966 [1609]:185; Bauer, 2004:130, Photo 10.14). The temple had five fountains or wells that were fed from five different sources by solid gold subterranean canals (Vega, 1966:186 [1609]). Such fountains or wells were often associated with stone pillars at times covered in gold and silver. Sacrifices were washed in these fountains and one of them channeled water to the “Garden of the Sun” in the *Coricancha* (Vega, 1966:185–186 [1609]; Rowe, 1944:26–41, Figure 9; Urton, 1999:12; Bauer, 2004:Figure 11.2, Photos 11.4, 11.5).

The Garden of the Sun was composed of objects made entirely of gold and silver and included all kinds of plants, herbs, flowers, large trees, birds, animals small and large, wild and tame, and three times a year they [the Inca] filled the garden with realistically looking gold cornstalks (Pizarro, 1921 [1571]:255; Vega, 1966 [1609]:187–188). All the *huacas* and shrines within the Valley of Cuzco were either visually or symbolically linked to the *Coricancha* and within it were idols dedicated to the Creator *Viracocha*, Thunder (*Sallallaya*) and Lightning (*Illyap'a*), the Moon, and of course the most sacred of all, the *Punchao* which symbolized the Sun (Cobo, 1990:48–49 [1653]; Zuidema, 1964, 1983:54, 1986:180–182). The mythic geography in the different quadrants of the Valley of Cuzco was given meaning by their location with respect to the *Coricancha*.

The Inca Empire was governed from Cuzco and its solar cult perpetuated from the *Coricancha* (Zuidema, 1986, 1989). The *ushnu* in the main plaza was located some 500 meters northwest of the *Coricancha* and beside a tall circular tower made of finely hewn stones called the *Sunturhuasi* (Zuidema, 1982a:161–162, 1986:187, 1989:402–408, Gráfico 48). This stone tower stood more than 18m high and was the tallest building in Cuzco (Vega, 1966 [1609]:701; Guamán Poma, 1980 [1583–1615]:262, 263). The roof was of the finest timber and above it was a very tall and thick pole that enhanced its beauty and height. In the walls were a number of windows used for observing solar cycles and therefore functioned as a kind of observatory (Vega, 1966 [1609]:701; Zuidema, 1982a:162). The *Sunturhuasi* was linked with the *ushnu* in the main plaza and another one to the northeast (Zuidema, 1980:326, 1982b, 1989, 1997). These architectural features functioned together to link the cosmic layers and mark the passages of temporal cycles (Zuidema, 1997). The way in which the cosmic layers were linked was when the sun was at zenith, its celestial aspect was reflected on the surface of the water from the well of the

ushnu in the main plaza (*ibid.*:266–267). This metaphorical connection between the world above (outside) and that below (inside) is in consort with an ancient and prevailing cosmology that perceives this world as a mirror that alternately reflects the celestial and underworld order across and through itself (Urton, 1981:63; Lechtman, 1999:227). According to Zuidema (1997:266), the *Suntuurhuasi* also represented an *axis mundi* or center of the world.

Wooden or stone pillars and fountains or wells demarcated the presence of *ushnus* within Cuzco (Anonymous, 1906:158 [1580–1621]; Albornoz, 1989 [c. 1582]:205; Zuidema, 1986:188). The basin or well was located near the base of the gold pillar in the main plaza (Pizarro, 1921 [1571]:251–252; Betanzos, 1987 [1557]:48–49; Molina, 1989 [1575]:74, 79). The Inca would carry out acts of ritual pouring of *chicha* and water into this basin and these fluids were channeled through an underground system of canals to *huacas* in the surrounding valley (Zuidema, 1986:187–188). Stone and wooden pillars such as those associated with the *ushnu* in the main plaza appear to be of religious as well as astronomical significance.

On civic/religious ceremonies such as *Citua Raymi*, the pillars were adorned with flowers and powerfully scented herbs (Vega, 1966 [1609]:117–118). Columns or pillars approaching Quito near the equator had diminished shadow, and were for this reason said to be more revered (Vega, 1966 [1609]:117–118). Garcilaso de la Vega goes on to say that the pillars and columns around Quito and to the north in Cayambe and Ibarra, were so highly venerated that the Governor Sabastián de Benalcázar tore them all down and they were “broken to pieces” because the Andeans worshiped them idolatrously (p. 118). The pillars functioned as gnomons, and Inca astronomers would make records of changes in the shadow cast by the sun on them (Zuidema, 1980:317–318). The anonymous chronicler (1906 [1580–1621]:151) is more explicit, stating that the Inca would observe the sunrise from the *ushnu* in the main plaza and if the sun rose in the horizon at mid point between sets of pillars on the horizon, they knew it was time to plant. The *ushnu* at Tajra Chullu in the Viriniyoc Canyon also has a large pillar that could have served in both horizon and zenith observations (Meddens, 1997:Fig. 9.3). In 1560, an Augustinian friar recorded a ceremony similar to a ceremony still practiced around the month of August in which a large wooden pole more the 40m high was erected in the plaza of *Huamachuco*. This pole was taken to the plaza along the straightest possible route and much *chicha* was consumed (Topic, 1992:45–59).

Beside the *ushnu* in the main plaza was a throne for the idol of the Sun to come and sit on, as they said, “in all its light” as well as fountains or wells to which offerings of *chicha* were made (Betanzos, 1996 [1557]:48; Vega, 1966 [1609]:117). The sacred quality of the *ushnu* in the main plaza was also represented by a stone in the shape of a sugarloaf pointed and inlaid with a strip of gold that represented the sun (Betanzos, 1996 [1557]:47–48). The social integration of elites and commoners to the solar cult involved veneration of two distinct symbolic representations of *Inti*. Commoners worshiped the sugarloaf stone, the elite a golden idol (*ibid.*:47–49).

The sugarloaf stone was also part of the *ushnu* and beside it a large hole was dug and all the people of Cuzco made offerings of gold and silver (Betanzos, 1996 [1557]:48). Once this hole was filled they built a stone font and all around it they

buried many small gold figurines or statues. It was on this platform that the Inca would be seated on the throne during certain rituals (Rostworowski, 1999). Excavations at the main plaza in Cuzco exposed the foundations of what may have been the *ushnu*. Large amounts of Inca ceramics were found and an offering of four camelid figurines, one made of gold two of silver and a fourth made of Thorny Oyster (*Spondylus* spp.) shell placed in a line oriented south-east (Meddens, 1997:6).

The ethnohistoric accounts suggest that *ushnus* were also central to participating in ritual ceremonies that were for the most part associated with the Inca nobility and the sanctification of divine kingship. Molina (1989 [ca. 1575]:79) describes the *ushnu* in the main plaza as the geographic center of the four quarters or *suylus* of the empire. The place where ritual celebrations involved animal sacrifices (mainly camelids) and mass consumption of *chicha* (Zuidema, 1980:326). These descriptions also imply that it was essential that the concept of *ushnu* be integrated into the religious beliefs of commoner populations.

The three primary material elements associated with the Inca concept of *ushnu* are; multi-tiered or truncated platforms, wooden or stone pillars, and basins or wells where water and *chicha* was deposited (Zuidema, 1980, 1989). Albornoz (1967:24 [1570–1584]) describes the *ushnu* as “a pillar of gold in the plaza from where the sun drank” and that a variety of ceremonial centers such as Tiwanaku, Huánuco Viejo, and Pucára also had *ushnus* and that they provided drink for the Sun (cf. Zuidema, 1980:327). The *ushnu* is also said to have provided a throne or “seat” for *Inti* (Fig. 9.6). *Ushnu* also has reference to the throne of the *Sapa Inca* (Guamán



Fig. 9.6 Guaman Poma’s depiction of the ascension of the young Inca Manco as *Sapa Inca* to the throne. His ascension in 1536 marked a period of resistance against Spanish colonial rule. The only text in this image is at the base of the truncated platform, Guaman Poma writes, “throne and seat of the Inca, called *ushnu* in Cuzco.” The ruler is surrounded by indigenous nobility who represented various states and communities throughout the empire (Guamán Poma, 1980 [1583–1615]:370 fol. 160)

Poma, 1980 [1583–1615]:239, 356). The sugarloaf stone associated with the *ushnu* in Cuzco is a reference to the original mythological Inca who turned into stone (see Urton, 1990, 1999). This stone has a symbolic relationship to Inca dynasty and their mythological basis of their right to rule.³ Zuidema (1980:331) suggests that the Cult of the Dead was a primary motivation for the astronomical use of *ushnus*, offerings of *chicha* into a basin or well, the burnt offerings of llamas, and probably the fountains as well. The locations of the *Sunturhuasi*, *ushnus* and the *Coricancha* suggest that they functioned to mark subsistence and cosmic cycles were also essential for channeling water and *chicha* (Zuidema, 1980:317–318, 320, 1989:412; Aveni, 1981). *Ushnus* integrated astronomical and meteorological information, and linked them to subsistence, ritual, and religious cycles as well as surrounding *huacas*.

Political Dimensions of Cultural and Ceremonial Centers Regarding the Concept of Ushnu

There is considerable ambiguity in the ethnohistoric literature and the archaeological record as to precisely what an *ushnu* was or how it should be defined and understood. Rostworowski (1999:230) describes *ushnu* as a “small stone structure in the main plaza, which served as a throne for the Inca during certain ceremonies.” Zuidema (1980:344–351) suggests that in Cuzco a building called the *Cuyusmanco* once existed on one side of the main plaza and that it formed an integral part of the *ushnu* (Fig. 9.7). The archaeological evidence appears to support the assertion that this concept is very ancient in the Andes, and took on various roles before its manifestation in the Late Horizon Period (see e.g., Hyslop, 1990). The antiquity of the concept is related to the association of truncated platforms at *ushnus* outside of the imperial capital, and their presence at centers from earlier time-periods, extending

³ According to the Inca origin myth, when the mythological ancestors were approaching the valley of Cuzco for the first time, Ayar Uchu was transformed into stone and became one of the principal Inca *huacas* (Urton, 1990). When they arrived at the place that would become the main plaza and the geographic center of the empire, another ancestor Ayar Awka was transformed into a stone pillar. Sarmiento (1942:69–70 [1572]) states this stone pillar stood near the Monastery of Santo Domingo, which was later built over the *Corichancha* (Bauer, 2004:140–142). Urton (1990:38–39) locates the same pillar on the central plaza. These ethnohistoric and anthropological lines of evidence suggest that the stone pillar associated with the *ushnu* in the main plaza represented an original mythological Inca. This perhaps explains why it was covered in gold and why the sugarloaf stone had gold inlaid into it, as well as, why these *huacas* (both pillar and sugarloaf) were so highly venerated. The transformation of two of the mythological ancestors, Ayar Uchu and Ayar Awaka into stone speaks to religious imperatives. Stone, sometimes living rock, were perceived of as petrified ancestors of humankind (Niles, 1992:347, Fig. 9.1). Carved and modified rocks are generally characteristic of Inca *huacas* throughout the realm and represent metaphors to ancestor veneration and at the same time speak to the mythological origins of the Inca dynasty. In the version of the origin myth by Cobo (1979 [1653]:104) one of the Inca ancestors was transformed into the sacred hill of Huancauri located near Cuzco.

Fig. 9.7 This is the first in a series of drawings by Guaman Poma dedicated to the conquest of Tawantinsuyu. He shows the Inca Emperor in a plaza in Cuzco holding a plate of gold nuggets as he asks the Spanish conquistador Candia, “is this the gold that you eat?” he responds, “this is the gold we eat.” In the background in a building beside the storehouses is a truncated platform. It is possible that this building is Cuyusmanco and that the platform inside was, during certain ceremonial rituals, probably moved into the main plaza beside the *ushnu* stone and pillar. Below the image he writes, “in Cuzco” (Guamán Poma, 1980 [1583–1615]:343 fol. 147)



back to the preceramic in Peru (*ibid.*). The Inca appear to have focused this concept upon serving their own political interests, and make it readily comprehensible to their non-Inca subjects. This is one possible reason for the lack of consensus.

Zuidema (1986, 1989) has emphasized the importance of the *ceque* lines with regard to dividing water for irrigation in the Valley of Cuzco. The *ceques* also played a major role in water rights that regulated cooperation (reciprocity) in the building and cleaning of such canals and subsequent use of water. Underground canals channeled *chicha* and water from the well in the central plaza, but may also have directed the flow of water in and out of the capital (Zuidema, 1980:324–331, 1986:182, 1989:414; Classen, 1993:68).

The channeling of both water and *chicha* as separate categories suggests a dual function that may explain why *ceque* means both “borderline” and “watery *chicha*” (Classen, 1993:68). This dual function continues to play a major role in indigenous ideas regarding water rights, hence, the linguistic association between *ceque* and borderline (Zuidema, 1986:182). Moreover, the geographic subdivisions of Hanan Cuzco were related to problems of water rights. Therefore, *panacas* and *ayllus* can be seen as geographic subdivisions of *suyus* and not only political subdivisions as has been generally supposed (*ibid.*:198). Thus, *panacas* and *ayllus* may have initially been defined as divisions of water rights within their *suyu*.

The channeling of fluids throughout the capital and surrounding landscape through the *ushnu* has a political dimension that has fundamental implications for social organization, group affiliation as well as the political geography. Molina’s (1989:74, 79 [ca. 1575]) description of the *ushnus* in Cuzco indicate that the *ushnu*

in the Huacaypata or main plaza served as the geographic center of the Inca Empire — the precise point the empire was divided into halves (upper/lower or *sayas*) and quadrants (*suyus*). As the geographic center, *ushnu* also had an important political significance to rites and festivals associated with the Solar Cult (Zuidema, 1989:414, 1980, 1992).

Albornoz (1967:24 [1570–1584]) related that *ushnus* were “Sacred Places” found throughout the empire, and were made of different kinds of stones and precious metal, and had buildings associated with them, as well as towers “made of beautiful masonry.” He provides sites such Vilcas Haumán, Huánuco Pampa, Pucára and more ancient ceremonial centers such as Tiwanaku as examples (see e.g., Hyslop, 1990; Morris and Thompson, 1985).

Despite these observations, the Spanish chroniclers overall rarely mentioned *ushnus* in their descriptions. However, those that do are rather explicit in their discussion of the concept. These various descriptions suggest *ushnu* had a variety of roles as well as sociopolitical and religious significance to Andean peoples (see Table 9.1). The association of *ushnu* with truncated platforms outside of Cuzco and the suggestion they were spread throughout the empire at centers that predate the Inca Empire indicates that their origins and meanings may be identified through an

Table 9.1 Functional and Material Correlates of the Ushnu Concept

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- (a) Astronomical observations: Two *Ushnus* in Cuzco, both demarcated by pillars and fountains or wells and their relationship to the *Coricancha* and a large tower called the *Suntar Huasi* were used in the systematic observation of the solar cycle as it related to the agricultural round. These features were used precisely in August and April, to mark the beginning and end of the growing season in the Valley of Cuzco and may have been used for reckoning cycles of various kinds, e.g., agricultural, ritual, political, mythological etc., (Zuidema, 1980:317, 319). Material correlates include pillars made of various materials, columns, gnomes, which are also used reckon astronomical cycles through esoteric knowledge surrounding shadow casting.
- (b) Sociopolitical as thrones and channeling fluids on the surface of the earth and below the surface of the earth. Ushnu has also been used to refer to a throne of the Inca (Guamán Poma, 1980 [1583–1615]:239, 357); as stones arranged as a platform or throne (Pachacuti Yamqui, 1950 [ca. 1613]:200). A fountain, basin or well and a pillar of gold from which the sun drank and where Inca nobility drank to the sun (Albornoz, 1967:24 [1570–1584]). Material correlates included stepped platforms or truncated pyramid, carved stones, stone altars, fountains, or basins to channel fluidity (water and fermented intoxicants such as *aqha* or *chicha*). These accounts suggest *ushnu* functioned as a seat of power for the Inca during certain festivals or rites. In toasting the Sun and venerated ancestors the concept was related to the Cult of the Sun and the Dead during the Late Horizon Period.
- (c) Another sociopolitical dimension of *ushnu* is related to the integration of subject populations through human sacrifice. One chronicler mentions a stone altar called *Osno* that was used for sacrifice (Anonymous, 1906 [1580–1621]:157); the *Ushnu* in the main plaza of Huacaypata was usually the site for the initial ritual ceremonies surrounding *Capac Hucha* or human sacrifice, primarily children (Guamán Poma, 1980 [1583–1615]:236). The sociopolitical function is again related to solar veneration and to the Cult of the Dead, but in this case relates to transforming the unblemished children of non-Inca societies into *huacas*, which become venerated ancestors and play a major role in rank and hierarchy within moieties of those
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(continued)

Table 9.1 (continued)

populations. In sacrificing such children to the sun they become *huacas*, that is, sacred and extraordinary. They are usually buried alive and kept alive with chicha fed through a tube until they die. The *villcas* or shrines, which hold their remains, are found in association with ceremonial centers within *llactas* or with Sacred Places, usually mountain tops, in the surrounding landscape (McEwan and Van de Guchte, 1992; Ceruti, 2004).

(d) *Ushnu* also refers to towers built around a shaft or axis (Albornoz, 1967 [1570–1584]:24); as a “sitting stone” or boundary marker (González Holguín, 1952 [1608]).

(e) *Ushnu* was also with reference to ordering the landscape in the Valley of Cuzco with reference to natural centers or *huacas* that radiated along imaginary lines called *ceques*. *Ushnu* is used with reference to a stone called *Osno* for the first line of the fifth *ceque* in the sector of Antisuyu and a fountain called Chilquichaca on the thirteenth *ceque* line of the sector of Cuntisuyu (Cobo, 1990 [1653]:63, 83). Material correlates are in this case stones, both modified and unmodified that may be distinguished by their shape and/or associated modification(s). It is possible that they, like the sugarloaf stone in the main plaza may have reference to the transformation of mythological Inca into living rock.

examination of the archaeological record. What is particularly telling about the *ushnu* concept beyond an important political component is that like all true centers, such places primarily function to bring order and meaning to the natural and mythic geography.

The political dimensions of *ushnu* are evident from a description by Guamán Poma (1980:413 [1583–1615]) of the Spaniard Viceroy Don Francisco de Toledo, who upon visiting the administrative center at Vilcas Huamán climbed upon the truncated platform to speak to the populace was received by the local nobles as an Inca noble (see Fig. 9.1). Locals related that when he stood upon this platform the viceroy assumed the “power” of the Inca. The assumption of power may imply that his physical presence upon the platform led to the perception by the populace that in that place, he represented the Inca (Isbell, 1978b:286). This sociopolitical dimension compliments its significance as the geographic center and speaks directly to mythological and dynastic imperatives.

The political importance of the *ushnu* as a throne, the geographic center of the empire, reckoning of subsistence and calendric cycles, and through the channeling of fluids to the boundaries of the political geography was another reflection of its organic complexity. The evidence also suggest some Inca and non-Inca *ushnus* served as centers of the world or *axis mundi*, implying a religious dimension that may predate the material, symbolic and political associations of the Late Horizon (Zuidema, 1980:322, 1989, 1997).

The political dimensions of *ushnu* have strong reference to Inca rule and therefore to ancestor veneration and the Cult of the Dead and particularly to the rite of *Capac Hucha*, as child sacrifice was central to providing a spiritual relationship between the Inca and their subjects. When being sacrificed to the sun, the most beautiful children of the empire became *huacas*, and the places they are buried became *huacas* and sanctuaries (McEwan and van de Guchte, 1992). The term *villca* (Aymara) can mean both “sun” and “shrine” (Bertonio, 1956 [1612]:386). In the seventeenth century it meant someone that entered into the society of *huacas* by

achievement or marriage — a very important cacique or chief (cf. Salomon and Urioste, 1991:46; Zuidema, 1973:19). *Villca* was also referred to an individual who partakes of the status of a *huaca*, a superhuman person (Salomon and Urioste, 1991 [c. 1598–1608]:Chap. 2 Sect. 10 f. 44). *Huaca* cults involved veneration of apical ancestors, of their patrilineages, their *ayllus*, and large clan like groups identified with major founder *huacas*⁴ (Salomon, 1991:17).

Most South American peoples do not describe creation from nothing. In fact, most show little interest in absolute beginnings but rather tend to emphasize transformation of primordial creatures and the first attainment of “creations” by a shifting succession of ancestral heroes (Maybury-Lewis, 1967:285–286; Sullivan, 1988:32). In linking the concept of *ushnu* to ancestral heroes in mythological time, to the very origins of Inca culture, there are strong reasons to suspect that the *ushnu* concept would have been used or have allegorical as well as metaphorical references to attaining vertical access and communication among spatial planes. The ideology and material manifestations associated with *ushnu*, as redefined by the Inca, are complicated by symbolic and sociopolitical concerns in the Late Horizon (Zuidema, 1980, 1992). The Inca not only tied the origins of their culture and polity to mythological heroes, but also to the origin of the sun on the Island of the Sun in Lake Titicaca (Urton, 1999:34–37). These mythological associations have reference to cosmic origins and world cycles that were manipulated through the *ushnu* in veneration of the solar cult. It was the association of the Inca to the sun through fictive kinship, they called themselves children of the sun, that provided another basis for their right to rule their vast empire, and to place themselves above all other regional cults as the supreme lords of their domain (Fig. 9.8).

In contemporary indigenous culture, the concept of *ushnu* is referred to as “the grand transcendence” (Zuidema, 1980:325–326). Adelaar (1977:371) states that “Our grandfathers and grandmothers say: “The stone (*câcû*) has drank of me (*tuxabaraman*) and the earth or the soil (*pampa*) is ‘*ushnu*,’ he has drank of me.” They are referring to the stone or *câcû* drinking and the stone symbolizes the Sun (Zuidema, 1980:332). Adelaar (1977) goes on to define *câcû* as an emanation associated with the dead ancestors, with buried gold, and also with stones and fountains.⁵ *Ushnu* refers to the spirit of the bones of the ancestors in Ayacucho, Peru and are commonly associated with a sacred mountain and are considered the equivalent of mountain spirits or *Wamani* (Ansión, 1987:129, 138). Body/mountain metaphors equate that circulation of water with that of blood and have reference to the fertility and fecundity of both the earth and humankind (Meddens, 1997:7).

⁴This association extends into the modern period; an ethnic group in highland Bolivia called the Uru was referred to as *haqe huaca* by their Aymara-speaking neighbors because they were believed to have survived from primordial times (Manelis de Klein, 1973:143).

⁵It can also mean to make one sick through emanations. The prefix “*tuxa*” means to “drink” while “*tuxaba*” means to emanate, or to exhale. The reference here to stones, fountains dead ancestors, and buried gold make metaphorical references to the Inca origin myth. When the term *ushnu* is followed by “*ulxu*” or *ushnu ulxu* it can refer to a person (usually male) who drinks excessively without getting intoxicated (Zuidema, 1989:421).

Fig. 9.8 This image is titled “the idols of the Incas, *Inti* (the sun), Huanacuari (the hill near Cuzco), Tambo Toco.” Beneath the symbol of the sun and moon the Sapa Inca and Coya (Queen) venerating at Tambo Toco near Pacariqtambo the site of the mythological origins of the Inca. The text in the *huaca* says Tambo Toco and below the windows or caves Pacariqtambo. The mythological Inca ancestors were said to have emerged from the central cave or window (Guamán Poma, 1980 [1583–1615]:238 fol. 264)



The Inca perpetuated the Cult of the Sun and the Dead as a means of legitimizing and sanctifying divine kingship. The inherent duality and dialectic complementary oppositions of structure/fluidity, was separate and not interchangeable (Classen, 1993:79–80; Staller, 2006). It is perhaps for this reason that they cloaked their religious imperatives, particularly the transference of divinity, through mythology and history, kinship, Inca ethnic identity and the recreation of a mythic geography that reasserted and reaffirmed their spiritual and political control over the natural and cultural world (Zuidema, 1982c, 1992:17; Niles, 1992). These religious cults were first and foremost political and represented a sanctification of sociopolitical domination within their realm and a primacy over all other religious cults (Niles, 1992:348).

Landscape Dimensions: “Civilized” Versus “Wild” Ushnu

The ceremonial and political dimension of *ushnu* as a throne or seat of power may be of great antiquity. Stepped or truncated platform mounds and subterranean plazas are very ancient in coastal and highland Peru. Cultural and ceremonial centers were sometimes depicted in effigy pots and in pottery motifs going back to the Initial Period and Early Horizon Period in Peru and Late Formative Period in Ecuador.

The evidence presented herein suggest the *ushnus* in Cuzco were distinctly Incaic and stand in contrast to those in other regions of the empire. When the *ushnus* in the civilized heartland of the Valley of Cuzco are contrasted and compared with *ushnu* in the countryside, some differences appear to reflect an inherent dualistic opposition that still permeates many aspects of Andean culture. The dualistic opposition relates to human/environmental interaction is centered upon a civilized/wild dichotomy. This dualistic opposition is particularly apparent in how the landscape is conceptualized. The Inca used architecture and engineering in the construction of roads, administrative centers, stone faced agricultural terraces, to symbolically dominate the landscape and visually reassert their authority over their subjects (Niles, 1992:348–349). In symbolically imposing themselves upon the land of the four corners, they were also expressing the sacred power of the civilized world of Cuzco, to the most remote reaches of the empire.

The civilizing influence of the Inca is particularly evident in remote *ushnus*, such as the monolith at Sayhuite. It is located on a hill called Concacha near the town of Abancay in the Curahuasi valley at 3550 masl (Meddens, 1997:5). It consists of a platform situated on Concacha measuring four meters wide and two meters high (Squier, 1877:555; Paternosto, 1996:123; Meddens, 1997:5, Figure 2). Sayhuite comes from the Quechua term *saywayta*, which means “place of orientation” (Paternosto, 1996). The nearby ruins of Rumihuasi and the *ushnu* at Sayhuite are distinct parts of a single site made up of a number of carved rocks and two or more raised platforms (Meddens, 1997:5).

The raised platform at Sayhuite is oriented along a NW-SE axis referred to as *Chingana*. It measures 28 × 13 m and stands 2.2 m high and a 5.5-m wide stairway that leads to the summit is on the north side of the structure (Meddens, 1997:5). On the summit is a one-meter square rectangular depression that may represent a well for channeling fluids. The plaza below and to the east is called *ushnu pampa*, by the local population and measures 128 × 59 m. Within the plaza, on the eastern side, is a finely carved stone fountain connected to a subterranean canal 35 cm wide. The canal is connected to two other platforms, one on the south and another the north side of the plaza (*ibid.*). Many nearby natural springs suggest the rituals associated with this place may be related to channeling fluids and to bringing on fertilizing rains (Fig. 9.9).

Hemming and Ranney (1982:165) maintain that Sayhuite is really the sanctuary oracle of Apurimac. Chroniclers state the oracle at Pachacamac “told” the *Sapa* Inca Tupac Yupanqui that this was one of its four sanctuary-oracle “sons.” Chroniclers describe a painted room with a thick post or pillar of gold dressed in delicate women’s clothing, as well as other idols (*ibid.*). This room has not yet been identified archaeologically, making the identity of the *ushnu* as the sanctuary oracle of Apurimac problematic at best (Paternosto, 1996:124). However, César Paternosto (1996:123, 127) mentions that during the sixteenth or seventeenth century the Spaniards vandalized *Sayhuite*, during one of their campaigns to eradicate idolatry.

The *Sayhuite* monolith is one of several carved rocks at this locality. It is ovoid measuring ~3.3 × 3 m and stands about 2.7 m in height (Paternosto, 1996:127).



Fig. 9.9 Concacha the terraced hilltop on which stands the remains of a once enclosed sanctuary and the carved Sayhuite Monolith. This site was said to be one of the oracles of Apurimac, one of four oracles, called the “sons” of Pachacamac (from Paternosto, 1996:Plate 70)

It may have been transported to *Sayhuite* as a boulder as it is not a natural outcrop. The original location of the monument on the platform cannot be determined as it appears to have been moved, perhaps by looters. The foundations and entrance spaces that remain suggest the platform was enclosed. Stepped terraces held in place by retaining walls made up of irregular rocks surround the platform. The retaining walls are symbolic rather than functional, demarcating sacred space, a common practice throughout the Andes (*ibid.*:127, Plate 70).

A miniature landscape with anthropomorphic and zoomorphic imagery, primarily felines, reptiles, frogs, and shellfish is carved upon the upper surface of the monolith (Paternosto, 1996:Figures 15–16, Plates 70–71; Meddens, 1997:Figure 2). The metaphor expressed by the carvings refers primarily to the channeling of fluids, the male generating principle. Once the hollowed out receptacle at the apex filled, it channeled water throughout the carved landscape (Fig. 9.10). The predominance of feline imagery reflects a possible symbolic reference to Cuzco and the Inca nobility especially with Inca Pachacuti (Paternosto, 1996:128). The entire monolith is in fact in the shape of a head of a feline (see Fig. 9.10). A feline head is also carved below the upper surface (Paternosto, 1996:Plate 71; Meddens, 1997:Figure 2). The symbolic significance of channeling fluids is further evoked by the fact that all other sculpted rocks at the site have steps and canals.

Below in the valley, and visible from the Sayhuite mound, are a series of carved boulders called the Rumihuasi, a Quechua term meaning “stone house.” The

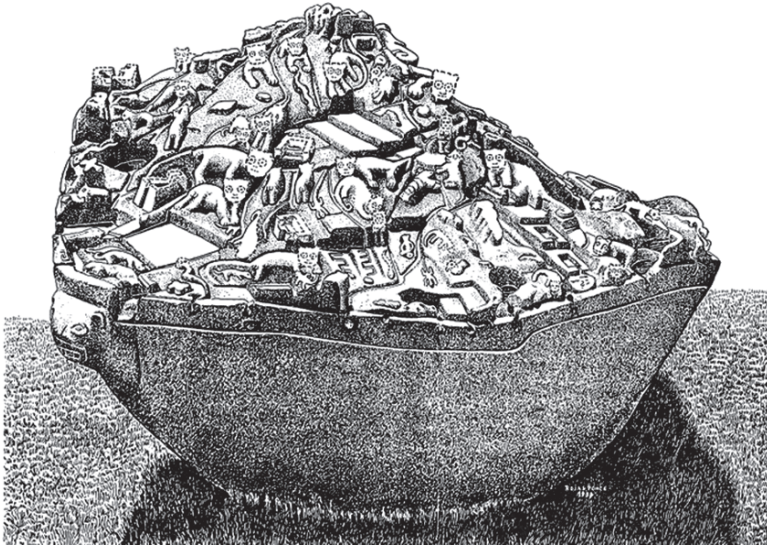


Fig. 9.10 Carved boulder showing its configuration, and the sacred landscape carved on its upper surface. It is said to be in the shape of the head of a feline. Note the three-dimensional feline head carved into the outer, lower surface to the left of the drawing (Photo by Paternosto, 1996: Figure 15). Drawing and reconstruction was originally done by Rojas Ponce, 1955.

Fig. 9.11 The geometric rock at Rumihuasi. The carvings on the left give the impression of being steps while those on the right of terraces. When E. G. Squier visited the site in the late 1800s the rock was only slightly fractured. Rumihuasi was subsequently damaged even further by either lightning or an earthquake (Photo courtesy of Jessica J. Christie)



Sayhuite monolith is the only modified rock in the area with such imagery all other carved rocks at nearby Rumihuasi have geometric modifications consisting of either steps and/or canals (Fig. 9.11).

The carved rocks at the Rumihuasi include one sculpted rock carved into a natural outcrop consisting of a double stairway, of “alternating” type, with three slightly ascending platforms surfaces above the stepped carvings (Paternosto, 1996:Plate 73). They are alternating in the sense that one has the appearance of a stairway while the other gives the impression of terraces. On the eastern part of the upper surface of the rock are cup shaped depressions, presumably receptacles for collecting rain-water or other fluids poured into them. Some of these depressions have channels

that extend to the side of the rock and terminate in rectangular and bell shaped concave depressions (Fig. 9.12).

Paternosto, citing Hébert-Stevens (1972:115) mentions that marriage ceremonies are still held there. *Illacta camayos* (foremen or town officials) pour fluids, presumably water or *chicha*, into the depressions as the bride and groom kneel before the two small channels and drink the fluids (Betanzos, 1996 [1557]:109). These practices may testify to a more ancient symbolic ritual.

Kauffmann Doig (1978:688–689) has suggested that the *huaca* at Sayhuite-Chingana was associated with a water cult. Neither Squier (1877:555–556) nor Middendorf (1895:541) saw the carved rock, though it was reported to them (Meddens, 1997:10). Felines in the highlands are associated with hail and Venus, and embody both malevolent and beneficial aspects. Feline are therefore linked to water and venerated ancestors (Meddens, 1997:10). The importance of channeling water is suggested by the irrigation canals, which originate to the southwest and west of the terraced hill and provide water to the Valley of Curahuasi (*ibid.*).

When Squier (1877:555) first described and illustrated the carved rock at Rumihuasi it was deeply cracked, but not as fragmented as it is now, perhaps the result of either a direct lightning strike or an earthquake (see Fig. 9.11). The carved rock measures 3.7 × 4.3 m and is just below 2 m high. A few feet to the south is another smaller rock with seats carved into its sides and rounded edges. It contrasts sharply with the geometrically carved alternating “stairways” of the Rumihuasi rock. These sculptures have two of the three elements associated with *ushnu*, seats or thrones, and platforms that involve the channeling of fluids. One must go down the valley ~600 m east of Rumihuasi to the so-called “Third Stone” to find the third element, carved boulders, pillars or gnomons (Paternosto, 1996:Plates 76–77, Figure 19). This rock stands alone with no architectonic reference to underscore its placement. Hébert-Stevens (1972:115) first suggested it was a solar stone, and in an earlier site survey of the region Carrión Cachot (1955:16) refers to it as an *intiwatana* or hitching post of the sun (Fig. 9.13).

The Third Stone is carved so that when shadow cast by the sun’s movement across the sky changes, its reflection may be used to record the passing of the annual cycle. Thus, it performs the same function as *intiwatana*, a pillar or gnomon.



Fig. 9.12 On the sides of the Rumihuasi rock are rectangular and cup shaped depressions that channel fluids and rainwater to the upper surface and sides of the monument (Photo courtesy of Jessica J. Christie)



Fig. 9.13 The carved boulder referred to by César Paternosto (1996) as the Third Stone, is a hitching post of the sun or *intiwayatana* used for astronomical observation and the reckoning of temporal cycles. It is located to the east and below the *Ushnu Pampa*, a large plaza with platforms on the northern and southern edges (Photo by César Paternosto, 1996:Cover).

This sculpture is distinguished by the fact it incorporates both naturalistic with geometric modifications. It is aligned on a north to south axis 15° west of magnetic north and carved *in-situ*. Moreover, there is a total absence of shadow when the sun is at zenith during the passing of the equinoxes (Paternosto, 1996:135).

The site of Chingana /Sayhuite/Rumihuasi has all of the primary elements associated with the *ushnu* of the Late Horizon Period (see e.g., Molina, 1989 [ca. 1575]; Vega, 1966 [1609]; Betanzos, 1996 [1557]). A platform with a seat or throne upon which the “sun sits,” a fountain or well for channeling fluids, and a gnomon for reckoning solar cycles. However, it is distinguished by an inversion from the various elements found in the main plaza in Cuzco. The *Sunturhuasi* tower functioned to record the sun’s movement and shadow cast by the pillars or gnomes, fountains channeled water through subterranean canals to the surrounding *huacas* and streams. The fountain in this case is in the highest part of the site, while the *intiwayatana* or Third Stone is topographically at the lowest point (Fig. 9.14). Situated vertically between these parts of the site is the Rumihuasi, a makeshift platform with carved seats. Rather than channeling water below the surface of the earth, the fountain collects rainwater and other fluids and channels them through a landscape carved on its surface that ultimately feed into the irrigation canals to the southwest and west of the terraced hill.

The inversion of the various components may reflect Andean concepts of dualistic opposition that contrast the civilized with the wild. Chingana/Sayhuite/Rumihuasi is set in a stark landscape and the upper and lower components, the fountain and *intiwayatana* respectively, are inverted the opposite of the way they are vertically

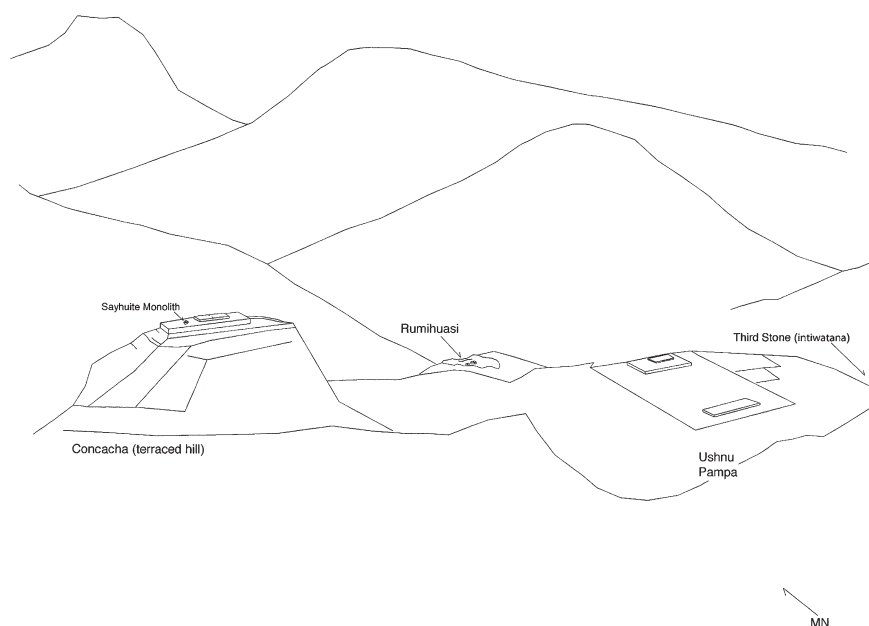


Fig. 9.14 Panoramic depiction of the various parts of the Chingana/Sayhuite/Rumhuasi *ushnu* showing their approximate topographic relationship and elevation of the various parts of the site to one another. (redrawn by author from Van der Guchte, 1990:Illustration 107)

organized in the civilized heartland of Cuzco. The underworld embodies a strong symbolic association with the dead and past and future events, and its ambiguous pull is related to the idea that everything that happens there is the opposite or the reverse of the way it happens on earth (Sullivan, 1988:123; Maybury-Lewis, 1989). The platform and thrones or seats of power are situated between them, mediating, the inverted upper and lower realms.

If the stone house or *Rumihuasi* really was the oracle sanctuary of Apurimac, then “communication” with the oracle would have been seen as mediating the civilized/wild duality and, promote access to the dead or venerated ancestors. The golden pillar wrapped in finery represents the final, albeit missing element for this site to be properly defined as an Inca *ushnu*.

The intrinsic relationship between the cultural and natural world is both a duality and an opposition. The community or heartland is closed and bounded—the civilized world of social solidarity (Classen, 1993:26, 34). The heartland stands in opposition to open space of the wild or savage natural world (Isbell, 1978:163–164). As one of the four sanctuary-oracle “sons” of the oracle at Pachacamac, that sanctuary-oracle of Apurimac would have symbolized a civilized center contained within a wild setting, a transcendence of the duality inherent in civilized/wild opposition. The inverted site components may be a metaphor for *otra nación*, where everything is the opposite of what it is in the world of the living (Urton, 1981).

Ushnus as Regional Centers

Ushnu centers in distant places within the empire contrast with what was reported from within and near the Inca capital. The architectural emphasis appears to be focused upon truncated platforms and large plazas, features of great antiquity in ceremonial centers throughout the Andes (Williams, 1985). The *ushnu* at Vilcas Huamán was one of the most important centers of the Late Horizon Period (Meddens, 1997:5, Figure 1). The truncated platform there has five levels, and access to a stone seat on the summit was through a double jammed doorway. The stairway and seat are oriented east to west and the structure is in a large plaza just north of a major building interpreted as a royal palace. Cut stone features found near the platform were thought to represent the remnants of a throne (Wiener, 1880:266–267). Chroniclers indicate the throne was part of a shrine associated with another large rock carved in the manner of a fountain or basin, where the nobility or lord would give public addresses, and where offerings and sacrifices were made (Cieza de León, 1947[1553]:435).

Anecdotal accounts indicate that an underground channel connected the *ushnu* at Vilcas Huamán to the modern church, which is built on top of a house of the *Mamaconas*. A 50 m long elaborate terrace still survives east of the plaza (Meddens, 1997:5). Albornoz states that the Inca considered the *ushnu* at Vilcas Huamán, as the “true” center of the empire. Molina and Albornoz mention a messianic cult of the *Taqui Onqoy* as related to the idols there and it is for this reason that the colonial government extirpated the idols from this destroyed capital center. Chroniclers of the seventeenth century, such as Guaman Poma and Santacruz Pachacuti also emphasize a relationship between the *ushnu* in the main plaza of Cuzco and the one at Vilcas Huamán (Zuidema, 1980:325–326).

The low three tier stone platform located at the Inca administrative center of Huánuco Pampa is an *ushnu* in the center of a large 550×350 m plaza with a staircase on the south side (Morris and Thompson, 1985:Figures 5 and 11). Access to the summit is provided by a low balustrade and located on the lowest platform are two small structures that face east. Felines, probably pumas, are carved in relief on the facade by the two access points. A well or hole that connected the interior of the structure near its eastern wall is said to have been located on the summit, but looters’ pits obscure the connecting channel (Morris and Thompson, 1985:59; see also Meddens, 1997:5). Earlier excavations mention the existence of a drainage system evident by a canal that was used for this purpose (Squier, 1877:218). The *ushnu* at Huánuco Pampa is connected to the most elaborate compound by gateways lined up at 88° east of north — closely approximating the point where the sun rises during the equinoxes. A canal follows the same line slightly off center of the gateways (Morris and Thompson, 1985:58–60; cf. Meddens, 1997:5).

The figuratively carved feline images on platform at Huánuco Pampa and the carved monolith at *Sayhuite* may be reflecting the importance of *ushnu* with respect to the male generating principle of the channeling of fluids (Zuidema, 1989:306). The symbolic association of feline imagery with channeling fluids may also be

related to the tail of the feline, which is thought to control the force of water and fertility in the lower parts of the Apurimac Valley (van de Guchte, 1990:227; cf. Meddens, 1997:10). Cuzco is in the approximate shape of a feline and regarded as a puma (Zuidema, 1989:360–383).

Felines such as the puma and jaguar are often conceptualized as intermediaries between this world, the celestial realm and underworld respectively (Meddens, 1997:10; Anders, 1986:916; Dillehay, 1998). The beach sand brought up steep Andean slopes to the main plaza (*Huacaypata*) in Cuzco emphasizes the symbolic importance of water (Sherbondy, 1992:61–62). Chroniclers stated that this was done in reverence to *Viracocha* whose temple was located beside the main plaza (Polo de Ondegardo, 1916 [1561]:109). The presence of sea sand at the very center of the imperial capital was both a political as well as a religious statement about Inca right to rule, one that evoked primordial origins and absolute beginnings (Sherbondy, 1992:62). Condors were also associated with *ushnu*, and both felines and condors with stars (Rosworowski, 1983:45). Condors were intermediaries with mountain spirits or *apu* (Isbell, 1978a:211; Reinhard, 1996:42). Mountain worship has a long and ancient tradition in the Andes (Kolata, 1993:109–143; Sharon, 2001; Reinhard, 1983a,b, 1985a). The evidence further indicates that mountain veneration is related to the fertility of *allyus* as well as agriculture (Meddens, 1994:141–142, 145; Reinhard, 1985a:306–307).

Mountain summits linked the celestial and lower realms in that such places mark to the passing of the sun and the basis for the circulation of water across the landscape. Circulation of water on and below the earth is crucial for rejuvenation and fertility and maintaining the structure and balance (Meddens, 1997:7–8). Iconographic evidence on Moche pottery suggests mountain worship and a symbolic link between elites and surrounding *apu* and *wamani* has ancient origins (Meddens, 1997:11; Sharon, 2001:Figures 1–4; Donnan, 1978:146–147, 150, 184, 1996:Figure 45; Donnan and MacClelland, 1999:102, 121). The complex irrigation technology associated with various highland and coastal civilizations emphasize the importance of the circulation of water to the political and religious sanctification of elite status.

Ancient Dimensions of Ushnu Centers: Tiwanaku and Chavín de Huántar

The archaeological evidence suggests that there is a variety of *ushnus* in different regions of the Andean landscape (see e.g., Hyslop, 1990; Meddens, this volume) and well beyond the scope of this analysis. The discussion is therefore restricted to two important highland centers; the Late Intermediate/Middle Horizon Period center of Tiwanaku, and Chavín de Huántar a Initial/Early Horizon Period center. Tiwanaku has features that may represent direct developmental antecedents to what occurs later in the Inca context. Chavín de Huántar shows a clear emphasis upon feline and aviary imagery in its sculpted monoliths and architectural facades, and the temple complexes have features which suggest this site may be an early expression

of the *ushnu* concept, as well as a metaphorical reference to mountain spirits and *axis mundi*.

Meddens (1997:10–11) suggests the Akapana and Puma Punka platforms at Tiwanaku represent an ancient example of *ushnu*. Both of these ceremonial complexes have elaborate drainage systems that predate such features in the later truncated platforms of the Late Horizon Period (Kolata, 1993), and may as well have served as an ideological basis for such drainage systems in later ceremonial centers.

Twenty-one human burials were uncovered at the base of the Akapana suggesting ideological continuity with ancestor veneration and sacrifice. Some are sub-adult and juveniles in association with large quantities of broken pots including drinking vessels or *keros* with motifs consisting of feline and condor imagery (Meddens, 1997:11). A feline mask on an anthropomorphic basalt sculpture was also found with these burials (*ibid.*). Canine burials were also recovered in one of the drainage canals and in Andean mythology were believed to accompany the dead into the afterlife (Kolata, 1993). Burials involving the ritual interment of canines and *keros* in association with humans later appear at the royal Inca estate of Machu Picchu (Salazar-Burger, 2001:Figure 5).

Under the Akapana platform is a layer of green gravel brought in from the Quimsachata and Chila mountains, which infers ideological continuity and symbolic identification to mountain spirits (Kolata, 1993:109–110), as the beach sand from the Peruvian coast brought to the main plaza in Cuzco, emphasized a symbolic association with the ocean and by extension Viracocha (Sherbondy, 1992:61–62). Other features suggesting a developmental relationship to later *ushnu* include, vertically elongated sculpted monoliths and tenoned heads on the wall of a subterranean or Sunken Temple, the stone pillars on both sides of the staircase in the Kalasasaya complex, and subterranean canals to channel water to surrounding raised fields. Evidence of human sacrifice, juvenile and sub-adult interments, feline and condor imagery, symbolic association to sacred mountains or *apu* and *wamani* and subterranean canals that channel water also suggest Tiwanaku may be an earlier expression of the *ushnu* concept.

The Initial Period/Early Horizon Period (900–300 B.C.) ceremonial center at Chavín de Huántar represents even more compelling evidence to suggest an earlier origin for the *ushnu* concept. Located along the banks of the Mosna River in the Cordillera Blanca of northern Peru at 3150 masl, Chavín may get its name from the Caribbean term *chavi*, which denotes tiger or feline (Burger, 1992a:128). Luis Lumbreras (1970:22) maintains the term comes from the Quechua word *chawpin*, which means “in the center.” Chavín de Huántar is situated along a river that forms a confluence with a tributary, the Huachasca River — an area of important mountain passes that link the western coast and eastern tropical lowlands.

The Old Temple at Chavín is incorporated architecturally to the New Temple and together they form a “U” shaped platform surrounding a sunken circular courtyard (Burger, 1992a:130, Figure 120). In front of the New Temple is a U-shaped plaza with a sunken rectangular court (Burger, 1992a:Figure 120, 1992b:Figure 2). The source of the architectural innovation involving the incorporation of the New

Temple is believed to come from the North Coast and adjacent highlands of Pacopampa (Burger, 1992b:267).

The principal icon is a carved monolith called the Great Image, Smiling Deity or Lanzón located in a subterranean gallery in the Old Temple (Rowe, 1962:9, 1967; Burger, 1992a:Figures 126–127). The subterranean gallery faces east in the center of the Old Temple, and is at right angles to the horizontal plane (Burger, 1992a:136). It represents an anthropomorphic being that incorporates reptilian and feline elements and is posed with its right hand raised and open palm exposed and the left palm lowered with the palm facing inward (Burger, 1992a:Figure 140). The imagery may be a metaphorical reference to *axis mundi* as mediator of oppositional duality—the personification of balance and order in the cosmos (*ibid.*:136). Moreover, a guilloche, or in this case a sky rope, emanating from its open palm is a clear symbolic reference to *axis mundi* (Rowe, 1962:Figures 7a–c, 8; Burger, 1992a:Figure 140). Another runs vertically from floor to ceiling up the back of the monolith and three additional guilloches extend below the feet (Burger, 1992a:137). The monolith is set into the roof of a cruciform chamber that extends into the ceiling and a vertical channel leads down the top of the sculpture into a cruciform design with a central depression carved on the top of the head (Rowe, 1962: Illustrations 6–8; Burger, 1992b:Figure 6; Roe, 1995:Figures 2.9–2.10).

A drainage canal extends from under the eastern staircase in front of the Old Temple and extends beneath the paved floor of the circular courtyard or plaza (Burger, 1992a:Illustrations 120, 122). Such a canal would have channeled water from inside the temple and drained it into the circular courtyard or plaza, essentially forming a basin (Meddens, 1997:11).

The circular courtyard or plaza includes feline imagery a pair of matching jaguars on the lower register of each side of the western staircase, arranged as if on a procession towards the main staircase (Burger, 1992a:Illustration 124). The upper register has pairs of anthropomorphic figures with feline and reptilian features on the head and extremities respectively, holding a “staff” of the psychotropic San Pedro Cactus (*Echinopsis pachanoi*) in their right hand (Burger, 1992a:Illustrations 123, 125; Sharon, 2000). The hair of this mythical being is made up of serpents and reptiles that also dangle from its waist reinforcing the water related symbolism, as do the curled tail of the felines in the lower register. The mythical beings in the upper register are blowing *Strombus* shell trumpets (*pututu*). *Pututu* traditionally used in ceremonies or rites in the Andes to initiate and terminate ritual festivities (Burger, 1992a:135).

The Great Image or Lanzón gives the distinct impression of vertically connecting the cosmic layers as an *axis mundi*. This is particularly apparent from the upper portion of the idol, its position and central location within the Old Temple, as well as the fore-mentioned sky ropes. *Chicha* or some other fermented intoxicant could have been poured down on the idol from above into the vertical channel, which would have settled in the central depression on the top of its head. Once filled, the *chicha* would have trickled down the top of the sculpture, reinforcing the cosmic connections of the layers through the channeling of fluid.

These various features, and the location and imagery suggest that Chavín de Huántar may represent an early variant of the *ushnu* concept. The reptilian, aviary

and feline imagery found on various idols and sculptures, and predominantly depicted in the ceramic art reinforce a symbolic association to mountain spirits and its location is a subterranean chamber, a clear connection to the underworld and the channeling of fluids. Underground passages and chambers are present on three sides of the circular plaza, beneath the floor of the rectangular court of the New Temple, and the numerous hidden stone lined canals that run beneath the court and plaza all eventually drain into the Mosna River (Burger, 1992a:135). Moreover, the site combines the two primary forms of plazas or courts, characteristic of the Initial Period and later periods of the highlands, circular and rectangular respectively.

Although circular sunken courts are relatively late at Chavín de Huántar, they are present at many earlier Late Preceramic and Initial Period sites on the coast of Peru (see e.g., Moseley, 1985; Williams, 1985; Shady-Solís, 1997, 2003). Ruth Shady (1997:39–41, 49–51) has identified an *ushnu* on the summit of a platform mound at the Late Preceramic Period ceremonial complex at Caral-Supe in the Supe River valley of coastal Peru. Significantly, irrigation canals are also found at this very early agricultural ceremonial complex. The repeated association of stepped and/or truncated platforms in association with circular depressions designated as plazas may reflect the great antiquity of *ushnus* and religious beliefs surrounding cosmic layers and access to and penetration through them via *axis mundi* within sacred centers. Later rectangular courts often have either platforms and/or monoliths in the center or to one side (see e.g., Morris and Thompson, 1985; Kolata, 1993). It is possible therefore that the Tello Obelisk at Chavín may have served as a gnomon in association with the rectangular plaza since Julio Tello found it outside of the New Temple near that plaza (Lumbreras, 1970:82, 1989:63). The imagery on this sculpture is highly detailed and includes zoomorphic and naturalistic representations that symbolically incorporate all of the various cosmic layers and elements derived from all of the various cardinal directions (Burger, 1992a Figure 141). Anthropomorphic images associated with the sculpture are also said to include solar symbolism (Lumbreras, 1989:63).

The various subterranean passageway-chamber complexes, underground channels, ventilation ducts and galleries, colossal stone idols and their location with respect to the most sacred mountains in each region are just some parallels exhibited by important ceremonial centers such as Chavín de Huántar and Tiwanaku (Reinhard, 1985b). These architectural features and the presence of stone obelisks, monoliths, and subterranean canals suggest that the concept of *ushnu* may have ancient origins in the Andes.

Concluding Remarks

These various lines of evidence suggest Andean centers were critical to cultures past and present. They provided a means by which the heavens were accessed to obtain meteorological and astronomical information and create order and meaning to the surrounding landscape. The sacredness of certain places is embodied in the concept of *Llacta*, which suggests an intrinsic relationship between a “place deity”

or “deity-locale” or local *huaca* and the surrounding landscape. The term *Pacha* conceptualizes the centrality of place and movement through time as occurring simultaneously at a moment or interval in time and a location and extension in space regardless of its scale (Salomon, 1991:14; Salomon and Urioste, 1991:14, 23–24 [c. 1598–1608]). Thus, the temporal dimensions of cosmic centers have reference to secular concerns such as agricultural cycles, as well as cosmological and mythological time. Vertical movement through the cosmic layers may be seen as approximating the concept of “*camac*” that is that penetration involves, revealing its inner structure, substance or essence or differentiating animating essences from interior states or conditions, that is, modes of being. Native Andean worldview still perceives the earth as a mirror that alternately reflects the celestial and underworld order across and through itself, and this is clearly embodied in the architecture and symbolism surrounding *ushnu* centers throughout Andean prehistory.

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