



# CAPÍTULO 26

## SIMPOSIO 26

### TAWANTINSUYU 2010

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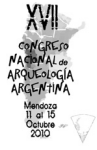
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## ARCHAEOLOGY, MYTH AND THE INKA RITUAL LANDSCAPE

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In traditional studies of the non-literate societies, oral traditions and mythological accounts have been commonly overlooked as valuable sources of data for scientific inquiries into the prehistoric world. The principal rationale for this is that these are perceived to be fictitious or imprecise records of the history of a cultural group because either they lack a date or even a notion of time. In the Central Andes, despite the detailed analyses of these by anthropologists such as Sánchez Garrafa (1999), Urton (1990), Escalante and Valderrama (1997), this has remained the dominant approach by archaeologists, who have read them literally and at times superficially, extracting information, such as historical dates with the aim of constructing historical chronologies and also to outline the cultural evolution of the region. In the Inka case, they have been especially used to construct the dynastic history and the expansion of Tawantinsuyu.

Arguably, such readings are fraught with difficulty, as they tend to overlook their nature. First, Inka historical accounts are the product of a turbulent post-conquest period and were principally recorded by the Catholic Church, Spanish government officials and settlers; there are very few indigenous records. During this period, Andean history and myths were often recontextualised, so that their inherent knowledge was 'compatible' with the Spanish legal and administrative system and also as a consequence of the suppression of the Andean cults and traditions (Salomon 1998: 268-279). Indeed, many narratives were recorded as part of testimonies to be used as evidence against followers of the Andean religion. In addition, many officials and notaries struggled to understand indigenous languages and also their customs, and thus 'did not know how to make inquiries' (Betanzos 1996), while observing that they 'paid less attention to fact finding than to acquiring land' or more to the point labour. They were interested in only certain issues, such as discovering the location of shrines and the nature of the Inka revenue scheme; they often ignored or abbreviated other threads of information, such as myths, claiming them to be irrelevant or 'fictitious'. On the other hand, it is probable that Andean people commonly misunderstood the questions asked of them and also withheld information. Thus, these historical sources are variable and incomplete. Second, mythical narratives are context specific, being both oral and performative in nature and thus, stories will vary from place to place, town or culture (Tate 2008:33). Literal readings commonly do not address such variations. Finally, the Andean concept of time and place does not correspond to those in western thought, in the sense that it is not linear; instead, time was entrenched in space and is cyclical, governed by the celestial bodies (Earls and Silverblatt 1976; Urton 1981).

More recent studies have developed a critical approach to myths, exploring their potential to provide insight into 'historical events', cultural settings' and the worldview of a particular group. These define myths as 'collective representations' of a given cultural group and also as stories that record historical events transmitted orally from one generation to other. Claude Lévi Strauss (1977) has been at the forefront of developing principles of these studies. He argued that they possess their own 'order' or and what Austin Lopez (1993) has termed a 'solid nuclei', that is repetitive symbols, motifs and themes that are juxtaposed with features that change over time. Notably, narratives can be deliberately reinterpreted, over time, as memories of the past are compressed or reshaped to embody contemporary 'needs and concerns', as demonstrated by Salomon in the case of the mythical narratives of Huarochirí (Cattell and Climo 2002:16; Salomon 1998, 2002). Identifying these components can assist us to 'excavate' the possible layers of meaning embodied in them. However, interpretations should be constructed with caution, bearing in mind that we can never know with certainty what prehistoric people thought or how they interpreted their world and their role in it (Ramírez 2005: 4-5).

Myths can serve several functions; they can be political tools, serving to establish the rights of a group to resources, such as land and water, while also forming the foundation for group or individual identity. Surveying the Andean literature, there is a plethora of stories that articulate the creation of the world and its celestial components, the primordial actions of gods and heroes that helped to shape it, the origin of a particular cultural group class and the establishment of important ceremonies and rituals, such as initiation.

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Some recent studies, such as those by Jonathan Z Smith (1978) and López Austin (1993, 2004), have argued that myths are ‘locative’, meaning they are narratives entrenched in a cultural landscape, and that they order and regulate changes and movements through space’. In this light, landscape plays an integral role forming the context; not only is it the stage or background, but is also an ‘animated and symbolic space’, in which people made active choices and acted out their relationship with their environment (Saunders 2004). In the Inka world, stories were commonly fixed at specific locations in the landscape which perceived to be alive, imbued with life force, *camay*: gods could be mountains and caves could talk, stones could cry blood, while others were the petrified bodies of heroes and ancestors. Therefore, all shrines, both natural and constructed, were known as *waka*, ‘sacred things’ or hierophanies, including topographical features.

The physical features of the landscape can be ‘reprised’ through ritual action, in song, music and dance (Stross 2008: 359) and thus, such narratives can be visual and processional in nature. In her recent study of the Olmec urban centre, La Venta, in southern Mexico, Carolyn Tate (2008) has argued that the distribution of carved stone features formed a ‘visual processional narrative’; that, scattered through the landscape, acted as cues or images, articulating stories about the creation of the world. Such processions, she argued, comprise the same basic ‘compositional devices’ as textual ones: they possess main characters, a physical setting, and a sequence, that is, a beginning and an end – which, in a ceremonial context, could be its start or end. From an archaeological perspective, such narratives may be reconstructed by examining a local landscape, the nature of sacred sites, both natural and constructed, including their orientation and size and by mapping their distribution through the landscape.

#### I. INKA SHRINES AND CANAL SYSTEMS

My research is focussed on one particular myth, a story which is related to the establishment and maintenance of Inka shrines associated with irrigation systems that provided the life-blood (water) to certain agricultural communities. It is diffused throughout Peru, notably in three main areas: the Central Coast and adjacent highlands, including Paramonga (Duviols 1974-1976: 175) to the north, and Huarochirí (Salomon and Urioste 1991: 64-75) and Ica (Oré 1990) to the south; the Cusco region (eg. Bolin 1987: 272-276; Cieza de León 2000 [1550]: 120-121 [Cap. XXXV]; Murúa 1987 [1590-1600]: 71 [Cap. XI]), including Chakan, Pikillaqta and Calca; and the Colca Valley (Escalante and Valderrama 1997: 88-91), to the north of Arequipa.

I have adopted a structuralist, more interpretative reading of them, in order to identify the major themes and motifs, as well as the socio-cultural processes and ceremonial events. Notably, some also possess threads of other themes, such that of initiation. The main elements can be outlined as the following:

1. The community is threatened with poverty, which manifests in the scarcity of water, causing the failure of crops and famine. In the case of Cusco, the pivot of the Inka cosmos, the hinterland was fertile and blessed with an abundance of water, while the urban core lacked rivers and springs. Therefore, the myth symbolically represents the centrifugal movement of waters to the centre, ensuring that it will be abundant and fertile;
2. A canal is constructed and, in a number of stories, during its construction or once established, difficulties manifest which render it inoperative;
3. The response to these obstacles is both technological and religious in nature. In many versions, a principal deity, commonly a principal mountain god, an *apu*, or the Inka, as the son of the Sun, is consulted. Such communication may be in person or via some shamanic ceremony or ritual, including dream incubation or a shaman traveling to the celestial or interior worlds. The response to their request instructs them that water will be provided in exchange for a human life. In one variation, a community leader makes an agreement with the mountain spirits by promising the hand in marriage of his beautiful daughter to a young prince-warrior, who eventually succeeds in bringing water from the mountains to irrigate the fields, commonly said to be her garden.
4. Once the canal difficulty is resolved, a young person, commonly female, is offered to the deity. She is taken to the source of the canal (usually a mountain, lake, reservoir or canal intake (*toma*)), where she is offered or is said to ‘sleep’ with the spirit. In this phase, the movement of the water is commonly likened to that of a serpent, while the canal source also can be conceptual, and not necessarily a geographical feature.
5. An important motif in each of these myths is blood, metaphorically canal water, that may be offered at critical points in the system, including the intake;
6. The sacrificed individual is venerated as a *waka* and receives offerings during canal cleaning and other rituals. In addition, other critical locations may also be venerated and receive offerings. These can be described as places where people were sacrificed or ‘turned’ to stone, or where a canal flows underground.

*II. SHRINES AND IRRIGATIONS SYSTEMS: ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATIONS*

Recent studies from the Colca Valley and Huarochiri have examined the relationship between the local ecology, irrigation systems and cosmology (Gelles 1990; Valderrama and Escalante 1988; Raéz Retamozo 2002; Salomon 1998). The irrigation systems were established during the prehispanic period and these communities attribute the basic ritual structure to their ancestors or the Inkas, although there are some Catholic nuances. Indeed, as Urton (1990) and Sallnow (1987) have shown in their work in Cusco, the syncretism of Andean practices and Catholicism was an act of 'negotiation', whereby the rites and ceremonies of both traditions were transformed and thus, as Urton noted (1990: 98), prehispanic ceremonies may still be practiced but have been 'reinterpreted in the new idioms, images and ritual structures presented by Roman Catholicism'. Nevertheless, these studies have uncovered a number of potentially critical patterns that can be tested in the archaeological record.

First, the communities venerated shrines, both natural and constructed, that were associated with the canal and in various ecological zones. These include rocks, summit platforms, springs, reservoirs and the canal *toma*. Another important community space is the plaza, where feasting and political ceremonies are performed, including the election of the committee to oversee the irrigation rituals, while also making offerings to mountain deities for rain and water. Some sites are also connected metaphorically, using familial terms. For example, the Apu of the Yanque community is Mismi and his wife, Umahala; it is a spring which feeds into the principal canal (Valderrama and Escalante 1988).

Second, such sites receive various offerings, including maize, libations of wine or water, stones representing 'alpacas' and live guinea pigs. The Yanque community either burns or buries them in small square pits ('cajas') beside the canal at locations that are marked by stones and believed to hold the essence of the receiving deity. These places were not necessarily venerated during the same ceremony (Valderrama and Escalante 1988). For example, the canal intake might be visited at the opening ceremony at the start of the irrigation season, while the Apu may be visited prior to the election of the new water committee.

It is interesting to note that during a ritual cycle, the Apu is often the first and last place to receive offerings. For example, Hualca-Hualca received the first and last offerings during the week long festival associated with canal cleaning in the community of Cabanaconde (Gelles 1990: 205).

*III. TANTA CARHUA*

One particular myth, that of Tanta Carhua, has been selected as a case study, with the aim of reconstructing its archaeological context. This 17<sup>th</sup> century account describes a young girl, Tanta Carhua, who was a daughter of a local official or Kuraka and was buried on a mountain in the prehispanic community of Urcon. It has captured the attention of many Inka scholars, including archaeologists, as it is the most elaborate account of an Inka shrine and sacrifice. It was written by Rodrigo Hernández Principe (2003 [1621]: 742-745), a Spanish priest, who recorded fragments of an oral story and blended it with his own eye-witness report about the shrine, its location and his interpretation of Inka state ceremonies, such as Raymi and Qhapaq Hucha. Although it is widely cited, the shrine and its surrounding prehispanic settlements have never been systematically recorded. In fact, this myth has been used by scholars, such as Johan Reinhard and Constanza Ceruti (2005) and Thomas Besom (2009), to demonstrate that Qhapaq Hucha, an Inka state ceremony during which young children were sacrificed, was only carried out at high altitude sites, classified as those 5000 masl and above because they considered that mountains were the most important topographical features in the Inka sacred landscape. In my research, these interpretations miss the point because the most important factor is the relationship between the mountain and its surrounding landscape, its context.

The story commences with the fact that Urcon was threatened with poverty, as a consequence of a hydrological difficulty encountered during the construction of a new canal to irrigate Inka state lands. There was a large stone that obstructed the flow into the principal canal. The Kuraka, Caque Poma, who had been recently chosen by the Inka, ordered that all local ritual specialists and shamans converge on the site and remove it. Only four were successful and once this problem had been resolved, the location became revered as a shrine and received offerings. In addition, those shamans, who had failed or did not appear in time for the ceremony, were sacrificed, as Hernández described they were 'butchered' and their blood flowed into the nearby river, turning the earth red and this was then used in the construction of the canal. This event may have taken place during the wet season or torrential rains and the river turned red because of its increased flow and sediment load from its erosive capabilities. However, this offering caused further difficulties and at some stage the Inka intervened but demanded that in exchange that a human life be offered.

After his selection, Caque Poma sent his only daughter to Cusco. Little is said about her time there; she presumably resided in the Aqllawasi, where she was probably taught the primary skills of weaving and making chicha, while also being educated about the Inka worldview. Notably, the Inka anointed her with a name, Tanta Carhua. After participating in the *Inti Raymi* ceremony, she returned home as qhapaq hucha. Upon her arrival, she was taken to a place overlooking Inka state lands called Aixa or Aisha, where, in front of a prepared pit that was to be her tomb, she uttered her famous words, '*you can finish with me now for the fiestas I enjoyed in Cusco were sufficient*'. She was then buried alive. Afterwards, she was venerated as the most important *waka* in the region and was consulted as an oracle, with her younger brother and his descendants acting as her priest.

This story narrates socio-political changes within the community, including land redistribution, with shamans awarded land for their successful efforts and a possible reorganization of the local shrine hierarchy (Zuidema 1989). In particular, Caque Poma's authority increased, as he demonstrated his ability to manage effectively the community's resources, while also demonstrating his loyalty to the Inka, by dedicating his daughter to their main cult, that of the Sun.

During his campaign to eradicate indigenous practices, Hernández found and destroyed this shrine. He described the site location as a rugged area in the 'high mountains', accessed by a rough track. He had identified its location by the scatter of animal bone and features he termed 'altars'. He excavated a pit more than three *estados* (5m) in depth, in which found the body of a girl, seated on level floor of the chamber. She was dressed in fine textiles, and was accompanied by ceramic vessels, including miniature jars, and other silver 'trinkets'. He also dismantled the *usnu*, which he described as a 'pipe through which they gave her drink' or made libations.

#### *IV. PRELIMINARY FIELD RESULTS*

The prehispanic settlement of Urcon is in the district of Ocos, in the Department of Ancash, about 260km north of Lima. It lies in the upper tributaries of the Pativilca valley about 40km from Barranca. It is located in a narrow, but fertile, valley, ranging in altitude from 4300m to about 1500m. The principal town is Ocos on the right margin of the Ocos River at about 2660m above sea level. On the basis of preliminary fieldwork in 2009, Miguel Cornejo and I have identified numerous artefact scatters, earthworks and architectural remains of late prehispanic settlements, the ancient canal system above the lands of Aisha. In 2010 I commenced a targeted valley survey with my Peruvian field team and this has provided additional information about the prehispanic settlement pattern, as well as the shrine located on a mountain called Tanta Carhua.

#### *Late Horizon settlements*

In previous studies, a number of prehispanic settlements have been identified in the northern part of the valley. Paredes (2004) has suggested that the settlement called Urcon might have been called Huallanca-Marca located on a mountain, south of the modern town of Ocos. This site is situated on the border between the quechua and suni ecological zones, situated around 3500 masl. My preliminary results indicate that this settlement comprised three main zones: an extensive irrigation system, including reservoirs, associated with ceremonial platforms; a funerary complex; and, residential complex and sanctuary. Architectural evidence suggests it was established in the Middle Horizon and may have been augmented during the Late Horizon, with possible Inka style structures present in a sanctuary area. In addition, other prehispanic sites have been recorded in the suni zone (above 3500 masl), northwest of the town of Bellavista on the western margin of the Ocos River. Here, the prehispanic landscape comprises a reservoir system, corrals and kullpas. Notably, the architectural style of the kullpas is consistent with those recorded in Copas, to the west of Ocos and these structures have been dated to the Middle Horizon (Melgar Torres and Torres 2007). The northern part of the valley is linked by a prehispanic (Inka) road to the Pativilca valley, which follows the Ocos River. In addition, a road linked the valley to Conococha, situated to the north. In the southern part of the valley and along the western side of Quebrada de Huanchay archaeological remains contemporary with Huallanca-Marca are observable and these comprise rectangular stone buildings, earthworks, isolated stone walls, stone alignments, surface artefacts and are in a location to oversee the canal and the lands of Aisha. This area is in the quechua zone and thus prime for maize production. The preliminary results tentatively suggest that the settlement pattern of the Ocos is consistent that with that observed in other parts of Ancash, with Late Horizon sites concentrated in agricultural zones (Herrera 2003).

#### *Prehispanic canal and the lands of Aixa*

The principal canal runs parallel to the river, running north to south, over more than 10 km; it is mainly unlined and dug in earth, although there is at least one section, where a serpentine-like channel is carved into the bedrock. In addition, the northern section of the canal is in use today and parts have been cemented. The canal runs through some very steep country, including very difficult rocky cliff-like faces and it crosses through a

number of boulder scree fields. Any of these could have caused the construction difficulty described in the myth. Notably, the 1970 earthquake destroyed a section of canal in the south, near the ridge of Aisha Chica and has not been repaired.

There are several potential shrine sites, including a waterfall that feeds into the canal. It is located about 1km south of the intake in the Ocos River. At the waterfall a carved rock basin, 7m x 70cm x 55cm, captures the water and directs it into the canal. It is interesting that today community members are afraid of this place and will not visit it, as they believe a 'black shadowy form' lives there.

There are four supplementary reservoirs located on separate ridges to the east and below cerro Tanta Carhua that are called Aisha Grande, Pataqatacocha and Ñamush. These sites comprise not only a circular stone-walled structure as the reservoir but also other settlement features, particularly at Aisha where there are also the remains of a prehispanic village. In addition, a series of ceremonial platforms were recorded on Ñamush. My local informant has related stories that each of these sites were important in prehispanic times and were places where rituals, including the child sacrifice took place.

There are other small sites, natural or constructed, that may have also been venerated and may continue to be so as part of ceremonies today. From an archaeological perspective, these may be identified based on their shape or size relative to their surroundings, or may have been modified by carving or painting. There are also other natural places, with no evidence of structures, that are surrounded by artefact scatters, including bone and ceramics.

#### *Cerro Tanta Carhua*

Cerro Tanta Carhua is a prominent hill to the southwest of Ocos and comprises a summit that looks westwards towards the ocean and the ridges of Loma Grande and Huaccapampa that look east and oversee the lands of Aisha. To its north are structural remains, including stone arrangements, rectangular structures and walls earthworks and artefacts scatters, as well as natural landscape features, such as prominent isolated rocks. There are several pits and depressions in particular locations that overlook the valley but the best candidate for the shrine of Tanta Carhua itself is located on a level crest above Ñamush. Notably, it is not at high-altitude, but at an altitude of only 2825m. Here, a rectangular platform around 12m long and 6m wide is observable and is defined by a wall, comprising a single row of stones, 60cm wide. The long walls are oriented NW-SE. A large circular depression towards the centre of the platform and is 6.80m x 6.10m but only 45cm deep and almost certainly represents a looting event, possibly of a tomb or other feature. The only artefact recorded at the site was a fine ceramic fragment.

#### **Conclusions**

The landscape of Ocos provides an interconnected distribution of natural features and settlements in a landscape imbued with cultural importance and in particular with the memory of Tanta Carhua and her father. Preliminary field evidence indicates the cultural context of this myth, its events and ceremonies that can lead to an integrated landscape archaeology which places the cultural events in a natural landscape, irrespective of its absolute altitude or massiveness. At the conference, I shall report further analyses of the Ocos investigations, using a methodology, based on the principles established by Jerry Moore (1996, 2006) and Carolyn Tate (2008), that have 'reconstructed' the mythical narrative. For example, Moore observed that various sites 'exhibit different communicative potentials in their physical form' and people's experience them is affected by a range of measurable variables, including visibility (i.e. assessing the prominence of a feature as seen by the observer and also its position relative to its surroundings), sound or the acoustic qualities of a site, mapping the distribution of site types in the landscape and its size relative to its environment, how the sites are affected by light (daylight) and also what one can observe from these locations. Some comparative observations will also be made.

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