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Inca Sacred Landscapes in the Titicaca Basin

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Abstract and Keywords

Sacred landscapes are networks of meaningful places that are often woven together in mythic frameworks. Frequently they are understood as narratives, which are re-enacted through rituals and processions. We present archaeological data from the Copacabana Peninsula and Tiwanaku to show how the Inca appropriated pre-existing places and transformed the sacred landscape of the Titicaca Basin to inscribe the politically powerful Viracocha creation narrative, which held that Viracocha emerged on the Island of the Sun and travelled to Tiwanaku, where he created the sun, the moon, and the ancestral couples of all people, beginning with the Inca. We argue that this creation narrative was a key element in the Inca Empire's ideology of legitimation. Consequently, the Inca appropriated and modified ritual places so that this narrative could be inscribed, re-enacted, commemorated, and remembered, and they developed an infrastructure to support these rituals and related processions.

Keywords: Tiwanaku, Copacabana Peninsula, Titicaca, Viracocha, Pumapunku

SACRED landscapes can be conceived of as networks of meaningful places that are woven together in cosmological and mythic frameworks. Often these are understood as narratives, which are re-enacted and inscribed on the landscape through rituals and processions. The nodes in these networks can range from unmodified natural features, such as mountains, rocks, caves, rivers, and trees, to constructed features, such as plazas, temples, monuments, and shrines, with a range of human-modified places in between (Ashmore 2007; Knapp 1999). The nodes can be closely spaced or distant, adjacent or discontinuous. Regardless of the form and spacing of the nodes, they are culturally and historically imbued with meanings that are created, shared, and reproduced through experiences and perceptions.

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Sacred landscapes often serve as material anchors for local histories and identities. Basso (1996), for example, argues that people experience a “sense of place” as their movement through a landscape evokes and provokes memories. In that way, places are venues where a community’s important lessons and histories are remembered and can be taught to new generations. Landscapes can also serve as maps of the cosmos, and they can materialize spatial representations of social and political structures. Perhaps most importantly to our discussion here, sacred landscapes and the nodes within them are often key sites in political dynamics of legitimization, empowerment, contestation, and resistance (Tilley 1994; Zedeño and Bowser 2009). Because of the political potency of sacred landscapes and the histories anchored within them, they are rich targets for manipulation by rulers and ruling elites. As a consequence, the past can be selectively forgotten or reinterpreted to legitimize the authority of dominant groups (Alcock 2002; Rubertone 2009; Van Dyke 2008; Wilson 2010). Landscapes can also serve as foci for contestation and resistance by subaltern groups within a society.

In complex societies with institutions that serve to legitimate political authority, social memory and history are often indispensable in establishing and maintaining the social order (Baines and Yoffee 1998). Of particular importance are events associated with the ancestors of the ruling group or family, foundational political events, and cosmogonic events, all of which are central to a group’s history and identity (Joyce 2000; Meskell 2003; Moore 2010; Van Dyke 2003). Although often deployed to maintain the status quo, memory work can also subvert the established order (Crawford 2007; Van Dyke 2008).

Sacred landscapes are often enduring and may even be understood to be timeless; however, they do not exist *sui generis*. Rather, these networks of places are constantly rewoven and remodeled through storytelling, ritual circuits and pilgrimages, commemoration, and ritual practices, both quotidian and exceptional. Places—whether monuments, shrines, domestic structures, tombs, or natural features in the landscape—are polysemic and can shift in their meanings over time and in light of the objects, heirlooms, and spolia found in them. This can lead to new versions of the past and sometimes can trigger responses of resistance and contestation (Bender 1998; Bender and Winer 2001). Landscapes can also be subjected to strategies of forgetting or erasure that entail the modification and destruction of selected places and objects (Boric 2009).

In this context, ritual commemorations in sacred landscapes can take the form of celebrations and feasts, pilgrimages and processions, and votive depositions and burials (Van Dyke and Alcock 2003:4). Commemorative rituals are central to memory formation and reproduction, as they often reference important historical and mythical events. By comparison, commensal feasting can be particularly powerful as an instrument of remembrance, as it creates and reinforces a sense of shared identity among individuals (Dietler and Hayden 2001). Connected in a narrative, ritual processions and pilgrimage nodes often recreate and re-enact such stories. In these events, the experience of moving through the landscape while also participating in rituals becomes the phenomenological basis for a collective memory that transcends individuality (Alcock 2002; Barbiera,

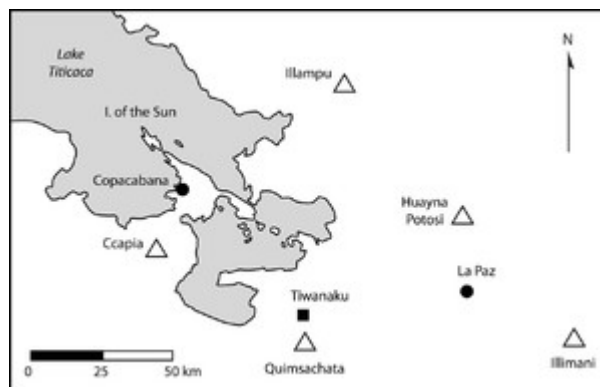
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Choyke, and Rasson 2009; Cannon 2002; Chesson 2001; Kuijt 2001). In some cases, these re-enactments are linked existentially to their original instantiation through the logic of mimesis (Kolata 1996).

The Inca Empire and the Titicaca Basin

The Inca conquered the Titicaca Basin and its polities sometime around 1470 CE. While several archaeological and historical studies have addressed the economic, political, and ideological motivations for their expansion into this region (Arkush 2005; Christie 2006, 2015; Pärsinnen 2003b; Seddon 1998; Stanish 1997), we focus here on the ways in which the Inca appropriated and inscribed sacred landscapes in the Titicaca Basin (see also Bauer and Stanish 2001).

A key component of Inca imperial strategy was the manipulation and appropriation of sacred objects and places in subject provinces (Acuto 2005). The Inca relocated the idols of patron deities from provincial shrines and housed them in the imperial capital of Cuzco, where they could be venerated and cared for so long as the subject province (p. 543) remained loyal to the empire (Cobo 1990 [1653]). They also appropriated preexisting sacred places, including pan-Andean pilgrimage sites like Pachacamac, Tiwanaku, and the Island of the Sun, and regional sacred spaces such as Catequil and in sites Saraguro (Bauer and Stanish 2001; Ogburn 2010; Rostworowski de Díez Canseco 1992, 1999; Topic, Topic and Cava 2002; Yaeger and López Bejarano 2004; see also Eeckhout and López-Hurtado, Chapter 2.5 in this volume). In these cases, the Inca modified preexisting structures and built new facilities that allowed them to incorporate these places into their own cosmology and mythic history. Although the imperial agenda was likely similar in cases of appropriation and co-optation of sacred places, the particular details of each case were tailored to accommodate local traditions, practices, and the preexisting landscape (Acuto and Leibowicz, Chapter 4.1).



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Figure 5.4.1 The eastern Lake Titicaca Basin, showing sites and mountain peaks mentioned in the text.

Around Lake Titicaca and at Tiwanaku, the Inca incorporated and appropriated earlier beliefs and shrines (Bauer and Stanish 2001; Salles-Reese 1997) to form one of their dominant creation narratives, as related by Spanish and indigenous authors (Cieza de León 1959 [1553]; Cobo 1990 [1653]). This narrative recounted that the creator

deity Viracocha emerged from the sacred rock, Intikala, on the Island of the Sun in Lake Titicaca (Figure 5.4.1). He then journeyed to Tiwanaku, where he made the sun, moon, and stars and assigned them their proper places in the heavens. He then created the primordial couples of the different Andean ethnic groups, beginning with those of the

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Inca. The first-born Inca were singled out by the sun when he prophesied that they, and their descendants, would become great rulers by subjugating other peoples. Finally, (p. 544) Viracocha journeyed across the Andes, giving names to places and calling out these first couples from their *pacarina* “dawning places” in their respective homelands. The first Inca couples emerged from the cave of Pacarictambo, near Cuzco.

The Inca commemorated this narrative through pilgrimages to the Island of the Sun. The pilgrimage route crossed the Copacabana Peninsula, directing worshippers through a series of gateways, massive walls, towns, and facilities, while simultaneously guiding these individuals through a ritual journey of purification, prayer, and offering-making (Ramos Gavilán 1988 [1621]). Recent archaeological investigations on the Copacabana Peninsula have revealed the varied ways in which the Inca modified preexisting shrines and altered the region’s landscape to create this pilgrimage route, while also meeting the logistical needs of a growing population (see also Christie, Chapter 5.2).

Early chroniclers also recount the ideological importance of Tiwanaku to the Inca. For example, Juan de Betanzos (1987 [1551–1557]) wrote in the sixteenth century that the Inca believed that Tiwanaku’s centuries-old stone sculptures were the models used by Viracocha to create the first people, the ancestral couples of the Andean ethnic groups mentioned earlier. Cieza de León (1959 [1553]) suggested that the Inca modeled their capital at Cuzco after Tiwanaku and emulated the site’s precision-fitted masonry. Until recently, there was little evidence for Inca occupation at Tiwanaku, and scholars could legitimately suggest that when the Inca used the toponym of Tiwanaku, they actually were referring to modern Copacabana (Pärsinnen 2003a:260–261). Recent investigations, however, have documented a significant Inca occupation at Tiwanaku, revealing the ways in which the Inca remodeled the Pumapunku complex to inscribe the creation narrative mentioned earlier (Yaeger and López Bejarano 2004; Yaeger and Vranich 2013).

The Copacabana Peninsula

The Copacabana Peninsula became one of the most important ritual centers in the Inca Empire after its conquest of the area sometime around 1470 CE (Bauer and Stanish 2001; Christie 2006:200; Seddon 1998; Stanish 2003:237). Its importance derived from its proximity to Lake Titicaca and the Islands of the Sun and Moon that lie just offshore, which were important places in pre-Inca and Inca creation narratives. Of particular salience was Intikala, the sacred rock at the northern end of the Island of the Sun, which was the locale where the sun was born. This fact gave the islands and the Copacabana Peninsula a sacred and ceremonial character comparable to the most important imperial sacred places, such as Cuzco, Pachacamac, and Tiwanaku (Bandelier 1910; Bauer and Stanish 2001; Christie 2006; Seddon 1998; Yaeger and López Bejarano 2004). Consequently, Copacabana and the sacred islands became the destination of a major

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pilgrimage route in the Inca Empire (Christie 2006; Cobo 1990 [1653]; Ramos Gavilán 1988 [1621]).

(p. 545) Spanish chroniclers claim that the emperor Inca Yupanqui ordered the removal of the local indigenous population in the region. They were replaced with colonists or *mitmacona* from 42 different ethnicities, according to an early Spanish census of 1548 (Bauer and Stanish 2001:59; Ramos Gavilán 1988 [1621: Bk. 1, Chap. 12]:84 f.). At the same time, a significant number of members of elite Inca lineages (*panacas*) were resettled at the town of Copacabana (Cobo 1990 [1653]; Ramos Gavilán 1988 [1621]), which was transformed into an important administrative center along the pilgrimage route. A variety of state constructions serve as physical reminders of Inca control over this ritual landscape, as temples, storehouses (*collcas*), pilgrims' lodgings (*tambos* or *corpahuasi*), shrines (*huacas*), roads (*nan*), and carvings of the living rock have been identified throughout the area (Arkush 2005; Christie 2006; Rivera Sundt 1978, 1984).

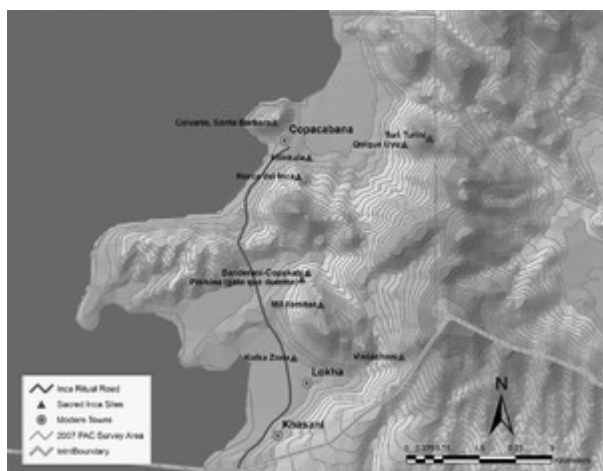
Previous archaeological studies have focused on the Islands of the Sun and the Moon and the carved stones of the Copacabana Peninsula (Arkush 2005; Bauer and Stanish 2001; Christie 2006; Escalante Moscoso 1997; Rivera Sundt 1978, 1984; Seddon 1998; Stanish 2003). It was not until 2007 that a systematic survey of the town of Copacabana and its immediate hinterland was undertaken by the Copacabana Archaeological Project (PAC), directed by José María López Bejarano. By focusing on the town of Copacabana and its hinterlands, the project was able to identify numerous settlements, shrines, roads, and other landscape features dating to the pre-Inca and Inca occupations of the region. The archaeological sites identified confirmed that the region was densely populated by the Lupaca and Pacajes ethnic groups, until the Inca resettled colonists. The presence of more than 20 sites with evidence of ritual activities, mostly related to carved stones and pictographic representations of camelids, highlights the religious significance of the Copacabana Peninsula during the Late Horizon. Many of these sites were preexisting sacred places dating to the Middle Horizon and Late Intermediate Period (LIP), which were appropriated by the Inca.

The PAC survey documented 23 Late Intermediate Period sites in the peninsula, ranging in size from 0.04 hectares to 1.5 hectares. As in other parts of the Titicaca Basin (Stanish 1997), the Copacabana Peninsula witnessed a decrease in the number and size of settlements during the Late Intermediate Period, a change that may be linked to the decline of the Tiwanaku state. Furthermore, the Late Intermediate Period sites that were documented lacked complex architecture or ceremonial structures. As for the identities of the peninsula's inhabitants, colonial chronicles suggest that the peninsula was occupied by Lupaca, Pacajes, and Yunguyo peoples prior to the arrival of the Inca. The PAC project found materials associated with Lupaca and Pacajes groups, but no clear ceramic indicators of the Yunguyo.

As is true throughout the region, Late Intermediate Period sites on the Copacabana Peninsula tended to occupy higher and more easily defensible locations, suggesting a time of increased conflict and warfare. The sites of Viscachani Pata (PAC-8) and Loqa

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Kollu (PAC-44) can be considered *pucaros* or citadels due their size (1.5 and 1.2 hectares), their placement on elevated points on the landscape, their large terraces, and their defensive walls. The Inca continued to occupy these sites, as indicated by the presence of storage *collcas* and large rectangular and circular structures. (p. 546)



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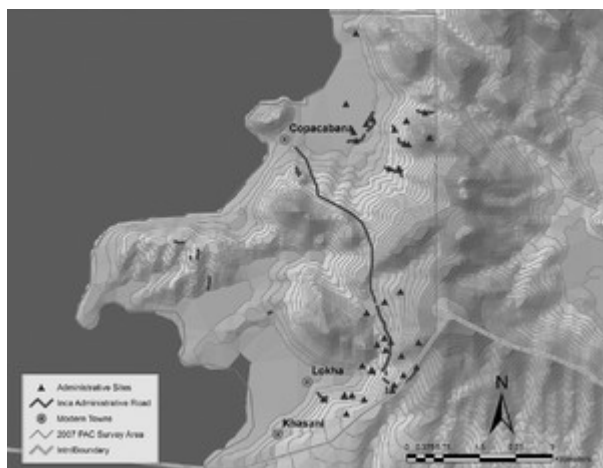
Figure 5.4.2 Late Horizon sites on the Copacabana Peninsula associated with the ritual road.

The incorporation of the Copacabana Peninsula into the Inca Empire brought a radical transformation of the preexisting settlement pattern in the peninsula. The 63 sites identified for the Late Horizon represent a doubling in the number of sites, and the size of settlements increased as well, ranging up to 4 hectares. Of great interest, the Late Horizon settlement pattern

suggests a reorganization of the local landscape, which was segregated into areas dedicated to ritual, administrative, and agricultural activities. These in turn were linked together by the two major roads that ran through the peninsula.

The Inca constructed a massive complex of terraces along mountainsides, and created new settlements associated with two major roads that connected the administrative centers and ritual centers to the town of Copacabana. By doing this, the Inca were able to create an effective circuit that allowed for the provisioning of the local towns and temples on the peninsula and the temples located on the Islands of the Sun and Moon. The main road, which was likely used for pilgrimages, ran along the coast (Figure 5.4.2). It connected the administrative and ritual site of Yauri Amaya (PAC-42) to the ritual centers near Lokha (PAC-43, 44, 62, 66, and 67). It also connected the major shrines of El Calvario, IntIncala, and the observatory named La Horca del Inca, located within the modern town of Copacabana. (p. 547)

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Figure 5.4.3 Late Horizon sites on the Copacabana Peninsula associated with the administrative road.

According to the chroniclers, royal *panacas* were settled at Copacabana, and the Inca emperor and his court celebrated state rituals there (Ramos Gavilán 1988 [1621]). The site known as Kusijata (the Inca Bath) was probably used for ceremonies of purification, and water from the natural springs was directed through an intricate series of canals that spilled over

the terraces. Copacabana was also the place where dignitaries and leaders from across the empire made offerings to the local shrines. Evidence of ceremonial and public infrastructure in Copacabana is observed in a number of sites, where fine cut stone architecture was registered (e.g. PAC-30, 32, 34, 35, 37, and 38).

The second road (Figure 5.4.3) was associated with PAC-18, the main Late Horizon administrative center in the southeast. It controlled more than 80 *collcas* built by the Inca in the Late Intermediate Period *pucara* of Viscachani Pata (PAC-7, 8, and 44). Additionally, the route connected two important ceremonial sites. The first was Mil Llamitas (PAC- 54), characterized by petroglyphs and pictographs picturing camelids, and the second was Inca Banderani (PAC- 66), distinguished by the presence of steps and an offertorium carved into the living stone.

Taken together, PAC data reveal the degree to which the Inca transformed the Copacabana Peninsula during the Late Horizon. On the Islands of the Sun and Moon, Bauer and Stanish (2001) documented how the Inca elaborated and appropriated ritual (p. 548) spaces as part of their ideological strategy to legitimate their place as the rulers of the Andes. López Bejarano's research confirmed that this pilgrimage route was inscribed on the peninsula through the elaboration of the coastal road, which ended at a series of locations on the peninsula shore. They were venues for important royal rituals and embarkation points for pilgrims traveling to the Islands of the Sun and the Moon. PAC further documented that the Inca created administrative and storage facilities associated with a second road, which provided the infrastructure needed to support the pilgrimage.

In carrying out their modifications, the Inca engaged with the preexisting sacred landscape. The presence of Inca carved stones at PAC-6, located within the Late Intermediate Period site of Loqa Kollu, shows the introduction and imposition of imperial ritual activities in indigenous settlements. The same is true of IntIncala, considering that the historical accounts suggest that it was one of the two early ceremonial centers in the

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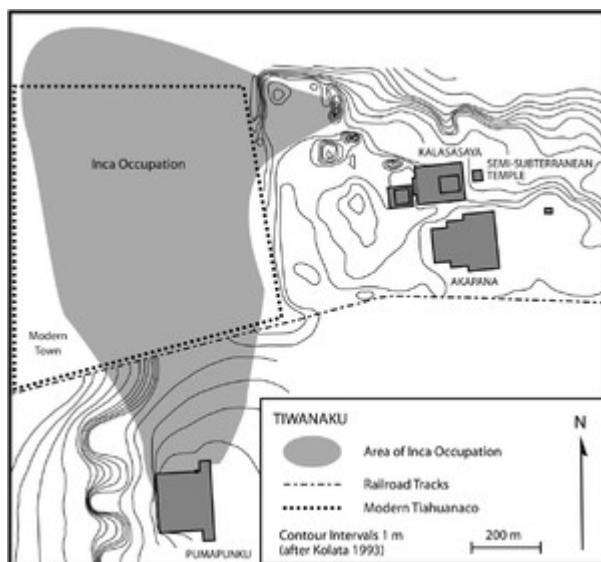
peninsula before the Inca arrival. The site was transformed to accommodate the ritual requirements of the Inca Empire. The Inca also co-opted a *huaca* in the Turi Turini Mountain (PAC-35) that was a major regional shrine during the Late Intermediate Period.

Tiwanaku

During the Middle Horizon, Tiwanaku was one of the largest urban centers in the Andes. Monumental temple platforms, elaborate palaces, and monolithic portraits of the city's rulers formed the heart of a city that influenced an area from the high Bolivian Andes to the Peruvian coastal desert (Kolata 1993). In the ceremonial core, Alan Kolata (1993) has persuasively argued that the Akapana pyramid was woven into a larger sacred landscape through its mimesis of the sacred mountain Quimsachata (Figure 5.4.1). Research directed by Alexei Vranich expanded our understanding of the place of Tiwanaku and its monuments in an even broader sacred landscape that included Lake Titicaca, sacred mountains like Quimsachata, Illimani, and Huayna Potosi, and the surrounding celestial bodies (e.g., the sun, the moon, and south celestial pole) (Benitez 2009; Vranich 2016). Furthermore, Vranich (2002, 2016) demonstrated that the movement of people through Tiwanaku was one key process by which the connections between these nodes were experienced and understood. He has also shown how this landscape and its nodes changed over time, as the site grew from the Formative period to the Middle Horizon (Vranich 2016; Yaeger and Vranich 2013). By circa 1150 CE, Tiwanaku was largely abandoned and the city's political power had dissipated. However, oral histories likely transmitted stories about the city and its buildings, intertwined with notions of cosmic creation and political legitimacy, long after the names of its powerful rulers had been forgotten.

When the Inca conquered the Titicaca region around 1470 CE, Tiwanaku became an important imperial center. Chroniclers relate that it was home to a royal palace and the (p. 549) seat of one of the empire's two Suyoyoc Apu, or governors general (Albornoz 1989 [1581–1585]; Cieza de León 1959 [1553]). According to Cieza de León (1959 [1553]), Tiwanaku was the place where Manco Inca was born, and where his father, Huayna Capac, planned his campaign to defeat the rebel forces staged in Quito. Because of Tiwanaku's salient place in the creation narrative described earlier, it was also an important *huaca*, located on one of the *ceque* lines radiating out from Cuzco.

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Figure 5.4.4 Plan of Tiwanaku, showing Inca occupation.

Tiwanaku's salient place in the Viracocha creation narrative was one of the reasons that the authors undertook four seasons of fieldwork at Tiwanaku under the auspices of Vranich's Proyecto Arqueológico Pumapunku-Akapana (from 1999 to 2002). The goal was to document the poorly known Inca occupation there (Figure 5.4.4).

Systematic settlement survey determined that the Late Horizon occupation

covered some 1.7 square kilometers, extending from Pumapunku to the modern town of Tiahuanaco (Smith 2002). The Inca settlement included three functionally differentiated zones: an elite politico-ritual zone adjacent to Pumapunku, a local settlement now located under the modern town, and a *tambo* along the Inca road east of the local settlement.

With the exception of the Pumapunku complex, the paucity of Late Horizon remains in the Tiwanaku monumental core and the absence of significant Inca modifications to the monumental platforms are striking. Although Pumapunku was not the largest or most imposing structure that the Inca would have found at Tiwanaku, our excavation of 750 square meters on and immediately surrounding Pumapunku demonstrated that it was the one the Inca chose as the focus for ritual activities. (p. 550)

We argue that there are several reasons that Pumapunku was selected. First, it is intimately linked to an imposing mountain peak, the snow-capped Illimani (Reinhard 1985). Vranich (1999, 2002) has observed that the Pumapunku complex is visually the most salient structure as one approaches Tiwanaku from the west, the direction of Lake Titicaca and Cuzco. Pumapunku stands out on the landscape, and it is axially aligned with Illimani, which can be seen behind the platform on the horizon (95 kilometers to the east). As one moves closer to the city, the Pumapunku platform comes to occlude Illimani, standing in for it visually and symbolically. Given the Inca penchant for landscape mimesis, this alignment would have been ritually important.

Because of its positioning directly between Illimani and Lake Titicaca, Pumapunku's axis united and mediated these two sacred landscape nodes. This mediating relationship was reproduced through people's ritual experience, as they journeyed east from the lake to Tiwanaku. Not only were Lake Titicaca and Illimani sacred places, they were also complementary dual opposites in indigenous thought, linked to a broader set of dual

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oppositions that inform Aymara understandings of the cosmos, geography, and society (Kolata 1993). These relationships were likely true for the Inca as well (Yaeger and López Bejarano 2004).

Second, the central sunken court of the Pumapunku complex was a natural reservoir where water accumulated in the rainy season. Drainage canals provided an outlet for rainwater in the Middle Horizon, but these were in disrepair when the Inca arrived (Vranich 1999). If the central patio was a reservoir in the Late Horizon, it would have provided the Inca with a ready source of symbolically charged water for rituals, which they directed to a bath.

A third reason we believe the Inca selected Pumapunku relates to more pragmatic concerns. The large plaza east of the Pumapunku platform is unlike other Tiwanaku public spaces, which tend to be small, intimate gathering places (Moore 1996). It is, however, similar in size to Inca plazas and thus would have been well suited to Inca gatherings and ceremonies.

Finally, there were originally at least two monoliths associated with Pumapunku, probably on its west side (Posnansky 1945). As noted earlier, Betanzos wrote that the Inca believed the sculptures of Tiwanaku were models used by Viracocha to create the first people. Their presence at the Pumapunku complex would have provided material evidence to affirm the Inca creation narrative.

We believe these features of Pumapunku—all of which derive from the platform's place in political and sacred landscapes of the Middle Horizon—led the Inca to focus their ritual activities on this building complex, rather than on other monumental platforms at Tiwanaku. Their efforts included three important modifications to the platform, which reconfigured Pumapunku in ways that made it more amenable to Inca ritual practices and referenced the Viracocha creation narrative.

(p. 551) First, they placed a line of sacrificial offerings 10 meters east of the monumental building that forms Pumapunku's eastern edge. Two of these offerings were identical, each consisting of a three- to nine-month-old infant (Blom, Stevens-Tuttle, and Ingraham 2005) buried with seven miniature vessels. The infants were presumably girls, given the presence of copper *tupu* pins that fastened textiles wrapped around their bodies. They also had unpainted vessels with ceramic forms emblematic of the Inca Empire, including shallow plates, one-footed ollas, and *aríbalos* (see Bray 2003). A third offering was located on Pumapunku's central axis. Although the area was badly disturbed by colonial looting, we recovered the remains of a sub-adult, aged 13 to 15 years, buried in a flexed position and without its head. Despite extensive excavations on all four sides of Pumapunku and on the platform itself, these are the only Late Horizon human sacrificial offerings documented at the site to date. Although offerings of Inca miniature vessels were found at the Kalasasaya platform, the Inca apparently saw fit to place human sacrifices only along Pumapunku's east side, which faces the Illimani sacred mountain.

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The second of the Inca modifications to the Pumapunku complex was construction of a small Inca “bath,” roughly 2 meters by 3 meters. There, water from the sunken central court of the platform could be directed and impounded. The bath and the buried offerings can be understood as Inca efforts to reintegrate Pumapunku into the larger sacred landscape, as they understood it in the Late Horizon. The bath and water-related features on the west side reference Lake Titicaca, which lies directly west of the platform, 16 kilometers distant. By comparison, the eastern sacrificial offerings recall the mountaintop *capacocha* sacrifices, widely documented throughout the Andes (Reinhard and Ceruti 2010). They referenced Illimani mountain to the east.

We believe that the relationships that the Inca created by carrying out these modifications were more than symbolic allusions to these distant sacred places. Pumapunku’s platform was a mimetic representation of Illimani, and thus placing sacrifices along its east side was equivalent to placing them on Illimani itself. Similarly, the sunken court was a mimesis of Lake Titicaca, and activities that took place there effectively took place in the lake. Thus, we would argue that Pumapunku not only united Lake Titicaca and Illimani through its axial alignment, but that Illimani and Lake Titicaca came together mimetically within the spatial confines of the Pumapunku complex.

The third modification that we will highlight is the only other modification that the Inca made to the Pumapunku building complex. On the platform’s north side, they built at least one small room, and a long, narrow gallery on Pumapunku’s lowest terrace. The front walls of the rooms rose directly from the face of the platform’s first terrace, while the rear walls were formed by the platform’s second terrace. The masonry walls were pierced by broad doorways that were nearly two meters wide. We suggest that the tall vertical face of these rooms and their broad doorways were a mimesis of the cliff face and cave mouths of Tambo Tocco mountain, the place of emergence of the Inca ancestral couples at Pacarictambo (Bauer 1991; Urton 1990).

These doorways overlooked a small plaza, adjacent to which were four rectangular Inca structures with refuse deposits containing fragments of painted *aríbalos* and serving vessels, carbonized plant remains and charcoal, and ample faunal remains, including (p. 552) many camelids and fish. We have interpreted these deposits as the debris from feasts, presumably held in the adjacent plaza (Knudson et al. 2012; Yaeger and López Bejarano 2004). If we are correct in relating the rooms and doorways to Tambo Tocco, at least some of the feasts celebrated here plausibly commemorated the emergence of the first Inca couples and, by extension, the Viracocha creation narrative.

Conclusions

A major challenge that confronts emerging empires and nations is how to construct an overarching political identity that transcends and cross-cuts preexisting ethnic, factional, and community identities and loyalties (Anderson 1991; Baines and Yoffee 1998; Sinopoli

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1994). The Inca were aggressive social engineers who reorganized the basic fabric of provincial societies by reshuffling *ayllu* kin groups into a decimally based administrative hierarchy (Julien 1988). They simultaneously reified provincial ethnicities as the basis for a program of internal colonization, moving thousands of people across the empire (Patterson 1992). Although the Inca construct of ethnicity entailed shared language and style of dress, it was ultimately grounded in the logic of descent: the members of an ethnic group had a shared ancestry tracing back to an original couple that had emerged from a *pacarina*, or “dawning place.”

The Inca wrote (*sensu* Niles 1999) their own ethnic history on the landscape around Cuzco by erecting shrines that celebrated key events in the lives of their primordial couples and later Inca rulers who descended from them, connecting those shrines with *ceque* lines that radiated out from the capital at Cuzco (Bauer 1998). But the justification of their imperial hegemony over other ethnic groups required memory work beyond the confines of Cuzco and the Sacred Valley. The Viracocha creation narrative embedded Inca ethnicity within deep time and laid out a mythico-historical charter for a pan-Andean imperial order that justified the Inca’s place at the apex of that order. The Inca primordial couples were the first to be created and were the favorites of Viracocha, and the sun himself gave them an explicit mandate to rule over other Andean groups (also Salles-Reese 1997).

To materialize that charter, the Inca appropriated preexisting sacred places and landscapes across the Andes, including those in the Titicaca Basin. In doing so, they incorporated them into a new sacred landscape that provided a narrative account of creation that was pan-Andean in scope. It is also likely that the Titicaca Basin sites were particularly important in the justification of rule over the peoples of Collasuyu (Stanish and Bauer 2007). Places such as Tiwanaku, with its massive and heavily worn monuments and shrines, or those on the Copacabana Peninsula and the Island of the Sun, could have been interpreted as evidence of earlier civilizations unaccounted for in Inca official histories. Hence, they posed potential challenges to those accounts. In a rewriting of history that entailed substantial investment in infrastructure and ritual architecture, the Inca converted the potential liabilities that these places represented into nodes in an (p. 553) emerging sacred landscape that provided the material foundations of a new narrative—Viracocha was born on the Island of the Sun and traveled to Tiwanaku, where he created the primordial couples for all Andean peoples, the Inca first-born among them. This new narrative bolstered Inca claims of pan-Andean rulership, and visiting Tiwanaku, replete with the stone anthropomorphic models used by Viracocha, would serve to reaffirm this new history.

The fact that each ethnic group had its own ancestral couples reified it as a distinct social group, and their association with a specific *pacarina* tied that group to a concrete territory and its resources. At the same time, the common origins of all people at Tiwanaku at the hands of Viracocha justified their unification under a larger hierarchical structure. By associating themselves with Viracocha and his creative powers, Inca

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emperors claimed special legitimacy as pan-Andean rulers (MacCormack 2001; also Kolata 1997). Inca imperial expansion recapitulated Viracocha's journey across the Andes, reuniting the descendants of the primordial couples he had created.

The Island of the Sun was another key place in this new creation narrative, and the Inca improved the road that conducted pilgrims through the Copacabana Peninsula on their way to that ceremonial center. They also refashioned the shrines along the route and implanted their own cosmology in a ritualized pilgrimage that people from around the empire undertook (Arkush 2005; Bauer and Stanish 2001; Christie 2006). By expelling much of the peninsula's indigenous inhabitants and installing *mitmacona* from dozens of ethnic groups, the Inca also evoked the Viracocha creation narrative. As representatives of the many peoples originally created by Viracocha, they were returned to the area where their original ancestors were created.

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