The Archaeology of Wak’as

Explorations of the Sacred in the Pre-Columbian Andes

edited by Tamara L. Bray
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Contents

List of Figures ix
Acknowledgments xv

PART I. INTRODUCTION

1. Andean Wak’as and Alternative Configurations of Persons, Power, and Things
   
   *Tamara L. Bray* 3

PART II. CONTEMPORARY ORIENTATIONS

2. The Whole World Is Watching: New Perspectives on Andean Animism
   
   *Catherine J. Allen* 23

3. Wak’as: Entifications of the Andean Sacred
   
   *Bruce Mannheim and Guillermo Salas Carreño* 47

PART III. WAK’AS IN THE TIME OF THE INKAS

4. What Is a Wak’a? When Is a Wak’a?
   
   *Zachary J. Chase* 75

5. Pachacamac—Old Wak’a or Inka Syncretic Deity? Imperial Transformation of the Sacred Landscape in the Lower Ychsma (Lurín) Valley
   
   *Krzysztof Makowski* 127
6. Of Blood and Soil: Tombs, Wak’as, and the Naturalization of Social Difference in the Inka Heartland

   Steve Kosiba  167

7. Men Who Would Be Rocks: The Inka Wank’a

   Carolyn Dean  213

8. The Importance of Being Inka: Ushnu Platforms and Their Place in the Andean Landscape

   Frank M. Meddens  239

9. Ordering the Sacred and Recreating Cuzco

   Colin McEwan  265

**PART IV. DEEPER HISTORIES OF WAK’AS IN THE ANDEAN PAST**

10. The Shape of Things to Come: The Genesis of Wari Wak’as

    Anita G. Cook  295

11. Of Monoliths and Men: Human-Lithic Encounters and the Production of an Animistic Ecology at Khonkho Wankane

    John W. Janusek  335

**PART V. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

12. Final Reflections: Catequil as One Wak’a among Many

    John R. Topic  369

*List of Contributors*  397

*Index*  399
According to Inka legend, the world was forever changed when their ancestors ascended the craggy peak of Wanakauri, their gaze falling for the first time on the valley of Cuzco. From atop this summit, the ancestral Inkas first performed the dramatic acts that would later characterize their imperial supremacy. One of them used his sling to level mountains and gouge out valleys in a feat of creative destruction that led his siblings to bury him alive in a nearby cave. Another joined his body to a local wak’a—a personified and hallowed place. By embedding his flesh in these soils, this ancestor became Wanakauri, the principal Inka wak’a. After receiving a signal of divine favor, yet another of the Inka ancestors planted the first maize and then asserted control over the Cuzco Valley and its “barbarous” inhabitants. In making this place and molding its environs, these mythic ancestors claimed Cuzco as their own. They became Inka.

Similar stories cast the Inkas as deific rulers who alone possessed the capacity to create and convert the land and its people. Indeed, although the Inkas did not have a written history, they often boasted to Spanish scribes of how their ancestors introduced the fundamental lineaments of Andean civilization—maize agriculture, weaving, irrigation, and urban life—to the people of Cuzco and beyond (Betanzos 1968 [1551]:13; Cabello Balboa 1951 [1586]:294; Cobo 1964 [1653]:62, 72; Garcilaso 1976 [1609]:48, 59; Molina 1947 [1573]:129; see also Julien 2000:254–68; Kosiba 2010:58–104; Murra...
The Inkas inscribed these boasts into the Cuzco valley’s soils and stones. Fields, boulders, and peaks were reborn as sacred wak’a where rituals evoked a history in which the Inkas appeared as both the architects and custodians of the Andean world (cf. Bauer 1996; Dean 2010, this volume).

In both their stories and rituals, then, the Inkas declared that Cuzco was the embodiment of their divine mandate to civilize and order the Andes. But how did this region, which was undoubtedly invested with local and pre-Inka cultural understandings, come to be naturalized as inherently Inka? This chapter investigates the social practices and environmental transformations through which the Inkas assembled their imperial capital in Cuzco (Inka Imperial period, ca. 1400–1533 CE). It presents recent archaeological and ethnohistorical data from Ollantaytambo, a monumental Inka city in the Cuzco region, to discuss how the construction of this urban center required the redefinition of lands, places, and people throughout an area that extended far beyond the city’s walls (Figure 6.1). In particular, the chapter argues that wak’as manifested the
essential social differences of Ollantaytambo’s imperial landscape. By attending to the biographies and social roles of Inka wak’as, the chapter examines how state authority is established and an empire is born—not solely through the domination of “natural resources,” but through the definition of “nature” itself.

THE STATE OF NATURE AND THE NATURE OF THE STATE

Anthropological archaeologists have long been interested in how state consolidation requires the reorganization and objectification of what might be called “nature.” After all, state governance is a process through which particular people, places, and lands are revalued and repositioned as they are molded into a new, unitary environment (Kosiba 2012a). Many archaeological studies, however, define “nature” according to Judeo-Christian ontological premises, which treat the “natural world” as a preanthropogenic terrain, a backdrop for human action, an ecology without humans, or a set of pristine environmental resources for humans to dominate, domesticate, and exploit (see critiques of this point of view in Balée and Erickson 2005; Denevan 1999; Escobar 1999; Glacken 1976; Little 1999; Worster 1994). In employing these premises, archaeological studies often describe the state as a top-down managerial solution to ecological problems such as population pressure, agricultural risk, water distribution, and land allocation (e.g., Algaze 1993, 2001; Balkansky 1998; Johnson and Earle 1987; Sanders and Price 1968; Spencer and Redmond 2004; Wittfogel 1955). No matter whether these solutions are achieved through consensus (Service 1975) or conflict (Fried 1967), what is rendered is a sharply political economic picture of the state as a rational plan, an administrative net designed to capture, dominate, and domesticate natural resources.

Such studies describe how political regimes with regional aspirations see the “natural” world (sensu Scott 1998). But they often overlook how both political regimes and local social actors define “nature” when they struggle to establish or maintain their authority. Whether in social contract theory or contemporary discourse, agents of the state describe “nature” as a problem to be solved, a force to be controlled, or a primitive stage of human and environmental development to be surpassed, civilized, and extinguished. For instance, the state project in nineteenth-century Argentina was in part realized by disseminating imaginaries of a “civilized nation” by spreading ideas about the “wild, indigenous” people who dwelled within and beyond its boundaries (Gordillo and Hirsch 2003). Similarly, in the ancient world, the rulers of Urartu declared that they carved their state from a dark and savage wilderness (Smith 2003). In
these instances, political regimes cast the state as an unprecedented moment in which a group of inspired leaders triumph over a primordial, chaotic “nature” by instituting a new order that is in accord with a notion of natural law or an idea about the proper structure of the world (see Alonso 1994; Schama 1995). “Nature,” then, is not an a priori state of being or a set of resources—it is a political claim.

The uniformity of these claims throughout prehistory and history suggests that state power is not only derived from the domestication and domination of natural resources. Rather, the state itself rests on a proposition about the nature of the world—an ontological proposition. Herein, the term “ontology” refers to an understanding of what it means to be, an understanding that is manifested in social practices rather than concepts or representations (Dreyfus 1991, 2000; Merleau-Ponty 1962). A state projects an ontological proposition by building an environment designed to cultivate idealized practices and bodily dispositions that define people, places, things, and lands (Kosiba 2010). For example, the urban spaces and architectural forms (urbs) of Europe’s early Christian states projected an ontological proposition that humans are creatures who should, in their everyday practices, conform to an ideal of order (civitas)—a way of life in which people efficiently exploit natural resources, work competently at their vocation, and avoid pleasures of the flesh (e.g., Cummins 2002a; Rama 1996; Wernke 2013; B. S. Rousse, personal communication, June 25, 2013; see discussion in Lefebvre 1991:41). To understand and perhaps undermine the genesis of a state, then, is to inquire into how (and the circumstances under which) political regimes stake claims about ontology and, moreover, how such claims are rooted in or opposed to antecedent cultural understandings and political practices.

**INKA IMPERIAL ORDER**

The Inka Imperial period exemplifies how political regimes seek to disseminate and legitimate an ontological understanding of the world, in particular an understanding of what it means to be a person. Similar to other indigenous American societies, the Inkas did not possess a word or concept akin to a Judeo-Christian notion of “nature” (B. Mannheim, personal communication, June 25, 2013; cf. Descola 1994). But the Inkas, in their narratives and practices, certainly projected ontological propositions about the nature—that is, the essential characteristics—of persons and their relationships with other persons, places, things, and lands. Above all, Inka rule rested on a claim to absolute social difference between deified Inkas and barbarous non-Inka people.
and places (Kosiba 2012a; Kosiba and Bauer 2013; Patterson 1992; Silverblatt 1988). Inka elite interviewees repeated that pre-Inka peoples were lazy and lost (ociosos y perdidos) and that this was the innate condition (condición y naturaleza) of the indigenous Andean people prior to the establishment of the Inka order (e.g., LeVillier 1940: 130, 139, 147, 156, 171).

To realize these claims to social difference, the Inkas redefined and grouped non-Inka land and people in a manner akin to an agriculturalist’s project to reshape weeds into carefully sown rows of crops. The Inka Empire was a social taxonomy comprising different categories of people, places, things, and land (D’Altroy 2002; Kolata 2013). Particular types of people were rooted in specific places and lands and defined by their innate capabilities and formal characteristics.

The Inkas recognized absolute distinctions between types of non-Inka persons. The Inkas created essential categories of non-Inka subjects that corresponded to different structural positions within the empire (see Zuidema 1990:12), such as ethnicities (e.g., Colla, Chachapoya), qualitative distinctions (e.g., chosen women [aqlakuna], retainers [yanakuna], specialists [camayoc]), and workers (mitmaqkuna). These categories reflect two kinds of essentialism. Ethnicities suggest a sortal essentialism, which is a claim that people of a single category, and only that category, bear specific attributes (on essentialism, see Gelman and Mannheim 2007). These people were relegated to specific areas, required to recognize a distinct place of origin, and distinguished by their practices and dress, which conformed to a state-mandated identity (e.g., Cobo 1990 [1653]:196–97, 206; Garcilaso 1976 [1609], bk. I, chap. 22). On the other hand, yanakuna and aqlakuna suggest an ideal essentialism based on formal characteristics such as “efficiency” or “beauty” (Santillán 1968 [1563]:114, 116; see also Murra 1980:154, 163). In a similar vein, the Inkas also uprooted people from their homelands and settled them in distant lands as mitmaqkuna, who were identified strictly by their capacity for generalized labor (Murra 1980, 1982; Patterson 1985; Wachtel 1982). These new types of people—yanakuna, aqlakuna, and mitmaqkuna—were no longer tied to their communities or their homelands. They were subject only to the Inkas.

These categorical distinctions were rooted in the land. Upon incorporating a region, the Inkas redefined the land by allotting particular fields and pastures to the local community and then allocating select areas to imperial institutions and religious cults (see Cobo 1964 [1653]:120; Murra 1980:31, 57; Polo de Ondegardo 1916 [1571]:154). The Inkas reorganized land and labor in the Cuzco valley, creating an elaborate system of social and spatial divisions made up of individual strips or sections of land (chapas) and the ritual
lines that divided them (*zeques*) (Betanzos 1968 [1551]:35; see also Bauer 1998; Zuiderma 1964, 1990). Situated along these *zeques* were wak’as, which personified places where Andean people engaged in practices that sustained the new Inka landscape. At these places, Andean people poured maize beer to ensure that the wak’as would not cause earthquakes (Calancha 1974–81 [1638]: 3: 855; Murúa 1962–64 [1590], bk. I, chaps. 35–36); they made offerings to appease the peaks and ensure safe travels (Cobo 1990 [1653]: 116); and they made sacrifices to guarantee the health of the Inka royalty (e.g., ibid.: 170, 172, 177). The Inkas required subject populations to produce social and spatial divisions that replicated the *zeques* and wak’a of Cuzco (ibid.: 167; Polo de Ondegardo 1916 [1571]:112; Pizarro 1978 [1571]:51; see also Bauer 1998; Bauer and Oroso 1998). By categorizing social groups, marking fields, and naming wak’as, the Inkas shaped new political subjectivities. And, as I will argue, they altered the essential relationships between people, place, and land that structured personhood in the Andes.\(^5\)

But how did the Inkas alter these relationships? To inquire into what constitutes this kind of categorized and compartmentalized landscape is to examine the oft-neglected politics of *naturalization*—the material and symbolic practices that work to embed claims to social difference and social order within the environment (Smith 2004; see also Harvey 1996; Kosiba and Bauer 2013). In this sense, we might think of how Maya elite staged ritual practices in which they positioned themselves atop stone friezes of the Cauac monster (a deity and chthonic force) to signify that only elites were allied with environmental forces (Scarborough 1998: 152). Or we may recall how the rulers of ancient South India constructed reservoirs that imitated the architecture of majestic temples to disseminate among their subjects the belief that elite authority was legitimate and “natural”—that rulers met their moral obligation to improve the environment and provide for their people (Bauer and Morrison 2008; Morrison 1993, 2009, 2010: 188). In these situated practices, political actors attempt to define what it means to be a particular kind of person by building (or razing) spaces and orchestrating (or refuting) practices that naturalize claims about “the way things were/are” and “the way things should have been/should be” (cf. Bell 1992:176; Geertz 1981:123–24, 130–31; for relevant case studies, see Bray 2013; Smith 2004; Swenson 2003, 2012).

Inka wak’as provide analytical points of entry into how political regimes seek to etch their claims to absolute authority into the ground. Indeed, as the opening tale of Wanakauri suggests, wak’a were essential to practices that created and intermeshed social and ontological boundaries. The tale of Wanakauri—a tale that was regularly performed and ritually reenacted—is not only a story
of Inka origins or the Inka domination of “nature” (cf. Bauer 1996; Dean 2010). It is a story about the creation and naturalization of an Inka ontological order, for in this tale we see practices that established categorical differences between types of people (Inka, non-Inka), places (Wanakauri, a preceding wak’a), lands (Inka Cuzco, the non-Inka outside), and times (Inka present, barbarous past). The birth of this wak’a inaugurated a new understanding of what it meant to be a person. But scholars often overlook the political salience of wak’as, treating them as apolitical reflections of an enduring Andean cosmology or passive places that encoded relationships between people and “nature” (e.g., Sherbondy 1982, 1992; Zuidema 1964, 1990). They rarely take into account how the social roles of wak’as and the meanings of their attendant rituals changed as new regimes came to power (for notable exceptions, see Bauer 1998; Moore 2010; van de Guchte 1999). To address such changes requires a shift from accounts about the structure of Inka rule and Andean cosmology to an analysis of the dynamic practices through which Inka social divisions and political ontologies were first put into place. By examining the practices that birthed new wak’a and people at Ollantaytambo, we can begin to explore the roots of the Inka imperial order.

OLLANTAYTAMBO

Ollantaytambo is a massive Inka imperial city situated 42.5 aerial kilometers from the Inka capital of Cuzco. At Ollantaytambo, the Inka built an urban center within a striking environmental setting (Figure 6.2). The city’s palatial complexes were situated upon a broad alluvial terrace at the junction of two river valleys, both of which ultimately provide entry to the lower-altitude Andean jungle (selva) and access to its valued products like coca leaves, feathers, and hot peppers (aji). As Ollantaytambo was built, massive terraces were raised, reshaping the land as they descended from the central plazas of the city to the banks of the Vilcanota, a turbulent and wide river. Springs, streams, and glacial lakes were canalized to carry water to the fields of Ollantaytambo. Storage houses, temples, and walls were affixed to the sheer cliffs that surround the city, creating an environmental aesthetic in which state institutional structures seem to organically emerge from salient geological features.

In building Ollantaytambo, the Inka created an extensive urban landscape. Indeed, the monumental structures that are now frequented and photographed by international tourists were only a small part of a grand design. These structures, terraces, and plazas were the ritual core of a vast complex of settlements, roads, shrines, and fields spread across the valley’s slopes. In
several early colonial litigation cases, both indigenous elites and Spanish lords declared that the formal juridical boundaries of Ollantaytambo encompassed a broad area that incorporated several adjoining valleys and settlement systems (Archivo Regional de Cusco [ARC] 1555–1729: fol. 7v, fol. 11v–12; ARC 1568–1722). The city’s eastern border was marked by the Inka complex at Pachar, situated 5.5 aerial kilometers from the central plaza (ARC 1555–1729: fol. 178). Ollantaytambo also stretched into the nearby Soqma Valley, where the monumental enclosure of Perolniyoq (or Korimarka) prominently marked both the Inka imperial presence and the southern boundary of the city (ibid.: fol. 1, 8, 13, 16–17). Other documents indicate that Ollantaytambo and its associated land claims reached far into lowlands located a considerable distance from the city’s core (Kosiba 2012b; see Archivo General de la Nación [AGN] 1576; ARC 1568–1722: fol. 294).

Ollantaytambo’s Inka occupation, however, was brief. Recent research indicates that the Inkas built Ollantaytambo during the fifteenth century (Protzen 1983, 1986, 1991; for radiocarbon dates, see Bengtsson 1998; Hollowell 1987; Kendall 1985). Excavations, surface collections, and surveys have not revealed evidence for substantial pre-Inka occupation at Ollantaytambo (Galiano and
Apaza 2004; Gibaja 1982, 1984; Kosiba 2010; Soto and Cabrera 1999; Vera 1986), though it is possible that the Inkas built the city by reusing architectural materials from an earlier and presently unknown site (see Hollowell 1987). Spanish documents indicate that Ollantaytambo was constructed during the imperial period, perhaps as the royal estate of Pachakuti Inka (Protzen 1991; Rostworowski 1962; Rowe 1997) or of Viracocha Inka (ARC 1568–1722:fol. 296v).

By constructing complexes such as Ollantaytambo, Maras, or Machu Picchu, the Inka royalty established inalienable and lineage-based rights over land and people (e.g., Covey 2006; Covey and Amado 2008; D’Altroy 2002; Murra 1980; Niles 1993, 1999; Quave 2012). Similar to the other Cuzco complexes, Ollantaytambo was a mélange of people from Cuzco and farther afield, including elites (Araccama, Chinchaysuyu, and Cuzco ayllus), retainers (yanakuna, aqlakuna), and laborers (mitmaqkuna) (Covey and Amado 2008; Glave and Remy 1983; Malca Olguín 1963; Rowe 1997). These new types of people were defined relative to their practical relationships with the land: the royal ayllus claimed the land and redistributed its products while the yanakuna and mitmaqkuna worked the city’s fields and built its terraces (Biblioteca Nacional del Perú [BNP] 1629:fol. 89–158).

Clearly, the creation of Ollantaytambo initiated new understandings of people, place, and land. In examining the dynamic history through which Ollantaytambo was produced, we see how these understandings were generated in practices of construction that produced particular types of persons and places. The archaeological data presented here are from the Wat’a Archaeological Project (WAP), a multiscalar survey and excavation project that was carried out between 2005 and 2007 that focused on the Ollantaytambo region (Kosiba 2010, 2011, 2012a). Ethnohistorical data were obtained through archival research conducted in Cuzco and Lima between 2011 and 2013.

BEFORE OLLANTAYTAMBO

Prior to Inka ascendancy, during the Ollanta phase (ca. 1000–1300 CE), the people of the Ollantaytambo area defined their identity and declared their autonomy by assembling discrete and highly localized communities. These groups organized economic and ritual practices in distinct areas to buttress their claims to specific lands, natural resources, and culturally significant sites. Each community was a tightly woven skein of settlements centered on a particular town (Figure 6.3) (Kosiba 2011). Situated directly between high pastures and low maize lands, these towns were likely the hubs of “compact
Figure 6.3. Map of pre-Inka (Ollanta phase) settlement clusters and ritual centers throughout the Ollantaytambo area. The map shows the location of sites relative to optimal (MPT1) and potential (MPT2) maize production terrain. Settlements are tightly grouped between maize production and high pastoral lands.
vertical” economies with farming and pastoral activities occurring in adjoining ecological zones (see Brush 1976; Yamamoto 1985; cf. Hastorf 1993).

Specific architectural features marked these towns as political and ritual centers, making them recognizable to others as the roots of a local community’s claim to autonomy and authority. These features, which included tomb sectors, plazas, and platforms, were found at all of the towns but no other sites dating to this period (see Kosiba 2010, 2011). The towns also contained common types of ritual space. Concentric terraces and platforms were built on abruptly rising hilltops, transforming them into stepped, truncated “pyramids” (Figure 6.4). Surface collections on these hilltops produced very high densities of decorated Ollanta phase serving vessel fragments, suggesting that these spaces were used for ritual activity (Kosiba 2011). Moreover, the towns contained exclusive spaces for the veneration of ancestors (e.g., the mummified, physically dead, whether recognized as collective or individual “ancestors” [Salomon 1995]). Ancestor veneration next to visible, open, and aboveground tombs was a new type of political practice that emerged during the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries in the Cuzco and Ollantaytambo areas (Bengtsson 1998; Dean 2005; McEwan et al. 2002). In comparison with other Ollanta phase sites, the towns were the only places that contained architecture and artifacts associated with ancestor veneration practices, including discrete mortuary complexes with multiple aboveground tower-shaped tombs (chullpas), platforms and plazas, and very high densities of decorated serving vessels (see data in Kosiba 2011: 132–38; cf. Covey 2006). Within these towns’ mortuary complexes, individual tombs adjoined small platforms and terraces, suggesting that people feted, fed, and conversed with specific ancestors in intimate rituals (Figure 6.5).

Before the rise of the Inka, then, Andean people anchored communities in specific localities. People constructed and venerated these places, and in so doing, they became “a people.” Over time, such practices reiterated affective ties between “a people” and “a place,” thereby marking a local community’s claims to authority and autonomy. Each of these localities was likely akin to what we understand as a llaqtap— a microscale ecology comprising a town, a local environment, associated settlements, and a ritual space (cf. Murra 1980: 29; Ramírez 2005: 53). Conveying an intimate relation between people and locality, Salomon (1991: 23) remarks that the people of a llaqtap—the llaqtayoq—possessed a place and were possessed by it. It appears as though, during the centuries prior to Inka rule in the Cuzco region, place, llaqtap, and llaqtayoq expressed the shared and sharply localized essence of people and land, blood and soil. These local communities thus rested on a political and ontological
claim of affinity and mutuality of being between a particular people and place, a kind of sortal essentialism that simultaneously linked a people’s connection to particular soils and marked social differences between localized communities. Prior to the Inkas, these claims were staked during situated social practices, such as ancestor veneration ceremonies staged within ritual centers. As we will see, these local claims and their attendant practices became the basis of a new Inka regional order.

**ASSEMBLING OLLANTAYTAMBO**

Many of the Ollanta phase towns were reborn during the process of Inka state formation (ca. 1300–1400 CE) (Figure 6.6). At Wat’a and Pumamarka, local towns that had been occupied for over a millennium, elites directed the construction of buildings bearing the insignia of the nascent Inka state—double-jamb doorways, trapezoidal niches, and double-frame windows (Kendall 1984, 1988, 1996; Kendall et al. 1992; Kosiba 2012a; compare with findings in the

**Figure 6.4.** Pre-Inka political and ritual centers near Ollantaytambo that were built around distinct geomorphological prominences and terraced. Clockwise from top left: Wat’a, Sulkan, Markaqocha (Ayapata), and Ankasmarka (photographs by author.)
Ollanta phase tomb structures often adjoin small terraced platforms, suggesting that the tombs were sites of secluded ritual practices. The arrows and lines show the entry and terrace wall of one tomb platform (Tomb A) from above and below (photographs by author).
Pisaq area [Covey 2006] and the Cuzco valley [Bauer 2004; McEwan 2006; McEwan et al. 2002]. I have argued that, by reconstructing these sites and redesigning their ritual spaces, local elites and local ethnic groups cemented their privileged positions within the nascent Inka state (Kosiba 2012b; see also Bauer 2004; Covey 2006; Niles 1980). They razed various parts of their towns, constructing massive buildings and walls at the entryways to mortuary sectors and terraced hilltops. In so doing, they converted long-used tombs and platforms that once marked a people’s intimate connections to their ancestors into exclusive Inka spaces that manifested the new regime’s claims to exclusivity and absolute social difference (Kosiba 2010, 2012a, 2012b). Spaces for collective ceremony became spaces explicitly linked to Inka power. In consequence, the ancestral places of local communities became Inka. That is, these places were recast as exclusive and elite places within an Inka order of people, places, and things.

Later on, in the early fifteenth century, the Inka elite detached their claims to authority from powerful ancestral places such as Wat’a and Pumamarka. They constructed new urban centers and estates at Ollantaytambo, Pisaq, and Machu Picchu (Covey 2006). These urban centers and estates all emphasized public ceremony in vast plazas. Throughout the Ollantaytambo area, new kinds of elites (kurakas) were stationed in imperial complexes (Chusicasa, Markaqocha, Ñawpa Colegio, Pachar, and Perolniyoq) and positioned to maximize surveillance of Inka lands, roads, and settlements (Kosiba and Bauer 2013). The mortuary precincts that had long defined local pre-Inka towns were not included in these complexes, suggesting that the Inkas introduced new ritual places and political practices in the imperial period. Indeed, in the Ollantaytambo area, aboveground, visible tombs and/or mortuary precincts cannot be found at any Inka complex, including the urban core of Ollantaytambo itself.9 Further indicating a shift in the spaces of social life, new residential settlements and lands were created to house new kinds of subjects such as mitmaqkuna, aqlakuna, and yanakuna (ARC 1555–1729:fol. 132, 182). In particular, the Inkas implanted an array of differentiated places on the banks of the Vilcanota—they arranged activities, emplaced social memories, and encoded spaces as if they were tying knots on an extensive khipu (cf. Urton 2012:494–95).

These changes, and these new social categories, were in part manifested through construction practices. Specifically, the construction of Ollantaytambo entailed the production of land along a 12 km corridor of the Vilcanota River. Initiating one of the Cuzco region’s most challenging engineering feats, the Inkas built retaining walls to direct the flow of the Vilcanota River (Farrington 1983; Niles 1999). The walls minimized damage from floods and transformed
Map of Inka Imperial period settlement patterns throughout the Ollantaytambo area. Throughout the transition to Inka rule, select preexisting political and ritual centers were dramatically transformed and embellished with Inka architecture. During the Inka Imperial period, newly constructed monumental administrative complexes (e.g., Chusicasa, Nawpa Iglesia, Pachar, and Perolniyoq) became the anchors of political authority that defined Ollantaytambo’s urban landscape. The Inkas also directed the construction of monumental structures on the plain called Markaqocha, below the pre-Inka town of Markaqocha (Ayapata).

Figure 6.6.
marshy banks into productive agricultural lands. The Inkas further increased the land area along the Vilcanota River by constructing terraces that controlled colluvium (Kosiba 2012b; see also Farrington 1983; Heffernan 1989, 1996; Niles 1993). My Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis of ASTER data indicates that these Inka projects created approximately 134 ha of new lands between Pachar and Ollantaytambo’s center and approximately 270 ha of new lands along the 12 km area that borders Ollantaytambo (Kosiba 2012b).

Here the Inkas created not only new lands but also new spaces that grouped people, places, land, and socioeconomic tasks. A royal road traversed these new lands, providing passage from Cuzco to Ollantaytambo’s monumental gate. An extensive canal directed water from Kulluspukio (also called Kusillo), a spring situated high above the Huarocondo Valley, to fields and terraces strung along an 11 km stretch of the Vilcanota River. In constructing and maintaining this road and canal, local people became subjects of an Inka notion of social and ecological order. Their labor was linked to the labor of other, distant communities. Indeed, the terraces, roads, and canals would have required synchronized labor and task scheduling among the inhabitants of different communities. A rupture within an 11 km canal or the flooding of a road, for instance, would potentially damage crops within multiple fields and effectively sever the regional connections and economic interdependencies of this system (cf. Hastorf 1993:202; Mitchell 1976; Sherbondy 1982). Thus, the city introduced not only new understandings of people, places, and land but also new understandings of people’s obligations to an Inka order.

**WAK’AS OF OLLANTAYTAMBO**

As mentioned above, Inka urban centers and administrative complexes in the Ollantaytambo area do not contain the conspicuous tomb structures or mortuary precincts that defined localities and communities prior to the Inka. Rather, the borders and entryways of Inka Ollantaytambo are defined by other monumental features: stone wak’as. The construction and veneration of these wak’as appears crucial to the reformulation—indeed, the *Inka-*ization—of the Ollantaytambo area. Many scholars have discussed Cuzco wak’as and the system of ritual pathways and land divisions (*zeques*) that they constituted (Bauer 1998; MacCormack 1993; Niles 1987; Rowe 1985; Sherbondy 1992; Zuidema 1964, 1990). Researchers have argued that the Cuzco wak’as were parts of an unchanging yet politically inflected calendrical structure (e.g., Zuidema 1964) or a dynamic landscape that undergirded different versions of Inka history (e.g., Bauer 1998). Few, however, have considered how systems of Inka wak’as
functioned outside of Cuzco itself (for an exception, see Bauer and Orosco 1998). Here I complement the previous research by demonstrating that Inka wak’as were personified places (cf. “place-persons,” Mannheim and Salas, this volume) who manifested and maintained an Inka social order throughout Ollantaytambo, from its distant borders to the very heart of the region.

The archaeological documentation of wak’as is no easy task. Any object or place can be a wak’a, and so it is difficult to distinguish wak’as through archaeological methods alone. Cuzco’s wak’as were often “natural places”—environmental features that people modified, named, and fed to ensure the well-being of the soils, the water, their community, and the empire. Thus, I concentrate on sites containing distinct forms of ritual architecture, for example, stand-alone carved boulders, platforms, and walled enclosures, which are explicitly associated with notable environmental features such as caves, springs, and canals. These sites were *adoratorios* (places for veneration), a word often used by Spaniards to further clarify the term “wak’a” (Acosta 1954 [1590]: 142, 152; Arriaga 1968 [1621]: 197; Cieza 1946 [1553]: 304). Cuzco’s imperial wak’as were largely places where people made offerings and staged feasts. More particularly, they were places sated and feted with “foods” that humans do not eat. Given these insights, I focus on the practices—building and feasting—through which people gave life to, engaged with, and attributed personhood to Inka wak’as and, in so doing, cemented their own social position and sense of personhood within an Inka order.

My analysis concentrates on ten modified boulders or wak’as, eight of which are situated along the royal road from Cuzco to Ollantaytambo and two that mark the southern border of Ollantaytambo in the Soqma Valley (Figure 6.7). Though there are surely other kinds of wak’a in the Ollantaytambo region, these boulders are important to our understanding of an Inka order because of their materiality, visibility, and temporality. Hewn from andesite and located along an Inka road, these particular kinds of wak’a appear as enduring and conspicuous guardians of an Inka world. Though modified andesite boulders are common near Cuzco, they are rare in the Ollantaytambo area (only ten were identified throughout the 200 km² area of the WAP survey), suggesting that these wak’as had a particular function and/or meaning. I conducted total surface collections at each of these shrines (which are small and appropriate for total collections) to determine their occupational history and use. Excavation data from several Peruvian colleagues provide additional insights into practices at the shrines.

The sequence of wak’as begins outside of Ollantaytambo’s borders, deep within the sheer walls of the Huarocondo canyon. The Inka road from Cuzco
The map shows how the wak'as were situated away from preexisting ritual centers, in or near select newly developed agricultural lands with large “geometric” terraces (e.g., between Pachar and Ollantaytambo), along the road from Cuzco to Ollantaytambo, and at the boundaries of Ollantaytambo (e.g., Pachar, Korimarka): (1) Saratubuallya, (2) Pomatales, (3) Ñawpa Iglesia, (4) Pachar (Hatun Kancha Raqay), (5) Chullurayay, (6) the dual boulders at Choqana, (7) Sala, (8) Perolniyoq, (9) Korimarka, and (10) Vilcanota.
to Ollantaytambo meanders through this canyon, passing the pre-Inka town of Wat’a. Boulder shrines are located at places where one gains and loses visibility of Wat’a, at Saratuhuallya and Pomatales. The andesite boulders of Saratuhuaylla are encircled by an immense Inka wall. From inside the wall, one sees the early Inka walls that enclosed Wat’a and its mortuary complex. Two carved andesite boulders also sit at Pomatales, affording a view of the mortuary complex below Wat’a. The larger and more elaborate boulder at Pomatales (“Baño de la Ñusta”) contains a central bench motif—a horizontal plane cut into the boulder’s surface—above which four niches are carved (Figure 6.8). The boulders at Saratuhuaylla and Pomatales call attention to Wat’a and its mortuary precincts. In so doing, they draw an analogy (sensu Wernke 2007, 2013) between the Inka wak’a and a pre-Inka ancestral place, an analogy that is further emphasized at other shrines in Ollantaytambo through the manipulation of water (for comparison at another Inka estate, see Bray 2013:172–75).

Farther along the road, one encounters the shrine of Ñawpa Iglesia (also called Choqella), a modified cave that contains multiple tombs. This shrine is connected to the spring of Kulluspukio, which courses toward the center of Ollantaytambo and thus links the shrine to Inka fields along the Vilcanota River. At Ñawpa Iglesia, terraces ascend a conical hill (Figure 6.9). An impressive carved andesite boulder stands atop these terraces in front of two finely worked slabs of granite, which form an immense cave. The boulder contains a triple-jamb door design and multiple bench motifs. Monumental walls and buildings are situated on either side of the cave. Tombs can be seen within the cave’s interior, intimating that this shrine was explicitly linked to ancestors.

The Inkas constructed Ñawpa Iglesia on unoccupied terrain. Alluvial deposits (fine sand and round cobbles) were uncovered near the base of several excavation units at the site, suggesting that the Huarocondo River regularly flooded this location before the construction of the terraces (Arredondo Dueñas 2009:58, 63, 72). Several canal features were uncovered during the excavations, linking the construction of the shrine to the canalization of the Kulluspukio and the creation of new land along the Vilcanota. Particularly high densities of polychrome Inka pottery and serving vessels suggest that people propitiated this place and its ancestors by feasting with or feeding the wak’a (ibid.:133). Similar to Saratuhuaylla and Pomatales, the shrine was situated in a private space—it was located between massive walls and accessible by only one path. The site’s walls and restricted entry suggest that feasting or feeding practices at Ñawpa Iglesia were personal affairs during which people participated in practices that linked powerful environmental forces with Inka ancestors.
Figure 6.8. The modified boulders of Pomatales (above) and Saratubuallya (below) (photographs by author).
Figure 6.9. Nawpa Iglesia, an intricately carved boulder (above) that sits at the entry to a modified cave (below) (photographs by author).
A connection between place and Inka ancestors is also foregrounded at the next shrine on the road, which personifies an Inka queen. The royal road steadily descends from Šawpa Iglesia to Pachar, where travelers from Cuzco turned toward Ollantaytambo’s core. An immense boulder towers over the road. The boulder is situated on a hill and surrounded by Inka walls. A document from 1574 sheds light on this place, revealing that near Pachar’s bridge there was a wak’a called (at the time) Hatun Kancha Raqay (ARC 1555–1729: fol. 181). The document states:

. . . in the high part on the left bank of the river when going from Cusco or the town of Maras to Tambo, one league from Tambo. . . here one finds a mound of earth piled high near a rock that appears as though it was a site of sacrifice and wak’a for the indigenous people. . . it is said that this mound of earth and associated buildings in the complex or corral served the Inka; it was a kind of ancient shrine [mochadero]. . . It is said that this is where the Inka sat. (ARC 1555–1729: fol. 181, 181v; my translation)\(^\text{12}\)

The shrine was a mochadero, a place that people venerated and personified by making kissing expressions (mochar) (e.g., Arriaga 1968 [1621]:211, 250; Polo de Ondegardo 1916 [1571]:136). The site belonged to Mama Oqlllo, the principal wife of the eleventh Inka emperor Wayna Qhapaq (ARC 1555–1729: fol. 181, 181v) (see discussion below). Surface collections and excavations near the wak’a indicate that it was constructed de novo in the Inka Imperial period (Solís and Olazabal 1998).\(^\text{13}\) The walls at this site demonstrate that it was a secluded space where ritual practices directed attention toward the shrine. The wak’a’s specific association with Mama Oqlllo and Pachar suggests, as was the case for many of Cuzco’s wak’as, that the rituals enacted here would have manifest a sense of shared ancestry as they invoked the Inka royalty, their biographies, and the land. Many of these wak’as thus directed attention to entities from the past that were key to Inka imperial strategy—entities such as the site of Wat’a, ancestors such as those people who were entombed in the cave at Šawpa Iglesia, or Inka nobility such as Mama Oqlllo.

Other wak’as further accentuate the new Inka land. Several carved boulders are positioned within the fields along the royal road to Ollantaytambo. Near the Inka settlement of Chulluraqay, a large boulder sits in the middle of the Inka canal from Kulluspukio. A channel was carved through the base of the stone, allowing the canal to enter and exit. The boulder is not located near a center of population or an elite complex—it is quite literally part of the canal and the agricultural terraces. A small platform is situated on one side of the boulder, suggesting that offerings were made at this place in private
engagements with the wak’a. A short distance ahead, carved andesite stones stand over either side of the road as it passes Choqana, a fortified and monumental Inka site. Each stone bears a bench motif and is attached to a small platform for offerings. In feting or feasting with the stones at Chulluraqay and Choqana, people would have recognized and venerated the newly built Inka agrarian landscape.

The final stone on this route sits at the terminus of the road from Cuzco, below the majestic and intricately sculpted rock outcrop of Ollantaytambo. A carved andesite boulder, now lightheartedly named la Sala de Operaciones (“Sala”), is positioned at the edge of the lower Inka plaza. The boulder was situated in an exclusive sector and partially surrounded by a wall (Galiano and Apaza 2004:99), suggesting that the site was built for private ritual activities. Similar to the other worked boulders on the road from Cuzco, the rock’s designs include a quadrangular bench motif.

Recent excavations reveal that “Sala” was constructed as part of the terrace system that faces the city’s lower plaza (ibid.). The excavations uncovered high densities of Classic Inka decorated serving vessels, suggesting that this place was established in the Inka period and it was feted or fed quite regularly. Indeed, an offering of animal bones was recovered at the boulder, and other offerings of miniature Inka vessels and a llama figurine were uncovered at a nearby fountain, leading the excavators to suggest that the boulder and its environs were places for sacrifices (ibid.:123).

Wak’as situated along the distant borders of Ollantaytambo also required practices that recognized the new Inka land and its structures. The Inkas modified two caves at Korimarka, a ridge situated on the upper slopes of the Soqma Valley that marked the southern boundary of Ollantaytambo (ARC 1555–1729:fol. 1, 8, 13). Korimarka consists of two neighboring caves of almost identical size that overlook the spring of Pantanayoq. Platforms with distinct Inka stonework face the cave. Adjacent to these platforms, a series of immense monumental terraces ascend a narrow ravine, leading to a pass that affords a view of Ollantaytambo.

Water flows from the marshy plains of Korimarka and Pantanayoq to a three-tiered, ~150 m tall waterfall that cascades through the craggy bluff below the Inka complex of Perolniyoq (Figure 6.10). At Perolniyoq, carved stones and monumental Inka spaces draw attention to this striking environmental feature. The buildings of Perolniyoq surround two carved andesite boulders, each exhibiting a bench motif similar to the other rocks on the road to Ollantaytambo. The Inka buildings and ritual spaces of Perolniyoq connect the Korimarka spring to Soqma agricultural lands. Indeed, the site is inseparable
Figure 6.10. The monumental complex of Perolniyoq (upper left), which the Inka built directly above a majestic waterfall (below) (photograph by author).
from the waterfall that feeds the valley’s terraces. In turn, people fed the wak’a at Perolniyoq. As at the other sites, our surface collections recovered unusually high densities of Inka polychrome serving vessels in the sector of Perolniyoq that surrounds the carved stone, suggesting that in this space people feasted with the wak’a.

The shrines at Perolniyoq and Korimarka point to broader themes among the wak’a of Ollantaytambo. First, all of these shrines were exclusively associated with recently created spaces—fields, canalized springs, monumental terraces, and newly constructed settlements. More particularly, all of the shrines were positioned near areas where the Inka built monumental agricultural systems—”geometric” terraces that formed angular shapes and intricate designs as they modeled hillsides and mountain facades (Kosiba 2012b). The shrines were specifically not constructed near preexisting political centers, such as Wat’a, Pumamarka, and Llactallactayoq, even though some were sited to view these pre-Inka towns. Nor were the shrines constructed in new Inka political centers or towns.

Most of the shrines were situated along the road and in the fields from Cuzco to Ollantaytambo. On the road, shrines were sited at regular intervals, each of them located approximately two to four kilometers from the preceding one. Their positioning on this road—and their regular spacing—suggests that when approaching or leaving Ollantaytambo, it was important to engage with a sequence of wak’a in a way that replicated Cuzco’s zeque system. That is, as people approached the sacred city, they would have visited a series of ritual stations that influenced their practices and bodily dispositions while calling to mind Inka actors and Inka history. At present, it is not clear whether Ollantaytambo had a zeque system, but a Spanish document explicitly states that the city used zeque lines to mark land divisions (ARC 1568–1722:fol. 354, 355). Not all Inka subjects could traverse the royal roads, thus some of these wak’a (e.g., Perolniyoq, Ñawpa Iglesia, Sala) might have been seen and revered only by select persons. However, many wak’a were situated near fields and canals (e.g., Saratuyaylla, Pomatales, Puchar, Choqana, and Chullurayqay Korimarka), suggesting that they were seen and propitiated by different kinds of person and subject.

DEFINING LAND, PEOPLE, AND PLACE

Colonial documents from Ollantaytambo provide further insights into this landscape, suggesting that these wak’a, and the lands in which they were situated, were essential to Inka ontological claims. Ollantaytambo wak’a resided
in the very places where the Inkas established new land claims and new social roles (yanakuna, kuraka). For instance, in a series of litigations against the Monasterio de Santa Clara in Cuzco (see also Burns 1999), Don Felipe de Coritopa Inka, the grandson of Pachakuti, stated that he was the kuraka of Pachar (ARC 1555–1729:fol. 178). Coritopa confirmed the role of the kuraka as the caretaker of a section of the city’s environment (ibid.: fols. 1–2). He claimed usufruct rights over land in Korimarka and Pachar, and stated that this privilege was derived from his obligation to care for the land (ibid.: fol. 4v). Such cases suggest that the lands associated with the shrines corresponded to the royal claims of direct Inka ownership and kuraka oversight that defined the imperial period. The documents also show that the development of these lands emplaced new kinds of people. Specialized laborers (yanakuna) were stationed near Korimarka, Pantanayoq, and Pachar (ibid.: fols. 12, 16–17, 216v–17, 232). Numerous people from the nearby town of Maras testified to the Spanish that “mamaconas” from their community resided in the Pachar buildings next to Hatun Kancha Raqay, suggesting that these women maintained the wak’a (ibid.: fol. 182). Mamaconas (“mothers”) were aqllakuna of high rank—older women who often taught younger women or women whom the Inka ruler gifted as bridewealth to become servants (see Acosta 1954 [1590]:155–56; Betanzos 1968 [1551]:53; Zuidema 2007). The documents, then, show that laborers and servants of a special status and class cultivated and cared for the land at Pachar and Soqma. Inka elite administrators like Coritopa would have directly overseen these laborers. A hierarchy of social categories and roles was anchored in particular lands that housed wak’as.

The wak’as lived in land that the Inkas created and managed. Several documents indicate that lands established due to the canalization of the Vilcanota River were the exclusive domain of the imperial religion and the Sun (Burns 1999:52). According to Spanish ontological premises, such land was not “owned” since it was assigned to “pagan” deities. Lands of the Sun, in particular, appear regularly in colonial litigations since they could be acquired by eager representatives of the crown and the church (e.g., AGN 1559–60:fol. 1–16). For instance, in 1557, Francisco de Mayontopa, the powerful kuraka of Ollantaytambo, argued against the Monasterio de Santa Clara in Cuzco for rights over approximately 580 ha of land near Pachar (ARC 1555–1729:fol. 452v). Representing Santa Clara’s interests, Jeronimo de Costilla stated that the lands should not remain in Ollantaytambo’s jurisdiction since they belonged to the Sun. Recounting his management of the land, Mayontopa answered that the people of Ollantaytambo were the rightful owners since they had created and cultivated these fields (Burns 1999:54). He petitioned
his case to the Corregidor of Cuzco, Polo de Ondegardo, who sided with the aging kuraka.

In a case that pitted Mayontopa against the Convento de la Merced in Cuzco, both parties declared that fields along the Vilcanota River were dedicated to the Sun and the divine Inka royalty (AGN 1559–60). The contested land was situated in Colcabamba, a place where maize was grown and stored for Ollantaytambo (ibid.; Burns 1999). These lands were maintained by Colla and Chinchaysuyu mitmaqkuna (AGN 1559–60:fol. 13, 26v, 29). Exemplifying the Spanish perspective on private property, the Mercederians claimed that the lands were “dedicated during the time of the Inka to the Sun and to the Inka, who was the lord of this region, and never in his life did Francisco Mayontopa possess them as his own, nor did his Indians possess them as their own” (ibid.:fol. 5; see also Burns 1999:55).  

These cases illustrate how definitions of the environment are at the heart of imperial projects. Indeed, as Burns (1999:57) cogently argues, within the folios of these documents we see a collision of imperial aims—an Inka project to define land use and a Spanish colonial effort to equate land with property. The kurakas claimed rights to Pachar and Soqma because they had dutifully overseen the labor and products of these lands. Spanish ecclesiastical groups argued that labor performed at Pachar and Soqma was specifically dedicated to the imperial cults and thus could not be claimed as private property. Under the Spanish regime, Coritopa makes a counterclaim for these lands as his territory (due to his labor management) and petitions for permission to establish or reconstruct clear territorial markers (mojones) (ARC 1555–1720:fol. 2, 4). The documents surely reflect the motivations of Inka kurakas influenced by European ideas of value. But if we read between the competing claims of “rulership” and “ownership,” we also see that these arguments are largely about different ontological understandings of people, place, and land.

**DISCUSSION: CREATING PLACES, CULTIVATING PERSONS**

As the Inkas assembled Ollantaytambo, they attempted to reconfigure relationships between people and the land, repositioning people and places according to their “essential” qualities. Local labor was distributed throughout a system of agricultural and pastoral lands, categorized according to the characteristics of the laborers, and managed by new administrative authorities. Likewise, rituals were detached from earlier ancestral places like Wat’a and redistributed along the border and road that connected the region to Cuzco.
When the Inkas constructed the city’s monumental structures, they raised wak’as in new lands assigned to Inka authorities and in terrain tilled by new people. As in the Wanakauri myth, so it was at Ollantaytambo: wak’as, people, and land were co-created.

The wak’as embodied this newly wrought Inka environment. They attached a common suite of signs—carved stones, geometric motifs—to spectacular environmental features. Commonalities in the materiality and style of wak’as suggest that they were meant to be used and perceived in similar ways. Many of them contain boulders that stand out relative to the surrounding architecture and geology. That is, these are all single, detached boulders, unlike the immense outcrops of carved rocks that constitute wak’a sites above the city of Cuzco. All of the Ollantaytambo stones exhibit bench motifs that focus the viewer’s attention on a particular facade of the boulder (Figure 6.11). As with many of the new Inka administrative sites, the wak’as were manufactured in previously unoccupied or newly established lands, suggesting a semiotic association between new imperial land claims and new Inka spaces. Situated next to springs and waterfalls, amidst monumental geometric terraces, and along an extensive road, the shrines emphasized Inka transformations of the environment. Conspicuous in their locations along the borders and roads of Ollantaytambo, the wak’as marked new Inka royal claims to land ownership—claims that were inalienable. The similarities in settings suggest that the boulders were positioned to aestheticize and accentuate agrarian lands, creating a landscape in which it appeared as though Inka imperial power sprouted directly from the earth (see also Dean 2010, this volume).

Even so, such a claim to power cannot be grounded in aesthetics and appearances alone. The data suggest that the power and personhood of the wak’as were manifested in situated practices of construction and veneration. These practices likely gained cultural purchase by invoking familiar, pre-Inka understandings about relationships between people and places. Indeed, the architecture and artifacts of the wak’as demonstrate that practices at these sites worked within the same semiotic register as ancestor veneration practices at pre-Inka ritual centers. The excavations and surface collections revealed high densities of decorated serving vessels and faunal remains near multiple wak’as, indicating that these places were feted or fed in ways that called to mind the practices through which pre-Inka people engaged with their ancestors. Similar to earlier aboveground tombs, the wak’as were enclosed within walls and/or adjoined by small platforms, revealing that both wak’a rituals and ancestor veneration practices were secluded affairs during which small parties of people or individuals confronted powerful beings. Finally, like the aboveground tombs of the
preceeding epoch, the wak’as were emplaced in lands worked by discrete kinds of people and/or distinct, highly localized communities.

Considering these data, I argue that the Ollantaytambo wak’as operated as if they were Inka ancestors rooted in the land (cf. Salomon 1995:322). During the centuries before Inka ascendancy, the people of the Ollantaytambo area participated in ancestor veneration ceremonies and came to understand that their flesh and blood were of the same substance as the soils and rocks of the

**Figure 6.11.** Common stylistic attributes of many of the carved boulders in the Ollantaytambo region include bench motifs that adorn specific facades of the stones. Clockwise from the top left: Pomatales, Perolniyoq, Ñawpa Iglesia, Choqana Boulder One, Choqana Boulder Two, and Sala (photographs by author).
places where their ancestors dwelled. In these ceremonies, they marked their possession of, and affinity with, a place. They were particular people of a particular place.

Ollantaytambo birthed a regional order of people, places, and lands, all of whom were subject to the Inka royalty. In laboring to shape the city’s stones, plant its fields, and serve its elites, Andean people became essential types of persons—e.g., Colla masons, mitmaqkuna workers, and yanakuna retainers. By performing traditional ancestor rites for the wak’as of these new lands, the new subjects of the state engaged with and attributed personhood to Inka wak’as and, ultimately, signified their connections (as particular types of laborers) to Inka soils. They became particular types of persons within a universal Inka landscape. By analogy with older ancestor rites, they reified their roles as socially distinct kinds of persons within an Inka kin network. In ritually forging kin relations with Inka lands and wak’as (personified places and Inka ancestors), they became “new people” in a new Inka world.

A closer look at the architecture of the Ollantaytambo wak’as reveals how people engaged with these wak’as and, consequently, affirmed their roles within the Inka landscape. The sites’ spatial layouts suggest that these were private spaces in which individuals confronted wak’as. The only other people present may have been the specialized attendants who could converse with the shrines (e.g., Cobo 1964 [1653]:204; Molina 1947 [1573]:47). All of the shrines were either partially enclosed in perimeter walls or flanked by formal platforms. These architectural elements enhanced the privacy and solemnity of wak’a rites by limiting people’s access to the sites, directing their movement, and focusing their attention toward specific features or facades of the place. For instance, in approaching many of these wak’as (e.g., Nawpa Iglesia, Perolniyoq, Pomatales), one sees only the particular facade of a stone bearing a bench motif. For instance, if presenting an offering at Chulluraqay, one must stand directly above the canal that enters and exits this carved stone. At Korimarka, the caves only come into view once one has reached the platforms on the adjoining ridge.

Such private, personalized and controlled spaces would have manifested a markedly different kind of ritual practice than the public Inka plaza ceremonialism that is typically understood as central to the Inka state religion. In Inka plazas, the royalty hosted lavish feasting ceremonies during which they offered their subjects special foods and plentiful drinks (Bray 2003; Cummins 2002b; Morris 1993; Ogburn 2005; Ramírez 2005). In these performances of state redistribution and largesse, people avowed their subject positions as laborers, while Inka elites confirmed their ascribed roles as the managers of
society (Godelier 1977; Kolata 1996). The architecture of Inka plazas suggests that feasts involved generalized, collective subjects. Dressed in their ethnic groups’ representative attire, subjects confronted state officials in public spaces designed for massive gatherings (Morris and Thompson 1985; Ramírez 2005). By comparison, the architecture of the Inka wak'as appears to emphasize individual roles and subject positions. In approaching these spaces people moved from open fields and roads to enclosed settings where they met Inka beings and ancestors. In these secluded engagements, people would have become aware of their roles within the broader environment, validating the connection between Inka authority and environmental forces, while verifying their personal obligations to an Inka landscape.

The wak’as were thus agentive inasmuch as they called out or interpelated (sensu Althusser 1971) people as particular kinds of persons and subjects, whether commoner or elite. People would have seen and revered these wak’as in different ways, in accordance with their social station. Ritual practices enacted in the shadows of these boulders would have worked to naturalize social differences as they ascribed “distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors” (Bell 1992:74). Elites that made offerings at the wak’as would have confirmed their roles as the caretakers of people, land, and labor. On the other hand, the wak’as likely manifested new social roles and obligations for the new people of Ollantaytambo (see Topic 1998; also Chase, this volume). Severed from their kinship ties and ancestral lands, the new people of Ollantaytambo served only the Inka royalty and worked only Inka lands. In engaging with these wak’as, the new people directed their ritual practices toward the Inka themselves and the Inka land. But, in so doing, they were not passively reacting to state power. At these places, Andean people solidified their positions as the subjects—indeed, the offspring—of the Inka world that they themselves had constructed.

CONCLUSION: NATURALIZING SOCIAL DIFFERENCES

After consolidating their power within the Cuzco region and abroad, Inka rulers began to manifest their authority and declare their divine status by constructing monumental urban complexes, such as Ollantaytambo. They founded vast landscapes—integrated environments of palatial edifices, terrace systems, canal networks, roads, and residential settlements. The construction of these environments inaugurated new definitions of people, places, and land. Usufruct rights and labor practices shifted radically as people were detached from the lands and places of their ancestors and directed to work land and
tend animals for seemingly abstract beings—the Inka rulers, the wak’as, and the Sun. Ritual practices conducted at the wak’as personalized the new labor relationships and naturalized the recently imposed social differences of the Inka state. The wak’as were thus essential to the Inka ontological proposition that social differences between Inkas and others were, put simply, “natural.”

In attending to these wak’as, we see that the ontological proposition of the Inka state—a proposition that paired types of people and land—was assembled through social practices and perceptions that were, in part, derived from Cusco’s pre-Inka cultural landscape. By building these wak’as and reshaping Cusco’s lands, then, the Inkas created a perhaps irresolvable contradiction between their state’s and local people’s definitions of a “natural” mode of being. Such contradictions can be found within the very roots of the Inka state and, by extension, the broader concept of “the State.” Indeed, political regimes often seek to liken a state to an unchanging natural order by building personified places, such as the stoic faces of Mount Rushmore, the opulent gardens of Versailles, the ornate reservoirs of ancient India, and the embellished natural places of Cusco’s wak’as. These places are designed to be sites of authorization where people, through their political and religious conviction and commitment, are meant to recognize or revere the power of a state. But these places are also potential sites of subversion where people challenge and reject the universal and naturalizing propositions of the state. After all, the “nature” that these places embody is a politically contested and socially manifested claim.

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NOTES

1. Most Spanish sources state that this ancestral Inka merged with a preexisting wak’a—both a place and the “form of a person” (bulto de persona)—near the town of Sano (Cabello Balboa 1951 [1586]:262; Molina 1947 [1573]:23; Murúa 1962–64 [1590], 1:23; Sarmiento 1965 [1572]:215). In contrast, see Betanzos (1968 [1551]:13), who claims that the Sun ordered one of the brothers to become Wanakauri.

2. The Spanish sources disagree on which ancestral Inka brother was entombed in the cave. Some claim it was Ayarcachi: Betanzos 1968 [1551]:12; Cieza 1967 [1553]:17; Sarmiento 1965 [1572]:215. Others state that it was Ayaraucu: Cabello Balboa 1951 [1586]:261; Molina 1947 [1573]:21; Murúa 1962–64 [1590], 1:23. Moreover, the sources disagree on which ancestral brother becomes Wanakauri. Some claim Ayarcachi: Cabello Balboa 1951 [1586]:263; Cieza 1967 [1553]:17; Molina 1947 [1573]:137; Murúa 1962–64 [1590], 1:23. And others list Ayaruchu: Betanzos 1968 [1551]:13; Sarmiento 1965 [1572]:215. These variations most likely reflect the divergent historical and political claims of Inka elites during the early colonial period (sensu Urton 1990). In all variations, though, an Inka ancestor reshapes the valleys and mountains of Cuzco; the ancestral Inka see a rainbow; an Inka ancestor attaches or offers himself to a local wak’a and becomes Wanakauri; and finally the Inka stake their claim to both possess and rule Cuzco.

3. Such claims can be easily located in both ancient and contemporary texts. They are central to the Epic of Gilgamesh, Maya inscriptions, the accounts of Julius Caesar’s campaign in Gaul, the arguments of Las Casas, the documents of Thomas Jefferson, the speeches of Frederick Jackson Turner, the writings of Lenin, etc.

4. For instance, the Inka recruited the Cañaris as royal guards due to this ethnic group’s unrivalled ferocity in battle (e.g., Cabello Balboa 1951 [1586], chaps. 22–23).

5. Some Spanish chroniclers remark that the Inka established wak’a when they first declared their authority over Cuzco (Cobo 1964 [1653]:64, 153; Guaman Poma de Ayala 1980 [1615]:58). Others specifically state that wak’a veneration was instituted by the ninth emperor Pachakuti Inka (Bandera 1968 [1557]:300; Sarmiento 1965 [1572]:242) or the tenth emperor Topa Inka (Santillán 1968 [1563]:111). Sixteen of the Cuzco wak’as were said to have been mandated by order of specific Inka rulers, suggesting that the elite created shrines to embed state narratives of history within the land (e.g., Cobo 1964 [1653]:177).

6. Ollantaytambo has had many names. Early documents call it “Collatambo” or “Tambo” (AGN 1559–60: fol. 23). These names refer to the Tampu pre-Inka ethnic group
that resided in the area and the Colla people that the Inka moved to the city. In the
sixteenth century the Spanish called the city “Pueblo de Zarza,” then “Santiago de
Tambo” (Glave and Remy 1983:2). Soon after, the name “Ollantaytambo” became com-
mon (e.g., Sarmiento 1965 [1572]).

7. No excavation unit in Ollantaytambo has uncovered more than a handful
of pre-Inka artifacts or any pre-Inka architecture. Some excavations have recovered
Killkë (pre- or early Inka) ceramics, but these samples are always very small and
always found in excavation levels bearing high percentages of Classic Inka ceramics
(e.g., see Galiano and Apaza 2004).

8. Yanakuna cultivated the fields of the royal Inka, including the lands of Pacha-
kuti and Topa Inka (Malca Olguin 1963; Rostworowski 1993:141–42). Mitmaqkuna
likely built the towering edifices of the city and tilled the fields dedicated to the Sun
and the wak’a (AGN 1559–60:fol. 26v, 40v). The mitmaqkuna were from the distant
Collao region (southern Peru) and the Chinchaysuyu region (northwestern Peru, out-
side of the Cuzco region) (ibid.:fol. 14–16, 26v).

9. There are multiple chullpa tombs near Kachiqhata, across the Vilcanota River.
Our surface collections reveal that many of these tombs were used during the Inka
imperial period. However, these tombs are almost exclusively associated with small
residential sites rather than large, central towns.

10. The vast majority of Cuzco wak’as (82.9%; 272/328) were non-built or modified
land features (Cobo 1964 [1653]). The most common of these were rocks (26.5%; 87/328),
springs (25.6%; 85/328), mountains/peaks (9.1%; 30/328 [excluding “rocks on moun-
tains”]), places (7%; 23/328 [“place where the Inka sat,” “place where one loses sight
of Cuzco,” etc.]), and plains (llanos) (6.1%; 20/328). Most of the other wak’as (14.9%;
49/328) were built features, the most common being houses of Inka royalty (4%; 13/328)
and tombs of Cuzco’s elite (2.7%; 9/328).

11. The best source on Inka wak’as is Bernabé Cobo’s 1653 list, which drew from
an unknown earlier source to document 328 Cuzco wak’as (Bauer 1998:14, 21). Cobo’s
list suggests that the vast majority of Cuzco wak’as were places for offerings and sac-
crifices (Cobo 1964 [1653]). The list contains information on the practices enacted at 151
of Cuzco’s wak’as. The most common offerings were seashells (27.2%; 41/151), children
(19.9%; 30/151), clothes (11.9%; 18/151), and meat (6.6%; 10/151). Gold, silver, and coca
were also proffered. Many wak’as received more than one of these materials, or they
were given the generic “ordinary things” (9.9%; 15/151), “everything” (5.3%; 8/151), or
“everything except for children” (4%; 6/151). It is notable though that many Andean
wak’as did indeed receive tribute in the form of comestibles, particularly corn beer,
maize, or sacrificed camelids (e.g. Arriaga 1968 [1621]:209).

12. The original Spanish reads: “. . . en lo alto a mano yzquierda como ymos del
Cuzco e del pueblo de Maras a Tambo / lo qual estara una legua del dho pueblo de
Tambo... en lo qual halle un monton de tierra alto sobre una peña que paresçio aver sido sacrificadero e guaca de los naturales... aquel monton de tierra y edifíciós que está en el dho que servia a los yngas o fuera algun Mochadero antiguo / dijo que a oýdo dezir que era donde se sentaba el Ynga.” In this passage, the Spanish ask Francisco Manya Ura, the alcalde of Ollantaytambo, about his knowledge of the wak’a at Hatun Kancha Raqay. The alcalde responds that he does not know about the site. However, the Spanish line of questioning suggests that they had already heard about this place and its previous function—their assumptions were confirmed later in the document when the kuraka of the nearby town of Maras stated that Hatun Kancha Raqay was a wak’a served by the special women (mamakona) of the Inka queen Mama Oqlllo (see below).

13. Excavations at Pachar and the nearby settlement of Chulluraqay recovered very few pre-Inka artifacts and no pre-Inka cultural levels (Solís and Olazabal 1998:103, 137–38).

14. One other carved stone sits directly in the Vilcanota River, at the edge of the city’s core. Another carved stone is situated in Piscacucho, the western boundary of Ollantaytambo (ARC 1568–1722:fol. 294). These other stones further demonstrate the association between carved boulders and the extension of the city.

15. Although pre-Inka/early Inka (Killk’e-related) pottery was recovered in this area, it was always associated with Classic Inka pottery. Killk’e-related sherds constitute 0–2% of the ceramics recovered from particular levels and 1.15% of the total amount of sherds. In a nearby plaza, only 1.32% of the total recovered sherds were Killk’e-related while 40.53% were Inka. The adjacent fountain sector contained a bit more Killk’e-related pottery (6.4%), but also more Inka pottery (35.4%) (see Galiano and Apaza 2004:110–11).

16. The document reads: “... And in order to obtain more information about this [Hatun Kancha Raqay] Don Sancho Usca Paucar, the principal kuraka of Maras, was questioned. He promised under oath to tell the truth. He was asked about the walls and structures [los dhos corrales e paredones] and what they were called, and he responded that these walls and structures, and the lands and terraces that were adjacent to them, were called Pachar... and the walls and structures belonged to [eran y avian sido de] Mama Oqlllo, the mother of Wayna Qhapaq. He added that he knows this because his ancestors [pasados] told him, and because some mamaconas from Maras resided in these structures...” (my translation). The original Spanish reads: “... E para mas ynformacion de lo suso dho tome e rrecébi juramento de Don Sancho Usca Paucar cacique principal del pueblo de Maras el qual prometio de dezir verdad de lo que supiese e le fuese preguntado / al qual pregunte que los dhos corrales e paredones cuyos eran e como se llaman el qual dijo que los dhos corrales e paredones e tierras e andenes que estan junto a ellos se llama todo Pachar/ e que si de otra manera lo llaman algunos yndios que es compuesto / e que los dhos corrales e paredones eran y avian sido de...”
Mama Oclo madre que fue de Guayna Capa y que esto sabe porque se lo an dho sus pasados e que en los dhos corrales uvo algunos mamaconas que eran del pueblo de Maras . . .” The reference to mamaconas, who were high-rank *aqlakuna* “mothers,” suggests that the town of Maras gave women to Ollantaytambo and its associated towns, much like the towns surrounding Cuzco gave women to the Inka nobility (see Zuidema 2007).

17. The litigation concerned 200 *fanegadas* of land situated in Pachar (Burns 1999:50). A *fanegada* was equivalent to the amount of land that one could sow with a *fanegada* of seed, approximately 2.9 ha.

18. The Spanish reads: “son tierras que fueron dedicadas en tiempo de los Yndios Yngas para el Sol e para el dho Ynga señor que fue destos reynos e que nunca las tuvo ny poseyo en su vida Don Francisco Mayontopa ny sus Yndios por suyas ny como suyas y que son sin perjuizio del dho Mayontopa e de sus Yndios.”

19. Arriaga (1968 [1621]:248) claims a similar isomorphism between ancestors and wak’as, stating that the founders of a town (the “Huaris”) venerated wak’as, while the second and third generation of newcomers to an area (“the Llacuaces”) venerated the mummies of their ancestors. In this example, people performed their attachment to the land by engaging with one of these two kinds of emplaced person.

20. The Inka royalty lived on as the ancestors and the leaders of the empire. Their mummies were essential to political ceremony and action (see general discussions in Bauer 2004; D’Altroy 2002; Dillehay 1995; Kolata 2013; McEwan 2006). But contrary to pre-Inka practice, very few Inka subjects would ever see a mummified Inka or an Inka ancestor. Instead, Inka subjects performed their social roles by venerating wak’as, which personified the Inkas, their actions, and their lands.

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