THE CONSTRUCTION OF VALUE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

EDITED BY

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AND

GARY URTON

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EMPLACING VALUE, CULTIVATING ORDER: PLACES OF CONVERSION AND PRACTICES OF SUBORDINATION THROUGHOUT EARLY INKA STATE FORMATION (CUZCO, PERU)

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Abstract

Places are often treated as if they are the passive, inert backdrops against which generalized political ideologies and practices are staged. The objects that circulate through places, and the discourses that circulate about them, are understood to invest places with accumulative social value. But often overlooked are the ways in which places themselves work to generate regimes of value. In this paper I argue that the political construction of value occurs through and not over place. Using recent archaeological data from the capital of the Inka Empire (Cuzco, Peru), I demonstrate how the initial process of Inka state formation was predicated on the conversion of significant pre-Inka places. These practices of conversion manifested the absolute social distinctions—the regime of value—upon which the Inka state would come to rest. By destroying preexisting villages, building colossal walls, and paving plazas atop domestic sectors, the Inkas implanted their claims to divine authority and constituted an ideal of social order. The laborers who carried out these projects of destruction and conversion recast their own ancestral places as Inka, thereby producing a social landscape and naturalizing the political authority to which they themselves became subject. I contend that these situated practices of material transformation inaugurated a new era by emplacing new value categories that systematically ordered people, places, and things.
Introduction

The Inkas built the largest empire in the indigenous Americas, and Inka myths offer a startlingly uniform vision of the dramatic processes of destruction and subordination through which they assembled this extensive domain. In these myths, the Inkas appear as the divinely ordained caretakers and cultivators of a previously chaotic world. Other people are largely cast as uncivilized barbarians embroiled in incessant warfare—naturally disordered savages lacking permanent leadership, law, towns, and order (e.g. Cieza 1971:31, 33 [1554]; Estete 1918:330 [1535]; Levillier 1940:79; Pizarro 1965:180 [1571]; Polo de Ondegardo 1916:117 [1571]; Sarmiento 1965 [1572]; see Kosiba 2010 for several more examples).

Inka elites often testified to Spanish chroniclers about the crude barbarism they encountered when first expanding the borders of their nascent state in Cuzco and how, in accordance with their divine mandate to rule, they destroyed the villages and shrines of anyone who declared themselves equal or challenged Inka claims to absolute authority. As one early Spanish chronicler records:

There was a [non-Inka] ruler named Illacumbi from two towns located four leagues from Cuzco, one called Cugma and the other Guata (Wat’a). Inka Yapanqui and Inka Roca told this ruler to give them obedience. Illacumbi responded that he was a high elite like them and free, and that they would have to get rid of him with their lances. The Inkas took up arms against this ruler. Illacumbi and two other local lords, named Paucar Topa and Poma Lloqui, gathered their people together and fought the Inkas, but they were conquered and killed along with almost their entire town. This place then suffered from many cruelties. And from there, the Inka turned to Cuzco and triumphed in his victory [Sarmiento 1965:239 (1572); my translation and italics].

In numerous accounts like this one, the Inkas claimed that it was through the violent assertion of their absolute authority that they first cultivated order throughout the Cuzco region (Bauer 1996; Covey 2006a; Julien 2000; Kolata 1996; Salles-Reese 1997; Silverblatt 1988; Urton 1999). Indeed, the mythos of the Inka Empire casts the violence of incorporation as the necessity of state integration. The destruction of other people and places (or, more precisely, Others’ places) appears essential to a glorified narrative of Inka prowess and destiny. Yet it is precisely during these violent encounters that the people and places of the Cuzco region became essential parts of an Inka order. How then do we look beyond the mythos of absolute Inka dominance and examine the contradictory processes that made this dominance manifest?

These stories about the ostensibly violent process of incorporation reveal as much as they conceal. They demonstrate that Inka authority rested in an inviolable claim of absolute difference that cast Inkas as divine and all others as subordinate. In this framework, the Inkas’ fierce reply to Illacumbi’s contention that he was “a high elite like them and free” was not so much a punitive measure as a corrective one—a forceful restoration of the proper order. For non-Inkas would never be
“like” Inkas: in myths, and in the very organization of the Inka Empire, vanquished people might become part of the Inka system, yet they forever remained “not quite Inka.” The stories of Cuzco’s early days, then, are not simply accounts of conquest. They are political statements about the production and naturalization of essential social value categories.

This paper examines the initial creation of the Inka state by attending to how these social categories, premised on an absolute distinction between Inka and non-Inka, were quite literally put into place. In particular, I examine the labor practices through which Wat’a, a significant pre-Inka town and shrine, was ceremonially put to death and then resurrected in a process of conversion that was crucial to the production of an Inka vision of social order. In so doing, I focus on how state consolidation is tied to the constitution of social value—the fundamental abstract categories through which people, places, and things are defined and ordered.

This examination requires a shift from the textual to the archaeological, from stories the Inkas told their Spanish conquerors to an exploration of the political and social contours of Wat’a in its immediate context, the Ollantaytambo area, located within the Cuzco region capital of the Inka Empire (Figure 4.1). Data presented here are derived from the Wat’a Archaeological Project (WAP), an integrated systematic survey and excavation program that I directed from 2005 to 2007. An inquiry into practices of conversion and regeneration at places like Wat’a reveals...
how claims to the naturalized authority of the state are staked within contests over the value, definition, and meaning of the very materials and spaces of our world.

**Processes of Valuation, Places of Conversion**

Anthropological archaeologists have long noted that polity formation involves the emergence of new regulatory institutions in which political authority is invested (e.g. Adams 1966; Wright 1977). These accounts, which are rooted in Weberian (1968 [1921]) notions of centralized management, often seek to delineate the mechanisms through which regional integration and territorial sovereignty are secured. They hold that the emergence of the state is a qualitative leap in political organization, a dramatic process of social transformation during which local reckonings of authority are subsumed within a multilevel bureaucratic apparatus (Claessen and Skalník 1978; Wright and Johnson 1975). Bureaucratic rule entails abstraction: places are recast as administrative sites; customs are rewritten as laws; environments are redefined as resources; and people are reconfigured as subjects or authorities (Alonso 1994; Scott 1998). The production and extension of a state might then be considered a process of abstraction in which people, places, and things are reclassified and revalued inasmuch as they are molded into (what is claimed to be) a continuous political space.

Studies of the later Inka Empire provide tantalizing glimpses of how an expansionary political project was in part realized through the violence of abstraction. Having established an integrated polity within the Cuzco region, the Inkas initiated a series of military campaigns and political alliances throughout the Andes, ultimately reorganizing diverse peoples and distant environments under a flexible bureaucratic apparatus (D’Altroy 2001b). In governing, the Inkas ruled according to the capacities and circumstances of distinct populations and did not apply blanket policies over territory (Ramírez 2005). Scholars have argued that the genius of Inka imperial governance lay in its capacity to organize social and environmental variability and thus articulate local agendas with imperial objectives (Morris 1985:478; Wernke 2006). In some instances, the Inkas drastically altered subject populations by restructuring local settlement systems into highly productive Inka economic landscapes (D’Altroy 1987; LeVine 1992) or by forcibly moving thousands of people to distant ecological zones (e.g. Wachtel 1982). Alternatively, the Inkas sometimes chose to indirectly administer subject populations by exacting tribute through the meticulous assessment of each local household’s contribution (in labor) to the imperial project (D’Altroy and Earle 1985; Murra 1980 [1956]). The Inka Empire was thus a process of political and cultural consolidation underwritten by a project of categorization. People and places were evaluated and objectified as an integrated, yet highly variable, imperial system was assembled.
Although political economic policies varied, the emplacement of recognizable Inka architecture reorganized space and society throughout the empire (Gasparini and Margolies 1980). In the absence of markets or money (La Lone 1978), the Inka economy was rooted in institutions of redistribution and labor management, and the people who oversaw these institutions were housed in newly constructed, discrete spaces (e.g. D’Altroy and Earle 1985; Hyslop 1990; Morris 1982, 1992; Morris and Thompson 1985; Protzen 2000; Stanish 2001). To legitimize their imperial project, the Inkas often manipulated widely recognized mechanisms of reciprocity, casting imperial domination as benevolence by hosting theatrical feasts within the vast plazas of their august, monumental complexes (DeMarrais 2001; Morris and Covey 2003; Morris and Thompson 1985). The immense storage facilities and extensive plazas of Inka administrative installations would have been salient markers of Inka political supremacy that, in areas where they were present, redefined the Andean landscape into a legible topography of abstract binaries: state/society, public/private, and exclusive/inclusive.

In codifying landscape, people were repositioned according to an ideology of absolute social difference. In their origin myths, the Inkas were divine beings who sowed the seeds of civilization as they introduced maize to the savage peoples of the Andes (Bauer 1996). This deified social category referred only to the royal bloodline from Cuzco. The exclusivity of this category was expressed and materialized in various ways. Only Inkas could wear the distinct hairstyles, finely woven clothing, and gigantic gold ear-spools—the latter leading the Spanish to refer to Inkas as orejones, “long ears”—that defined high elites (Betanzos 1996:68 [1557]; D’Altroy 2002; Murra 1989). Inka lands and treasures were inalienable, a tradition that caused great concern for a person of no less standing than the twelfth Inka emperor, who complained that the ancestor cults (panaqas) of his predecessors held too much power due to their inviolable claim to his predecessors’ wealth (Pizarro 1978:52–54, chapter 10 [1571]). Inka people, places, and things—indeed, “Inka-ness”—were utterly incommensurable with other kinds of people, places, and things. No amount of grain could be traded for Inka ear-spools. No subject could “become Inka.”

In contrast, Inka imperial subjects were positioned within a cascading hierarchy according to the kind of service or labor they provided to the state (D’Altroy 2001b:214–216). Local elites often retained a modicum of authority within this system but were redefined as “Inkas by privilege,” a somewhat derogatory category that refers to the once-autonomous elites who now mediated between subject populations and Inka royalty (Bauer 2004:17; Covey 2006b; Urton 1990). But most Inka subjects were reclassified as specialized retainers or laborers. Some labor groups were derived from ethnic groups, whose identities were objectified as members’ bodies and adornment were required to conform to an essentialized model of their group (Cobo 1979:190 [1653]). At a more abstract level, entire populations were systematically categorized according to their potential labor output: extended families were broken apart to create discrete households—a married man, his wife
and progeny—that were labeled tribute-paying units and then reorganized into groups of 10 to 10,000 (Betanzos 1996:120 [1557]; Julien 1988; Murra 1980 [1956]; Stanish 1992). And, in perhaps the most remarkable imperial policy, scores of people were uprooted from their kin networks and ancestral lands and were redefined as laborers (*mitma*) who answered only to the Inka state (Murra 1982; Patterson 1985). Repositioned in these groups, Inka subjects were made quantifiable, and their labor rendered commensurable and abstract.

This social taxonomy, these absolute differences, structured the Inka imperial social order. People, places, and things were valued relative to the Inka, particularly, in the case of persons, in terms of their social group’s perceived geographical and genealogical distance from the Inka ruler in Cuzco (Bauer 2004). Inka social order thus pivoted upon definitions of social value—distinctions constituted through the recognition of absolute differences (on value as demonstration of difference not equivalence: Dumont 1982; Eiss and Pederson 2002; Foster 1990; Graeber 2001; Strathern 1988). The constituents of this idealized Inka order were nonoverlapping, complementary spheres of value—a kind of “taxonomic value” in which, on the one hand, certain people, things, and actions were deemed commensurable while, on the other hand, other people, things, and actions were fundamentally singular. As the opening tale of Illacumbi’s downfall demonstrates, the creation of this order and these social value distinctions was a project at the heart of Inka state formation and expansion. In an Inka world, others could not dare to claim the highest status. Those who did so ceased to exist.

To ask how this kind of state was founded is, ultimately, to inquire into how value is manifested and naturalized. The aforementioned accounts of bureaucratic organization are about the application of political power across territory, but they tell us very little about how the essential categories of Inka rule were first manifested as Andean people were incorporated into this vision of social order. In attending to processes of Inka incorporation, scholars often argue that Inka governance was rooted in a preexisting system of autochthonous Andean practices and values (e.g. Murra 1980 [1956]; Rostworowski 1978; 1983; Zuidema 1982, 1990). For instance, Platt (1976) develops a theory of how the Inkas adopted the Andean cultural concepts of duality through which community labor was organized and reworked these categories into a system defined by hierarchical oppositions, in which one-half of a duality is perceived as superior (see also Schaedel 1978, 1988; T. Turner 1996). Other scholars have argued that Inka state formation and expansion were processes of mystification throughout which an exploitative mode of production was concealed by ideological claims of cultural continuity (Godelier 1977; Patterson 1985; Silverblatt 1988). These explanations offer novel insights into a drastic social change but only faintly sketch the actual processes of conversion through which these Inka value categories were carved from a preexisting social milieu. For the Inkas, this social order was not just hierarchy; it was built on *nominal* and not ordinal distinctions between things and people. We are left to wonder how an Andean person
came to recognize her new position within the Inka state, how the Inkas coerced or convinced people to labor for their state, and how the meaning and function of Andean values changed as they were incorporated into an Inka political idiom.

To address such questions, it is helpful to scale down our view of the state—which is often analyzed at regional and systemic scales—and to examine the specific contexts and practices through which social value is constituted. We might consider how social value is constituted through social action and engagement (Munn 1986) and, more particularly, how value is produced in particular, staged contexts in which social action is rendered conspicuous (Graeber 2001). Here we may do well to recall a classic anthropological example of social value as action in context: the potlatch ceremonies practiced by indigenous peoples of the American Pacific Northwest. During the colonial-era potlatch, things like blankets and copper were destroyed, while things like cloth goods, kitchen utensils, and serving trays were given away (Boas 1916:538–543; 1966). In this histrionic performance, political authority was validated and subject positions were objectified (Godelier 1999; Rosman and Rubel 1972; Tollefson 1995). But the potlatch did not solely reproduce an enduring framework. The influx of European goods raised the stakes of the potlatch, redefining subject positions among community members while affecting and altering the things, practices, and places through which claims to authority were realized (Barnett 1938; Marshall and Maas 1997; Wolf 1999). In these situated material practices, then, social value was continually defined and redefined relative to rapidly changing historical circumstances.

Indeed, political claims that rest on such processes of valuation are, sometimes unintentionally but often by necessity, staked within and over particular places. Whether it is the validation of status within a colonial-era Kwakiutl potlatch, the 1972 occupation of Wounded Knee by political activists, or the disassembly of the Berlin Wall, the emplacement of such claims matters to both the claimants and their audience. Often, it matters so much that the places themselves become objectified and thereby converted into essential elements of the claims. (We might think of how the storming of the Bastille has come to stand in for the process of the French Revolution.) It is thus through a consideration of places of value conversion that we may reconsider how we think about social value as a process of objectification and redefinition—a process of valuation. After all, it is in particular places that people both experience social change and recognize their positions relative to such changes.

It is telling that the Inkas repeatedly explain their incorporation of new areas through descriptions of the partial destruction of old buildings and towns and the construction of new ones. Archaeological and ethnohistorical cases demonstrate that, throughout the centuries preceding Inka ascendancy, specific places (towns, fortresses, mortuary sectors, shrines) in the highland Andes accrued special cosmological and social value for local kin groups (Arkush and Stanish 2005; Covey 2008; D’Altroy 1992; Hastorf 1993). Such places were cast as powerful sources of a kin group’s social identity and as essential components of its claim to temporal
continuity and political autonomy (Kosiba 2010). Inka processes of social conversion might have targeted these places, such as the Temple of Wari Wilka (Cieza 1971:311, chapter 84 [1554]) or the Island of the Sun in Lake Titicaca (Cobo 1990:94 [1653]; see Bauer and Stanish 2001), precisely because they were long recognized as founts of political power.

In this light, the Inkas appear to have staked their claims to rule through the capture and transformation of already-recognized and valued places (Silverblatt 1988; pace Ramírez 2005). For the Inkas, place transformation and processes of social conversion were intertwined. To understand the social transformations through which Inka values—and the Inka state—were built, then, is to inquire into the processes of conversion through which pre-Inka places were rebuilt. It is to look beyond the cyclopean facades of Inka monuments and to seek instead to understand the practices of labor coordination through which these monuments first came to be raised and revered.

**Rebuilding Place, Building the Inka State**

Recent research has begun to uncover the dramatic processes through which the Inkas assembled their nascent Cuzco state, processes that signal the importance of place and space to Inka politics. Archaeological and ethnohistorical surveys have documented how, throughout the fourteenth century, the Inkas progressively extended their political reach into neighboring regions, subsuming once-autonomous social groups into the growing polity through strategic alliances, elite intermarriages, and military conquest (Bauer 2004; Bauer and Covey 2002; Covey 2006a; see also Heffernan 1996; Kendall 1994, 1996). The surveys suggest that early Inka regional governance was in part predicated upon the establishment of an administrative bureaucracy (see especially Covey 2006a), a model of integration, settlement reorganization, and resource reallocation that sought to convert the very contours of Cuzco’s mountainous environment into conduits of political economic management. A semblance of regional coherence—indeed, the production of a region—was thus vital to an Inka vision of order.

Preexisting seats of political power appear to have received special consideration throughout this process of regional consolidation. Inka administrative buildings were raised within many local political centers, such as the hilltop settlement of Pukara Pantilliñjlla (Covey 2006a; Dwyer 1971), the Cuzco Valley town of Chokepukio (McEwan et al. 1995, 2008), and the cliffside complex of Q’aqya Qhawana (Kendall et al. 1992), to name a few. Such constructions foreshadowed the finely cut masonry and tiered agricultural systems that later became iconic of Inka imperial power (Niles 1993, 1999). These architectural transformations occurred more than a century before the construction of imperial Inka estates such as Machu Picchu and Ollantaytambo (Bengston 1998; Hollowell 1987; Kendall
1985), suggesting that it was through the modification of locality and landscape that the Inkas first manifested their societal order.

My intention here is to complement the previous research by examining the specific changes in political practices and places through which Inka authority was established among the particular, formerly autonomous groups of the Ollantaytambo area. To emphasize the relation between developments in the Ollantaytambo area and the broader Cuzco region, I use the term “Ollanta phase” (OP) when referring to the centuries that directly preceded Inka ascendancy in the northwestern Cuzco area (OP ca. A.D. 1000–1300). The Ollanta phase is defined through reference to distinct local pottery and architectural styles (Kosiba 2010). I use the term “Early Inka period” to refer to the initial process of Inka state consolidation, a period characterized by the use of Classic Inka material culture within local practices and the appearance of Inka architecture within preexisting sites. Table 4.1 depicts the relation between these periods and other established regional chronologies largely derived from Ica—an area the Inkas annexed during the early stages of their imperial expansion outside of the Cuzco region (Menzel 1959) and Cuzco (Bauer 1992, 2004; Covey 2006a; McEwan 2006; McEwan et al. 2008; Rowe 1944, 1945, 1946).

### Table 4.1. The Cuzco region chronology relative to the periodization used throughout the Inka provinces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cuzco Region</th>
<th>Inka Provinces</th>
<th>Dates (A.D.)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ollanta phase (OP; Ollantaytambo) or Killke period (Cuzco)</td>
<td>Late Intermediate period (LIP)</td>
<td>ca. 1000–1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Inka period</td>
<td>Late Intermediate period (LIP)</td>
<td>ca. 1300–1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial Inka period</td>
<td>Inka period</td>
<td>ca. 1400–1533</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**The Advent of Inka Rule in the Ollantaytambo Area**

The WAP survey data provide a preliminary sketch of how the Inkas established their political control in the Ollantaytambo area. In attending to changes in settlement patterns, we can begin to understand how the transformation of particular places was important to how the people of this area were incorporated into the Inka polity. For instance, the wholesale desertion or destruction of pre-Inka places might suggest that the Inkas forcibly appropriated the area and then restructured it in accordance with an ideal of Inka order. Such changes have been documented in the imperial provinces, where the Inkas often required people to abandon their settlements and move closer to productive maize agricultural land (D’Altroy and Hastorf 2001). In contrast, continuities in both local settlement and seats of power might suggest more incorporative processes of conversion—processes through which new value distinctions were constituted as preexisting sociopolitical places and practices were recast within an Inka mold.
To track changes in places and practices throughout the Ollantaytambo area, the survey documented the spatial distribution of the ceramic forms and architectural styles that comprised feasting events (Figure 4.2). Ethnohistorical and archaeological evidence demonstrates that public feasting was essential to the reproduction of both Late Intermediate period (LIP) and Inka authority (Bray 2003; Cummins 2002; Kolata 1996; Kosiba 2010; Morris 1982; Ogburn 2005; Ramírez 2005). I document the distribution of two Inka architectural styles that were often associated with feasting: open plaza spaces and niched buildings (Coben 2006; DeMarrais 2001; Gasparini and Margolies 1980; Hyslop 1990; Morris and Thompson 1985). I trace the relationship between these architectural styles and Inka polychrome ceramic densities, especially serving vessels such as plates and bowls, at a sample of pre-Inka sites. Inka polychrome ceramic styles and forms are well defined in several publications (D’Altroy 2001a; Julien 2004; Rowe 1944). In particular, I assess whether and how these tokens of Inka state largesse infiltrated OP seats of political authority.

The WAP survey data show that, throughout the OP, particular sites became privileged places of political activity. The survey reveals a dichotomous settlement pattern in which sites were distinguished by variable artifact densities and architecture types. Specifically, eight OP sites contained high densities of OP decorated

Figure 4.2. A view of Wat’a. The insets show Inka architectural and ceramic styles, including a niched building (left) and double jamb doorway (right).
serving vessels, as well as complex architecture (Figure 4.3). I employ the term “town” in referring to these sites. The term emphasizes how these were significant local places—loci of specific kinds of social and perhaps ceremonial activity (llactas), particularly as evidenced by relatively high percentages of decorated serving vessels, variation in domestic architectural styles, and architectural features such as...
platforms and mortuary complexes (Kosiba 2010). These places were most likely perceived to be sources of social value and political authority (see also Covey 2006a).

During the transition to Inka rule, many of these towns were continually occupied and architecturally embellished (Figure 4.4). The vast majority (94 percent) of preexisting (OP) sites—including settlements, tomb complexes, shrines, and

Figure 4.4. This map depicts Inka-period settlement pattern in the Ollantaytambo area. Icons correspond to densities of decorated serving vessels, not site sizes. High densities of Inka polychrome serving vessels (white triangles) are often found in pre-Inka towns that contained high percentages of LIP (OP) serving vessels (black circles), suggesting continuity in the occupation and perhaps function of some places throughout Inka polity formation.
agricultural areas—continued to function as places of social activity. More precisely, formal Inka architecture was constructed within many OP towns. There is a statistically significant relation between OP sites with high densities of OP decorated serving vessels and sites with diagnostic Inka public architecture such as niched buildings and plazas ($\chi^2 = 27.001; \text{df} = 3; \text{significant at .001 level}$). There is also a significant correlation between sites with high densities of OP decorated serving vessels and sites with high densities of Inka polychrome serving vessels ($r = .217, n = 83; \text{significance at .05 level}$). These patterned associations between architectural forms and serving vessel densities suggest the sustained use of many OP towns as staging grounds for political ceremony.

However, while the practices and places of the prior epoch were retained, they were now often associated with formal spaces bearing the stamp of the new state. In a striking display of power, massive walls were constructed around sections of pre-Inka towns such as Wat’a and Pumamarka. Such walls are ubiquitous features of Cuzco-area Inka monumental sites, and they most likely had both defensive and ceremonial functions (see Gasparini and Margolies 1980:281; Hyslop 1990; Kosiba 2010; Niles 1980). Similar to the high walls that enclose the castles of medieval Europe or the fortified towns of medieval Rajasthan (e.g., Johnson 2002; Sharma 1993), these Inka walls may have both protected and monumentalized the courtly spaces and social centers that comprised local political life. Diagnostic attributes (for example, bar holds, trapezoidal doorways and niches, and quoins) make obvious that these walls were constructed in accordance with an Inka-period aesthetic and technology. Radiocarbon dates from the walls at Pumamarka and Wat’a reveal that they were raised in the late fourteenth century, the same time many Inka structures were first built at these sites and throughout the Cuzco area.

As these perimeter walls were raised, both Wat’a and Pumamarka were radically redefined (Figures 4.5 and 4.6). Immense buildings were constructed over portions of the preexisting towns. The buildings were marked with recognizable symbols of Inka prestige, such as double jamb doorways, double frame windows, and trapezoidal niches (see Figure 4.2) (Agurto 1987; Gasparini and Margolies 1980; Kendall 1985; Niles 1980; Protzen 1993). Clusters of archetypical Inka commoner houses, agricultural terraces, and storage structures were built outside the perimeter walls. This rigid partitioning of monumental and residential space appears essential to the reconstruction of Wat’a and Pumamarka and to the materialization of an Inka ideal of order.

The maintenance and elaboration of these particular pre-Inka places—and only these select places—suggest that when the people of this area were subsumed into the Inka state, they were not subsumed through strategies typically associated with later Inka imperial expansion in the provinces—namely, population movement, site abandonment, and displacement (e.g., D’Altroy and Hastorf 2001). In fact, the data, in particular the evident continuation and elaboration of preexisting seats of power, accord closely with comparable systematic surveys from the Cuzco Valley,
Figure 4.5. Plan of Wat’a illustrating how different sectors are spatially segregated by the site’s massive wall.

Figure 4.6. Plan of Pumamarka showing the bifurcation of this site into distinct fortified/elite and everyday sectors. The walled precinct contains baths, a feasting hall (*kallanka*), and several plazas. Storage structures, a residential area, and agricultural fields are situated outside the wall.
which find significant changes in specific localities yet little to no change in settlement location and/or sociospatial organization during the initial decades of the Inka period (Bauer 2004; Bauer and Covey 2002). Rather than fiery conquest and erasure, then, the data thus suggest a process of articulation between preexisting and Inka agendas—a process that pivoted upon the conversion and compartmentalization of local places. The division of these sites and the practices through which this division was manifested thus demand further attention.

Concealing the Past, Constructing the Present: The Conversion of Wat’a

At the onset of the Inka period, Wat’a was a relatively large (12-ha) settlement located approximately 40 aerial km from Cuzco. Our surface collections and excavations demonstrate that Wat’a was occupied for centuries prior to its Inka-period reformulation, with particularly robust populations residing there during the Formative period (ca. 1000 B.C.–A.D. 500) and the Late Intermediate period (ca. A.D. 1000–1300). The WAP survey shows that during the OP, Wat’a was one of a few sites in which pre-Inka feasting practices and ancestor propitiation ceremonies were staged (Kosiba 2010). It is likely that Wat’a was an ancestral place—a long-occupied settlement and shrine, the history of which would have been clearly visible in its multiple tombs and accreted structures. However, much of this pre-Inka town lay beneath its Inka structures.

As the Inkas took power, Wat’a was not demolished. It was converted. Our 22 excavation units were distributed throughout the intramural and extramural sectors of Wat’a. These units uncovered no evidence for site-wide burning, such as a general ash lens, large amounts of burned plaster and earth, or high densities of charred objects. In contrast, highly localized fires were lit in only a few contexts and were directly associated with the construction of the new Inka architecture.

The following sections focus on the practices that converted Wat’a, specifically the construction of three kinds of Inka space: a plaza, a storage area, and a house. These spaces were key instruments of Inka rule. Plazas were loci of the feasting events in which Inka legitimacy was performed and declared through staged displays of state largesse (e.g., Coben 2006; Morris and Thompson 1985). Storage structures both symbolically and physically represented the polity’s strength by illustrating its capacity to provision its armies and to provide for its people during droughts or poor harvests (e.g., Hyslop 1990; LeVine 1992; Morris 1967, 1992). Inka-period houses frequently conformed to a standard rectangular model, instantiating a model of order and regularity within local domestic settings (Gasparini and Margolies 1980; Kendall 1985; Niles 1980, 1987; cf. Morris and Thompson 1985). At Wat’a, the materials and spaces of the past occupation were transformed into the foundations for these institutional spaces.
After passing through the perimeter wall of Inka-period Wat’a, a visitor would travel along one of two pathways that meander to either side of Wilkapata, the imposing walled peak around which Wat’a was built. Directing movement along the edge of a precipitous ridge, these pathways lead to a single place—an expansive plaza flanked by immense buildings. This, the most monumental Inka space in the site, becomes visible only after one walks the entire length of the fortified town. The restricted location of this plaza marks it as a special place, while its grandiose architecture evokes Inka authority.

Inka plaza architecture manifests both state power and societal order. Theatrical public ceremonies, especially collective feasting events, were often staged within the extensive plaza spaces of imperial cities (Morris and Covey 2003; Morris and Thompson 1985), exclusive elite compounds (Coben 2006), and smaller Inka monumental centers such as Wat’a (cf. Covey 2006a; Kendall et al. 1992; McEwan et al. 2008). Researchers have interpreted Inka feasts as political tools that rendered potential rebellions quiescent through ostentatious displays of state largesse (e.g., Bray 2003; Cummins 2002; Kolata 1996; Ramírez 2005). At Inka feasts participants were plied with vast quantities of food and drink, either in histrionic celebration of collective labor or in reverence of a state-ordained festival. In sponsoring and directing these feasts, the Inkas cast themselves as the benefactors and protectors of society. The construction of a formal plaza within Wat’a would have thus ushered in a drastic change in the institutional spaces, everyday practices, and political meaning of this place.

The plaza at Wat’a is an early Inka construction. Its spatial extent (approximately 850 m²) and location reflect OP architectural traditions, while its architecture is laden with symbols of Inka prestige and power. This space and its cyclopean buildings stand out among the otherwise dense clusters of residential buildings that make up the terraced, vertical topography of Wat’a. The plaza floor was made from gypsum and sandstone sediment—locally derived materials that often adorned significant OP architecture, such as tombs (Kosiba 2010). The white horizontal plane must have gleamed in the bright, high-altitude, Andean sun. A series of tall quadrangular buildings, painted red, provided a vertical plane and vibrant color that would have sharply contrasted with the white expanse of the plaza floor. Adding to the visual appeal of this area, the red and white plaza contrasts a series of intricately cut maize terraces, a geometric cascade of green fields that cover the mountainside directly visible from the plaza. This plaza was built directly in front of an immense and multicolored sandstone outcrop. At Inka-period sites, such outcrops are often wak’as, sites infused with otherworldly power (e.g., Acuto 2005; van de Guchte 1999). Two platforms are situated on either side of this outcrop, suggesting that it was revered as a wak’a, as it is now. The plaza was thus monumental in scale and
location. Its buildings were the nexus of the principal aspects of Wat’a, creating a sense of centrality while aesthetically and physically conjoining areas of the site.

These visual fields and this architectural aesthetic surely contributed to the grandeur of this space. Yet the political meaning of this plaza was also largely constituted by its hidden monumentality. That is, this plaza floor concealed the deeply embedded history of the place upon which it sat, as well as the monumental labor process through which it was produced.

The area upon which the plaza was built was the core of the pre-Inka settlement at Wat’a. While the occupation and use of other spaces within Wat’a waxed and waned, this area was used or occupied (perhaps intermittently) from approximately 600 B.C. until A.D. 1600. When compared with other excavation and surface collection units, this was the only area of Wat’a within which the densities of artifacts remained relatively stable over the site’s entire history. Prestige objects—obsidian flakes and tools, silver and copper fragments, marine shells, and numerous carved steatite beads—recovered within this OP residential area suggest that it was an elite space and/or an area for nonquotidian activities (Cuba 2003, 2004; Kosiba 2010).

After almost a millennium of use, this place was buried, burned, and covered by an Inka plaza. This process was initiated when the circular and D-shaped pre-Inka residential structures of this sector were interred beneath almost 1 m of fill. Many house walls were disassembled; others were toppled. Remains of disassembled walls are very shallow, situated directly below the plaza, and are not associated with architectural debris, mortar, or rubble. In contrast, other walls appear to have been reduced through more violent actions. In these areas, a deeper fill covers the walls and serves as a foundation for Inka buildings. The sequence of destruction thus corresponded to the subsequent sequence of construction. This was not an act of annihilation. It was a planned process of spatial conversion.

Following the disassembly of extant structures, the area was then filled with rubble and trash—but not just any sort of trash. Specific kinds of objects were interred. Compared with previous levels, the fill contexts reveal a striking increase (about 120 percent) in fine decorated OP pottery sherds, particularly serving vessels. Inka polychrome serving vessel sherds were included in this fill, suggesting that select objects were interred in this space not because they were past materials but precisely because they were valued.

Particularly large vessel sherds were recovered within the fill layers, suggesting that many of these objects were broken as they were incorporated into the fill. A sharp increase in the overall weight-to-count index of ceramic material was documented within particular levels of the plaza excavations (Figure 4.7). The weight-to-count index is a ratio of ceramic sherd weights to ceramic sherd counts recorded within each level of each excavation unit. A relatively higher weight-to-count index means that heavier and thus typically larger ceramic sherds were in that context. We recovered multiple sherds from single vessels. While the high percentage of decorated vessels indicates that only specific kinds of objects were
interred in this area, the fragments from single vessels and the high weight-to-count index suggest that some of these objects were broken throughout their interment (Figure 4.8).

These materials do not seem to have been transposed from another context (that is, the fill was not created or accumulated elsewhere and then moved wholesale to this site). First, it is notable that the fill layers contained broken decorated pottery but very few of the other artifacts (bones, lithics, and carbonized material) one would expect if the fill were comprised of transposed material. Second, the plaza fill levels produced relatively few eroded or highly eroded sherds (9 percent), suggesting that the material deposited in this area was covered directly after its deposition. Altogether, the interred materials appear to be “ceremonial trash” (Walker 1995)—objects typically associated with ceremonial practices and then specifically selected for disposal in a particular area.

Following the production of this fill, people leveled the area and then lit a controlled fire above the pre-Inka structures and alignments. Our excavations uncovered a thick ash lens, situated directly below the compact white sediment of the plaza floor (Figure 4.8). This lens consisted of nothing but ash, suggesting that this was a clean, hot, and very short-lived fire. Very high percentages of burned
ceramics and burned faunal remains were associated with the ash level (an average 165 percent increase in burned ceramics and a 205 percent increase in burned faunal remains). The sharp increase in faunal bone densities suggests that consumption activity or trash dumping co-occurred with the fire. The quick execution of the fire and the associated dense concentration of faunal remains suggest that this fire was designed to “cleanse” the space—an agriculturalist’s way of clearing the area before it was to be further “cultivated” through the construction of new architecture.

Subsequently, the plaza was constructed. A residential area that had been intensively occupied was dismantled and then filled with stones, bones, and broken objects. The materials of the preceding order were converted into the foundations of the new order. In this process, an important Inka political place accrued meaning through the controlled destruction of the place upon which it was built.
In the Storage Structures

In a process rivaling the plaza construction, several OP ovoid structures were burned, filled, and then buried beneath Inka buildings (Figure 4.9). The size and morphology of the ovoid structures suggest that they were used for storage. Two of these structures contain ventilation shafts, allowing for cool dry air to enter the structure and therefore forestall the decomposition of materials contained therein. There are similar structures at LIP settlements in the Mantaro region of the central
In discussing these structures, Lavallée (1973:103) notes that throughout the early twentieth century, highland Andean peasants stored grain and/or tubers in such stone-lined pits, called *shunkullu*. Similarly, agriculturalists living in the vicinity of Wat’a immediately recognized these kinds of structures, adding that they remember how their grandparents used such structures for storage. A radiocarbon date indicates that the structures were constructed in the thirteenth century.\(^\text{12}\)

Scholars have argued that managed Inka storage facilities were among the social institutions that underwrote Inka governance (e.g., D’Altroy and Earle 1985; LeVine 1992; Morris 1982, 1992, 1993; Murra 1980 [1956]; Rowe 1982). Researchers in the central Andes have uncovered evidence that during the LIP, particular households controlled storage (Costin and Earle 1989; Levallée 1973). In that region, the transition from household to centrally managed Inka storage was a sea change in local social organization (D’Altroy 1992; D’Altroy and Hastorf 2001). The interment of these structures at Wat’a, and their subsequent replacement with formal storage spaces, thus offers a rare glimpse of how early Inka political practices were established through the conversion of local structures.

At the time of their interment, these ovoid structures were completely filled with cultural material. We excavated the structures in 5-cm arbitrary levels to fully document any changes in the practices through which they were filled and interred. By attending to the detailed sequence through which these structures were decommissioned, another program of destruction, cleansing, and conversion is revealed.

The people who decommissioned these ovoid structures first emptied their contents and then lit fires inside them. We recovered few artifacts from the lower levels of the units, suggesting cleaning. A lens of ash covered the floors of these structures. The ash did not contain organic material, illustrating that these fires consumed all the fuel with which they were built. Burn scars on the interior walls of the structures further suggest that these were intense fires.

After the fires were lit, people filled the structures with pottery. Many of the ceramic sherds that filled the structures were from decorated pre-Inka storage vessels (64 percent),\(^\text{13}\) suggesting that only select objects were interred in these contexts, a mimetic practice in which storage vessels were interred in a storage space. Whole vessels were recovered in situ in both of the ovoid contexts. For instance, a large polychrome OP storage vessel was smashed along the wall of the ovoid structure underneath a niched Inka building (Figure 4.9). The ovoid structures also contained many stone tools used for food processing, such as cobbles for grinding maize.

Although decorated storage pots and grinding tools constitute the bulk of the material within these structures, high percentages of Inka and OP polychrome serving vessels were found within the uppermost levels of both structures (5–10 cm). Inka pottery, including several whole serving vessels, was recovered only in the upper levels of each structure’s fill. As in the plaza, the Inka pottery suggests that
the destruction of valued things was important to the decommissioning of pre-Inka places.

The serving vessels were associated with animal bones and maize cobs, suggesting that food consumption practices brought these structures’ decommissioning to a close. Select kinds of fauna were deposited in the upper levels. In both units, dog (*Canis familiaris*) remains were associated with an excavation level flush with the crowning features of the ovoid context. Some of the dog bones are charred and show cut marks, indicating that the dog was defleshed, roasted or burned, and perhaps consumed (see Kosiba 2010). In addition, the charred bones of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus peruvianus*) were associated with the upper levels of the two storage structures. These dog and deer bones were mixed with numerous bones from guinea pig, or *cuy* (*Cavia porcellus porcellus Linne*), an animal that was often consumed in Inka feasting contexts (Sandefur 2001:183).

The faunal remains and the serving vessels suggest that a feasting event coincided with the final stage of decommissioning and that this event incorporated unusual or especially symbolic fare. Throughout our excavations at Wat’a, dog and deer bones were recovered only in particular contexts, typically those exhibiting evidence for transformative processes, such as construction or abandonment (Kosiba 2010). Deer was an elite and nonquotidian food among the Inkas (Sandefur 2001). Ethnohistorical sources provide some clues about Inka consumption of dog and its potential meaning. For instance, Garcilaso de la Vega (1965:book 6, chapter 10 [1609]) states that the Inkas derogatorily referred to their rivals the Wankas as dog eaters (*comeperros*), an insult that may reflect a perception of absolute social difference rather than actual practice (also Taylor 1987:161 [1598]). Similarly, an anonymous Jesuit chronicler (1968:155 [1594]) emphatically states that Andean people did not normally eat dog. The evidence from Wat’a, however, suggests that dogs were consumed only during the process through which spaces were transformed, or they were emplaced as offerings. Consistent with these data, several chroniclers claim that dogs were used in sacrifices (Jesuit 1968:154 [1594]; Avila 1987:161 [1598]), and others add that dogs were eaten during sacrificial practices (e.g., Cobo (1964:202 [1653]). Overall, the evidence suggests that these items were consumed or emplaced to heighten the social significance of the decommissioning process.

The people who enacted this process placed llama mandibula (*Lama glama*) on top of each fill context. Similar to the dog bones, llama mandibula were encountered throughout Wat’a only in select contexts corresponding to moments of transition, such as the beginning of Inka occupation or the Inka abandonment of a site. After placing these bones on the fill, the people lit another fire. The ash layers conform to the size of the ovoid structures that lay below, signaling that the fires were controlled (Figure 4.9). A radiocarbon date from the ash covering one of the ovoid structures indicates that it was buried in the fourteenth century, about two generations (or 100 years) after the date derived from its foundation.14
The process came to a close when Inka niched buildings were constructed atop these sites and new storage structures were built near the plaza. Formal, centrally located, and restricted in access, these new storage structures bore the emblems of Inka authority. A radiocarbon date from a wooden beam in the corner of one of these storage structures indicates that it was constructed in the early fifteenth century, within a generation of the fires that were lit above the older, OP ovoid structures. The location of the newer structures suggests that they were most likely used to directly support events staged in the central plaza area. Here, as in the plaza, differences between OP and Inka organization were established in seemingly ritualized practices of destruction, interment, and construction.

**Atop the House**

At Wat’a, OP structures were also converted into Inka houses. In fact, one of the more striking examples of architectural conversion occurred in Balcónpata, an Inka-period domestic sector situated outside the monumental wall. Beneath the floor of an Inka-period house, our excavations uncovered the remains of an OP house and another ovoid storage structure. Whereas the conversion of architecture within the intramural area concerned the transformation of residential places into formal and monumental spaces, the transformation of these domestic spaces evokes a more intimate relationship between local people and a growing polity.

At first, the people enacting this process filled the entire context with sediment—a thick (1–1.7 m) and clean fill containing few artifacts. After almost completely covering the house in sediment, they lit a fire. Again, few charcoal pieces were associated with the fire, suggesting that it destroyed all the organic material used as fuel.

After the fire was lit, people began to fill the context with pottery. Only specific materials were then interred, especially finely decorated OP and Inka monochrome-slipped and polychrome vessels (62.9 percent). Serving vessels comprise the majority (58.3 percent) of the identifiable ceramic sample—almost double the percentage of serving vessel sherds recovered from other contexts in Balcónpata (Kosiba 2010). These sherds were deposited in concentrated areas of the fill, in a 10-cm vertical space that abutted the crowning features of two OP walls.

Again, special offerings were also placed amid the pottery. Burned dog and cuy (guinea pig) remains were interred between the OP walls (Figure 4.10). Dense concentrations of ash suggest that the cuy was burned in situ. The ash was situated directly in front of what was to become the doorway of the new house. The dog remains were scattered between the OP wall and the ovoid structure.

Subsequently, the people who enacted this process placed three rows of river cobbles on the surface of the fill, between the animal remains and the walls (Figure 4.10). Although the meaning of these cobbles is unknown, their interment suggests that they are associated with this sequence of transformative practices. The people who enacted the process then situated a human burial between a row
of cobbles, an OP wall, and the corner of the Inka structure. The body is vertically positioned only a few centimeters below the Inka-period floor, in the same 10- to 15-cm fill context as the offerings, the ash, and the crowning features of the OP walls. Included with the body were a set of weaving tools—a ruki pick made from deer bone and a knife made from slate. These objects signal how, in many Inka mortuary practices, the objects and tools associated with a person in life were often interred with his or her body (see Lyon 1995; Paredes 2003).

Following the interment of this body and these offerings, a thin layer of sediment was spread over the entire fill level and a small fire was lit above the burial. OP and Inka serving vessels were placed within the context. Many of these sherds corresponded to the same vessels, and very few of them were burned, suggesting that the pottery was broken in situ after the fires were lit or as the fire was dying—a
practice common to all the instances detailed here. Specific objects, including a llama mandible and marine shell fragments, were recovered from this final ash layer.

An Inka house was then built. Two radiocarbon dates from this context suggest that these practices were enacted during the fourteenth century, within the same relative time frame that massive architectural and institutional transformations were occurring within Wat’a. The construction of Inka-style houses outside the perimeter wall corresponded to the destruction of the pre-Inka houses within the plaza space.

A household space was thus converted through a suite of violent and commemorative practices similar to those enacted within the intramural spaces. Yet this household sequence also emphasizes how, in transforming these spaces, an isomorphism was established between the burial of people and places. That is, burials and offerings were not in the foundations of these places; rather, they are the foundations of the places.

**Discussion: The Conversion of Wat’a and the Emplacement of Value**

As the aforementioned evidence suggests, the Inkas often sought not to destroy the places that local peoples recognized as sources of social value but to translate their value into an Inka idiom and in so doing to put local peoples into their “correct” places (see also Silverblatt 1988). The survey shows how the Inkas undertook a selective transformation of the lands they incorporated throughout the Ollantaytambo area, confining their efforts to particular sites, such as seats of political authority and ancestral places that were iconic of local social identity and autonomy. Existing sites for political ceremony were largely retained, while the practices through which local people participated in political action were relegated to exclusive and monumental spaces within a sharply defined, “legible” landscape (Scott 1998; also Mitchell 1988; Smith 2003). It appears as though Inka state formation was less a process of *coercion* than a process of *conversion*—one that sought to order people and places of the Cuzco region by staking new value distinctions within the hallowed ground of powerful places.

The excavations at Wat’a suggest how these value distinctions were emplaced. At Wat’a, Inka practices of place conversion were not solely acts of destructive erasure; nor were they simply processes of renovation. Wat’a was extinguished and a new Inka place inaugurated through a strategic program of conversion that targeted only particular buildings and areas. The sequences of destruction and reconstruction detailed here were uncovered within select contexts (6 of 22 excavation units) underneath distinctly Inka spaces. An Inka plaza was built over a long-occupied elite residential area. Pre-Inka storage areas were decommissioned and replaced by a centralized, restricted-access facility situated next to the plaza. A massive perimeter
wall was constructed around the new monumental precinct, creating an exclusive, fortified, sanctified, and thoroughly Inka space. Simultaneously, domestic activities were moved to an area outside the walled precinct. The new spatial arrangement bespoke a dramatic break with the preceding way of life. As Wat’a was split into distinct exclusive and residential sectors, the material boundaries of a new social order were built.

A look into the foundations of these Inka spaces reveals the process through which this new order was assembled. Conspicuous in its monumentality and exclusivity, the new Inka spaces of Wat’a were constructed through coordinated labor that entailed particular sequences of action—burning, smashing, offering, feasting, and burying—in particular sites. The objects interred within these spaces—marine shells, llama mandibula, cuy, decorated pottery—were more than just wealth, more than just the “good china.” And the practices with which these objects were associated were more than just construction activities. Offerings and feasting practices including nonquotidian fare (dog and deer) complemented the destructive interment of valued objects, lending a solemn theatricality to this process of reconstruction and renewal. As in Malinowski’s famous account of the magic essential to Trobriand canoe manufacture, it appears as though the sequential interments and selected material offerings at Wat’a were both essential to and inseparable from the labor of construction (for a comparable case, see Monaghan 1998).

Similarities between the sequences of actions that built both the Inka plaza and these Inka places reveal what seems to be a ritualized program of conversion—a linked series of actions that are attributed heightened significance and are deemed culturally necessary to accomplish a goal (e.g., Bell 1992, 1997; Bloch 1989; Swenson 2007). The overall goal of this ritual program was the redefinition of Wat’a as a definitively Inka place—a place markedly different from its predecessor and a place of absolute, incommensurable value. To invalidate the prior political order and inaugurate the new political regime, it appears as though it was essential to inter these valued things in these places in this theatrical way. In describing such practices, Connerton (1989:9) accentuates how “a rite revoking an institution only makes sense by invertedly recalling the other rites that hitherto confirmed the institution” (see also Bell 1992; Geertz 1973; Turner 1982). In comparison, archaeologists have recognized how Maya termination rituals were performed to kill, control, or convert the power that resided within certain places (Boteler Mock 1998; Coe 1959; Schele and Friedel 1990). Indeed, Wat’a was “put to death” only to be “resurrected.”

Returning to a regional perspective, we find that walled exclusive spaces were raised at many other pre-Inka places throughout the Cuzco region. Such places were systematically converted, perhaps through similar programs of reconstruction. At Pumamarka a monumental walled precinct was built on a hillside adjoining the extensive pre-Inka settlement (Kendall et al. 1992, 1996; Niles 1980). Q’aqya Qhawana (Juchuy Coscco), in the northern Cuzco region, replicates the spatiality of Wat’a and Pumamarka (Kendall et al. 1992), and at this site, too, grandiose Inka
monumental structures are separated from a nearby residential sector. Similar to the architectural overlay at Wat’a, Inka niched buildings and plazas were built within the central sectors of several large towns, including Pukara Pantillijlla and Qhapaq Kancha (Covey 2006a; Dwyer 1971). And, illustrating a striking similarity in incorporation processes, at the Cuzco Valley political center of Chokepukio, institutional structures were burned and ritual offerings interred when this important site was subsumed within the Inka state (McEwan et al. 2002, 2008). Radiocarbon dates indicate that these sites were architecturally embellished at about the same time as Wat’a—in the mid-fourteenth century (see dates in Bauer 2004; Covey 2006a; Kosiba 2010). Like Wat’a, many of these places were continuously or intermittently occupied for centuries prior to Inka state formation (Covey 2006a; Kendall 1996; McEwan et al. 2002), suggesting that the Inkas targeted long-recognized political and/or valued places in an effort to produce a coherent and ordered landscape throughout the Cuzco region.

Throughout their imperial expansion, the Inkas continued to assert their absolute authority by converting places that had long been recognized as sources of social power. Within La Centinela, the capital of the coastal kingdom of Chincha, the Inkas directed the construction of restricted plazas that declared Inka exclusivity by separating the Inka elite from local lords (Morris and Santillana 2007; see also Lumbreras 2001; Wallace 1998). Upon incorporating Pachacamac, a long-revered coastal religious site, the Inkas ordered the construction of a gargantuan pyramid and a monumental structure, both of them dwarfing the preexisting structures (Patterson 1985; Shimada 1991; Tello 1940). The evidence from Cuzco suggests that this later imperial policy of place conversion and subordination was forged during the Inkas’ initial confrontation and engagement with the other social groups of the Cuzco region.

The authority of the new Inka regional class was rooted in claims of absolute difference, and throughout Inka state formation these claims were planted in preexisting seats of power. At Wat’a, we see how this occurred: exclusive spaces were produced through practices of destruction and regeneration. In influencing or directing these practices of conversion in these valued spaces, the Inkas materially constituted the absolute differences—the essential categories of value—upon which their authority was built. The smashing of objects within pre-Inka places and the construction of monumental buildings and colossal walls manifested an absolute difference between pre-Inka and Inka ways of life and also between outside and inside, past and present, and non-Inka and Inka spaces. The changes documented at Wat’a, then, were not simply changes in the meaning of a local place. Through the conversion of local place value, a general regime of value was manifested and a state was born. Put simply, it was emplaced.
Becoming Inka . . . Subjects

In constituting social value, people define themselves as they define the contours of their world. The challenge, then, is to understand how in rebuilding Wat’a, once-autonomous local people inaugurated a new regime of value and in so doing redefined themselves as subjects of the Inka. Though we may never know whether Inka elites, local elites, or local commoners directed this process of transformation at Wat’a, it is highly probable that local hands enacted these practices of conversion. This proposition is well supported by broad continuities in the manufacture techniques of both the architecture and the material culture of Ollantaytambo-area sites, at which Inka structures and spaces were produced according to antecedent local styles of manufacture and construction (Kosiba 2010).

Local people were recast as Inka subjects inasmuch as they performed their new roles within the nascent Inka state. The excavations at Wat’a revealed a common sequence of practices within the labor process itself, intimately interwoven ritual and practical procedures of destruction, consumption, and construction. These practices would have required systematic coordination between participants within and across the spaces they sought to convert. In ritualizing this labor process, the Inkas directed a spectacle that not only recast local people as Inka subjects but forced them to be aware of their new roles (DeBord 1994; Smith 2004, 2006). The coordination of these laborers’ activities must have engendered a heightened self-consciousness of their social roles (as laborers) and, by implication, recognition of their lower position within a broader social hierarchy. In rebuilding Wat’a, they were reclassified as abstract and commensurable “workers” in a manner that would become iconic of incorporation into the Inka state—namely, through their labor (see Patterson 1985).

People confronted the essential social categories upon which Inka authority rested through their own labor, in their own place. Wat’a was a place where ancestors dwelled, a place in which the social fabric of a group was embedded. But through these people’s labor, it became Inka. More precisely, the particular and local value of Wat’a and similar places was transubstantiated—places like this became the symbols and sources of a completely different kind of value that divided the world into distinct and incommensurable social categories. This was not just the instantiation of hierarchy. It was the creation of nominal rather than ordinal differences between places, their functions, and their inhabitants. Local people’s participation in the transformation of this place would thus have been a powerful and emotive way to concretize their new role as Inka subjects and their subjection to this new social order.

In short, to put a new twist on an old idea: value was constituted through labor. Not labor time but labor organization within a specific context. Here, social value was defined in the very conspicuous distinction between those who labored and those who did not.

This study demonstrates how situated practices of place conversion might work to constitute value and consequently solidify the foundations of a regional state.
Among the Inkas, places did not accrue value because of their use or their position in an Andean cultural system. People did not amass social value solely through the accumulation of material resources. Their value (their potential to be Inka spaces or Inka subjects) was made manifest only during situated practices and processes of conversion. In this example, then, a notion of “value” as a coherent structure or totality does not precede the practices through which it is realized.

By building over sites within Wat’a and other important places, local people labored to obliterate the structures and signs of their own past, transforming their ancestral places in ways that suited Inka objectives. Their labor of place conversion entailed a suite of practices that embedded Inka value categories within the very mortar of a long-occupied and revered pre-Inka place. In destroying pre-Inka buildings, local people concealed their own past. In raising Inka buildings, they defined the political authority to which they were subject. They built the walls that kept them out. They marked the social boundaries of a new world order. As Wat’a became Inka, new values were, quite literally, put in place.

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Notes

1. The original Spanish reads:
Era otro cinche llamado Illacumbi, cinche de dos pueblos, el uno nombrado Cugma y el otro Guata, cuatro leguas del Cuzco. A este cinche enviaron a decir Inga Yupangui e Inga Roca que les viniese a dar obediencia, y respondioles que el era tan principal como ellos y libre, y que si algo querian, que lo habian de librar por las lanzas. Por esta respuesta
tomaron las armas contra el dicho cinche. El cual y otros dos cinches sus compañeros, llamados el uno Paucar Topa y el otro Poma Lloqui, juntaron sus gentes y salieron a pelear con el Inga, mas fueron vencidos y muertos ellos y cuasi todos los del pueblo. Y asolo aquella poblacion toda a fuego y a sangre con muy grandes crueldades. Y de alli se torno al Cuzco y triunfo de esta victoria [Sarmiento 1965:239 (1572)].

2. The Wat’a Archaeological Project included: (1) a full-coverage pedestrian survey of a 200-km² area; (2) mapping, intensive surface collections, and architectural studies at pre-Inka and Inka sites; and (3) extensive excavations and analyses (ceramics, faunal, macrobotanical) at Wat’a (Kosiba 2010).

3. Of course, this vision of absolute order was often more ideal than reality, inciting resistance as much as it instilled socioeconomic integration (e.g., Kolata 1996; Ramírez 2005; Silverblatt 1988). The challenge, though, is to first understand how the Inkas attempted to implant this kind of social order throughout the Andes and then to examine how local people might have acquiesced to or subverted Inka hegemony.

4. Such taxonomies of social value appear to define many ancient imperial projects, especially those that assert divine authority through ancestry and thus claim the absolute exclusivity of a ruling class (e.g., Brumfiel 1998; Kuhrt 2001).


6. Several researchers apply the category Killke period to the centuries that precede Inka rule in Cuzco (e.g., Bauer 2004; Covey 2006a). The Killke period corresponds to the geographic distribution of Killke pottery, which is defined by a decorative style and often thought to correspond to Inka political influence. But, the use of Killke style pottery as a temporal marker is problematic in its cultural-historical assumptions and tenuous empirical association with political influence (see also Chatfield 2007; Covey 2006a: 135; McEwan 2006: 199). More particularly, Killke pottery cannot be used as a temporal marker in the Ollantaytambo area, where many local styles derived from pre-Inka (twelfth and thirteenth century) excavation contexts mimic some of the design and manufacture features of Killke pottery, yet with distinct local variations. (Kosiba 2010; see also Gonzalez Corrales 1984; Lunt 1987; Rivera 1971a, 1971b, 1973). For the period directly preceding Inka ascendancy (Ollanta phase), I established a local ceramic chronology based on pastes, manufacture techniques, forms, rims, and decorative motifs (Kosiba 2010). The appearance of Inka architectural and ceramic styles defines the onset of the Inka period (see also Gibaja 1984; Lunt 1987). Additional research will further clarify the Ollantaytambo-area ceramic sequence.

7. Throughout the Cuzco region, high perimeter walls surround Inka monumental complexes, including Tipón within the Cuzco Valley; the temple to Viracocha at Raqchi; Ollantaytambo; and Saqsaywaman in Cuzco (Gasparini and Margolies 1980; Hyslop 1990; Niles 1980).

8. A radiocarbon date was obtained from a grass sample embedded in the wall's mortar at Wat’a. This sample (AA85886) yielded a calibrated one-sigma date range of A.D. 1391–1446 (68.2 percent). Another radiocarbon date was obtained from a charcoal sample embedded in the wall's foundation at Wat’a (within WAP excavation unit 9). This sample (AA82719) yielded a calibrated one-sigma date range of A.D. 1425–1455 (68.2 percent) (OxCal 4.1).

9. WAP excavated a total area of 149 m² and a total volume of 195.8 m³. In previous years, INC conducted extensive block excavations in the plaza sector of Wat’a and uncovered the
remains of pre-Inka residential structures underneath the Inka-period plaza floor (Cuba 2003, 2004).

10. An excavation unit near the plaza contained a continuous stratigraphic column, suggesting the long-term use of this area. Three radiocarbon dates were derived from Formative-period contexts under the plaza. The calibrated one-sigma ranges for these three dates are A.D. 3–118, 766–543 B.C., and 787–555 B.C. (68.2 percent) (OxCal 4.1). One radiocarbon date was derived from an OP context beneath the plaza. The calibrated one-sigma range for this date is A.D. 1229–1285 (68.2 percent) (OxCal 4.1).

11. Percentages of decorated ceramics (weight in grams) drastically increase within the levels (4 and 5) of the plaza excavation units (10 and 17) that correspond to the destruction of the OP village—a 109 percent increase in decorated serving vessels in unit 10 and a 137 percent increase in unit 17. There was no significant change in the stratigraphic sequence of the excavation unit directly below the plaza (11), thereby suggesting that the filling was highly localized.

12. WAP uncovered three ovoid structures (Kosiba 2010). INC excavations have revealed similar structures (Cuba 2003). The radiocarbon sample was taken from charcoal embedded in the foundational mortar of an ovoid structure. The date from this sample (AA82091) is A.D. 1236 ± 38. The calibrated one-sigma date range is A.D. 1230–1299 (68.2 percent) (OxCal 4.1).

13. Of the sherds recovered from the first context (unit 15), 72.3 percent were decorated. Of the sherds derived from the second context (unit 16), 75.4 percent were decorated. Of these decorated sherds, 64.2 percent from unit 15 and 82.6 percent from unit 16 are monochrome-slipped or polychrome vessels.

14. A date obtained from this charcoal sample (AA82093) is A.D. 1359 ± 36. The calibrated one-sigma date range is A.D. 1314–1399 (68.2 percent) (OxCal 4.1).

15. There is clearly one storage structure near the plaza. Associated buildings may have been used for storage. A date obtained from the Inka storage structure’s wooden beam (AA82719) is A.D. 1544 ± 36. The calibrated one-sigma date range is A.D. 1437–1490 (68.2 percent) (OxCal 4.1). The date is a bit later than expected, perhaps due to contamination of the exposed wood.

16. Radiocarbon measurements were derived from two excavated charcoal samples from both the fill and the ash layer covering the pre-Inka house. These samples yielded AMS dates of 1307 ± 36 (AA82089) and 1338 ± 36 (AA82090). The calibrated one-sigma date ranges are A.D. 1291–1386 (68.2 percent) and 1305–1391 (68.2 percent) (OxCal 4.1). Covey (2006a) reports a similar range of radiocarbon dates derived from the wall daub of semicircular and rectangular structures within Wat’a (provenience information from Alan Covey, personal communication, May 28, 2009).