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Dynastic oral tradition, administrative records and archaeology in the Andes

John V. Murra and Craig Morris

Instead of lamenting the absence of written records in the Andean area, we have only to look closely at the abundant evidence which has survived in the form of archaeological associations. (Dorothy Menzel 1959:141)

Some years ago, R. T. Zuidema reviewed a book called *Empire of the Incas*, written by an historian. Such a book was premature, claimed Zuidema (1965), since we know so little about the social, symbolic and political organization of the Inka state. Our only sources were the dynastic oral traditions recorded by the eyewitnesses of the European invasion; hence, the only certain fact of Inka history was King Atawallpa's captivity in 1532.

The historian was indignant. In a long and angry letter to the editor of the *American Anthropologist* he asked: did the reviewer mean it that no one could write Inka history until the anthropologists had first figured out Andean social structure? Zuidema replied, in essence, that the historian's impression was accurate. Neither asked what archaeology's contribution could be in this impasse.

In fact, considerable progress has been made in recent decades in the study of eyewitness accounts of the sixteenth century – if not in figuring out Inka history, then in our understanding the Andean use of the unusual high altitude resources available, hence of economic and political institutions. Many new questions have been formulated (Murra 1962; 1975) and new research strategies devised. While notable sites are continuously being 'reconstructed' without previous excavation, as if their very beauty and popularity removed them from the province of grubby research, other examples of Inka urbanism, like Huánuco Pampa, have received serious attention since 1964 (Morris 1967; 1974). While it is plain that dual patterns of authority prevailed in the Andes at all levels of society, we still know little about the two kings who were probably ruling in Cuzco at any one moment in time. However, the functions and privileges of the two Lupaqá kings, ruling a major Aymara polity incorporated into Tawantinsuyu, the Inka state, can now be discerned (Murra 1968). Graziano Gasparini (pers. comm.) thinks this duality is represented in architecture and town planning.

Much has been made of the scarcity of new 'chronicles', as the sixteenth century sources are locally called (Murra 1970). Philip A. Means's *Biblioteca Andina*, published in 1928, incredibly, is still a useful guide to these accounts. Dynastic oral tradition is more difficult to use in the Andes than it is in Africa (Vansina 1961; Wilks 1974). While a good deal of the regional, provincial tradition can be recovered ethnographically, there is little or none spanning the four and a half centuries separating us from the Inka

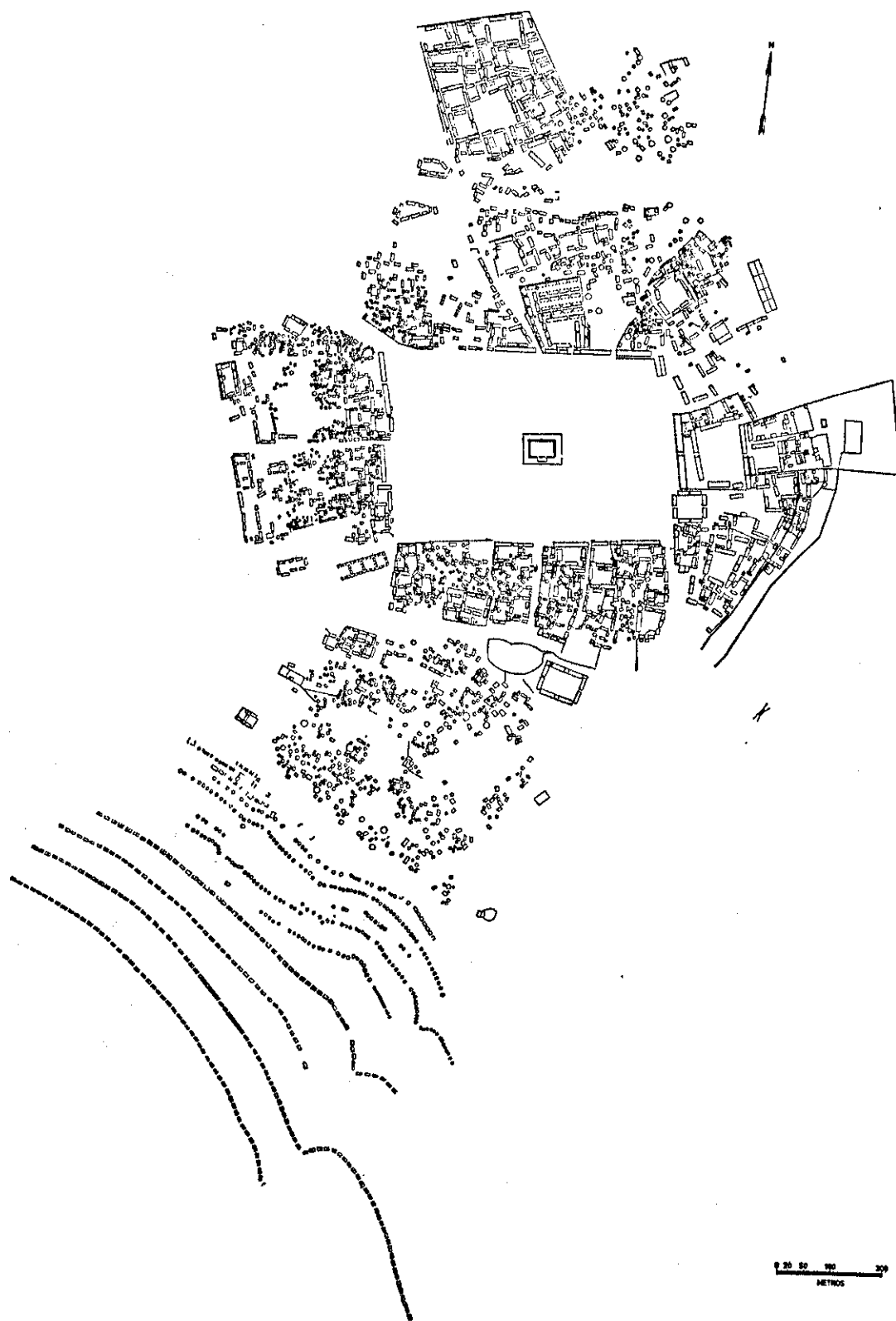


Figure 4 Preliminary architectural base map of Huánuco Pampa. Storehouses are in the south-western part of the city



Plate 1 Rows of storehouses as seen from platforms in the central plaza of Huánuco Pampa



Plate 2 Chulpa at the site of Cutimbo in the southern Peruvian altiplano; possibly a burial place for the Lupaca elite



Plate 3 Taieri Island, New Zealand, the site of a whaling station in the 1830s and 1840s

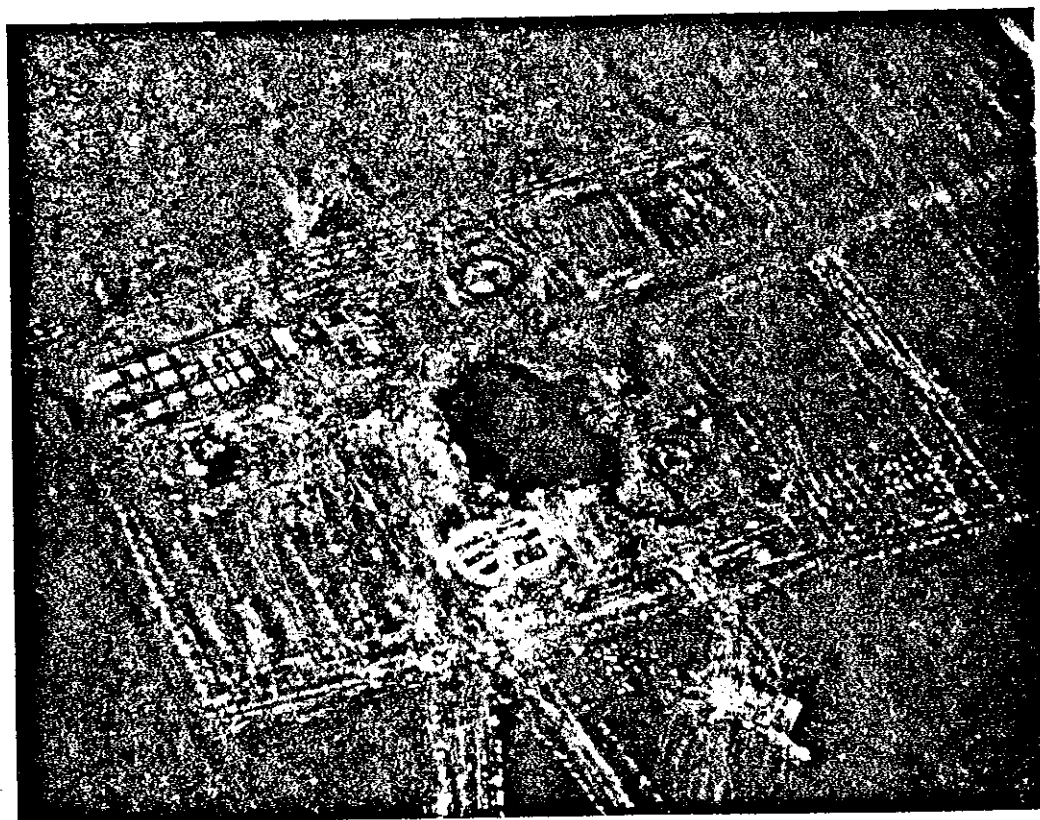


Plate 4 Aerial view of the Irrawang Pottery site from the south-east

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state. It is, then, particularly important to verify and amplify the hints from the traditional chronicles through archaeological fieldwork, although the research process is one of testing relatively general models and hypotheses rather than following up specific written statements.

More than thirty years ago, John H. Rowe (1944) drew a plan of what remained of Coricancha, the 'golden enclosure' in the Inka capital, hidden beneath colonial temples and modern plazas. Since then, the revelations of the 1950 earthquake and the lavish 'reconstruction' funds provided currently by UNESCO, have helped Rowe test the accuracy of eyewitness accounts of Cuzco's urban and architectural features in 1533. Dorothy Menzel's 1959 article has shown how far careful archaeological survey can take us beyond the written sources in understanding differences in the administrative patterns of Inka rule on the Pacific coast. Valcárcel (1934-5), Thompson and Murra (1966), Morris (1967; 1972a), Matos Mendieta (1972), and Valencia (1970) are only a sample of those willing to expand and challenge through excavation the information provided by the European observers.

A case in point is the system of administrative and logistic centres built by the Inka along their highways in an attempt to convert the multitude of regional polities into Tawantinsuyu. Many of these centres were abandoned early after the conquering Spanish destroyed the native system of rule which built them. We have no house-to-house surveys of any of these centres, or at least none have been found so far. Our main sources of written information are Cieza de León ([1553] 1947; 1959) who travelled many of the Inka roads and Waman Puma ([1613] 1936), who has given us a list of the centres. Although both of these, particularly Cieza, provide important benchmarks from which a study of imperial centres in the provinces may be begun, neither gives us much detail on what these centres were like while the Inka were still in power.

In contrast, the archaeological record for the Inka state centres is incredibly rich – at least in the central Peruvian highlands where we have surveyed parts of the road system. Many of the roads themselves can be traced through aerial photography. Some of the installations along the roads have been destroyed in colonial and modern times, but many others are still so well preserved that accurate maps and building counts can be made without excavation. Since many of the sites did not exist until the Inka period, the chronology is relatively simple. In addition, the rapid abandonment of the centres once Tawantinsuyu was defeated has led to unusually little secondary movement of artefacts after their primary, Inka Period, use. The simple chronology and relatively intact patterns of artefact and architectural associations make the remains of the imperial centres ideal for the study of activity patterns and the reconstruction of 'site ethnographies'.

These advantages are further enhanced by the high degree of standardization of the ceramic vessels used in most of the settlements under direct state control. As Rowe (1944: 48) noted many years ago, Inka ceramics are so standardized that a whole vessel can frequently be reconstructed from a single sherd. Our work has shown that ceramic complexes composed of differing proportions of various vessel types can be defined and their functions identified with the help of architectural evidence and the occasional observations of the use of objects and buildings recorded in the sixteenth century

(Morris 1971; 1974). All of these highly unusual archaeological advantages of the roads and the centres the Inka built to administer Tawantinsuyu make them ideal sources of many kinds of information on the economic, social and political organization of the empire.

Cieza de León was the best ethnographer of the early European observers. But his main aim was a faithful general picture with only occasional local detail, and most of the questions about structure and organization which are of interest to modern students of the Inka could not have occurred to him. More important, he began his travels in Perú fifteen years after the arrival of Pizarro. Although this was early enough to observe many native institutions still functioning, the upper levels of the Inka state had already been dismantled or subverted to European ends.

Information on the purely native organization at the state level had to be retrieved from royal informants; most of the centres the state had built as seats of administration were now either under European control or had begun to fall into ruin. From his description of the great centre at Vilcas, we can see that Cieza was confronted with what was already in part an archaeological problem: 'What can be seen are the foundations of the buildings, and the walls and enclosures of the shrines, the stones I have mentioned, and the temple with its stairways, even though it has fallen into ruins and is overgrown with grass and the storehouses have fallen down. In a word, it was once what it no longer is, and by what it is, we can judge what it was' ([1553] book I, chap. LXXXIX; 1959: 127). He appreciated the value of the abandoned sites as checks on his information – and even as evidence that his information could not be complete. 'Whatever the Indians said about these residences fell short of reality, to judge by the remains' ([1553] book I, chap. XLIV; 1959: 68).

The picture Cieza gives us of the roads and the towns along them emphasizes the extent of the system, and the carefulness with which it was planned so as to provide what was needed where it was needed. As a soldier he was appreciative of the attention paid to provisionment. Everywhere he is aware of the extensive presence of storage. He also leaves little doubt that many of the highland centres were actually built by the Inka, not just taken over and used. The archaeologist thus frequently does not have to start from scratch in dating the sites – although a careful check for earlier occupations should always be made. Perhaps the most important element in Cieza's observations is that he alerts us to the somewhat unusual and Andean character of the centres. In citing the size and importance of the centres he carefully refers to the number of people 'serving' them, not to their inhabitants or population ([1553] book I, chap. LXXXIX; LXXX; 1959: 127, 109). Indirectly, the sheer fact that such extensive and impressive establishments were frequently falling into ruin within fifteen years of the capture of Atawallpa indicates a very strong dependence on a particular political order.

The observations of Cieza, interpretations of Andean institutions based on more comprehensive analyses of written sources (Murra 1956; 1975), and preliminary evidence from archaeological work in 1964 and 1965 (Thompson 1968; Morris and Thompson 1970), have been combined in an attempt to provide a coherent set of ideas to guide further research on Inka installations in the provinces (Morris 1972b). Since mid-1971 a substantial archaeological project has been testing those and other ideas at the administrative centre of Huánuco Pampa in the Peruvian central highlands (Morris

1975). Even though the analysis of the data from the project is still incomplete, it is already clear that the testing and amplification of information from written sources is very productive at the level of Inka administrative operations. In short, archaeology does allow us to fill in much of what Cieza knew he was missing.

It is not possible here to undertake a general report on the new evidence emerging from Huánuco Pampa, but a few examples will suffice to show how archaeological data can help confirm the written sources, supplement general observations with detail, and correct misleading statements and impressions.

1 As impressed as some of the sixteenth-century writers were with the Inka state settlements, there is little concrete evidence on their size. It is difficult to translate Cieza's careful references to 'those who served' into information which is useful for comparative purposes. Our mapping work at Huánuco Pampa shows that it covered almost two square kilometres. The remains of more than 3,500 structures are still visible. When estimates of the number of structures in badly destroyed zones are added to this, we arrive at a total count which was probably between 4,000 and 5,000. A thorough study of the material from an excavated sample of the buildings should give a good indication of how many were residences and how many served other functions. We should be able to differentiate between several different kinds of residence – allowing us to give more specific meaning to Cieza's references to the people who 'served' the centre. That 'profile' of the population will have to await the complete analysis of the excavated material. But we can tentatively estimate the centre's housing capacity at between 12,000 and 15,000, based on a still tentative calculation of the dwelling space there.

2 The account of Cieza is filled with valuable information on the storage system which so impressed him. He tells us something of the contents of the warehouses at Tumipampa ([1553] book I, chap. XLIV; 1959: 68) and says there were more than 700 depositories at Vilcas ([1553] book I, chap. LXXIX; 1959: 127). But again we need to convert his statements into more precise quantitative information on the storage facilities and their uses if we are to deal with modern comparative problems. Work on the storage system mentioned above, demonstrates clearly that archaeology can provide much of that quantitative information. The 497 storehouses in the main facility at Huánuco Pampa were divided into functionally specialized sets of buildings devoted to the storage of various products. While it was not possible to identify the use of many structures, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the storage chambers were used mainly for foodstuffs. The total volume of the Huánuco Pampa structures was about 38,000 m.³, space for more than one million bushels. Some of this space was of course wasted because of containerization of certain goods. We were also able to suggest that between 50 and 80% of the space was used for root crops and about 5 to 7% for maize. Although figures on storage do not directly reflect the production or even the use of various goods, they do underscore once again the importance of root crops and other high altitude products in the native Andean economy at all levels.

3 Written sources emphasize the political and military functions of state centres with little mention of economic matters aside from storage. The absence of references to

major market places is paralleled by our inability to identify any substantial areas which could have served market functions in Huánuco Pampa. All sizable public areas seem to have had other uses. While this certainly does not prove that no barter or market-like exchange took place, it does suggest that major, institutionalized markets were not an important aspect of Inka centres.

One of the most significant results of our work in Huánuco Pampa is the demonstration of large scale non-agricultural production. The workshops discovered emphasized cloth and food processing, and were aimed at the requirements of a state economy based on reciprocity and redistribution rather than market exchange (Morris 1974). These results amplify considerably our understanding of Inka state-built cities, showing that they were not just logistics and administrative centres, but played a critical economic role as well.

4 Finally, there is an additional way in which the impression we get of Inka provincial centers from Cieza and others is modified by archaeology at Huánuco Pampa. The emphasis on military functions and activities so prominent in written sources has not emerged from archaeological work. A sample of 20% of the storehouses revealed no arms stores. Less than a dozen artefacts of clearly military intent have been recovered in the excavation of almost 1,000 pits and trenches.

It is possible, of course, that our archaeological findings may reflect some undetectable event – such as the systematic confiscation of all weapons by the Spanish. And there are, indeed, areas of apparently all-male communal housing that, except for the absence of arms, could be interpreted as soldiers' quarters. A more likely observation, however, would seem to be that Inka installations were not uniform in their military importance. It is perhaps no accident that the strongest specific reference in Cieza to military stores and activities is in his description of Tumipampa in the lands of the rebellious Cañari, near the part of the frontier that was still expanding when the Spanish arrived (Cieza [1553] book I, chap. XLIV; 1959: 68). Installations like Huánuco Pampa, once they were no longer near the battle lines or military problem areas, may have performed secondary military functions, such as logistic support of the movement of people to front line areas. In any case, the archaeological record clearly shows that Huánuco Pampa was not simply a garrison station with a few ancillary functions. It supported a much broader variety of economic and political activities as a critical element in the structure of a complex Andean state.

A somewhat different avenue of research utilizes previously neglected or new sources of written information. The most useful have turned out to be the administrative records collected by colonial authorities during the first decades after the invasion. Some of these are house-to-house and town-by-town accounts of inspections ordered by the vice-regal authorities of Lima, Quito or La Plata for census or tribute purposes; others are records of litigation over canals, herds or lands between two or more Andean ethnic groups, with or without the meddling of their European masters (Ortiz de Zúñiga 1562; Diez de San Miguel 1567; Rostworowski 1967–8; 1973; Espinoza Soriano 1971–2).

Not all Andean states were as large or as complicated as Tawantinsuyu. The scope of the administrative papers is narrower, but they are rich in information about politics

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which, although conquered and incorporated by the Inka state, maintained considerable cultural and political autonomy. Good examples are the circum-lacustrine kingdoms of Aymara speech (such as the Lupaqa, Pakasha or Karanka) that had emerged from the break-up of the Middle or Tiwanaku Horizon. The earliest dynastic traditions agree that when Cuzco began to expand, its armies moved south, to the highland plateau surrounding Lake Titicaca, at more than 3,800 m. above sea level. This region was eventually known as the Qolla quarter of Tawantinsuyu. Although it was then, and is still today, the most heavily populated part of the Andean highlands, its archaeology is but little reported and the later, immediately pre-Inka and pre-European occupations, those most readily accessible through historical information, have been virtually ignored.

Not only was the *altiplano* the nucleus of the Tiwanaku expansion, it was early recognized as the most prosperous part of the Andes according to either local or foreign criteria. To quote again the observant Cieza de León:

This part which they call the Collas, is in my opinion the greatest province of all Peru and the most populated . . . and it is true that if this land of the Collao were a deep valley like that of Chuquiabo or Xauxa that would grow maize, it would be considered the best and the richest part of most of the Indies . . . (Cieza [1553], book I, chap. XCIX; 1947:442).

One of the explanations of this probable 'wealth', so far above the tree-line, is the complementary arrangement within a single 'archipelago' of widely separated resource zones, controlled from a central nucleus where subsistence, power and the bulk of the population were concentrated (Murra 1968; 1972). The peripheral 'islands' of the polity could be located at eight, ten or even twelve days' walk from the nucleus; their occupants were permanent settlers who produced maize, timber, cotton, coca leaf, guano fertilizer or seafood for their faraway kinsmen and rulers; while absent from the centre they maintained full access to the subsistence tubers and the camelid energy, wool and meat harvested in the *altiplano*.

A town-by-town inspection of such an 'archipelago' made in 1567 was published in Lima in 1964 (Diez [1567]). An ethnographic reconstruction of this Lupaqa system of simultaneous access to widely dispersed resources appears in Murra (1968). No archaeological verification of this 'archipelago' model was possible till 1973, when a seminar sponsored by the Foreign Area Fellowship Program allowed a group of Bolivian, Peruvian, Chilean, US and Québec students to spend eight weeks in the area.

We were able to combine archaeological, historic and even ethnographic observations, since continuities in agriculture, herding, land tenure, language and religion are so strong. A preliminary report on the archaeological side of the work is already available (Lumbreras 1974). Two of the participants, John Hyslop and Elias Mujica, have since returned to the area to conduct a detailed archaeological survey of all sites mentioned in the records. They have expanded our understanding of the Lupaqa polity by showing that the seven provincial capitals described by Garci Diez were recent, Inka-times resettlements in their present locations along the royal highway, much like the administrative centres described above.

Before Inka times, the major settlements were walled-in areas of considerable size (20 and more hectares), located in the highlands behind and above the lake, at the very limits of agricultural production (4,000 and more metres), closer to their pastures. A

doctoral dissertation by Hyslop, *Late Cultural Development on the Southwest Side of Lake Titicaca*, should be ready for defence in early 1976 at Columbia University, New York.

'Archipelagos' have been compared in various parts of the Andes (Murra 1972). Processual aspects of the model now loom important and have high priority for archaeological testing: as the polity grows, so does the distance at which peripheral settlements can be maintained; structural changes in the status and functions of the colonists, known as *mitmaquna* in Quechua, can also be expected. It is likely that maize growers, alpaca herders or wood hewers, resettled at fifty or sixty days' walk from their kinsmen, will have a hard time making an effective claim to their latent rights in the nuclear region.

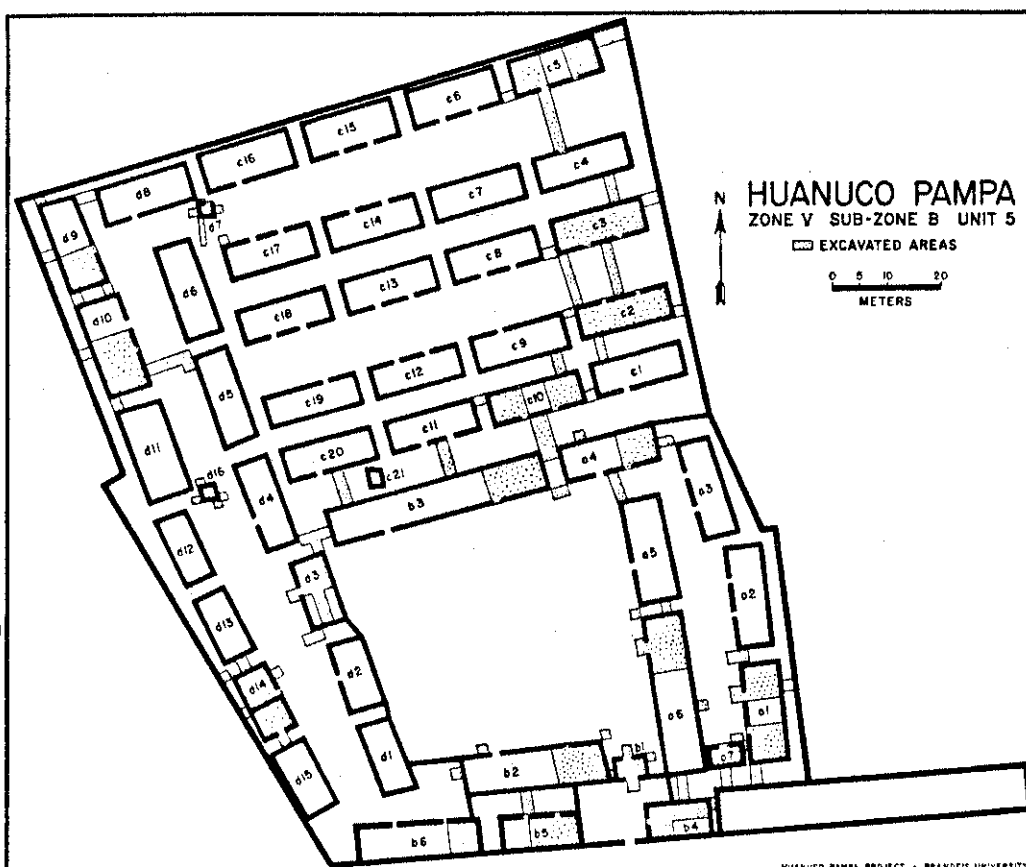


Figure 5 Plan of compound which housed weaving activities. Note access point near south-east corner

Archaeological verification of this change is most promising in the artisan 'islands' set up by Andean states, both before and during Inka times, where the ecological macro-adaptation is minimized and replaced by productivity or military considerations. Potters, weavers or smiths were resettled to provide the benefits of mass production, under workshop conditions which could fairly be compared with the 'industrial' establishments of Europe at the same time.

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Leads to the location of one such artisan 'island' were found during recent work at the Bolivian National Archive in Sucre. As part of litigation, one of the lords of Guancané, on the north shore of Lake Titicaca, testified that:

'The Inka Guaina Capac settled as *mitimaes* on our lands, one thousand weavers, in the village of Millerea and 100 potters at Hupi, which is nearby, and although their presence did us great damage our ancestors did not dare resist the will of said Inka since they were so afraid of the tyrant. . . .'

Hupi is probably Qupi, which means 'pottery' in Aymara; it is a frequent place name in the Andean landscape. The ethnologists had no difficulty in locating Milliraya, near Guancané, and have triangulated the location of the workshops. Their importance can be seen in the following testimony:

'The witness's father was a bookkeeper of the Inka and sometimes he came with his father to the said town of Guancané and saw . . . 1,000 resettled weavers . . . and his father kept accounts of all the people who were there and of the boundary stones and of the lands which were issued them. . . . Then there were also the hundred . . . who were all of them potters and this witness saw them and saw how his father who was bookkeeper of the Inka, assigned the crockery which these Indians had to make and their share was that of a hundred. . . .'

One of the main needs for future archaeological research is expansion and verification of our understanding of such artisan *mitmaquna* settlements. While the kilns used by the 'hundred' potters may have been flimsy, we expect to find at least the enduring discards, the broken and misshapen vessels produced by the state's *mitimaes*, as their name has been rendered in Spanish. The possibility of finding stratigraphy to pre-incaic periods is not excluded. But the economic dimension, the role of resettled state artisans, is an important feature of Andean organization and it is that which we expect excavation to clarify.

22.ix.1975

*The Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey*

*The American Museum of Natural History
New York, New York State*

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Abstract

Murra, J. V. and Morris, C.

Dynastic oral tradition, administrative records and archaeology in the Andes

Many questions about the structure and dynamics of native Andean societies can be answered by research strategies which carefully coordinate written sources and the archaeological record. Ways are explored in which archaeological tactics have been, and may be, combined with the two major kinds of written sources available for the Andes - dynastic oral tradition and administrative records. It is emphasized that both kinds of sources need to be verified and expanded by archaeology, although they differ somewhat in the way they are approached. Oral tradition provides the basis for rather general hypotheses about Andean society, particularly at the state level. Administrative records, on the other hand, offer specific regional details, with an invaluable opportunity to see below the imperial mantle and to locate and check concrete examples of widespread practices and institutions.