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THE TEMPLE OF BLINDNESS: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INCA SHRINE OF ANCOCAGUA

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"In the district of Canas there was a temple which they called Ancocagua: there they made sacrifices according to their blindness."

Pedro Cieza de León¹

Ancocagua must be one of the most enigmatic Inca sites mentioned in early colonial documents. The renowned Spanish chronicler, Cieza de León (1977 [1554]:107), listed it as the fourth most important temple in the Inca empire. Yet, there is no description of the site, nor of its exact location, and this naturally gives rise to some basic questions. Where was it? Why was it so important? Given its significance, why did so few of the Spanish writers refer to it? The only way one could hope to answer these questions was by gathering together the historical references and by investigating the region in which the site might be found.

Beginning with Cieza de León's (1977 [1554]:107, 153) account, we know that an ancient ("muy antiguo") oracle was highly venerated at Ancocagua, and that the temple was somewhere in the province of Hatun Canas.² Aside from the Incas, people from all around came to worship at the temple. Animals and humans were sacrificed and gold was offered to the deity there. Cieza de León (*ibid.*:107) heard that gold valued at 30,000 pesos was taken from the temple by the Spaniard Diego Rodríguez Elemosín. Even more treasure was found, and there were reports that gold and silver were buried by the Incas in places still undiscovered.

¹ My translation. See Cieza de León (1984 [1553]:223).

² *Hatun* in Quechua means "large" or "principal" (González Holguín 1989 [1608]:158).

When I first began searching for clues to the location of Ancocagua in the historical accounts, I did not find its name directly associated with a temple. However, it does appear in historical records from the province of Canas. In a list of communities dating to 1575 one called Ancocaua³ is listed next to Coporaque and Yauri (in Hatun Canas), as it was in lists prepared in 1583, 1599, and 1812 (Glave 1987:64-66) (Table 1; Figure 1).⁴ Today, the towns called Coporaque and Yauri are 12 km apart and in the same wide valley, about 140 km (in a straight line) to the southeast of Cusco in the province of Espinar. Because the communities noted are listed in geographical sequence, the settlement of Ancocagua must not have been far from them. In addition, by 1581 the people of Ancocagua had been "reduced" (brought together) into a landholding unit that was a part of the community of Coporaque (Aparicio 1982:96). It consisted of 275 people and 28 tribute-paying Indians, but the Indians would have presumably kept their landholdings outside Coporaque proper.

The reason for the "reduction" is said to have been that the Ancocagua Indians poured melted gold down the throat of the Spaniard to whom they owed tribute. Those responsible ran off to other provinces while the remainder

³ "Ancocagua" is also spelled "Ancocaua", "Aconcagua", "Anccocahua", "Anccocahua", and "Hancocagua".

⁴ The orthography of Quechua terms has varied through the years and depends upon the author. Thus, one can find such spellings as Ancocagua/Ancocaua, Mullucagua/Mullucachua, Suykutambo/Sucuitambo, etc. I have maintained the use of terms that appeared to me to be the best known from the literature and have indicated alternative spellings of some words because they appear in various documents and on maps.

settled in Coporaque (Celestino 1982 [1792]:78). Whether this is fact or legend, in the late 1700s Ancocagua was listed as one of eight groups (*ayllus*) forming Coporaque (Hinojosa 1987:232). It was described as having once had its own parish (*curato*) (*i.e.*, prior to the incident with the Spaniard), but in 1792 it formed part of Coporaque (Celestino 1982 [1792]:78). It is suggestive that when the lists follow a clear north-to-south progression throughout, as in those of 1575 and 1583 (Glave 1987:64, 66), Ancocagua occurs last. This indicates that Ancocagua originally bordered Coporaque to the south.

Support for this hypothesis comes from an examination of the rivers noted in historical sources. In a document of 1586, the Apurímac River is stated to have its origin in a village called Ancocagua, which lay on the road from the city of Arequipa (*i.e.*, to Cusco) (Fornee 1965 [1586]:28). Many tributaries to the south of Coporaque contribute to the origin of the Apurímac River, and the road between Arequipa and Cusco passes through this area (Agurto 1987:42; Alicia Quirita, personal communication 1994). Thus, it is possible that the place called Ancocagua was the temple of that name.⁵

⁵ According to a 1:100,000 map (Perú, Instituto Geográfico Militar, Carta Nacional, Cailloma, Hoja 31-s), there is a small settlement with the name of Anccocahua seven km to the south of the town of Cailloma (Caylloma), at the origin of the Unculle River (Figure 1). This settlement is not situated on a high point, and, therefore, does not fit the description of the site of Ancocagua. No ruins of significance have been noted in the area (Alicia Quirita, personal communication 1994). In any event, this Anccocahua is not located in the province of Hatun Canas and thus is an unlikely candidate for the temple. However, it is possible that this settlement was named after the temple or the land and people associated with it.

There is a mountain called Anccocahua (see the IGM 1:100,000 map Callalli, Hoja 32-t), but it is 100 km to the southeast of Coporaque in the province of Collagua. Thus it is too far away to have been the site of the temple, even if ruins exist on the mountain.

We know today that the area south of Coporaque is the source of the Apurímac River. That this was also known by the Spaniards is further demonstrated by a list of rivers presented in 1792 by Celestino (1982:75). According to him, the Apurímac River has its origin in Vilafró Lake, which is 12 km west of the town of Cailloma (Caylloma) where the list begins, and this is, in fact, close to its true origin. Only through the use of modern technology has the source of the Apurímac's furthest tributary been traced to the foot of the mountain Mismi *ca.* 30 km to the south of Cailloma (McIntyre 1991:20).⁶ The Aconcagua River was first in the list of Celestino, reportedly flowing into the Apurímac after it passed through a steep gorge below Cailloma. Of the rivers that follow, all those that I could locate on the 1:100,000 series maps⁷ produced by Peru's Instituto Geográfico Nacional⁸ occur downstream from the Aconcagua/Apurímac confluence (moving from south to north) in the same order as they do in the list.

I could not find a river with the name Aconcagua on any map, but it is probably one of the rivers that originate near the town of Suyckutambo (Sucuitambo) or between it and the pass of Apacheta Rayada some eight km distant (Figure 1). The Sañu River, which follows the Aconcagua River in the list, flows into the Apurímac just below the Inca site of Maucallacta, approximately 20 km south of Coporaque. The next river listed, the Quero, flows in near Coporaque. These rivers both have their origins in the lakes in the mountains above Cailloma near the town of Suyckutambo (4,800 m). This is at a divide where rivers flow in all directions. The majority,

⁶ The Incas were aware that Mismi Mountain, on which they made important ritual offerings (Ross 1980), straddles the continental divide, and that rivers start flowing to the Pacific Ocean from its western slopes, and also from only a few km to the west of Vilafró Lake.

⁷ These include the Cailloma 31-s, Vellile 30-s, Condoroma 31-t, and Yauri 30-t sheets.

⁸ Formerly the Instituto Geográfico Militar.

however, eventually sweep around to merge with the Apurímac. Although we do not know which place the Incas considered to be the exact source of the Apurímac, it seems reasonable to assume they would have perceived it to be in the region south of Coporaque.

Aside from Inca ruins leading south from Coporaque along the Apurímac River as far as the archaeological site of María Fortaleza (Quirita and Candia 1994), there is evidence suggesting an Inca presence higher up the Apurímac Valley. One part of the name Suyckutambo, (*tambo* means "way station" in Quechua) could indicate an Inca presence at this place, and the name *apacheta* (Quechua for "cairn") suggests that traditional worship was performed on the pass of Apacheta Rayada. Inca potsherds have also been reported from the Suyckutambo area (Alicia Quirita, personal communication 1994). More research needs to be done to establish the Inca presence in this little-known area.

One other tributary of the Apurímac, the Callomani (also spelled Cayamani) River, also begins near Suyckutambo and meets the Apurímac just above Maucallacta and immediately before María Fortaleza. Because it is the first significant tributary downstream from the gorge, it might be the one that was called Aconcagua in 1792. When placed beside the information about the community (*ayllu*) of Ancocagua noted above, the evidence pointed to the temple of Ancocagua as having been located to the south of the town of Coporaque. However, this still left the problem of what the temple looked like, because there are several Inca sites in the area.

The discovery of the missing part of the 1551 book by Betanzos (1987 [1551]) has meant we now have important information concerning the physical description of Ancocagua. He noted that the temple was on a fortified spur directly opposite a hilltop. Based on events he described that occurred in Cusco, we know that a battle took place at Ancocagua in late 1535. There had been an uprising in the area and local inhabitants had killed a Spaniard. Juan Pizarro led a group of Spaniards and native allies to lay siege to the forti-

fied temple. After some time the rebels ran out of water and were about to surrender. However, it snowed heavily one night, and thus they were able to continue their resistance (*ibid.*:293).

The Spaniards asked members of the Inca nobility who had accompanied them how the Incas had captured Ancocagua when they battled the people living there some years before. The Spaniards were told that the Incas filled in the breach between the two high points using rocks, bushes, and bunches of wild grass. Employing the same method, the Spaniards captured the fortified temple (Betanzos 1987 [1551]:293-294).⁹

⁹ Hemming (1970:185-186, 572 footnote 186) synthesized material provided by some chroniclers about a battle at a fortified, rocky outcrop called Ancocagua located in "bad, humid country". Monica Barnes (personal communication 1995) kindly provided information from three sources cited by Hemming: Herrera y Tordesillas 1615; Pizarro y Orellana 1639; and the "Probanza de servicios . . ." of 1538, the latter published in 1940 in a collection of documents edited by Padre Víctor M. Barriga (hereafter referred to as Archivo General de Indias 1940). Pizarro y Orellana relies heavily on Herrera y Tordesillas, which is the most complete account. Only one of the men involved in the battle, Diego de Narváez, mentioned that the land was humid and bad ("tierra húmeda y mala") (Archivo General de Indias 1940:49). However, he did not state that it was hot, and it is even unclear if the country described was at Ancocagua or that crossed while he returned to Cusco. This takes on significance when the two other participants, Tomás Vásquez and the priest Pedro de Varco [*sic*], described suffering from the cold during the campaign (*ibid.*:45-46).

The highland region of Hatun Canas was well-known for its cold climate (Cieza de León 1984 [1553]:224), and we have seen that Betanzos described it snowing at Ancocagua. Given that the battle must have taken place in the South American summer months of late 1535, it makes sense that the wet season would have begun, with snow at higher elevations and rain lower in the valleys. This would make Diego de Narváez's discussion of humidity understandable.

According to the accounts of Herrera y Tordesillas (1615:231-234) and Pizarro y Orellana (1639:199-200), Indians killed Pedro Mártir de Moguer, while Diego de Narváez (Archivo General de Indias 1940:49) stated that it was Pedro Martín Domínguez. Spaniards under

Given the above information, it was now possible not only to narrow down the location of the temple in Hatun Canas, but also the number of sites fitting its description. Unfortunately, the reported presence of Shining Path terrorists in the region meant that I delayed several years in beginning my search for Ancocagua. However, in 1994 I had the good fortune to meet Alicia Quirita, one of two archaeologists who had recently conducted investigations in the area (see Quirita and Can-

the leadership of Gonzalo Pizarro attacked the rocky outcrop in 1535. Later Juan Pizarro arrived with reinforcements. They attacked using a siege blanket, but were unsuccessful. Finally a member of the Inca nobility came from Cusco to help. He had four Spaniards disguise themselves as Indians, shave their beards, and dye their faces. During the night, he and the four Spaniards (Mancio Sierra, Francisco de Villafuerte, Pedro de Barco, and Iuan Flores) were admitted within the first and second entrances of the walls. The five men were able to fight off the Indians long enough for the rest of the Spanish forces to enter and capture the fort. Many of the natives leaped to their deaths from the cliffs. The Spaniards captured 5,000 gold castellanos and used these to help build the church in Cusco.

Although the exact location is not noted in these sources, and they do not mention Ancocagua as having been a temple, these accounts appear to describe the capture of the fortified "temple" of the same name. This is made more likely when we remember that both the battle described by these writers and the one recounted by Betanzos occurred at the time of the uprising of the Collao Indians in late 1535. Both took place on a rocky outcrop with steep cliffs, and both were undertaken due to the Indians having killed an *encomendero*. Both also note the cold, both involved a Pizarro brother, and both places were named Ancocagua.

Betanzos wrote about the battle for Ancocagua a few years after it occurred, and his account does not mention Ancocagua as having been captured by deployment of disguised men. However, this may not have been brought to his attention, and in any event it does not contradict his description of the use of materials to "fill" the space between the hill and outcrop. Indeed, the siege blanket may have been used at this time or it may have been part of a combination of tactics involving the entry through disguise and an assault by means of reaching the upper area of the fort by the method described above.

dia 1994). Lacking the information provided in Betanzos' more complete account, Quirita and Candia (1994:23) hypothesized that the temple of Ancocagua may have been on the summit of the mountain Quimsachata near Coporaque. In August 1994 Alicia Quirita and I were able to examine sites in the region, combining her archaeological survey and my own historical research.

There are numerous ruins in the area. However, few have been described in the literature, and we initially could not find any that fit Betanzos' description of Ancocagua. For example, the important Inca sites of Kanamarca (K'anamarka) and Maucallacta (Maukallakta) are not on high points (Angles 1988, vol. 2:571-601; Bonnett 1983).¹⁰

One of the most significant sites we visited is that of Mullucagua (also spelled Mulloccahua and Muyuqhawa) located on a hilltop at about 4,100 m in elevation and about 12 km to the east of Yauri (Angles 1988, vol. 2:593, 597; Pardo 1948:15-20). The hilltop is a truncated cone dominating the surrounding area (Pardo 1948: photo 7 between pages 18 and 19). The site is constructed with points of entry protected by bastions, contains funerary towers, and has some fine Inca stonework (Angles 1988, vol. 2:577, 582, 584, 593; Pardo 1948:15-20). It was reportedly one of the fortified places used by the Canas people prior to Inca presence in the region (Celestino 1982:75). However, it did not fit Betanzos' description, nor the location as determined from the list of communities and rivers described above. Furthermore, the name of Ancocagua was unknown to the local inhabitants we questioned.

However, as soon as we went to the south of Coporaque, we encountered people familiar with the name Ancocagua. It was not used for a particular site, but rather to denote an area, Ancocagua Manturca. This is a plateau located about 10 km south of Coporaque. We were told that it is bounded on the west by the

¹⁰ It should be noted that even the bottoms of the valleys in this area are above 3,800 m in elevation.

Apurímac River and on the east and south by mountains, among which (as labeled on the 1:100,000 IGM map) were Huicho Pucara, Vila Pucara, Chita, Huayna Condori, Sayuta, and Checorume. Ancocagua Manturca consists of several small settlements in an area of more than fifty square km (see the 1:100,000 map Yauri Hoja 30-t). The altitude of the plateau is around 4,000 m with some houses as high as 4,400 m. Used for grazing animals, this is also the first area (aside from small patches of land along the rivers) where agriculture (primarily of potatoes, but also quinoa) can be carried out to the north of the continental divide and the source of the Apurímac River. It is, therefore, also the first area where a number of permanent settlements can be maintained.

We could find only one archaeological site in this region which fit Betanzos' description, and it turned out to be the most important: María Fortaleza. It would seem to be no coincidence that it is the only major archaeological complex in the region to have a Spanish name. This indicates that the Spaniards may have wanted to suppress the indigenous term for the site. The Spanish toponym is itself suggestive: *fortaleza* means "fort" and María is, of course, the Virgin Mary, implying that the site had a religious element. As noted above, Ancocagua was a fortified temple.

According to local tradition, the name dates to the time long ago when a woman yelled out "Jesús, María" after being surprised while she was urinating. The Virgin Mary instantly appeared and was converted into a rock, while the urine of the woman became a river. The rock is near the confluence of the Totorani and Apurímac Rivers just below the ruins (Quirita and Candia 1994:44, 88) (Figure 2). This legend could have its roots in an older one, as discussed below.

The local name of the site is now T'acra-chullo (Tajra Chullo on the 1:100,000 map). According to local inhabitants, this comes from the words *t'acra* meaning "disarranged rocks" and *chullo* meaning "trickling water" (Quirita and Candia 1994:88). The name would seem appropriate for the place, because

the outcrop and river bottom are both strewn with boulders and certainly water could be said to trickle amidst the boulders at the river and even on the outcrop when it rains (Figure 2).

The physical dimensions of the outcrop are impressive. Quirita and Candia (1994:87) estimate the top area to be about five hectares, *i.e.*, some 50,000 m², on which hundreds of ruins exist (Figure 3). According to my altimeter, the summit is at 4,170 m, which is 134 m above the river.

Based on Quirita's and Candia's (1994) investigation of the ruins and ceramics, the site became particularly important during the Middle Horizon (*ca.* A.D. 540 to A.D. 900) when it was occupied by the Huari (Wari) people.¹¹ It continued to play a key role in the region through the Late Intermediate Period (called Collao in this area; *ca.* A.D. 900 to A.D. 1476) and the Late Horizon (*i.e.*, the Inca Period; *ca.* A.D. 1476 to A.D. 1534 in this region) (*ibid.*). There are also ceramics dating from the Early Horizon (*ca.* 1400 B.C. to 400 B.C.) through the Early Intermediate Period (*ca.* 400 B.C. to A.D. 540). However, it is not clear just how important a role the site played before the Middle Horizon. Nonetheless, the ceramics indicate that the site may have been occupied for around 3,000 years.

One of the best preserved structures is at the western foot of the outcrop about 15 m above the Totorani River (Quirita and Candia 1994:99-102) (Figure 4). It is a large (over 16 m long) rectangular building of Inca origin, as demonstrated by its trapezoidal doors and niches and typical Inca construction tech-

¹¹ I have only provided a summary of the findings made at María Fortaleza. Further details on the archaeology of the site can be found in Quirita and Candia (1994) and in a forthcoming publication based on their thesis. They were the first to survey María Fortaleza in 1991-92, and they conducted seven 1 x 1 m excavations: two in Sector A, two in Sector B, two in Sector C, and one in Sector D (Quirita and Candia 1994:104). It must be emphasized, therefore, that archaeological work at the site has just begun.

niques (*cf.*, Agurto 1987; Gasparini and Margolies 1980) (Figure 5). The majority of the ceramics found in and near the building (located in Sector D as denoted by Quirita and Candia 1994) were of Inca or Collao origin. Four trapezoidal windows are in the front wall and four trapezoidal niches are in the back one. A cleared area (delineated by a retaining wall) is in front of the rectangular structure, while several circular structures exist behind it. Of interest is that the central doorway is directly in front of a door in the back of the building. The impression is that people may have had to pass through the structure before ascending to the summit of the outcrop.

A trail leads from this building to the highest point of the notch between the outcrop and the hill opposite it to the south, and from there on to the summit. At this point a trail from the Apurímac River converges with it (Quirita and Candia 1994:88). Remains of walls line the trail above the notch, and one stone gateway still exists about halfway to the summit. The trail reaches an area on the summit with large Inca structures (as in Sector A) and passes near a number of funerary towers (*chullpas*) (as in Sector C) (Figure 3).

Sector A includes a large enclosed area (*cancha*) (*ca.* 80 x 40 m) with an Inca structure on its western side (Figure 3). According to Alicia Quirita (personal communication 1994), the Inca structure was built on the base of a Huari one, and the ceramics encountered during an excavation in its interior support this conclusion (see Quirita and Candia 1994:109, where more than half the ceramics are Huari).

Quirita and Candia (1994:89-90) hypothesized that the *cancha* may have been a place where ceremonies were conducted. It is at the center and highest point of the summit area. Huari ceremonial pottery was found in and near it; and the natural bedrock in the *cancha* contains four circular holes and one rectangular one (*ca.* 1.5 m in diameter) that could have played a role in rituals.

Sector B has structures and ceramics which indicate that it is of Huari origin (albeit with some Inca occupation). Sector C con-

tains several funerary towers (Figure 6) and tombs, mostly pertaining to the Late Intermediate Period (Quirita and Candia 1994:97, 167, 197). Over 200 circular structures exist on the summit, and these also primarily date to the Late Intermediate Period (*ibid.*:92).

Little archaeological work has yet been undertaken at María Fortaleza, and Huari ceremonial structures have not yet been identified. However, a religious component at the site during the Middle Horizon is suggested by the presence of fine Huari ceramics (John Rowe, personal communication 1994). María Fortaleza was probably much more than a religious center. It is at the farthest limit of Huari expansion to the east (Chávez 1988), and it likely would have played a role as a control point for trade between the coast and highlands during both the Middle and Late Horizons (Quirita and Candia 1994:196, 201).

Taken together, the ruins indicate that many people lived at least part of the time on the summit of the outcrop of María Fortaleza. The site was occupied from at least the Middle Horizon to Inca times. Religious activities occurred there. What additional evidence exists to support María Fortaleza's identification as the Inca temple of Ancocagua?

Returning to the information supplied by Betanzos, we need to see if María Fortaleza fits his description of the site. The narrowest part of the notch between the outcrop and the hill facing it to the south is only about 14 m wide. The notch naturally begins to widen as it rises higher. Once level with the summit of the outcrop, it is so wide that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the Spaniards to fill it completely, as described by Betanzos. However, Betanzos was not an eyewitness, and if we assume that the Spaniards built up a rampart to reach the less steep sections about 20 m above the notch, then the description makes sense. It is about 73 m from the notch to the highest point of the summit, but the steepest area occurs in the first third of the ascent. It should be added that on all the other sides of the outcrop the drop is vertical for some 60 m or more.

In any event, Betanzos noted that Ancocagua was built on an outcrop close to a hill equal to it in height, and this fits well with the site of María Fortaleza. The outcrop of Ancocagua had no water source on its summit, because Betanzos described that the Spaniards nearly forced the natives to surrender due to the lack of water. This, too, fits the outcrop of María Fortaleza. Snow could have easily fallen on the site in the latter part of the year, as it did in mid-September 1991 (Alicia Quirita, personal communication 1994). María Fortaleza is in an area called Ancocagua and it is in what was Hatun Canas. In addition to our own unsuccessful attempts to locate another archaeological complex which might be the fortified temple, we could not find anyone, either a local inhabitant or outsider, who has visited the region and who knew of any other important site in the area that fits Betanzos' description of Ancocagua. Thus, taken together, there are several reasons for identifying María Fortaleza as the site of the fortified temple of Ancocagua.

It might be of interest to turn now to ethnographic and historical information about religious beliefs in the region of María Fortaleza. In 1792 it was reported that a mountain above Coporaque was thought to be very powerful and that it contained an enchanted lake (Celestino 1982:77). Much the same belief has been noted in recent times about a magical mountain with a lake on its summit from which treasure is said to have been taken (Hinojosa 1987:230). This mountain is almost certainly the one called Quimsachata (4,759 m), dominating the town of Coporaque. We found that basically the same legends about Quimsachata and its lake exist to the present day. Although no major ruins were seen by a local man who had been to its summit, he did say that people traditionally made offerings there during Carnival (in February) to ask for an increase in livestock. According to Quirita and Candia (1994:23), Quimsachata is considered a tutelary deity (*apu*) of the entire province of Espinar. It stands out prominently to the north when viewed from María Fortaleza.

Not far from María Fortaleza (*ca.* 30 km to the northwest of Coporaque) is the mountain

called Huaylla Apacheta. It is believed today to influence livestock fertility and to have a lake on its western slopes where "many cows graze" in its depths (Roel 1966:28). This is a belief which conforms to one found throughout the Andes, including during the Inca horizon. It is thought that domesticated livestock originated out of lakes and that mountains were their ultimate owners (Arriaga 1968 [1621]:115; Duviols 1974-76:283; Flores 1988:249-250; Gow and Gow 1975:142, 148; Isbell 1978:59). It also accords with beliefs about mountains throughout the highlands. There pastoralism plays an important role, as has been the case in the province of Canas since at least the Inca Period (Cieza de León 1984 [1553]:224), and at Coporaque for centuries (see Hinojosa 1987:230 for a report dating to 1689).

Ritual battles still take place *ca.* 40 km to the north of Coporaque. These are believed to augment crop fertility, and offerings, along with any human blood that might be shed in the battles, are thought to go to Pachamama (Mother Earth) and the mountain deities (Barionuevo 1971:79, 82; Gorbak *et al.* 1962:278, 287, 290).

As we have seen, there is also land suitable for the cultivation of potatoes and, to a lesser extent, other native crops such as quinoa, on the plateau of Ancocagua Manturca and along the river valleys. Mountains not far distant, such as Ausangate, continue to be worshiped for agricultural fertility (Gow and Condori 1982:40-43; Reinhard 1991:81). Thus, agricultural and livestock fertility were principal reasons for the establishment of shrines on the summits of mountains throughout much of the Andes (Reinhard 1985).

River confluences were often considered sacred by the Incas (Betanzos 1987 [1551]:72; Murua 1946 [1590]:312). They were used as places to wash and be cured of illnesses (*ibid.* 1946:312) and to perform rituals relating to the dead (Guaman Poma 1980 [1615]:272). In the Cusco region, they are still viewed as being powerful and dangerous places (Allen 1988:205). María Fortaleza was built on an outcrop which overlooks the confluence of

two major rivers at a critical ecological point, and this surely would have added to its sacredness.

There is little ethnographic information available on María Fortaleza itself, but what does exist is significant. In local tradition, selected elements of the physical terrain are perceived in terms of a body metaphor. María Fortaleza is believed to be at the center of the body, *i.e.*, the navel. The head is the Callomani River, the right arm is formed by the Llaska River, and the left by the Totorani River. The right foot is the archaeological site of Inti Pucara and the left foot is composed of the ruins of T'eraqara Pucara, located on the east and west sides of the Apurímac River, respectively (Quirita and Candia 1994:42-43). Thus its head is to the south (the source of the Apurímac River) and lower members are to the north (the direction of the flow of the Apurímac).

The use of a body metaphor is known for other regions of the Andes (Bastien 1978; Valderrama and Escalante 1988:206) and is clearly a way of providing meaning to significant geographical and cultural features found in an area. In this case the focus is on rivers and ruins which are united through the metaphor. Based on the long tradition of the body metaphor in Andean beliefs (Bastien 1978; Salomon and Urioste 1991 [ca. 1600]), María Fortaleza's role as a symbolic center could date back at least to the Inca period. Indeed, Cusco itself was perceived by the Incas to be the "navel" of the world (Garcilaso 1966 [1609]:93). This metaphor suggests one role that the deity of Ancocagua may have played.

We saw above how the name of María Fortaleza is believed to have come from the Virgin Mary, who was converted to stone. The urine of the woman who called out her name was the source of a river, *i.e.*, the Apurímac River after its confluence with the Totorani River at the foot of the outcrop. A symbolic link between urine, water courses, and fertility has been noted in other regions of the Andes, including Chumbivilcas not far to the west (Roel 1966:25-26) and the Colca

Valley to the south (Valderrama and Escalante 1988:206).

Today, María Fortaleza is still perceived to be a female, and we were told that offerings are made on its summit in August, and during Carnival, for the fertility of crops and livestock. Offerings are also made to Pachamama (Mother Earth) and to the surrounding mountain deities (*e.g.*, Quimsachata, Choquepirhua, Machula, and Laramini) for the same reason. Every day, coca leaves are offered to the mountain deities so that they will give the people strength during the day (Quirita and Candia 1994:46-47). It is common throughout the central Andes to make such offerings to deities associated with the land (Allen 1988).

The meaning of the name Ancocagua may also provide some clues as to site. The word appears to be of Aymara origin, the language spoken in this region at the time of the Spanish conquest (Bertonio 1984 [1612], vol. 1:A2). In Aymara *anco* (*hanco*) means "white" and *cahua* (*i.e.*, *cagua*, the "g" and "h" being used interchangeably in the Spanish writings of the time) means "the last or hindermost of a village" (*ibid.*, vol. 2:32, 118). The use of *cagua* makes sense when one considers the location of María Fortaleza. It is indeed at the hindermost part of the area called Ancocagua Manturca.¹² According to Girault

¹² The chroniclers consistently spelled Ancocagua with a single "c" and not "cc" when referring to the temple fortress. The double "cc" is distinctive in both Quechua and Aymara and indicates forceful pronunciation (*cf.* Betanzos 1987 [1551], vol. 2:32, 41; González Holguín 1989 [1608]:9-10). Betanzos, in particular, was fluent in Quechua and would presumably have caught the difference in pronunciation. Thus it seems unlikely that "ccagua" (the Aymara word for "tunic,"; Adelson and Tracht 1983:50) was the word intended, despite its apparent appropriateness in the context of Ancocagua, *i.e.* as being like a "white tunic." (This might, however, explain the spelling of the mountain Anccocahua discussed in note 5 above.)

I initially searched for possible meanings of Ancocagua in Quechua, but could not find spellings and meanings that I felt were reasonable alternatives to the Aymara etymology presented here. There is the possibility that because in Quechua "anca" means "eagle"

(1988:140), *anco* also has the meaning of "fertile," and this appears to have been the case during the Inca period (Bertonio 1984 [1612], vol. 2:118). Use of the term *anco* becomes even more understandable when one sees the white coloring of the rocks which make up the outcrop of María Fortaleza.

Based on the use of the name María and the beliefs noted above, it would seem reasonable to assume that the deity of Ancocagua was perceived to be female and that it was closely associated with the Apurímac river. María Fortaleza's strategic situation relative to trade between the highlands and coast may have also carried with it religious connotations. Deities of the hills and mountains were widely invoked for success in trade, both during the Inca period and in modern times (Reinhard 1990:167). In addition, as we have seen, the summit complex of María Fortaleza is within view of both a river confluence and sacred mountains, including snow-capped peaks over 100 km away, which we know were especially sacred to the Incas, and surely long before them (Reinhard 1990, 1991, 1995, in prep.). Whatever other roles it played, María Fortaleza was likely used as a place of worship for obtaining the fertility of crops and animals and success in trade. Its ecological

and cagua could be a variant of "qhaway," "to look," Ancocagua could mean something like "eagle lookout" (Monica Barnes, personal communication 1994; cf., also Angles 1988, vol. 2:593 for his use of "qhawa" for "cagua"). However, I doubt this was the case, since the "qh" is like the "cc" noted above, and the "a" and "o" were not switched in any of the spellings of the name by the chroniclers. These vowels are distinguishable as phonemes in Quechua (as opposed to "u" and "o" which are allophones of the same phoneme) (González Holguín 1989:9-10; Salomon and Urioste 1991:79, note 307). Furthermore, the name, if Quechua, would lack a nominalizer. Many of the names of the huacas of the Cusco ceque system are also best read in Aymara (Beyersdorff in press), supporting my interpretation of Aconcagua as an Aymara toponym. Given the Aymara presence in Hatun Canas and the common usage and spelling of both words forming the name Ancocagua in that language, I believe that it is not necessary to search elsewhere for the etymology of the term.

setting in an area suited for pastoralism and at the beginning of the agricultural zone would have reinforced the importance of such worship.

These factors all would help explain María Fortaleza's regional significance, but it still leaves open the question of why the Incas considered the site to be so important.¹³ Indeed, Cieza listed it as the fourth most important temple in the Inca empire. He would appear to have been influenced in his list by someone with a vested interest in Ancocagua, for surely ceremonial centers such as the Island of the Sun and Pachacamac, to name only two, could, with more reason, have been on it. But this does not detract from Ancocagua having been held in very high regard among the Incas. So why was this the case, when any number of other temples in the empire could have been selected?

With Ancocagua there is support for a conceptual link between the temple and the origin of the Apurímac River. As we have seen, the source of the Apurímac River is located to the south of Coporaque, near the town of Cailloma (Figure 1). The Apurímac was a river highly venerated by the Incas (Garcilaso 1966 [1609]:527). A temple was built on its banks near a steep gorge downriver from the town of Curahuasi, just prior to its descent into the tropical lowlands. The main idol was female, and the deity Apurímac spoke through this idol (Cobo 1990 [1653]:108). Indeed, during Manco Capac's rebellion against the Spanish, the deity spoke to the Inca emperor in the presence of a Spaniard, Francisco Martín, who was being held as a prisoner. The temple's guardian was a woman of the

¹³ It was reported by Celestino that silver mines were worked in ancient times in one of the two mountains near Suyckutambo, and many other mines were reported in the area (Celestino 1982 [1792]:78). The Incas worshiped mountains for their minerals (Cobo 1990 [1653]:45). However, mines were located in many parts of this region, and it would seem unlikely that this was a major reason for the Incas to have considered the temple of Ancocagua to be of such importance.

Inca lineage, and it was one of the most famous of the Inca sanctuaries (*ibid.*:108).

The river's name meant "the speaking captain or leader," and it was also called Capac Mayu, a name indicating that it was a major river of the Inca realm (Garcilaso 1966 [1609]:527). The use of the phrase "muy antiguo" by Cieza de León to denote the temple of Ancocagua, the statement of Betanzos that the Incas had to defeat local people at Ancocagua, and the archaeological remains, including fine ceremonial pottery dating to the Middle Horizon, all point to Ancocagua as a place of worship for the people of the area prior to the arrival of the Incas. The Incas may have added to its importance by relating it conceptually to the source of the Apurímac River.

It is suggestive that the temple of Vilcanota, noted as the third most important temple in the Inca empire by Cieza de León (1977 [1554]:106), was located at the pass of La Raya, the source of the Vilcanota River and at the divide of two major river systems (Reinhard 1991:38, 1995). Cusco, the center of the Inca empire, lies between the Apurímac and Vilcanota river systems (Figure 1), and we know that the Incas paid considerable attention to hydrology and attributed ritual importance to river sources (Sherbondy 1982).¹⁴ Rivers were also fertility sources which partook of the powers and sacred characters of the mountains at their sources (Reinhard 1991:37-38).

María Fortaleza is situated on an outcrop overlooking the first wide valley which the Apurímac entered that was both of agricultural and pastoral significance. Along with the fact that many minor tributaries contribute to the origin of the Apurímac River, it is possible that the place called Ancocagua, noted in 1586 as being at its source (Fornée 1965 [1586]:28), was the temple of that name. The Incas may

have perceived that it was where the Apurímac River truly began, and thus that it was located at the conceptual, if not the precise, origin point. Important rivers converge at or near María Fortaleza, and this would also explain why the name Aconcgagua was applied to the first river noted as one of its tributaries in the late 1700s (Celestino 1982 [1792]:75). Inca sites in and near the valley below María Fortaleza indicate that the area was of significance to the Incas. Assuming that Ancocagua was already a place of worship for the indigenous peoples, the Incas would have gained prestige and economic/political control by building up the site and making substantial contributions to it. This is a tactic that they used in several other areas (Albornoz 1984 [ca. 1582]; Salomon and Urioste 1991 [ca. 1600]; Reinhard 1985).

In summary, I have used the following evidence to identify María Fortaleza as Aconcgagua: 1. It is located in the province called Hatun Canas at the time of the Spanish conquest, and it is in the precise area which can be deduced from the list of communities and rivers noted in the historical sources. 2. Its physical description matches that provided by the chroniclers in that it is situated on an outcrop with steep cliffs, and opposite a hilltop at nearly the same elevation. It is fortified and virtually inaccessible. 3. It contains some of the most important Inca and pre-Inca archaeological remains in the area, including artifacts suggesting a religious significance for the site. 4. The climate fits the description of the chroniclers, and the site is in an area where brush and branches could be obtained (as described for the siege); such vegetation was not available at higher elevations. 5. The name Ancocagua is used to denote the area in which the site is located. 6. The site is the only one that has a Spanish name, a name which in turn indicates both the site's fortress aspect and suggests a religious role. 7. Local tradition points to the religious significance of the site and its location. 8. Its location, in terms of both sacred and physical geography, provides a reasonable explanation for why the Incas considered it to be of such religious importance. 9. The meaning of the name of Ancocagua is appropriate for the site. 10. No other

¹⁴ We know the significance that dualism had in Inca thought, and the Incas may have also viewed the temple of Ancocagua as forming a logical counterpart to the temple of Vilcanota.

known site in the area meets the description of the chroniclers. Given all the evidence, it seems likely that María Fortaleza is Ancocagua.

This still leaves us, however, with the question of why Ancocagua was noted by few chroniclers, yet was described as being so important by Cieza de León.¹⁵ Writing in the mid-1500s, both Cieza de León and Betanzos were among the earliest chroniclers of Inca religion following the Spanish conquest of 1532. Cieza de León (1977 [1554]:107) noted that Ancocagua had been looted only three years after the Spaniards won the battle for Cusco. By the late 1500s, when several accounts of Inca religion were being written, it would have been a distant memory.

The site at María Fortaleza had been abandoned after the Spanish conquest (no colonial remains were found on the summit), and the Spanish presence in the area was maintained instead in settlements built in the valley below the site. By all appearances, they simply renamed the site, placed a cross on it (according to local lore), and presumably restricted access to it, because there is little evidence of a later occupation. Currently, only local pastoralists take their sheep to graze on the summit. It was a common practice for the Spaniards to build a chapel or church on an important sacred site, but they did build a church at the site of Maucallacta not far downriver from Ancocagua, and this would have served the Spanish settlers and native peoples (Angles 1988, vol. 2:598, 601; Bonnett 1983:56). Ancocagua apparently played no enduring role in Inca mythology, because it was not especially

¹⁵ The chronicler Vázquez de Espinosa (1948 [1617]:558) stated that the temple of Viracocha at Cacha (Rajchi) was called Ancocagua. His account was written in 1617, much later than those of Cieza de León and Betanzos, and he clearly confused Ancocagua with Rajchi (Cieza de León 1984 [1553]:223). An idol of a deity called Ancocagua (written Hanco Caua in the original text) was confiscated by Catholic priests in the late 1500s far to the west of Coporaque (Millones 1990:274), but it is unclear if this was meant to represent the deity worshiped at the temple of Ancocagua.

noted by the Incas interviewed by the Spaniards after the mid-1500s.

Ancocagua was not an exception in this regard, because Vilcanota and Coropuna¹⁶ (noted as being third and fifth in Cieza de León's list of the five most important Inca temples) were also not described in any detail in later chronicles (Reinhard 1995, in prep.). Although Vilcanota was mentioned occasionally, this seems to have been due to its having been situated on a major route used by the Spaniards, and to Inca priests having annually made pilgrimages to it from Cusco (Molina 1959 [1575]:38). Being situated in relatively isolated areas and having their exact locations unknown, both Ancocagua and Coropuna received little attention from historians and archaeologists.

Although this article helps to clarify some issues relating to Ancocagua, while admittedly raising others, the temple's meaning has yet to be well established. Nonetheless, this examination of the evidence relating to Ancocagua serves to focus attention on a site of great importance to the Incas, and it helps further our understanding of Inca beliefs in one of the lesser known regions of their empire.¹⁷

¹⁶ Near the Mountain Coropuna in southwestern Peru (Reinhard in prep.).

¹⁷ The temple of Ancocagua may also contribute to our understanding of an Inca ceremonial site on the mountain of Aconcagua over a thousand miles distant (Schobinger 1991, 1995). At 6,960 m, it is the highest mountain in the Andes and is located in the southern tip of the Inca empire in west-central Argentina. As we saw in note 3 above, Aconcagua was an alternative spelling for Ancocagua in the accounts of both Cieza de León and Betanzos.

We know that the Incas sent colonists to populate areas in distant parts of their empire and also that these colonists reestablished their traditional deities in the new areas (Albornoz 1984 [ca. 1582]:198). Thus the possibility exists that colonists from the region of Ancocagua could have been responsible for both the name of the mountain and the ritual sacrifices performed high on its slopes during the Inca period.

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Table 1. Tribute paying population according to landholding units (repartimientos) in the provinces of Canas and Canchis in 1575 and 1812. From Glave 1987.

| <i>Repartimientos</i> | 1575 | 1812 |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Checacupe – Hilave | 488 | 211 |
| Cangalla | 115 | 368 |
| Combapata | 161 | 70 |
| Combapata – Chiara | 118 | 171 |
| Tinta | 671 | 441 |
| Cacha | 323 | 445 |
| San Pablo (Charrachapi) | 59 | 129 |
| Sicuana | 400 | 1,162 |
| Lurucache | 322 | 179 |
| Maranganí | 120 | 200 |
| Yanaoca | 679 | 350 |
| Languisupa | 256 | 157 |
| Layosupa | 227 | 239 |
| Checasupa | 322 | 515 |
| Pichigua | 922 | 510 |
| Yaure | 660 | 651 |
| Coporaque | 239 | 393 |
| Ancocaua | 29 | 172 |
| TOTAL | 6,111 | 6,363 |

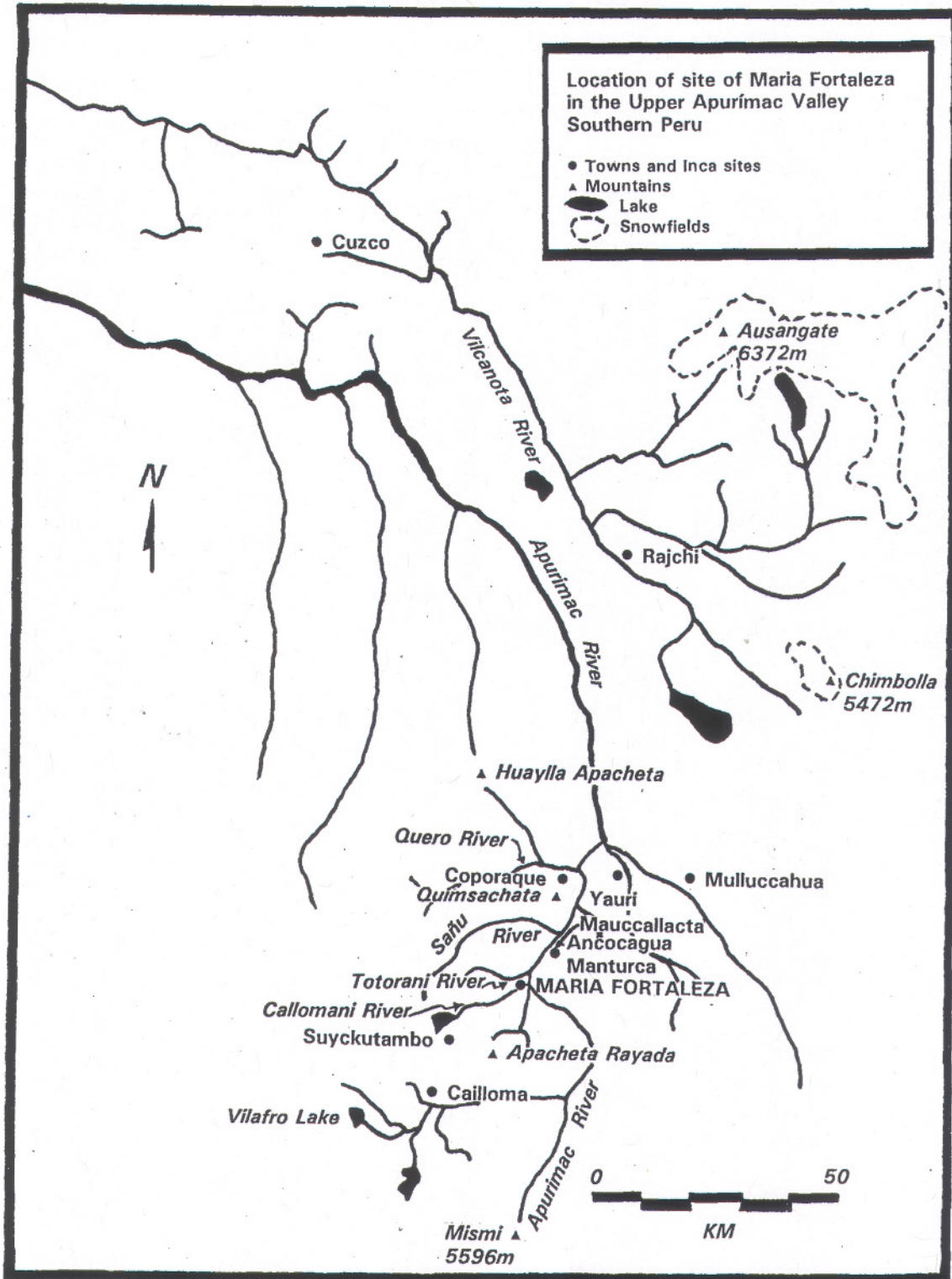


Figure 1. A map of the region in which the temple of Ancocagua was located, including sites, towns, and geographical features noted in the text.



Figure 2. The rocky outcrop of María Fortaleza rises above the confluence of the Apurímac and Totorani Rivers. The main archaeological complex is found on the summit of the outcrop in the upper center of the photograph.

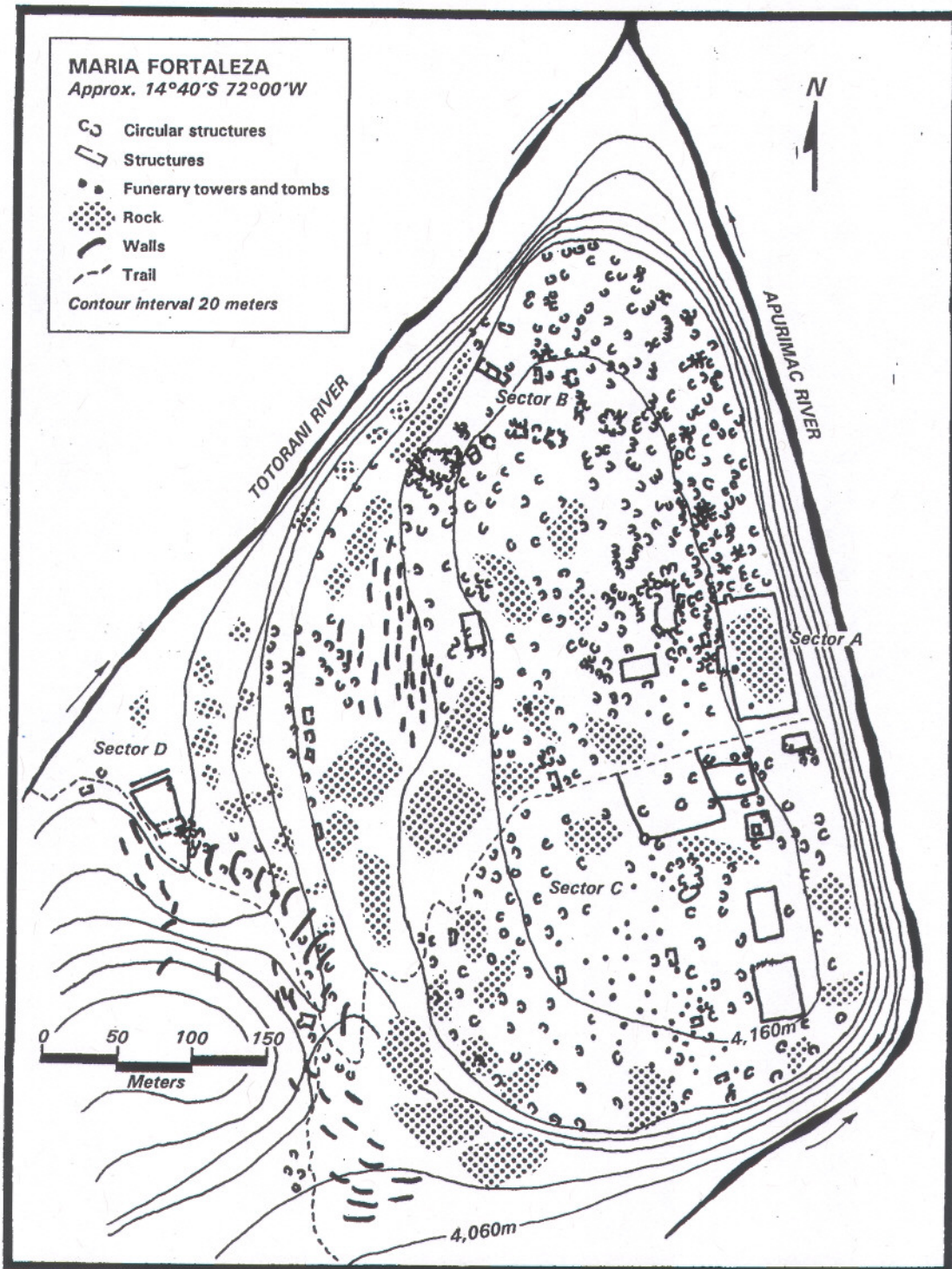


Figure 3. Plan of the ruins of María Fortaleza (after Quirita and Candia 1994).



Figure 4. The notch between the outcrop of María Fortaleza (at the upper left) and the hill to the right is clearly visible. A large Inca structure can be seen in the lower left-center of the photograph.



Figure 5. This Inca structure stands in the route of access to the summit ruins of María Fortaleza.



Figure 6. One of the many chullpas (funerary towers) found on the summit of the outcrop of María Fortaleza. Person in photo is Alicia Quirita.