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Keywords

Inca, Huacas, human sacrifice, ideology, ceque, mountains

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Sacred Politics: An Examination of Inca *Huacas* and their use for Political and Social Organization

Amy B. Scott

Introduction

The sacred nature of the Andean region is a topic that has been widely explored in recent years. As empires were built and destroyed within this region, ideology played an important role in political and social organization. It is the goal of this paper to examine the rise of the Inca Empire and the use of ideology, and more specifically *huacas*, to gain political and social control. At the time of Inca expansion and conquest, the sacred Andean landscape was already well-established along the coast and in the highlands of Peru and its neighbouring countries. The power of the sacred Andean landscape was built upon a network of shrines and sacred places collectively defined as *huacas*. As the Inca expansion spread throughout the Andes, governing power was gained through the use and manipulation of *huacas* which had significant historical roots in many Andean communities. By incorporating pre-existing Andean beliefs into the official state ideology, the Inca were able to utilize *huacas* to aid in their political and social expansion.

This paper will explore the characteristics of *huacas* within the Andean region through the Cusco Ceque System and the Inca mountaintop shrine system and how the underlying ideologies surrounding *huacas* aided the Inca in their Andean expansion. The theoretical framework of ideological materialization will also be discussed with reference to political context and the Moche culture that pre-dated the Inca Empire.

Huacas: Inca and Andean Ideologies

The concept of the *huaca* as a sacred place or object is directly related to ideology, which can be defined as a set of cohesive ideas and beliefs that validate the existence of a collective group of individuals (Conrad and Demarest 1984:4). Although ideology can be an inclusive concept, it is important to recognize that the ideological beliefs of the Inca do not necessarily represent the beliefs of the Andean groups that pre-dated them (MacCormack 1991:4). For this discussion, the Andean people represent all individuals that pre-dated the Inca or were not considered ethnically Inca; the Inca in contrast, represent the small group of individuals considered ethnically Inca and expanded throughout the Andes beginning in the 15th century. Once the Inca conquered the Andean region, they interwove their own ideological beliefs into pre-existing Andean ideologies, creating a fluid exchange of ideas and beliefs over time (MacCormack 1991:4,148,150).

It can be argued that the sacred nature of *huacas* represented the primary connection between Andean ideologies and Inca ideology. Both Andean and Inca ideologies considered *huacas* as manifestations of both the natural and the supernatural world such as springs, stones, hills and mountains, temples, caves, roads, or trees (D'Altroy 2002:163). Although many of these *huacas* were physically static, some were portable and were moved by Andean groups to other regions (Bauer 1998:25). These characteristics associated with *huacas* helped to unite the Andean region in that portable *huacas* allowed

ideology to reach distant peoples, while permanent *huacas* united local people under similar belief structures. This commonality between Inca ideology and Andean ideologies was also present in the worship of ancestors and natural places (Classen 1993:2). Many *huacas* occupied natural places across the landscape and were associated with the ancestors of both the Inca and non-Inca people, as origin myths generally presented the Creator God as emerging from a natural land formation (D'Altroy 2002:49). The power of the physical environment was an important aspect of both Andean and Inca ideologies, as the people "literally read their [physical] surroundings as a resonant text of sacred places and spaces" (Moseley 2001:51). It was through this ideological commonality that the Inca established the power of *huacas* across the Empire (Conrad and Demarest 1984:102). Inca state ideology was persuasive because it converged with long-standing Andean traditions surrounding *huacas*, allowing the Inca to fully manipulate and utilize these sacred places and objects as forms of political legitimization and social control (MacCormack 1991:148).

Political legitimization and social control were also harnessed by the Inca as they re-formulated state dogma to elevate their own history and traditions (Niles 1992:347; D'Altroy 2002:175). *Huacas* were the primary tools in the re-formulation of Inca state ideology as they dictated the rights to land, to water, and to power, over which the Inca claimed ownership (Isbell 1997:53-54). *Huacas* gained their status across the Inca Empire through their mythical importance, their relationship to Inca rulers, and their astronomical alignment (Bauer 1998:8). Because *huacas* were already infused with great respect, the Inca control of these sacred places both established their divine rulership and united

the Andean region under a re-formulated Inca state belief system.

The Inca Expansion

As the Inca began their expansion into smaller Andean provinces, they required a means of political and social organization. By examining the mechanisms of Inca conquest and the conflict surrounding their rise to power in the Andes, it becomes clear why they relied on the power of *huacas* to establish political stability and social union. The early Inca (pre-empire) were a small scale rural ethnic group that evolved in a bitterly competitive Andean world after the decline of the Wari and the Tiwanaku (Conrad and Demarest 1984:95,96,101; D'Altroy 2002:48; Sallnow 1987:32). It was not until A.D. 1400 that the Inca began to emerge in the Andean region as the dominant political power established through "force of arms" (D'Altroy 2002:48; Moseley 2001:9). Once in power, the Inca governed over ten million people within a region of 5,500 square kilometers until the Spanish conquest in 1532 (Moseley 2001:7,9).

Despite the success of amalgamating over eighty provinces, particularly in Peru, the Inca inevitably created tension through their imperial expansion that required some kind of control system (Conrad and Demarest 1984:129). Because the Inca Empire was characterized by one ruling elite known as *the* Inca in Cusco, political and ideological authority needed to be re-affirmed in all outlying polities in the Andes. This was achieved through Andean unification projects such as the establishment of local lords in outlying communities, the mass movement of Andean people to Inca dominated cities, and most importantly the creation of a state ideology (Niles 1992:348).

Although the Inca and Andean people shared certain ideological beliefs, the

formation of a state ideology was primarily to solidify regional power through empire cohesion. The danger of ideological restructuring was a constant threat to the Inca because if they altered traditional rituals and beliefs too much, then the smaller communities within the Empire may have deemed the changes unacceptable, leading to a loss of state unification (Jennings 2003:452). Some Andean scholars believe that Inca ideology was rooted in the belief that the Empire was weakening and being corrupted under the influence of different local ideological practices and therefore, the Inca needed to re-affirm the one true ideology of the Andes (Jennings 2003:452-453). For this re-establishment of the 'true' ideology, the Inca had to tactfully weave their own beliefs into those of the non-Inca people (Jennings 2003:452-453). Many rituals and traditions of the Inca were established in communities throughout the Empire to unify the ideological practices of these communities with the practices of Cusco, the Inca capital (MacCormack 1984:33). Because many of these Inca traditions and rituals were built upon the local ideological beliefs, communities were less likely to rebel against their Inca lords (Jennings 2003:452). It was through the social beliefs of the Andean people that the Inca legitimized their authority and created a sense of community among the many ethnic groups in the Andes (cf. VanDyke and Alcock 2003:3). Building their Empire on a foundation of locally-held ideological beliefs, the Inca were able to illustrate the relationship between the state and the sacred structure (Classen 1993:67). For the Inca, *huacas* were the primary agents of the sacred structure because of their supernatural affiliation throughout the Andes (Sallnow 1987:36). It is important to recognize however, that only through the materialization of these *huaca* ideologies were they available as political and social

tools for the Inca to use and manipulate.

Materialization of Ideology

Ideology is generally regarded as an intangible experience or belief that is not easily accessible within the archaeological record. Attempts at understanding ideology and the associated physical experience are characteristic of the field of phenomenology, which was applied to archaeology in the 1990s in an attempt to study the human experience inferred from archaeological remains (Johnson 1999:193). Although not restricted to ideological experience, phenomenology has been utilized as an important approach within archaeological interpretation. It can be argued here that this phenomenological approach to the human experience has been further enhanced by the concept of ideological materialization (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996). Ideology, at times, can be identified as passive and static by scholars, when in fact it is frequently dynamic and an important variable contributing to cultural transformations (Conrad and Demarest 1984:3). Unfortunately due to the difficulty in accessing ideology and its social influence from the archaeological record, it is generally over-shadowed by other catalysts of social change (Conrad 1981:4). However, it is important not to disregard the instances of ideological materialization that can demonstrate the power of state beliefs in the formation and the maintenance of an empire.

It is clear that the Inca relied on the unification of ideological beliefs to gain power throughout the Andes, specifically through the materialization of *huacas*. As argued by DeMarrais *et al.* (1996:16), ideologies gain power through "materialization" which can take many forms such as ceremonies, monuments, landscapes, symbolic objects, or written sources. Through the materialization of ideology, a shared experience is created

between groups through tangible means, as ideology can then extend beyond a local group to communicate central authority to a larger population (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996:16,28). When empires are built upon unstable foundations, as was the case with the Inca, the materialization of ideological beliefs can aid in the reduction of tensions and promote the cohesion of an empire (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996:31). DeMarrais *et al.* (1996:20-30). discuss how this materialization of ideology can occur at varying levels of social organization in similarly-successful and effective ways with examples of chiefdoms, states, and empires.

In order to understand the success of the Inca materialization of ideology through the use of *huacas*, the Cusco Ceque System and the Inca mountaintop shrine system will be examined as case studies. The Cusco Ceque System, as an example of materialized ideology, represents how the geographic positioning of architecture, settlements, and public space provides a map of the surrounding sociopolitical system (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996:19). The mountaintop shrine system will also provide evidence of the successful materialization of ideology due to elite control and power gain (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996:19). These two specific examples will be examined to show the power of *huacas* as tools of political control and social organization through their materialization at the hands of the Inca.

The Cusco Ceque System

Materialized ideology was not unique to the Inca, as many Andean communities had tangible ideological objects or places that dominated their belief system such as iconography, cultural practices, or architecture. However, it was the way in which the Inca used materialized *huacas* to aid in their own political and social gains that made their rise to power unique. To understand the political and

social organization of the Inca, the primary geographical focus is on the Inca capital of Cusco, with reference to Spanish ethnohistorical records and some archaeological data (Zuidema 1964:39). The Cusco Ceque System is defined as a system of *huacas* and sacred places in and around the city of Cusco that required constant maintenance and sacrificial offerings. This Ceque System has been long studied by Andean scholars with extensive reliance on the ethnohistorical record of Bernabe Cobo written in 1653 (Bauer 1998; Hamilton 2008; Julien 2008; Rowe 1985; Zuidema 1964). Cobo was a Jesuit priest who lived in Peru most of his life, studying the Inca and recording their history (Hamilton 2008:547). He is perhaps best known for his written account of the intricate *huaca* system found throughout the capital city of Cusco entitled *Historia del Nuevo Mundo* (Julien 2008:711). Although Cobo's account of the Cusco *huacas* is the most widely used by scholars, he was not the primary author of the information but rather transcribed his *huaca* account from another documentary source (Bauer 1998:13-17; Julien 2008:712). Polo de Ondegardo is generally regarded as the primary author that Cobo utilized to create his narrative account of the *huacas*, although many scholars remain divided as to who compiled the original *huaca* data.

In his account, Cobo outlined 328 *huacas* that made up the sacred landscape of ancient Cusco (Bauer 1998:23). The majority of *huacas* that were described and categorized by Cobo were springs or sources of water, as well as standing stones, hills, mountain passes, palaces, and royal temples (Bauer 1998:23). At the center of the Cusco Ceque System was the Temple of the Sun, also known as the *Coricancha* or 'Golden Enclosure' from which all ceque lines radiated outwards (Julien 2008:716; Rowe 1944:26). Ceques were an important characteristic of the Cusco Ceque System

because these radiating lines or pathways connected the various *huacas* to one another, creating organization among the shrines (Julien 2008:716). *Huaca* organization was further aided by the division of the Inca Empire into four main provinces, collectively called *Tahuantinsuyu* (four quarters) with the *Coricancha* representing the center of the Empire (Bauer 1998:1). Each of the four provinces, *Chinchaysuyu*, *Antisuyu*, *Collasuyu*, and *Cuntisuyu* encompassed certain *huacas* within the Cusco Ceque System and were composed of nine ceque lines each, except *Cuntisuyu*, which had fifteen ceque lines (Bauer 1998:184; Rowe 1944:39). The organization of ceques and *huacas* into these four provinces provided relatively equal ideological distribution within Cusco that demanded maintenance and worship achieved only through the social organization of ritual responsibilities. Both the physical distribution of these *huacas* and the traditions and rituals associated with them were important.

As discussed, each *huaca* had its own specific meaning and each served a different purpose for the Inca such as guarding against death, or wishing for a good harvest, health, or a safe journey (Bauer 1998:23). The pilgrimage to these specific *huacas* was an important aspect of Inca state ideology as specific rituals and offerings were required at different shrines (Bauer 1998:26; Sallnow 1987:32-41;). The different offerings made at the various *huacas* throughout the Cusco Ceque System were llamas, guinea pigs, textiles, coca, metals, and children. All of these offerings represented various ideological beliefs and were closely associated with the meaning of the *huaca* (D'Altroy 2002:167). The manner in which these offerings were processed was also important, in that they were either burned or buried or in the cases of springs and water sources the offerings were thrown

into the *huaca* (Bauer 1998:27).

The care and maintenance involved with *huaca* worship were also important aspects of the physical and social understanding of the Cusco Ceque System. Within the city of Cusco and throughout the Inca Empire, caretakers known as *quipucamayos* kept detailed records of the offerings that were given and owed to each *huaca* (MacCormack 1991:201). The term *quipucamayos* is derived from the Inca tradition of the *quipus* or knotted cords that were kept as detailed records of economic transactions, suggesting a highly organized Inca society both ideologically and economically (Bauer 1998:8). It was through this meticulous record keeping and ritual responsibility that a connection was established between the Inca and their subjects. Not only were *quipucamayos* responsible for *huaca* offerings but also for the organization of shrine worship that took place during certain times of the year (Bauer 1998:8). Despite all individuals in the Inca Empire being responsible for shrine worship, there were strict hierarchical divides among society between the upper class royal *ayllus* (kin group) and lower-level citizens known as non-royal *ayllus* (Bauer 1998:39). Each *ayllus* within Cusco and the surrounding communities had ritual responsibilities to their *huacas* and the surrounding ceques (Bauer 1998:39; Niles 1987:205). From this basic understanding of the Cusco Ceque System, scholars have developed different interpretations of these *huacas* and how they related to the political control and social organization of the Inca.

Interpretations of the Cusco Ceque System

How a scholar approaches ideology and the role it played within the Inca Empire will ultimately affect the way that she or he interprets the Cusco Ceque System. The Ceque System has been interpreted as either a functional organizational tool removed

from ideology or as an organizational tool built upon an ideological framework, both of which will be briefly discussed. The Straight Line Argument supported by Zuidema (1977) and Aveni (1981) is a structuralist archaeological approach to the Cusco Ceque System. The central argument of the Straight Line hypothesis is that the function of the Cusco Ceque System was for counting through the Inca calendar. It was believed that each *huaca* represented a specific day and that vanishing points on the horizon were astronomical markers (Bauer 1998:187; Julien 2008:715; MacCormack 1991:194-195). *Huacas* considered within this context were important based on their geographical position in forming straight lines across the landscape rather than due to their sacred meaning (Bauer 1992:187). Due to the well-established sacred nature of *huacas*, not only to the Inca but to generations preceding them, it is questionable to assume that the Cusco Ceque System was used merely as a geographic marker of calendrical time and astronomical patterns. The known significance of *huacas* and their materialization throughout the Andes demonstrates the necessity in considering the ideological undertones of the Cusco Ceque System and how it functioned as a political and social tool.

In contrast to the Straight Line Argument, the Conceptual Line Argument supported by Rowe (1979) and Niles (1987) assumes an ideological framework for the Cusco Ceque System. This hypothesis, which is based primarily on archaeological evidence, argues that the ceque lines within Cusco do not follow a straight line pattern. The topographic nature of Cusco alone illustrates that the ceque lines must have zigzagged across that landscape and could not have followed a specific straight line pattern (Bauer 1992:187). This lack of consistency of the ceque patterning suggests

that *huacas* were established based on their sacred nature and not simply on their geographical position (Bauer 1992:187).

The importance of recognizing these differences in archaeological interpretations aids in the understanding of how the Inca garnered political control and social organization from the use of the Cusco Ceque System. This system may have had very practical implications such as calendrical and astronomical patterning but the ideological basis of these *huacas* must be recognized. Therefore, it can be argued that it is because of the underlying ideological beliefs about *huacas* that the Inca were able to utilize the Cusco Ceque System to create a cohesive empire.

The Political and Social Implications of the Cusco Ceque System

The way in which the Cusco Ceque System provided the Inca Empire with political control and social organization can be examined from three main perspectives: ritual responsibility, regional continuity, and the fluidity of *huaca* meanings. The ritual responsibilities of the Andean people promoted social organization where individuals had a specific purpose or role within the larger society. It can be argued that through the creation of these societal roles of ideological obligation, the Andean people were united under the common state ideological belief system. Not only did these ritual responsibilities create group cohesion throughout the capital, but they also provided individuals with a sense of identity in the Inca world; although they would never be considered as ethnically Inca, the Andean people were still highly regarded within the Empire (Bauer 1998:35; Morris 1993:189). This creation of identity was an important organizational tool for the Inca who needed to control and organize their Empire to suit their own specific goals and agendas.

Regional continuity within the Inca Empire was also created in Cusco through the integration of neighbouring shrines into the Ceque System and through the aid of outsiders in the maintenance of the *huacas*. These *huacas* and their importance to all groups in the Andean region would have acted as a political tool to subdue rival or rebellious groups within the Empire whose beliefs were integrated into the Cusco Ceque System (MacCormack 1991:104). Social organization would have also been created through kin group responsibilities that were expected not only within the capital, but also in outlying kin group communities. Alliances with other groups near Cusco were strengthened through the inclusion of outside members into the Inca capital but most importantly through the incorporation of outsider *huacas* into the Cusco Ceque System (Niles 1987:174).

The fluidity of the *huaca* meanings was also important for establishing political control and social organization for the Inca. Because the Inca constantly changed their beliefs over time, they could re-affirm their rulership through the dynamic Ceque System (D'Altroy 2002:167). Although the *huacas* were usually physically static, their meaning was continually re-invented to promote Inca control. Considered as "flexible expression[s] of social and spatial relationships" it becomes clear why the Inca relied heavily upon the Cusco Ceque System to establish their rightful authority to the Andean region (Bauer 1998:161). By incorporating *huaca* beliefs from outlying communities into their re-invention of divine rulership, the Inca created a nearly infallible ideological system that demanded political and social control over the Andean people.

The materialization of *huacas* in the Andes was not unique to the Inca, but rather deeply engrained within the ideological systems of the Andean people. However, the way in which the Inca utilized this

materialization of *huacas* to gain political control and social power was unique. Because *huacas* were already tangible objects or places before the expansion of the Inca their transition into state ideology was relatively smooth. The Cusco Ceque System merely provided an arena for these widespread beliefs to be arranged and divided among kin groups to solidify Inca political power and social organization. Materialization provides a focal point of ideology where individuals can experience and access the same objects and places. The Inca consolidation of power would have been greatly encumbered without tangible representations of the dominant ideological system. The Cusco Ceque System represents the importance of the materialization of ideology and specifically *huacas* for the Inca, without which their gain of political power and social organization would have been greatly hindered.

The Inca and the Human Body: Mountaintop Huacas

In order for the Inca to utilize mountaintop *huacas* to gain political and social organization they needed to incorporate human sacrifice as a representation of Inca power. As recognized by many Andean scholars, the most valued sacrificial offering was the human body to the most important *huacas* within the Inca Empire (Blom and Janusek 2004:126; Rowe 1963:305). Although human sacrifices were made at some of the *huacas* within the Cusco Ceque System, the majority were confined to the mountaintop shrines located throughout the Empire. The use of the human body as a *huaca* offering charged these shrines with specific meaning due to the importance of the human body in Inca cosmology, in which the body is a symbol for the dynamic whole or the totality of the cosmos (Blom and Janusek 2004:136; Classen 1993:3). Much like how the Inca

incorporated the four provinces into their political organization in Cusco, the human body is analogous to this in that within each body the same dynamic organization exists. Because the human body represented the dynamic whole of the Inca world, it is assumed that human sacrifices were drawn from all four corners of the Empire to unite the people under this state ideology (Classen 1993:64). Ultimately the power ascribed to the human body by the Inca created a link between the natural and the supernatural worlds allowing the Inca to call on the most powerful gods during human sacrifice rituals, such as Inti the Sun god and Illapa the Weather god (Ceruti 2004:114). Through human sacrifice, the Inca therefore continually reasserted their divine rulership throughout the Empire.

The Mountaintop Shrine System

To understand the success of the Inca materialization of ideology of the mountaintop *huacas* it is important to establish the characteristics of this shrine system and why it was important throughout the Andes. As discussed, hills and mountaintop *huacas* were important throughout the Andean region well before the Inca expansion, with snow-capped summits representing the most important *huacas* and deities (Rowe 1963:296). At least one hundred mountaintop summit shrines were built by the Inca throughout the Andean region with four principle summits (*Ausangate, Vilcanota, Coropuna* and *Pariacaca*) surrounding the capital of Cusco (Ceruti 2004:104; Rowe 1963:296). Although many of these mountaintop shrines have been found south of the Inca capital, it is assumed that these *huacas* radiated outwards from Cusco, similar to the Ceque System, to reach into all areas commanded by the Inca (Farrington 1992:378). The topographical nature of the Andean mountains and their dominating

presence makes it clear why mountains were regarded as sacred representations of the supernatural; they were a constant physical marker of the sacred landscape for all to see and all to worship, despite the geographic distance separating many communities. The influence of the Andes on weather patterns is also an important consideration when defining their sacred nature. The weather patterns caused by the mountains demonstrated to the Andean people their awesome power and sacred influence on all aspects of society such as food production, cultivation techniques, and social practices (Reinhard 1992:101). Even today, mountaintops are still considered sacred by native Quechua speakers, who believe they are “personified, sacralized, deified and still the homes of ancestors” (Benson 2001:13). An example of this is the contemporary Snow Star festival in the Andes, where Christian ideology is woven into the long-standing Andean mountaintop worship ceremonies (Reinhard 1992:95; Surette 2008).

The rituals and ceremonies associated with these mountaintop shrines were also important in that they ascribed these *huacas* with ideological, ritual, and social meanings. *Capacocha* is the term used to describe the ceremonies in which human sacrifices were made for important events in life (birth, death), to stop natural calamities (drought, epidemics), and to appease the mountain deities who controlled the weather (Ceruti 2004:113). The individuals chosen for mountaintop shrine sacrifice were usually young boys and girls from all parts of the Inca Empire, offered to the gods by their parents or chosen specifically by the Inca (Rowe 1963:306). The offering of these human bodies to the mountaintop shrines provided Inca-controlled communities with messengers into the afterlife to appease the gods and to show loyalty to the state ideology (Ceruti 2004:114).

Perhaps the best example of an Inca mountaintop shrine is from the Lullailloco volcano in Argentina, excavated by Johan Reinhard and Constanza Ceruti in 1999 (Ceruti 2004:108). To date, the Lullailloco site is the highest archaeological site in the world with an elevation of 6715 meters above sea level. This sacrificial site is characterized by three individuals, a young woman, a female child, and a male child who were interred with over one hundred offerings of metal, shell, textiles, pottery, and feathers (Ceruti 2004:108). The many hardships and difficulties associated with reaching mountaintop *huacas* like Lullailloco are symbolic of the Inca struggle for political and social control over many Empire resources, specifically individuals for sacrifice and sacrificial offerings donated by different communities (Ceruti 2004:119). By embarking on these mountaintop treks to perform human sacrificial ceremonies, the Inca demonstrated their endurance and power within the natural world which they attempted to unite with ceremonies dedicated to the supernatural world, ultimately reaffirming their divine right to rulership.

The Political and Social Implications of the Mountaintop Shrine System

The way in which the mountaintop shrine system provided the Inca Empire with political control and social organization can be examined from both a supernatural and spatial perspective. Although many human sacrifices appear to be made strictly for ideological purposes, it is important to consider the political and social gains of human sacrifice for the Inca. The use of mountaintops as locations to enhance political control was established by the Inca based on long-standing Andean beliefs. The sacred nature of mountaintops and hills throughout the region gave the Inca an opportunity to “frame the ceremonies

performed on the summits within a broader context of political strategies to legitimate the power of the Empire” (Ceruti 2004:113). By utilizing the human body as a sacrificial offering the Inca could position themselves on the cusp of the natural and supernatural world (Blom and Janusek 2004:137). Because ideology was already strong in the Andean region, the Inca needed to use the mountaintop *huacas* as representations of the most powerful ideological symbols to affirm their divine and absolute rulership.

The spatial positioning of these mountaintop *huacas* truly illustrates how the Inca extended their political and social power to the very limits of the natural world. Similar to the Cusco Ceque System, which reached into all four corners of the Inca capital city, the mountaintop shrine system stretched into the four corners of the Empire. During these mountaintop ceremonies and rituals, sacrificial items and individuals were sent to Cusco to be transformed into Inca offerings that would be dedicated to these mountaintop *huacas*. The flow of sacrificial goods from all regions of the Empire provided the necessary sustenance for the Inca in the form of a state-controlled pilgrimage (Ceruti 2004:113). By incorporating both powerful offerings and powerful *huacas* the Inca established their political and social organization. Social organization was gained through the integration of the four provinces into these specific mountaintop *huaca* ceremonies, while political control was emphasized through the Inca connection to the supernatural world and their divine rulership.

The materialization of mountaintop *huacas* is another example of how tangible expressions of the dominant ideology aided the Inca in their consolidation of power. Despite *huacas* being palpable objects (or places) before the rise of the Inca, their use within the mountaintop shrine system

represents their unique use as ideological symbols as well as dominant political and social tools. Similar to the Cusco Ceque System, the mountaintop shrine system was characterized by the use of *huacas* to demonstrate the Inca divine rulership. However, the mountaintop shrine system also incorporated another facet of the materialization of ideology through human sacrifice. The use of the human body as a sacrificial offering ultimately became a tangible representation of the dominant state ideology much like the *huaca* to which the sacrifice was being offered. Although the Inca relied heavily on the materialization of ideology created before them, this example demonstrates that they also had the potential to create their own tangible representations of ideology.

Discussion

The materialization of ideology by the Inca ultimately went beyond the creation of just tangible objects (or places). This materialized ideology was so well-established in the Andes that its use to unite the Inca and non-Inca people was a practical and attainable goal, as the power of these *huacas* was recognized and harnessed. Although the Inca were the ultimate wielders of political and social power, by utilizing *huacas* as tools of organization, they still remained intertwined with state ideology rather than removed from it. Because the Inca Empire was built upon many generations of Inca and Andean ideological beliefs, the elite individuals who rose to power over the non-Inca were still deeply tied to these beliefs, which they both imposed and embodied. As a result of this ideological embodiment, the Inca were able to command their landscape to suit their political and social organizational needs. In order for this political command to be successful within the Andean region, the Inca needed to institutionalize specific

parameters that all Andean people could follow. These parameters were best established through the materialization of ideology both in the Cusco Ceque System and the mountaintop shrine system.

The Inca ultimately began their expansion into the Andes from their capital city of Cusco. This primary location of Inca influence and power, at the core of the expanding Empire, demonstrated the ideological parameters to be adhered to in all outlying polities. Through the integration of the Cusco Ceque System into all aspects of the political and social realms, the Inca demonstrated the importance of materialized ideology as an organizational tool. By first establishing this importance in the Inca capital, the use of the materialization of ideology could be diffused outwards into other Inca regions. The mountaintop shrine system was an important cohesion tool used by the Inca to link communities beyond the physical reach of Cusco to the similar ideological parameters established first within the capital.

The use of materialized ideology in the Andean region was not only demonstrated by the Inca but also preceding cultures that utilized and manipulated belief systems to unite different regions across the landscape (Conrad and Demarest 1984:91). Moreover, the materialization of ideology was not only characteristic of Empire building but also other forms of government that relied upon the power of ideology as a connecting vein between communities. Because materialized ideology can take various forms and meanings, there are many different contexts in which this theoretical framework can be applied by Andean scholars; for example with regard to the Moche culture of the Early Intermediate Period to the Early Middle Horizon Period (200 B.C. – A.D. 750).

Characteristic of the Moche culture was a reliance on material symbols to

promote a standard ideology between groups of powerful rulers that dotted the landscape of northern Peru (Dillehay 2001:262). The unified ideological belief system that the Moche came to embody was based primarily on the use of cohesive visual arts that promoted public rituals (Dillehay 2001:262; Pillsbury 2001:9). These fine-line drawings were strictly controlled by the Moche elites who used this materialized ideology to appropriate their own history and traditions and legitimate their social position (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996: 23). Within a Moche context, this visual ideology of the various religious cults was considered a vital mechanism for the unification and centralization of power similar to the Inca use of *huacas* to consolidate power (Dillehay 2001:274). While the Inca demonstrated their materialized ideology through large-scale architecture and landscapes (Cusco Ceque System and the mountaintop shrine system) the Moche diffused their ideology through small-scale material goods, such as pottery, and through public rituals, particularly burial ceremonies (DeMarrais *et al.* 1996:24-26). It was because the Moche could materialize the common ideological beliefs through visual art, iconography, and ritual that they created cohesion among the elites of many smaller groups occupying northern Peru. Although the Moche culture cannot be considered governmentally equivalent to the Inca, similar mechanisms of using ideology as a unifying tool are present in both cultures. This brief example demonstrates that the Inca were not the only Andean culture that relied on use of long-standing Andean beliefs to supplement their own goals and agendas. Ideology represents an important unification tool that characterized various cultures of the pre-contact Andean world.

Conclusions

Overall, the role of ideology within a political and social context is difficult to assess in the archaeological or ethnohistorical record. The subjective nature of ideological understandings generally causes the omission of ideological interpretations when examining past cultures. Although ideology cannot explain all aspects of Inca political control and social organization, it can still contribute significantly to the understanding of how the Inca Empire was built. *Huacas*, as representations of the materialization of ideology, were important elements aiding in the Inca consolidation of power and need to be further integrated into archaeological interpretations of the Andean past (Gose 1993:481). The Cusco Ceque System and the mountaintop shrine system were used as specific case studies to examine the different ways the Inca used materialized ideology in the form of *huacas* to build and expand their Empire. This examination of *huacas* was an attempt to illustrate the role that ideology can play in the overall development of complex societies. Some scholars consider ideology as the primary catalyst of political and social change, suggesting that ideology is “political ideas in action” (Friedrich 1989:301). Despite the limited ethnohistorical and archaeological data about *huacas* they are still an important line of evidence to further support ideological interpretations surrounding the Inca. From this perspective, ideology and its materialization ultimately helped to establish the Inca Empire and created a form of sacred politics with ideology as an underlying force for political and social control.

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