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WAK'AS, MALLKIS, AND THE INCA AFTERLIFE: THE HYDROLOGICAL
CONNECTION BETWEEN THE INCAN EMPIRICAL AND NONEMPIRICAL WORLDS

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Abstract: The ruling elite amongst the indigenous groups of the Andes region, often referred to as the Incas, were, before European contact, a non-literal society. Therefore, our understanding of their religious beliefs pertaining to the relationship between life and death, and the intricate relationship between this belief system and the environment surrounding the Inca is heavily influenced by post-European contact, often clouded by European propaganda and a lack of cultural relativism. This project aims at exploring the relationship between the hydrological cycle and the Incan empirical and nonempirical worlds by comparing and synthesizing post-European contact written records, ethnohistorical records, archeological evidence, and geophysical data, looking at it through the lens of environmental archeology, anthropology of religion, and ethnohistory, by looking at how this relationship is reflected in the Inca concept of places connected to the nonempirical world known as wak'as, such as the Incan mummies known as mallki. By examining and analyzing these connections we gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of how the Incan spiritual beliefs reflected their adaptation to the environment surrounding them, and, thus, gain insight into how human belief systems shape and are shaped by the environment surrounding cultures due to the pressures the environment puts on them.

Introduction

When attempting to gain control over the Andes region, the Spanish found themselves confronted by a culture adapted to an environment far different than that of their native Spain. The region's indigenous, ruling elite, known as the Inca, lived a life where the borders between the empirical and nonempirical worlds, such as life and death, were viewed as more flexible and less defined than that of the European newcomers. The Spanish nobleman Pedro Pizarro, the first cousin of Francisco Pizarro, recounts being brought to a mallki¹ to negotiate on behalf of an Inca captain seeking to marry a nobleman's daughter:

I, who believed that I was going to speak to some living Indian, was taken to a bundle, [like] those of these dead folk, which was seated in a litter, which held him, and on one side was the Indian spokesman who spoke for him, and on the other was the Indian woman, both sitting close to the dead man. Then, when we arrived before the dead one, the interpreter gave the message, and being thus for a short while in suspense and silence, the Indian man looked at the Indian woman (as I understand it, to find out her wish). Then, after having been thus as I relate it for some time, both the Indians replied to me that it was the will of the Lord the dead one that she go, and so the captain already mentioned carried off the Indian woman, since the Apoo [*wak'a*, *mallki*] ... wished it.²

Reading this account, we can see how the deeply catholic Spaniards began to associate the Incan relationship with the nonempirical with daemons and the devil.³ Similarly, the related concept of *wak'as*,⁴ loosely translated into "...deity, sacred object, or shrine..."⁵

¹ A Quechua term for the Incan mummy, written as either *mallki* or *malqui*. For consistency, I will be using the spelling *mallki* throughout the paper.

² Pedro Pizarro and Philip Ainsworth Means, *Relation of the Discovery and Conquest of the Kingdoms of Peru, by Pedro Pizarro ...* (New York: Cortes Society, 1921), 204-5; cited in Brian Bauer, *Ancient Cuzco: Heartland of the Inca* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 165; cited in Steven Kosiba, "Ancient Artifice: The Production of Antiquity and the Social Roles of Ruins in the Heartland of the Inca Empire," in *Antiquarianisms: Contact, Conflict, Comparison*, B. Anderson and F. Rojas, Eds. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), 82.

³ Pablo José de Arriaga, "Extirpacion de la idolatria del Piru," in *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, no. 209 (Crónicas Peruanas de Interés Indígena), (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas 1968), 191-277; Pizarro and Means, *Relation of the Discovery*, 204-5; cited in Kosiba, "Ancient Artifice," 81-2.

⁴ A Quechua term for sacred, spiritual places. Sometimes also written as *waka* or *huaca*. For consistency, I will be using the spelling *wak'a* throughout the paper.

⁵ Laurence Cuelenaere, "The Decolonization of Belief from a Native Perspective: Wak'as and Teología Andina in the Bolivian Highlands," in *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 22, no. 3 (2017): 536-55.

or thought of as "...personified places...",⁶ inspired the same kind of reproach.⁷ This demonization of these central aspects of the Incan belief systems was a clear attempt at drawing a line between the old, "barbaric," ways of life, and the new, "civilized" path of Christianity.

In the contemporary Andes, "Teología Andina understands the wak'as in light of practices that testify to the existence of the Christian God, rather than the transformative agency of wak'as in their own right."⁸ To fully understand the role the mallkis and wak'as played within the Inca culture, and how they remain important to different descendant groups to this day,⁹ we must understand their relationship to the environment surrounding the Inca. This paper will use a mixture of environmental archeology, anthropology of religion, and ethnohistory to contextualize the evidence and show how the Inca belief system reflected their relationship with, and adaptation to, the hydrological cycle¹⁰ in the aired environment of the Andes region.

The Hydrological Connection in the Society of the Inca

Several researchers have noted the connection between the culture of the society of the Inca and water. One of the earliest researchers to start emphasizing the importance of water in this region was the Peruvian archeologist Julio C. Tello. Throughout his work on pre-Hispanic Peruvian Cultures, he notes the Indigenous feats of controlling the water resources in the region through the construction of reservoirs and aqueducts. In his 1937 book *Arqueología de Cajamarca: Expedición al Marañon*, a collection of his field notes streaming from his excavations of antique water channels, he establishes "an alternative environmental

⁶ Kosiba, "Ancient Artifice," 80.

⁷ Arriaga, "Extirpacion de la idolatria," 205; Pizarro and Means, *Relation of the Discovery*, 204-5; cited in Kosiba, "Ancient Artifice," 81-2.

⁸ Cuelenaere, "The Decolonization of Belief," 536-55.

⁹ *Ibid*, 536-55.

¹⁰ The hydrological cycle refers to the natural cycle of water, ie: rain or precipitation, snow, glaciers, rivers, lakes, and evaporation, or the transformation of water from a liquid to gaseous state.

conclusion that was multi-functional.”¹¹ Acknowledged as America’s first indigenous archeologist, Tello’s work struggled to academic weight during his lifetime outside of Peruvian society due to his marginalized status, elaborate Spanish writing style, and often political tones.¹² However, over the last twenty to thirty years, his writings have gained more academic interests, as “... there has been a renewed interest in the history of archaeology and the increasingly inward-looking focus on the practice of archeology.”¹³ Richard Burger, in his 2009 book *The Life and Writings of Julio C. Tello America’s First Indigenous Archaeologist*, explains that “Tello’s intimate understanding of highland herding, irrigation, and other farming practices led him to emphasize the crucial link between the environment, cultural knowledge and the success on early Peruvian cultures:”¹⁴ Tello was one of the earliest people to be in a position where he understood both the cultural aspect of the indigenous descendants of the Inca, the environmental conditions of the Andes region, and the archeological evidence left by the Incas. He was, therefore, due to this unique background, able to start connecting some of these pieces.

Rupert Medd, in his 2015 journal article “Wakas and Water, Julio César Tello’s Spiritual Poetics of Archaeology,” draws clear lines between the importance of water to the Andean populations and folklore surrounding heroes, great deeds, origin myths, and the divine based in the pre-European-contact.¹⁵ Basing much of this argument on the work of Tello, he explains “...how conquest disrupted a philosophy of integral environmental relations, especially regarding cults surrounding the importance of water. This included the

¹¹ Julio C. Tello and Virgilio Freddy Cabanillas, *Arqueología De Cajamarca: Expedición Al Marañón, 1937*. 1. ed. Serie Clásicos Sanmarquinos. (Lima: Corporación Financiera de Desarrollo, 2004).; cited in Rupert Medd, “Wakas and Water, Julio César Tello’s Spiritual Poetics of Archaeology,” in *Studies in Travel Writing* 19, no. 2, (2015): 147–68.

¹² Richard L. Burger, *The Life and Writings of Julio C. Tello America’s First Indigenous Archaeologist* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press 2009), 1-4.

¹³ Burger, *America’s First Indigenous Archaeologist*, 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 79.

¹⁵ Medd, “Wakas and Water,” 147–68.

origins of water, its purity, consumption, communal celebration and veneration.”¹⁶ He went as far as defining the Peruvian pre-Hispanic civilization as a water cult.¹⁷ Further, Medd points out that new information “... draw[s] attention to the more recent reports emerging from Peru that are classifying water as a godsend as well as a wasted and increasingly precious entity[,]” and points out that “[t]his cult for water that Peru's pre-Hispanic civilizations started was alive again in the spirit of the local communities and its ethos was bigger in scope than running water. It was revolutionary in the sense that it was dismantling centuries of colonial ideology forced onto the environment.”¹⁸ Thus, Medd illustrates how remnants of this water cult can still be seen in modern Peruvian society and its attempts to deal with current changes to the climate.

In their 2003 article “Water, Huacas, and Ancestor Worship: Traces of a Sacred Wari Landscape,” Glowacki and Malpass draw on the connection between water as “...an essential element of life...” and its connection to religion and where people settled.¹⁹ They explain that “[t]his linkage is supported by the fact that water acquisition, management, and control are some of the most common themes of religious myth.”²⁰ Glowacki and Malpass made the case that the repeated climatic events marking the prehistory and history of the South American Andes region were particularly inducive in tying together the religious beliefs, the decision makings, and the more practical ways in which the societies controlled water.²¹

Glowacki and Malpass focused much on their research on the Wari, a group that predated the society of the Inca. The center of Wari culture was Ayacucho, some 574 km west of Cuzco, but their empire spanned a much larger area, that for the majority of its

¹⁶ Tello, *Obras Completas Volumen 1*; cited in Medd, “Wakas and water,” 147–68.

¹⁷ Medd, “Wakas and water,” 147–68.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 147–68.

¹⁹ Mary Glowacki and Michael Malpass, “Water, Huacas, and Ancestor Worship: Traces of a Sacred Wari Landscape,” in *Latin American Antiquity* 14, no. 4 (2003), 431–48.

²⁰ Glowacki and Malpass, “Sacred Wari Landscapes,” 431.

²¹ *Ibid*, 432.

existence also included the region of Cuzco. Further, one of their principal settlements was located just a short distance outside of where the Inca Capital would later be built.²² Much of Glowacki and Malpass's work in reconstructing the Wari cultural sphere was drawn from the body of knowledge of the Inca, including ethnohistories and evidence from ethnographic accounts.²³

They explain that the period 540–1000 CE, known as The Middle Horizon, “is marked by the appearance of Wari cultural influence throughout much of pre[-C]olumbian Peru.”²⁴ The Wari colonized the Cuzco region for a period of approximately 400 years, incorporating local groups into their society, and leaving lasting impressions on the local cultures, including religious practices and much of the colonization model the Inca would later use.²⁵ Glowacki and Malpass further explain that the Middle Horizon evidence indicates “... ceremonial activities closely tied to sacred natural topographic features and intimately linked to ancestor worship and the cosmological control of water.”²⁶ Further, they linked the Wari obsession with water to a series of droughts persisting through the sixth and early seventh centuries.²⁷ This shows that the Inca emerged in a society where water, its procurement, and possible scarcity due to natural disasters, was already intricately tied into the fabric of the local belief structures.

The Importance of Water in Agricultural Societies

The society of the Inca nourished themselves predominantly through agricultural means, and this means the significance placed on food production within the society is reflected within the myths and stories. Water is important for agricultural societies, the Inca

²² Ibid, 435.

²³ Ibid, 435.

²⁴ Ibid, 432.

²⁵ Justin Jennings, “Local Settlement Continuity and Wari Impact in Middle Horizon Cusco,” in *Beyond Wari Walls Regional Perspectives on Middle Horizon Peru*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 79-112.

²⁶ Glowacki and Malpass, “Sacred Wari Landscapes,” 432.

²⁷ Ibid, 437.

had an emphasis on controlling water by *hydraulic channels*, such as aqueducts, to secure their harvest.²⁸ Since the Andes stretches over several climatic zones, the natural resources and what a society can grow highly variable, and resources were redistributed across the different regions through a system of reciprocity directed by the central government. As will be discussed further down, the higher regions of the Andes are both more cold and more arid, droughts often occurring at periods of the year, thus controlling the movement of water becomes a necessity for any sort of longtime settlement of the altiplano highland regions. As the centers of control changed, so did the control of the water management systems.²⁹ In fact, the importance, sophistication, and success of these ancient hydraulic systems have led many of them to still be in use for agricultural production today in the highlands.³⁰

For any agricultural society the interlinked concept of fertility, the connection of earth and water, is of vital importance for one's survival. Therefore, the hydrological cycle and the control of water remains a key feature of any agricultural society. Its veneration serves as a communal memory to stress the importance of control in the case of times of scarcity and droughts, and the control of water often becomes interlinked with political and religious control.

To illustrate, in Chinese mythology, dragons are the personification natural forces, primarily associated with water and good luck. They could either give you a good harvest or destroy both it and even your home through floods or droughts. Thus, the usage of the dragon as the symbol of the emperor served to draw a line between political power and the control of water in the agriculturally based economy.

²⁸ Tello, *Obras Completas Volumen 1*; cited in Medd, "Wakas and water," 147–68; also see María Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*. Translated by Harry B. Iceland (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999); The term *hydraulic channels* refers to ways in which water was moved from one place to another.

²⁹ Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*, 215.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 218.

Pauketat explains some of the reasoning behind this in his 2020 article "When the Rains Stopped: Evapotranspiration and Ontology at Ancient Cahokia.":

Obviously, air and water exist in relation to evaporation, condensation, precipitation, and absorption or runoff—processes that directly affect the atmosphere, oceans, continents, and life in general. They change physical states in ways that can dramatically impact materials and beings, causing landscapes to be shaped and organisms to live or die. Certain aspects of evapotranspiration, a kind of “mattering,” ... are readily perceived by people to be powerful, which is to say to disproportionately produce observable, palpable changes in some relational web. Explanations by people of such causal relationships generally invoke either natural or spiritual forces.³¹

In a setting where access to water is often limited, it stands to reason that water becomes even more important and, therefore, even more integrated into the structures of the society. It is therefore imperative to look at the climatic conditions of the area surrounding the Inca capital of Cuzco, to see how water fits into their adaptation to that environment.

Contextualizing the Hydrological Connection to the Climatic Conditions of the Andes

The *hydrological cycle* is the cycle of water as it moves between its solid, fluid, and gaseous stages. In solid form, it takes the shape of ice or snow, in fluid form, we see it as rain or the waters of lakes and rivers, while in its gaseous stage water becomes vapor, often invisible, though we can sometimes see it as steam. Water naturally cycles through these forms. Bodies of water such as lakes and seas will give off vapor under the sun's rays. The vapor will then fall down as rain or snow, the snow will melt, and the water will travel along waterways such as rivers and streams until it again is in either a lake or the sea. When talking about the hydrological cycle, this pattern of transformation and movement is what we are discussing.

The climatic conditions of the Andes are highly variable, as mentioned above, due to the differences in elevation and coastal winds, but the general rule of thumb is that the higher the elevation, the colder and dryer it gets. Cuzco tends to be generally dry and temperate, a

³¹ Timothy R. Pauketat, "When the Rains Stopped: Evapotranspiration and Ontology at Ancient Cahokia," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 76, 4 (2020):410–38.

term that entails a moderate amount of rainfall throughout the year, with sporadic periods of droughts. Though rain is abundant during the summer months, 158.00mm in January, the winter months have drought-like conditions, with June only seeing about 2.00mm through the whole month.³² The temperatures fluctuate a bit less, with October, as the warmest month, averaging a maximum of 21°C and July, being the coldest month, averaging a maximum temperature of about 18°C.³³

However, these are the current climatic conditions of the area, and to understand the Inca view, we need to look at the *paleoclimatic record*, meaning the data illustrating past temperatures. The Inca roughly existed in the timeframe 1438-1533 CE, but since we know that much of their cultural practices and stories were continuations of earlier cultural groups,³⁴ we must include some of those timeframes in our discussion as well. This means that we must look at the paleoclimatic data from stretching at least back to the Wari colonization.

A *multi-proxy*³⁵ analysis of *core samples*³⁶ of lake sediments from the now dried up lake basin of Lake Marcacocha, in the highlands southeast of Lima, used pollen analysis and radiocarbon dating to establish a model for the climate going back some 7000 years.³⁷ The pollen data indicated the more or less disappearance of maize agriculture around 100 CE, two periods of resurgence in 500 CE and 900 CE.³⁸ When added to previous archaeological,

³² "Average Monthly Rainfall and Snow in Cusco (Cusco), Peru (Millimeter)," *World Weather & Climate Information* (Amsterdam: World Wide Travel Organization 2010-).

³³ "Climate and Average Monthly Weather in Cusco (Cusco), Peru," *World Weather & Climate Information* (Amsterdam: World Wide Travel Organization, 2010-).

³⁴ Glowacki and Malpass, "Sacred Wari Landscapes," 431–48; also see Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*.

³⁵ The term *multi-proxy* entails the usage of data, including fossilized remains and sediment characteristics, to reconstruct past environments.

³⁶ A *core sample* is the extraction of a sample of sediment or ice, by drilling a steel pipe into the ground, lakebed/seabed, or ice.

³⁷ Alex Chepstow-Lusty, Michael R Frogley, Brian S Bauer, Mark. B Bush, and Alfredo Tupayachi Herrera, "A Late Holocene Record of Arid Events from the Cuzco Region, Peru," *Journal of Quaternary Science* 18, no. 6 (2003): 491–502

³⁸ Chepstow-Lusty et al., "A Late Holocene Record," 499.

archaeobotanical, and glacial geomorphological evidence, all the data indicates that timeframes between resurgences were due to "... a period of colder climatic conditions leading to significantly reduced human populations in the area," followed by a more arid climate after 900 CE³⁹ After 1100 CE, the data indicates a shift toward warmer and more dry conditions, which seems to have lasted up until the 1800s.⁴⁰

Further data from a 2002 study combining geological and archaeological techniques in the Jequetepeque and Zana valleys of Peru's northern coast, also seems to back this timeline up, finding evidence of "... two major episodes of drought, El Niño flooding, and desertification" in the timeframe 250-1553 CE.⁴¹ Interestingly, these more coastal areas showed evidence of relocating their settlements to less flooded areas during the timeframe 900-1400 CE,⁴² the start of which coincides with the reemergence of agriculture seen in the highlands and discussed above.⁴³

Despite the environmental challenges of the dryer environment of the period, the societies of the Andes region thrived in the altiplano. Today, strategies of diverse crop management are used in the Andean altiplano, cope with the limitations of the climate, specifically the aridity and lack of precipitation.⁴⁴ Effective water management is the core of successful farming here, the lack of consistent rain leaving the population with the population to come up with ways to concentrate the available water, either spatially or temporally.⁴⁵

³⁹ S. Johannessen and C. Hastorf, "A history of fuel management (A.D. 500 to the present) in the Mantaro Valley, Peru," in *Journal of Ethnobiology* 10, no. 1 (1990), 61-90; G. Seltzer and C. Hastorf, "Climatic change and its effect on Prehepatic agriculture in the central Peruvian Andes," in *Journal of Field Archaeology* 17 (1990), 397-414; A. Kendall, "An archaeological perspective for Late Intermediate Period Inca development in the Cuzco region," in *Journal of the Steward Anthropological Society* 24 (1996), 121-56; cited in Chepstow-Lusty et al., "A Late Holocene Record," 499.

⁴⁰ Chepstow-Lusty et al., "A Late Holocene Record," 499.

⁴¹ Tom Dillehay, Alan L. Kolata, and Mario Pino Q., "Pre-Industrial Human and Environment Interactions in Northern Peru During the Late Holocene," *Holocene (Sevenoaks)* 14, no. 2 (2004), 272.

⁴² Dillehay, Kolata, and Pino Q., "Pre-Industrial Human," 279.

⁴³ Chepstow-Lusty et al., "A Late Holocene Record," 499.

⁴⁴ Pablo Cruz, Thierry Winkel, Marie-Pierre Ledru, Cyril Bernard, Nancy Egan, Didier Swingedouw, and Richard Joffre, "Rain-Fed Agriculture Thrived Despite Climate Degradation in the Pre-Hispanic Arid Andes," *Science Advances* 3, no. 12 (2017).

⁴⁵ Cruz et al., "Rain-Fed Agriculture."

For concentration in space, irrigation increases crop water availability over reduced areas via impluvia, spring capture, and canals. . . . For concentration in time, *biennial fallowing* may allow accumulation of water resources over 2 years, as shown in various dry farming areas in the world. . . . Biennial fallowing is practiced in the totality of quinoa cultivation in this region of the southern altiplano today. More than just controlling weeds and preserving soil fertility . . . biennial fallows . . . serve to save water.⁴⁶

These forms of water management are both practiced in different regions throughout the highlands of the former Inca Empire, though the practices most likely date back to the first agricultural settlements.

The Inca rose to power in 1438 CE after agriculture had about 500 years to re-establish itself in the region. From the evidence mentioned above, we know that the Andes were was in a very dry period, starting about 300 years before the Inca Empire was founded. We can then see, that to deal with these challenges and survive in the harsh climate, the Inca's predecessors chose to control the water spatially through the hydraulic channels that let them grow their food. When looking at the climatic conditions, it, therefore, becomes obvious why the control of water was linked to the control of power in the high altiplano regions.

Understanding the Inca

The Inca were not a specific ethnic group, in fact, the Inca empire consisted of a multitude of different ethnicities, at its height stretching from the southern parts of modern-day Chile to the southwestern coast of Colombia. It, therefore, covered more or less all of the Andes region. Rostworowski de Diez Canseco notes that "... reflections on Andean identity demonstrates the inhabitants of the Inca state were not as shaped into a single national identity. Rather the Incas limited themselves to the recognition and exploitation of the human and territorial resources under the control of the ethnic lord."⁴⁷ Instead of having an ethnic

⁴⁶ Ibid; Emphasis added it the term *biennial fallowing*, which is the process of only seeding a plot of land every second year, letting it sit for the non-used year to gather water. People who practices this form of agriculture will alternate between plot every year to maximize the available natural resources.

⁴⁷ Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*, 225.

connotation, the term Inca refers to the ruling elite of Cuzco, the royal family, whose head was called Sapa Inca.

The Inca Empire was divided into four *suyo*, large divisions, all under the control of Cuzco's central government.⁴⁸ Each of these divisions corresponded with the four Cardinal directions,⁴⁹ thus representing the importance of the special and temporal locations such as sacred sites and calendric events, both intricately linked with the planting and harvesting of agricultural societies.

Between all the different ethnic groups, there was probably a great variety within the spiritual beliefs and folktales within the empire. Still, many of the tales share similar features, and several connect to water. As origin stories often reflect some of a society's most valued beliefs, a connection between these and the control of water should be expected when seeing the important place water held to life in the regions surrounding Cuzco.

Glowacki and Malpass explain that:

Ideology defines and explains religious, political, social, and economic aspects of a society. Religious ideology is perhaps the strongest and most enduring... in traditional and preliterate society where religious beliefs and their material associations are both conservative and pervasive. Consequently, if analogies are to be made between living or historic cultures and prehistoric ones, the strongest of these should be religious... Beliefs and practices of a religious ideology should be recognized by their unique symbolic representational elements and configurations and, consequently, should be identifiable in the archaeological record. An analysis of religious ideology should draw not only on religious data but also on those of the other cultural spheres, since all are generated by the same underlying structure and practices.⁵⁰

Therefore, when looking at things like origin myths, we must look for correlations and patterns to recognize the symbolic reflections of the ideology and worldview of the people to whom they belong.

⁴⁸ Burger, *America's First Indigenous Archaeologies*, 318.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 318.

⁵⁰ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1959); Glowacki and Malpass, "Sacred Wari Landscapes," 434-5.

Local “[m]yths and legend tell of the beginning of the hydraulic channels in a magic time, when animals could speak. The springs came forth as a result of rivalries among celebrated [wak’a], who challenged each other to test their powers, urinating in those places which became the springs.”⁵¹ From this, we can see several things reflected. Firstly, the control of water is not only held up as important, something that has more or less always been an important part of survival but it is connected to the most distant of ancestors, in a time so far away that living without it would have been unbearable. Secondly, the aspect of hydraulic channels arising in the mythical time when animals spoke, entails a relationship between the control of water and taming of nature. Lastly, as we will see further down, wak’a are important ancestral spirits, thus the formation of springs is seen as a gift from the ancestors, and, further, the element of competition illustrates the veneration associated with the miracles of creating water sources.

In general, “[t]he sea, the lakes, the springs were venerated as the places of origin of numerous ethnic groups. The lagoons were considered to be manifestations of the sea and the origin of water ...”⁵² From this, we again see the important role water takes within the Inca *cosmogony*, the stories of their creation. As water is seen as the origin of numerous groups of people, we see a link between water and the concept of life. This is further verified with lagoons representing the sea and the origin of water, hinting at a view that all water comes from the same place. Therefore, since life is associated with water, it must all have been connected and originated from the same source at one point.

⁵¹ Francisco de Avila, *Dios y hombres de Huarochirí*, translated by José María Arguedas (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1966); Frank Salomon and Gregor Urioste (translators and eds.), *The Huarochiri Manuscript: A Testament of Ancient and Colonial Andean Religion* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); *Idolatrias*, VI, 18 (Lima: Archivo Arzobispal, nd.); cited in Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*, 214;.

⁵² Janette E. Sherbondy, *The Chanel System of Hanan Cuzco*, Thesis (Michigan: University Microfilms International of Illinois, 1982a); Janette E. Sherbondy, “El regadio, los lagos, los mitos de origen,” *Allpanchis* 17, no. 20 (1982b), 3-32.; cited in Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*, 214.

The Inca are often describing as a sun-cult, due to their worship of the creator deity Viracocha, the foremost deity in their pantheon, who also served as the sun god. However, this description can be somewhat problematic, as noted by Gose,⁵³ as Viracocha was both the god of sun and storms, thus, he was closely linked to water and mountains as well.⁵⁴ Therefore, it stands to reason that Viscacha was arguably more a god of the cycles entailing weather and life and death, as these two things were linked in the Inca cosmology. This broader view of him also makes more sense seeing that he was the creator god and fits well with the prominent place fertility worship had within the society of the Inca's belief system. From this line of reasoning, the society of the Inca would be better understood as a cult of cycles, especially those involving the cycles linked to life and death, than a sun cult.

It is also important to remember that what we think of as gods did not have the same meaning for the Inca as we put connect it with. The Society of the Inca believed in spirits that inhabited the landscape around them, and these spirits, as we will discuss at greater length further down, were usually connected to their ancestors. Great spirits such as Viracocha represented fantastic heroes and progenerates whose deeds should be celebrated by all their decedents. In other words, if anything, the Inca were ancestor worshipers. This fact, of course, gives further credence to the suggestion above that the society of the Inca was a cult of cycles linked to life and death, upon which the hydrological cycle was the ultimate symbolic manifestation.

The "god" Guari, is an example of this, as the description of him in literature is interchangeable between being called a god and a wak'a.⁵⁵ Still, his area of power was the

⁵³ Gose, "Water under the Incas." 480.

⁵⁴ Glowacki and Malpass, "Sacred Wari Landscapes," 439.

⁵⁵ Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*, 217.

sea, and he was understood to have "... taught men to construct terraces and irrigation canals and was worshiped throughout the highlands⁵⁶"

The cosmology, the explanations for the world around them, of the Inca was directly tied to their social and political power structures:

[T]he power of the Inca was not an end in itself but rather a means of realizing a metaphysical control that was the common aspiration of most of the fragmented political units that existed before the empire was formed. ... One central metaphysical issue motivating the rise of the Inca empire and embodied in this political structure was how to control a complex cycle that linked death and the regeneration of life in Andean thought. Here death was thought to create sources of water that lay outside the boundaries of the local political unit, such as Lake Titicaca and the Pacific Ocean. These sources had to be coaxed or coerced into sending water back to the local level for agricultural purposes. If these distant places could be subjected to imperial control, then the complex cycle linking human death and agricultural fertility might be directly administered.⁵⁷

Thus, again we see the connection between drawn between the importance of the hydrological cycle, power, life, and death.

The idea of dualism was highly integrated into the Inca worldview. Rostworowski de Diez Canseco the impotence of duality by stating that one "... Andean way of drawing boundaries was based on the principles of opposition and complementarity. In fact, the opposition of halves whether of *hanan* and *hurin*, upper and lower, or *ichoc* and *allauca*, left and right formed a dual division throughout the Andean world. *Ayllus*, towns, and valleys were all partitioned into."⁵⁸ Hence why the number four is seen so often within the local legends structure, why there were four *suyo*. Further, why the Inca believed that every object possessed two *camaquen*, meaning spirits or vital forces.⁵⁹ Succinctly, they had an animistic worldview, where everything was viewed as being alive, even the dead because the borders

⁵⁶ María Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *Estructuras andinas del poder*, (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Pruanos, 1983); cited in Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*, 225.

⁵⁷ Peter Gose, "Segmentary State Formation and the Ritual Control of Water under the Incas." *Comparative Study of Society and History* 35 (1993), 480; cited in Glowacki and Malpass, "Sacred Wari Landscapes," 481-2.

⁵⁸ Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*, 225.

⁵⁹ Tamara L. Bray, "An Archaeological Perspective on the Andean Concept of Camaquen: Thinking Through Late Pre-Columbian Ofrendas and Huacas." *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 19, no. 3 (2009): 357-66.

between life and death were not viewed with the same sense of finality and rigidity that our contemporary society.

The Mallki

The relatively dry and cold environment of the higher regions of the Andes is conducive to a natural form of mummification, as the regular decomposition process is slowed down. Mummification process itself involved the slow drying out of the body of the deceased. "The arid climate of the Andean coast and highlands enabled the preservation of corpses so the deceased could be kept physically. As a result of this, the divide between the living and the dead was so clear-cut; the living interacted with their ancestors..."⁶⁰ To understand this interaction, we must therefore put together the links between this mummification process, the beliefs of the society the Inca was part of, and the importance of the hydrological cycle in this arid environment.

As discussed earlier, the society of the Inca believed that every object has two *camaquen*, and, in humans, the two split upon death. The part referred to as the *kamachiy* joined the ancestral line and stayed with the body.⁶¹ According to the Inca beliefs, it was this remaining part of the soul that gave the mallki the ability to speak through certain living people.⁶² The mallki, thus, developed into a symbolic manifestation of the ancestral line, physically representing the power and importance of both the families and, in more important cases, individuals.

When someone died, the body was:

...wrapped around with cloth of a quality that denoted the individual's position within the community during his lifetime. In addition, those of highest status were sometimes also provided with masks of metal sewn onto or lying just beneath the outermost layers of cloth... The finest and usually the largest mummy masks are golden, though

⁶⁰ Dean, Carolyn, "The after-life of Inka Rulers: Andean death before and after Spanish colonization," in *Hispanic Issues On Line*, (2010), 29.

⁶¹ Peter Gose, "The Andean circulatory cosmos," in *The Andean World*. Linda J. Seligmann and Kathleen S. Fine-Dare, Eds. (2018): 120; *Kamachiy* comes from the word *kamasqa*, meaning to "infuse", pertaining to the life and spirit infused into the decedents by the ancestors, the parts that connects the ancestral line together.

⁶² Gose, "The Andean circulatory cosmos," 120.

originally they were painted and decorated with plaques of copper and other material.⁶³

Thus, even in death, the social hierarchy was reflected through the differential treatment of the bodies, the more important, then the more ornate the dressings and decorations.

This is differentiation also extended further into the treatment and upkeep of the mallki. Most people were only remembered for a few generations, their mallki then allowed to slowly deteriorate.⁶⁴ Still, “[s]pecial curatorial care went ... to mallkis and the mummified bodies of deceased rulers, who formed a direct link to the founding ancestors.”⁶⁵ As these mallki received better care and more veneration, the memory of their deeds was kept alive through oral traditions throughout the subsequent generations, moving them into mythical status. We see the social hierarchy of the Inca’s society, therefore, extend into the afterlife, and ancestors seen as able to extend their will into the world of the still living. The more important they had been in life, the more valued their impute from the beyond were to the living. “Descendant groups regularly made and venerated other kinds of ancestor images, such as figurines, statues, or sculpted stones... making ancestor images essentially propagat[e] the symbolic system (kinship) by articulating material expressions (effigies of prototypes) and social relations of the cult group ...”⁶⁶ Therefore, as the opinions of the ancestors were valued and sought, they were believed to talk through the other objects representing them, even after their mallki were gone.

⁶³ Heather Lechtman, “Andean Value Systems and the Development of Prehistoric Metallurgy,” in *Technology and Culture* 25, no. 1 (1984): 11-2.

⁶⁴ Gose, “The Andean circulatory cosmos,” 119.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁶⁶ George F. Lau, “Animating Idolatry: Making Ancestral Kin and Personhood in Ancient Peru,” in *Religions* 12, no. 5 (2021): 2.

The other half of the soul, the *upani*, journeyed on to the world of the dead, the *upaymarka*, associated with distant large bodies of water or sacred mountains.⁶⁷ The *upani*'s departure was thus represented with the body's loss of moisture, and the subsequent moisture loss for the *ayllu*, and its journey was viewed as "... enacted in reverse the founding ancestors' journey from their remote points of origin ..."⁶⁸ Succinctly, it could be viewed as a form of reversed birth. "Their supernatural journeys through the underground waterways helped to 'aquify' the land, sending them to their ultimate dwelling or resting places called *upaimarcas*, which were bodies of water."⁶⁹ The desiccating state was seen as the *upani* being called by these distant sources of water so they could be reconstituted, upon which they could return to provide water for their decedents.⁷⁰ Thus, "[b]y separating, withdrawing, and recycling water from desiccated bodies and allowing its redistribution across the landscape, death enabled the Andean circulatory cosmos."⁷¹ The idea of the *upani*, therefore, served as a "duality of opposites" together with the *kamachiy*, a bit like the ying-yang concept, two opposite parts that make out a whole and balance each other, and reflecting the dualistic worldview of the Inca discussed above.

The Views on the Wak'as

The Quechua term *wak'a* refers to "... any person, place, or thing possessing a sacred or supernatural quality."⁷² They are often thought of as "...any material thing that manifest[s] the superhuman: a mountain peak, a spring, a union of streams, a rock outcrop, an ancient ruin, a twinned cob of maize, a tree split by lightning. Even people can be *wak'a*."⁷³ This

⁶⁷ Pierre Duviols, "Huari y llacuaz: agricultores y pastores. Un dualísimo prehispánico de oposición y complementariedad" *Revisita del Museo Nacional* 39 (1973): 136; G. Taylor, "Supay." *Amerindia* 5, (1980): 58; Gose, "The Andean circulatory cosmos," 120; The term *upani* loosely translated into "shadow."

⁶⁸ Gose, "The Andean circulatory cosmos," 120.

⁶⁹ Glowacki and Malpass, "Sacred Wari Landscapes," 437.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 437.

⁷¹ Gose, "The Andean circulatory cosmos," 121.

⁷² Glowacki and Malpass, "Sacred Wari Landscapes," 436.

⁷³ Frank Salomon, "Introductory Essay," in *The Huarochiri Manuscript: A Testament of Ancient and Colonial Andean Religion*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991): 16; cited in Laurence Cuelenaere, "The

reflects the aspect of animism⁷⁴ associated with this set of beliefs, and, further, supports why the mallki arguably at times can be viewed as wak'a.

Other authors, such as Kosiba, have argued that many of the links between the wak'as and pre-European-contact-Inca legends stem from interactions between Europeans and the Andean people that aimed at turning these speaking places of power into "...mute objects that represented a general past to a public audience."⁷⁵ However, many legends could also be seen as examples of the opposite of this argument, such as the origin stories we discussed earlier. Still, there could be a grain of truth to this idea. Such a ploy could easily reflect the ambivalent feelings regarding the emerging relationship between the wak'a and Christianity during the time of and following European contact.

The wak'a represented the greatest challenge to Europeans after contact, hence why we can still see remnants of their worship today.⁷⁶ A large part of this was their connection to water and power, in a place where hydrologic control was of the uttermost importance and ingrained into the fabric of society, as illustrated above.

Wak'a were often sacred due to their intimate association with the homes and the resting places of important ancestral figures, playing off the ancestral worship mentioned above. The mythology states that these ancestors emerged from the wak'a, or the place of the wak'a, sounding their lineage, and occasionally turning to stone due to their great deeds.⁷⁷

Decolonization of Belief from a Native Perspective: Wak'as and Teología Andina in the Bolivian Highlands," in *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 22, no. 3 (2017): 536–55.

⁷⁴ Refers to the personification of objects, animals, and the dead, by giving them behavioral aspects or attributes of living humans.

⁷⁵ Kosiba, "Ancient Artifice," 96.

⁷⁶ Patrick Ryan Williams and Donna J Nash. "Sighting the Apu: a GIS Analysis of Wari Imperialism and the Worship of Mountain Peaks," in *World Archaeology* 38, no. 3 (2006): 455–68; also Tello, *Obras Completas Volumen 1*; cited in Medd, "Wakas and water," 147–68; also see Rostworowski de Diez Canseco, *History of the Inca Realm*.

⁷⁷ Alborniz in Pierre Duviols, "Una edición de Cristóbal de Albornoz: La instruccioón pare descubrir todas guacas de Piruy sus camayos y haciendas" *Journal de la Société de Américanistes* 56, no. 1 (1967), 7-39; Pabio José de Arriaga. "La extirpación de la idolatría en el Perú" in *Colección de libros y documentos referentes a la historia de Perú*, Horacio H. Urteaga and Carlos A. Romero (eds.), no. 1 (Lima: Sanmartí 1920), 49-55, 137-144; Burr Cartwright Brundage, *Empire of the Inca* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1963), 46-52; Burr Cartwright Brundage, *Lords of Cuzco: A history of Description of the Inca People in Their Final Days* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press 1967), 35, 144-155,149; Bernabé P. Cobo. *Historia del Nuevo Mundo*.

Linguistically, the ancestral connection can be drawn directly from the terms related to the wak'a. As Glowacki and Malpass explained, “[t]he Quechua word ‘villca’ meaning ‘grandfather’ or ‘great-grandfather,’ and by extension, ‘ancestor’ can be used interchangeably with the word [‘wak’a’]. Interestingly, the words ‘villca’ and ‘ayllu,’ the latter being the corporate unit defined by and responsible for its ancestral [wak’a] are likewise synonymous.”⁷⁸ Thus, we see the ancestral connection to the wak'a, the reflection of a worldview where life and death were connected through cycles of water that made their borders more fluid. Further, “Certain types of [wak'a], such as large bodies of water, certain mountains, rock formations, and great stones, were believed to be the origin points of different peoples and their deities associated with each, their founding ancestors. These kinds of [wak'a] were called *pancarinas* or origin places. The corporate group identified with these [wak'a] honored their divine forefathers through offerings to their *pacarinas*.”⁷⁹ A strong personal and social connection was therefore formed to, therefore, places. As Glowacki and Malpass, this creates a system where wak'a, “sometimes associated with ancestor worship as *pacarinas*, then, were the links and portals to this ideological system whereby death and water produced a cycling of creation and recreation.”⁸⁰ Thus, the wak'a concept served to further the idea of these cycles and connections to water.

No. 4, (Seville: Sociedad da bibliofilos andaluces, 1890-95): Book 13, 13-17, 9-47, 342, 1990, 1, 47; Diego González Holguín, *Vocabulario de la lengua general de todo el Peru llamanda lengua Quiccuca o del Inca* (Lima, 1608): Book 2, 330; John Howland Rowe, “Inca Culture at the Time of the Spanish Conques,” in *Handbook of South American Indian, II*, Julian Steward (ed.), Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 143 (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1946), 295-8; Domingo de Santo Tomás, *Lexicón o vocabulario de la lengua general del Perú*, Facsimile edition published by Raul Porras Barrenechea (Lima: Instituto de Historiam, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 1951), 143, 173, 232 ; Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, *Historia de los Inca*. Colección Hórreo, no. 10 (Buenos Aires: Emercé Editores, 1942), 70; R. Tom Zuidema, “The Ceque system of Cuzco, the Social Organization of the Capital, off the Inca,” in *International Archives of Ethnography*, Supplement to L. E. Brill (Netherlands: Leiden, 1964); R. Tom Zuidema, “Kinship and Ancestor Cult in Three Peruvian Communities: Hernández Príncipe’s account 1622.” *Bulletine de l’Institut Français d’Etuders Andines* 2, no.1 (1973), 19; cited in Geofferey W. Conrad and Arthur A. Demarest, *Religion and Empire. The Dynamics of Aztec and Inca Expansionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 102; cited in Glowacki and Malpass, “Sacred Wari Landscapes,” 436.

⁷⁸ Glowacki and Malpass, “Sacred Wari Landscapes,” 436.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 436.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 436.

Further, the Wak'a was strongly integrated into the political life, and thus, the power struggle between different groups:

“Each [waka] defined a level of political organization that might nest into units of a higher order or subdivide into smaller groupings. Collectively they formed a segmentary hierarchy that transcended the boundaries of local ethnic polities and provided the basis for empires like that of the Inca. However, these [waka] were also the focus of local kinship relations and agrarian fertility rituals. The political structure that they articulated therefore had a built-in concert for the metaphysical reproduction of human, animal, and plant life. Political power in the pre-Columbian Andes was particularly bound up with attempts to control the flow of water across the frontier of life and death, resulting in no clear distinction between ritual and administration”⁸¹

Therefore, when keeping in mind the concept of the upani from further up, by controlling the wak'a, especially the more important ones, “power over the ancestral land and the cosmological sources of water could be harnessed.”⁸² Due to this, if a group was transferred from one area to one with a different wak'a, they would also have to transfer the power of the ancestral line. This process differed depending on whether the waka were made from stone or water, but for the latter, it involved the ceremonial transfer of a small amount of water from the old to the new.⁸³

Still, maintaining the power of the wak'a, thus maintaining the connection to the ancestral line and your access to water, came at a price. Sacrifices and offerings had to be made in a process that often is referred to as feeding the wak'a. Not all of the Inca people died as a result of war or natural causes, their *mallqui* serving as a gift and connection to the local spirits within the *wak'a*. As human sacrifice is a cross-cultural phenomenon, having occurred in cultures all over the world at some point in time, it is important to understand that the act of making a sacrifice, human or otherwise, is the act of destroying it to render the essence to the nonempirical, the things beyond or normal physical world. Succinctly, it is associated with the act of directly attempting to communicate or satisfy spirits or gods.

⁸¹ Gose, “Water under the Incas.” 480; cited in Glowacki and Malpass, “Sacred Wari Landscapes,” 436

⁸² Glowacki and Malpass, “Sacred Wari Landscapes,” 437.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 437.

Though human sacrifice in the Andes arose before the Inca, it did not reach its height until during the empire.⁸⁴ Still, both the tradition and the association with feeding the wak'a were an intricate part of local groups, lone before the Inca took hold of power. The human sacrifices tended to be at remote locations, such as mountaintop shrines⁸⁵ or close to the salt flat Salinas Grandes.⁸⁶ Several reasons could be behind the sacrifice of humans including: celebrations of events such as victory in war or events in the emperor's life; the death of an emperor; as a response to natural disasters; to concentrate special locations or construction projects; and, to ensure a good harvest or the health of the emperor.⁸⁷ Even so, the feedings of the mountain spirits were likely linked to some form of annual events as these practices persist today, with meals of appeasement fervid up in February and August at different dates, though obviously no longer human sacrifices.⁸⁸ In Inca times, the sacrifices were tended to be young humans people perceived as being physically perfect.⁸⁹ The evidence further shows that sacrifices were often consumed coca leaves and corn liquor before their death,⁹⁰ a process that would have eased the death, minimized the suffering, and hindered the victim from trying to escape.

The rituals and trend to stress physical perfection indicate that the Inca were giving the spirits people who had a certain value and veneration within the general population. We must also keep in mind the effect living with the *mallki* and ancestor worship must have had on the potential sacrifices. Since the Inca view on death was less defined than our

⁸⁴ Maria Constanza Ceruti, "Frozen Mummies from Andean Mountaintop Shrines: Bioarchaeology and Ethnohistory of Inca Human Sacrifice," in *BioMed Research International*, (2015).

⁸⁵ Ceruti, "Frozen Mummies."

⁸⁶ Thomas Besom, "Inka Sacrifice and the Mummy of Salinas Grandes," in *Latin American Antiquity* 21, no. 4 (2010): 1.

⁸⁷ Ceruti, "Frozen Mummies."

⁸⁸ Williams and Nash. "Sighting the Apu," 455–68.

⁸⁹ Jason L. Toohey, "Feeding the Mountains: Sacred Landscapes, Mountain Worship, and Sacrifice in the Maya and Inca Worlds" in *Reviews in Anthropology* 42, no. 3 (2013): 161–78.

⁹⁰ Besom, "Inka Sacrifice," 5.

contemporary view, as discussed higher up, it thus stands to reason that people's attitudes towards being sacrificed might have been different than what we might consider.

Of course, human offerings were far from the only form of offerings provided to the wak'a and mallki. Other popular items included the fermented maize beverage chicha, which was often used to feed the mallki, as well as offerings of copper, stone figurines, and spondylus shells. In discussing the last three, Glowacki and Malpass suggest that together, they "... may have represented a synchronized hydraulic and cosmological system. Buried as gifts to the subterranean world of the dead, they may have been used to invoke the power of the ancestors to bring forth water."⁹¹ Succinctly, their combination could be a representation of the cyclical belief system of dualistic opposite forces.

The wells of Cuzco and other important places were sources of veneration, their wak'a regularly receiving offerings in the attempt of controlling them. The wak'a of Ticsicocha, translating to "lake of origin" in Quechua, had wells that served both as Cuzco's principal source of water and the main wak'a commemorating the city's founding by the Inca, thus serving as the city's cosmological origins.⁹²

Wak'a could be several things, but in general "[w]ak'as were spots of ceremonial, ritual, or religious significance arranged along pathways called siq'is. Some wak'as were natural features, such as springs, boulders, or caves, while others were man-made features like buildings, fountains, or canals. The number of wak'as on each line varied, typically from 3 to 13 or more per siq'i. Certain people from specific kin groups were designated as caretakers for each wak'a."⁹³ The siq'i was found throughout large parts of the empire, centering around the settlements. "The [*siq'i*] system of Cuzco was composed of at least 328 shrines ([wak'a]) organized along 42 hypothetical lines ([siq'i]) that radiated out of the city of

⁹¹ Glowacki and Malpass, "Sacred Wari Landscapes," 443.

⁹² Ibid, 438.

⁹³ Brian S. Bauer, "Ritual Pathways of the Inca: an analysis of the Collasuyu Ceques in Cuzco," *Latin American Antiquity* 3, no. 3 (1992):185.

Cuzco, the capital of the Inca.”⁹⁴ The siq’i paths were straight lines radiating out of the site, like the rays of the sun, the shrines along them serving both political, social, and religious functions. “The seminal importance of [wak’a] is clearly evidenced in the 1653 writings of the Jesuit Priest, Bernabé Cobo. He describes a complex of approximately 350 [wak’a] surrounding the Inka capital of Cuzco, organized around the most sacred of Inka sites, the Coricancha, or Temple of the Sun. These Huacas occurred within the Inka [siq’i] system.⁹⁵ And because specific important social groups were assigned as their caretakers,⁹⁶ they served both as a reflection of power and as a way to organize the empire around Cuzco. The System was divided into four sections by the cardinal directions, thus both matching the tracking of the equinoxes,⁹⁷ and matching the four suyo. Further, since the specific shrines demanded offerings at specific times,⁹⁸ there is arguably a link to calendric events associated with the system, drawing links to the quipu, a record-keeping knot system.⁹⁹ Others again have drawn other connections to the siq’q system, tying it to an image of the Milkyway. through the lins’ possible tracking of risings and settings,¹⁰⁰ Either way, this is an understudied part of the Inca culture that should be looked into more before conclusions are made. The thing that is interesting about it, is that most agricultural societies tend to form calendric devices to help them in planning out their sowing and harvesting. With the water and fertility connection already so ingrained in the siq’i system, both through the wak’a and the socio-political power associated with the maintenance of the line, this does become a bit more of an appealing hypothesis.

⁹⁴ Brian S. Bauer, "Ritual Pathways of the Inca: an analysis of the Collasuyu Ceques in Cuzco," *Latin American Antiquity* 3, no. 3 (1992):183–205.

⁹⁵ Glowacki and Malpass, "Sacred Wari Landscapes," 436.

⁹⁶ Zuidema, R. Tom. "The Ceque system of Cuzco, the Social Organization of the Capital, off the Inca." In *International Archives of Ethnography*, Supplement to L. E. Brill. (Netherlands: Leiden, 1964), 1.

⁹⁷ Bauer, *The Sacred Landscape*, 8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

⁹⁹ Zuidema, R. Tom. "The Ceque system of Cuzco,," cited in Bauer, *The Sacred Landscape*.

¹⁰⁰ Lecoq, Patrice, "Can the Inca Site of Choqek'iraw Be Considered an Agro-Pastoral Calendar?" *Ñawpa Pacha* 33, no. 1 (2013): 43–69.

Conclusion

Even though there is no question that patterns of spiritual worship vary between groups within the Andes, it is worth noting that veneration of water and sites associated with water remains prominent within the local traditions.¹⁰¹ “[S]upernatural forces associated with water and fertility, *wamanis* or sacred mountains deities are venerated by cults identified with local groups and their territories,”¹⁰² a clear continuation of the veneration of the wak'a.

The hydrological connection draws its inspiration from the empirical realm, surrounding the landscape around Cuzco. The arid climatic conditions that make survival there difficult at best, the need to control the scarce resources of water being one of the foremost struggles for survival. Still, much of the nonempirical world was tied to water, through origin stories, veneration of water sources tied to the origin myths of certain groups, the ancestral worship, and offerings so water would keep coming, and the connection between water and the journey to the afterlife. Through all that, the cycle of life and death mirrors the harshness of the existence in such an environment, and water and the hydrological cycle was to the Inca the ultimate symbol of the cycle of life and death, illustrating that the boundaries between the empirical and nonempirical world were not a solid line, but cyclical.

¹⁰¹ Medd, “Wakas and water,” 147–68.

¹⁰² John Earls, “La organización del poder en la mitología quechua,” in *Ideología mesiánica del mundo andino*, Juan M. Ossio (ed.) Edición de Ignacio Prado Pastor (Lima 1973), 393-414; Enrique González Carré and Fermin Rivera Pineda, *Antiguos dioses y nuevos conflictos andinos* (Ayacucho: Universidad Nacional del Dan Cristóbal de Huamanga, 1983); Billie Jean Isbell, *To Defend Ourselves: Ecology and Ritual in and Andean Village*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978); Jacques Morissette and Luc Racine, “La hiérarchie des wamani: essai sur la pensée classificatoire quechua,” in *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec* 3, no. 1-2 (1973), 167-88; cited in Martha B. Anders, “Structure and Function at the Planned Site of Azángaro: Cautionary Notes for the Model of Huari as Centralized Secular State,” in *Huari Administrative Structure: Prehistoric Monumental Architecture*, William H. Isbell and Gordon F. McEwan (eds.), (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1991), 193-4; Glowacki and Malpass, “Sacred Wari Landscapes,” 439.

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