

# WIRAQOCHA AND THE RITES OF THE TEMPLE IN RAQCH'I, PERU

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Van C. Evans

“In ancient times the sun died.  
Because of his death it was night for five days.  
Rocks banged against each other.  
Mortars and grinding stones began to eat people.  
Buck llamas started to drive men.  
Here’s what we Christians think about it:  
We think these stories tell of the darkness following the death  
of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Maybe that’s what it was.”

—Francisco de Ávila, indigenous priest born in Cuzco  
*The Huarochiri Manuscript*, c.1598, ch. 4

When the bearded conquistador Francisco Pizarro and his men landed on Peruvian shores in 1532, the native populations mistook them for gods and addressed the first Spaniard they met as *Wiraqocha*.<sup>1</sup> The indigenous people were all familiar with the account of their supreme deity, a bearded white god named Wiraqocha who had anciently lived among them for a time and, leaving by sea, had promised to return. Titu Cusi Yupanqui noted how strange it was that these men had beards of different colors, animals with shoes of silver, a language in which they communicated through white cloths, and that they commanded Illapa, the god of thunder, with their rifles. He concluded the Spaniards were “a people that without doubt could be no less than Wiraqochas.”<sup>2</sup> Pizarro sought to perpetuate this belief as long as possible in order to exploit and plunder the people, and near Cuzco,

his troops captured and imprisoned messengers of Callcuchima, one of the generals of Inca King Atahualpa. These messengers were charged with informing Quisquis (another Atahualpa general) of an important discovery: the Spaniards were mortals.<sup>3</sup>

Who was this god Wiraqocha? Early Spanish and Peruvian historians, called chroniclers, recorded Incan history from the accounts provided by the natives during their journeys. One Spanish chronicler, a soldier named Pedro Cieza de León, wrote of a legend in Perú where a long time had passed without seeing the sun (see 3 Nephi 8:20–23). The people implored and made vows to their gods for light, and the sun arose and they all rejoiced. After this happened, they say that toward the south,<sup>4</sup> there “suddenly appeared,” coming from the Lake Titicaca region of Tiwanaku,

a white man of large stature, who, by his aspect and person, showed forth great authority and veneration. This man had such great power that he changed the hills into valleys and from the valleys made great hills, causing streams to flow from the living stone. When they saw his power they called him Maker of all things created, Prince of all things, and Father of the sun. . . [It was said that he did] even greater things, for he gave life to men and animals, and by his hand flowed many benefits. . . they say this man travelled along the highland route northward, working miracles as he went. They say he gave men instructions on how they should live, speaking to them with great love and kindness and admonishing them to be good and to do no damage or injury one to another, but to love one another and show charity to all. In most places they call him *Ticiviracocha* [*Tecce Wiraqocha*, Creator of all things] . . . In many places they built temples to him.<sup>5</sup>

Cieza also offered the source of the god’s name. After travelling northwest through the country, “he arrived at the coast and there, holding his mantle, he went forth amidst the waves of the sea and was never seen again. As he went they gave him the name ‘Viracocha’ [Wiraqocha], which means ‘foam of the sea’” because he could walk on the water like the sea foam.<sup>6</sup> Another early chronicler, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, wrote that Wiraqocha had companions with him at the time he departed, and “having said this he went

to sea with his two servants, and went traveling over the water as if it was land, without sinking. For they appeared like foam over the water and the people, therefore, gave them the name of Viracocha which is the same as to say the grease or foam of the sea.”<sup>7</sup>

The Peruvian chronicler Juan de Betanzos asked the natives what their tradition had to say about this Wiraqocha. He wrote, “They told me he was a man of tall stature clothed in a white robe which came down to his feet and which he wore tightly belted at the waist and had a crown on his head.” When Betanzos asked them the name of the person in whose honor the stone statue was erected they replied, “Con Tici Viracocha Pachayachachic, which means in their language ‘God Creator of the World.’”<sup>8</sup> Sarmiento also described him as “a man of medium height, white, and dressed in a white robe like an alb secured round the waist, and that he carried a staff and a book in his hands.”<sup>9</sup>

### By Any Other Name

Cieza, Sarmiento, and Betanzos were not alone in recording this god. Father Bernabé Cobo understood that this god was so holy that he had no official name; instead he was known by different metaphors that referred to his function or existence.<sup>10</sup> Cieza reminds us that even though “in most places they call him” Wiraqocha, he was known by other names in different parts of Andean space and time.<sup>11</sup> I have considered forty-two variant descriptions for Wiraqocha by the Incas and ancient Andeans. Table 1 presents a synopsis of the different names and various meanings recorded by the chroniclers for this god in their original Spanish. This list is not exhaustive, and I have left out a few variants that, by virtue of different orthography, might confuse the reader.

In most cases, the chroniclers described Wiraqocha with a functional title. A number of them refer to him as “Creator of the World.” Sarmiento wrote that “in the beginning, and before this world was created, there was a being called Viracocha. He created a dark world without sun, moon or stars. Owing to this creation he was named Viracocha Pachayachachi, which means ‘Creator of all things.’”<sup>12</sup>

Name of God	Meaning	Chronicler
Viracocha	Creator of the World	Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa (1572, version 2), Pedro Gutiérrez de Santa Clara (1565), José de Acosta (1590, version 1), Antonio de la Calancha (1637), Bernabé Cobo (1653, five versions)
Viracocha	Christian	Domingo de Santo Tomás (1560), Diego González Holguín (1608)
Viracocha	Infinite, Invisible, All powerful	Antonio de la Calancha (1637)
Viracocha	All Wise	Ludovico Bertonio (1612)
Viracocha	Person Coming from the Sky, Supreme God	Alonso Ramos Gavilán (1621)
Teqsi Viracocha, Ticoi Viracocha	Originator of all things, Divine Origin	Titu Cusi Yupanqui (1570), Bernabé Cobo (1653)
Con Ticsi Viracocha	Incomprehensible God, Creator of Heavens and the Earth and Sun and Moon, and Stars, and all the World	Barbome de las Casas (1560), Juan de Belanzos (1551), Pedro de Cieza de León (1553), Cristóbal de Molina (1575), Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala (1615)
Viracocha Pachá Yachachic	Jesus Christ, Creator of All Things, Instructor of Space and Time	Joan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui (1613), Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa (1572, version 1), Cristóbal de Molina (1575), José de Acosta (1590, version 2)
Zapalla	The One and Only Lord	Francisco López de Gómara (1578)
Tocapu, Tocapo	Perfect, Complete, He Who Finishes	Melchor Hernandez (1594), Cristóbal de Molina (1575)
Ymamana	He Who Controls or Owns All Things	Cristóbal de Molina (1575)
Tuapaca	Creator, Son of the Creator	Pedro de Cieza de León (1553), Alonso Ramos Gavilán (1621)
Tunupa, Tonapa, Taracapa	Creator of the World	Bertonio (1612), Tunupa is an Aymara god, heavenly and purifying, related with fire and lightning. Tunupa (Aymara) is equated to Wiracocha (Quechua)
Tunupa	Jesus' Apostle Thomas or Bartholomew	Alonso Ramos Gavilán (1621), Antonio de la Calancha (1637), Joan de Santacruz Pachacuti Yamqui (1613), Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala (1615)
Pachacamac	"The god of the christians and Pachacamac were one and the same.... The Most High God who gives life and being to the universe," "Creator of the World, the Most High God, Lord of the Earthquakes and Master of the Oracles	Garlilaso de la Vega (1609), Antonio de la Calancha (1637), Rosas (2017)
Illa Tecce	Eternal Light, Sacred Origin, or First Thing Without Beginning	Valera (1594), Illa Tecce also had angels, called hayhuay panti, the "resplendent, beautiful ones."
Illatiçi Huira Cocha Prua (Pirú or Perú)	Splendor and Firmament The One True God, the Creator of All Things, God of the Old Testament	Montesinos (1642, 1644, 1645, 2007)) Montesinos (1642, 1644, 1645, (2007), Seville MS, Book I Discourse 1, Ch. 9), Valera (1594)

Table 1. Synopsis of Names and Meanings Recorded by the Chroniclers.

In addition to the title as Creator, Wiraqocha was known as “All Wise,” “All Powerful,” “Infinite,” and “Invisible.” Colonial and modern scholars have difficulty reconciling this god who is on one hand “Incomprehensible” and the “Creator of All Things,” while on the other hand he is viewed as a folk hero god who walks humbly among them and heals them.<sup>13</sup> Latter-day Saints view this conflict as more apparent than real and are able to integrate the two disparate narratives into one god. The Andean descriptions of Wiraqocha (and other appellations) are consistent with the Latter-day Saint understanding of the Savior. Given the precedent for Jesus’s merciful visit to the ancient Americans recorded in 3 Nephi, it is proposed that Wiraqocha is none other than Jesus the Christ, the God Jehovah of the Old Testament, and that he walked the earth of ancient South America and lovingly blessed the people.

Of the forty-two different variants of Viracocha, at least five chroniclers give an account of his journey through South America. In all cases, the chroniclers agree that Wiraqocha begins at the southern end of Lake Titicaca. In most narratives, the Lord comes upward out of the lake, but Friar Ramos Gavilán, who was living in the Titicaca region, wrote that the local Indians told him this god came down from the sky.<sup>14</sup> Cobo noted in his history that Wiraqocha of the sky was in “the form of a brightly shining man.”<sup>15</sup> Wiraqocha then takes his journey in a precise northwest direction.

### **The Holy Path**

In 1977, María Schölten, a Dutch mathematician based in Perú, discovered that there is a straight line or alignment of Incan and ancient Andean temple cities located geographically along a perfect diagonal at 45° of the North-South axis of the planet. Schölten recounted her discovery in her book *The Route of Wiracocha*. While reading Joan de Santa Cruz Pachacuti’s *Relación*, she came upon his account of the three windows and drew a sketch to illustrate each window. Upon doing so, she realized that each window indicated a location and that the three formed a line. When she applied a straight edge to her sketch overlaying a map of Perú, she discovered that these locations sat in perfect alignment with the temple cities

of Ollantaytambo, Cuzco, Urcos, Raqch'i, and Pucara in the Cuzco region. Upon extending the line, she found that it continued all through the sacred communities of Lake Titicaca and Bolivia as well. She realized that all these cities had one thing in common—Wiraqocha had visited them, and they were made sacred by His presence. She also extended the line northwest to find that it intersected with Cajamarca. As she pondered this, it also occurred to her that the temple compound of Pachacamac (present-day Lima) lies in a  $28^{\circ}57'$  sub-angle west from the diagonal line with Cuzco as the point of origin. Departing north from Cajamarca off this same sub-angle of  $28^{\circ}57'$ , the line went directly through the temple community of Yacuvíñay and terminated at Puerto Viejo before it went out to sea. Spanish chroniclers recorded that Wiraqocha departed into the sea at Puerto Viejo<sup>16</sup>

Schölten called her discovery the *Qhapaq Ñan* [Quechua for Holy Path], or the Route of *Wiraqocha* as shown in Figure 1.

It is unknown exactly when Wiraqocha sojourned and made the Holy Path, but chroniclers recorded that this event occurred in ancient times long before the Inca Empire rose. The Holy Path was a major route of pilgrimage for the ancient Andeans as well as the Incas.<sup>17</sup> Along the path, they built temples to him. At these temples, they presented what Gavilán referred to as a “special religion and ritual service.”<sup>18</sup> The dots in Figure 1 are locations where Wiraqocha visited and where temples were built to worship him.

### Temple Ceremonies

While the principal ritual in the temple was sacrifice, we know by the chroniclers that other services were also performed, such as initiations and endowments. These were performed under the authority and guidance of the Inca and the *Vilahoma*, who was a “prophet, seer, and foreteller.”<sup>19</sup> Regarding the policy of performing these services, Cobo recorded that the “form to be followed . . . was so well established, with the rites and ceremonies designated for each one, that no one was permitted to exercise his own free will in changing, adding, or eliminating anything from what was ordained, particularly with the general and public ceremonies.”<sup>20</sup>



Figure 1. The Holy Path or the Route of Wiraqocha.

Nevertheless, things did change. Balboa wrote that Topa Inca, father of King Huayna Capac, wanted to go to the coast to see the famous temple near present-day Lima. Topa Inca took the Huarochiri road and “he was very pleased with the service at that temple, although it was not administered according to the rules given by his father. He decided to build a new one, and the natives

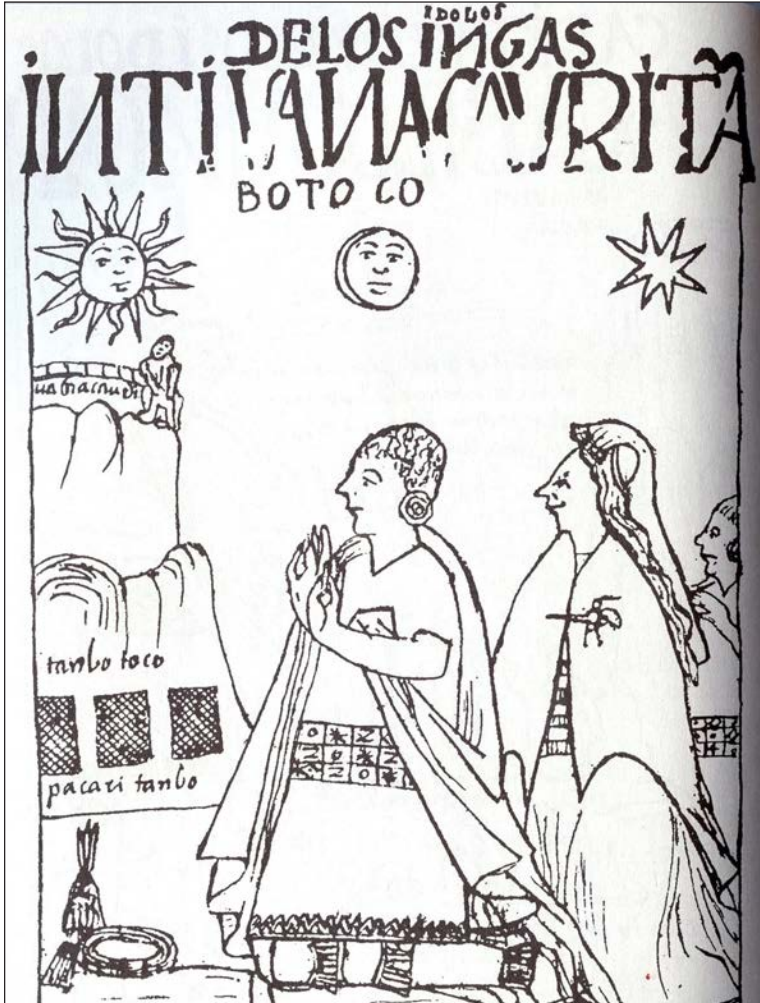


Figure 2. Poma's Depiction of Temple Clothing.

agreed, provided he did not destroy the old one. He built a very large temple to honor *Pachacamac* [Wiraqocha], and so the valley took its name.”<sup>21</sup>

Historically, we have only bits and pieces of any temple service other than sacrifices and initiations. Except for my research presented here, I know of no surviving record describing in detail temple ceremonies from the Inca or pre-Inca periods. I do not



doubt they existed and were recorded by historians, but they were most likely destroyed during colonization.

### Sacred Vestments

Special vestments accompanied this temple work. Cobo wrote definitively, “They had a special clothing which they put on for the sacrifices.”<sup>22</sup> And describing activities at the Temple of the Island of the Sun, Gavilán (1621) observed, “Those who presented themselves at the ceremony went with tokens and signs of devotion, and they kept their silence. . . the Indians got dressed in the most curious clothes.”<sup>23</sup>

The ancient Peruvians wore ceremonial breeches, robes, mitres or caps, girdles, and aprons, with some resemblance to that which Jehovah commanded through Moses (See Exodus 28:4-8, 31, 39, 42). Figure 2 is an illustration by the Peruvian chronicler Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala.<sup>24</sup> We see the Inca king and the queen both kneeling at an altar. The queen is wearing a veil and a shawl. They are both wearing robes, and the king’s robe is draped over his right shoulder. They are also wearing aprons. The king is performing the sign of *Yanantin*, discussed later. The following are a few examples of sacred vestments from archaeological findings.



Figures 3–5. Samples of the Mitre as Depicted in Ceramic.

### Mitre

Above are some representative samples in ceramic. Figures 3-5 are from the Moche culture (200 BC–700 AD), which is well known for the detailed ceramic work. Certain types of mitres were sacred and were used only for ceremonies and burial. Clark and Rodman discovered round mitres or caps and other Andean vestments on

the dead in cemeteries (800 BC–600 AD) throughout southern Perú and northern Chile. They noted that these mitres and other vestments were rarely found in the village homes or refuse dumps, indicating that they were not common everyday attire.<sup>25</sup> Figure 5 is similar to the cap currently used at the Temple of Wiraqocha at Raqch'i.



Figures 6–7. Examples of Aprons Found on Mummies

### Apron

Among the sacred articles of clothing was the *chumpi*, [CHOOM-pee], which is an “apron of exquisite colors cinched around the waist.”<sup>26</sup> These aprons were ceremonial, not functional.<sup>27</sup> Figures 6 and 7 are samples of aprons found on mummies in the southwest desert of Perú’ in the past fifteen years.



Figure 8. *Faja or Cinta, Meaning Girdle, Sash, or Ribbon.*

## Girdle

The girdle, still woven and used today, is called a *faja* or a *cinta* [Spanish terms for girdle, sash, or ribbon]. These are thinner than the apron and are tied around the waist over the robe and apron. They also may contain spiritually significant designs such as the spiral woven into Figure 8 (this image is difficult to see due to its age).

## Burial Clothing

In addition to usage in temple service, those who had received their blessings were buried in the sacred vestments.<sup>28</sup> In the women's cemetery at the Temple of Pachacamac (Middle Horizon Period, 600-1000 AD), German archaeologist Max Uhle described how the dead were dressed for burial: "This ancient feminine dress consisted of the following garments: A square cloth "ajsu" [acso] used as a robe/skirt, an apron and a belt made of cloth from one place, a shawl that looked like a cape, a veil, a front band, sandals, and occasionally a pleated cloth over the head."<sup>29</sup>

He continued that the robe [acso] was placed on the "right side" over the shoulder," and it covered the body down past the hips to the feet, leaving the arms free. . . . The peculiar belt consisted of two pieces, both of wool. One, a small wide piece that wrapped around the robe, and the other looked like an apron. . . . it was five or six hands tall . . . they were tight fitted."<sup>30</sup>

Sacred vestments existed in ancient Andean times, during the Inca Empire, and even in isolated regions of Perú today.

Cobo concluded that the Incas were the "nation that was probably more given over to religion than any other in the world" and that they built so many temples and shrines that you could

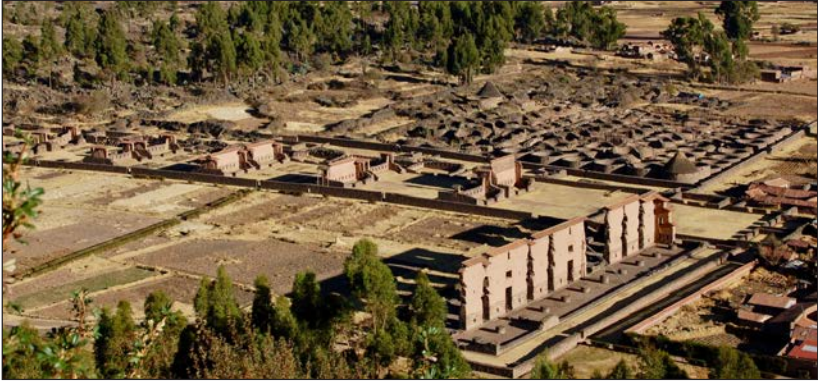


Figure 9. The Compound of the Temple of Wiraqocha.

hardly take a day's journey on foot without coming across one.<sup>31</sup> Among those temples along the Holy Path is the Temple of Wiraqocha at Raqch'i.

### Temple of Wiraqocha at Raqch'i

One hundred ten kilometers southeast of Cuzco, at the base of a volcano called Kinsach'ata lies the small village of Raqch'i (pronounced ROCK-chee). At over 11,400 feet (MSL), Raqch'i is the remnant of a pilgrimage site built by the Incas that boasts the only known two-story Inca temple structure in the empire: The Temple of Wiraqocha. The temple compound is enclosed by a four-kilometer-long perimeter wall of igneous stone with the Incan road running through it from Puno to Cuzco. The compound consists of eight structures. Among these might have included a *tambo* [resting place for travelers], the temple, an artificial lake, the north fountains, the south fountains, the *ushnu* [ceremonial platform], the twelve *yanacancha* [housing for *yanacona* and *mamacona*, who are the priests and temple matrons respectively], and 152 *qollcas* [cylindrical storehouses]. See Figure 9.

On the grounds, there was a statue of Wiraqocha that, according to Betanzos, stood five *varas* (4.3 meters) tall.<sup>32</sup> Betanzos interviewed elderly natives about the statue and was told that the sculpture depicted a tall man with a white dress that reached his ankles, that he had short hair and a crown on his head, and

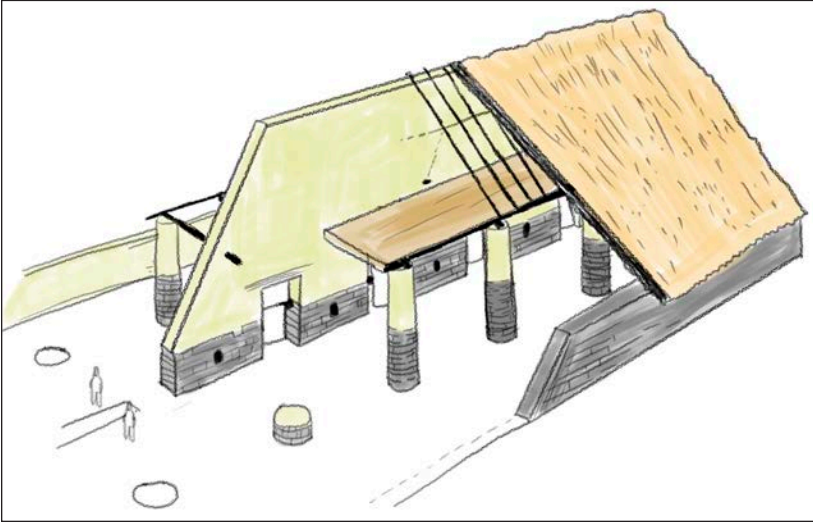


Figure 10. Depiction of What the Temple Might Have Looked Like.

that he carried something that looked like the breviary carried by priests<sup>33</sup> By the 1540s and 1550s, when Betanzos and Cieza visited the site, the Wiraqocha statue was being equated with Jesus' Apostle Bartholomew, a claim Cieza rejected.<sup>34</sup> The Peruvian born chronicler Garcilaso de la Vega lamented that the statue was disfigured because of all the stones that had been thrown at it.<sup>35</sup>

Betanzos reported that the temple itself “is so big that there is none larger in the land.”<sup>36</sup> See Figure 10 for a design of what the temple may have looked like. It measures ninety-two meters by twenty-five meters.<sup>37</sup>

The center wall stands to a height of nearly twelve meters. The lower part of the center wall is of imperial stone (the finest stonework reserved for religious structures), and the upper part of the walls is of adobe. Near the top of the stone are perfectly carved out notches to fit ladders to cover the openings (see Figure 11). From these ladders hung large curtains or veils. Incidentally, at least one other temple in the empire had a veil. At the temple and sanctuary of the Island of the Sun on Lake Titicaca, Cobo called the veil a “curtain of *cumbi*, which was the finest and most delicate piece [of this cloth] that has ever been seen.”<sup>38</sup>



Figure 11. Center Wall of the Temple of Wiraqocha at Raqch'i

There are wide columns placed directly in front of the main doors on the southeast and west sides, and Niles observes that the placement of the columns would seem to be at odds with gaining a view into or out of the building through these doorways.<sup>39</sup>

Because Raqch'i is an isolated village and Perú has been investing considerable resources into development of the Machu Picchu sanctuary and other Incan ruins in the Cuzco region, this temple did not receive significant archeological attention until the early 1990s. This isolation has been a blessing since the temple compound has only seen a rise in tourism over the past ten to fifteen years. The lack of commercial traffic or distraction allowed the shaman and villagers to continue traditional religious practices as their ancestors had done during Inca times. What follows is an explanation of the ordinances, rituals, and endowments performed on the grounds and in the Temple of Wiraqocha.

### Methodology

Unless otherwise documented, the descriptions of ordinances hereafter are produced from interviews with Martina Mamani Arosquipa, the *sacerdotiza* [shaman or high priestess] of Raqch'i. She is the highest spiritual leader in the village and inherited the position from her father, who was the high priest during his

adult lifetime. Martina was accompanied in the interviews by her daughter Grivanesa Flores Mamani, who is the spiritual heir. The first formal interview was held in their home on 21 March 2017 and recorded on video. The second interview took place on 11 April 2017 via telephone. The third interview took place at their home and at the temple site on 26 July 2019. These interviews were done in Quechua and Spanish. Some of the ordinances were performed on me as a participant to show how it was done. Other rites, such as receiving a new name, were simply described. I used a phenomenological research technique of non-leading, open-ended questions for them to both *describe* the temple experience and explain the *meaning* the temple held for the patron.<sup>40</sup> As part of my ethnographic research background, I have worked in Perú and visited the temple site and villagers many times over the past twenty years, guided by both Martina and Grivanesa.

### Ordinances, Rituals, and Endowments

The ordinances, rituals, and endowments at Raqch'i were performed in this order: fasting and meditation; initiation of washing, anointing, and renaming; the stone endowment; endowment and dressing of ceremonial vestments; and pilgrimage and entrance to temple worship. Temple worship included instruction on the creation of the world and at least one sign of their covenant that we know about. As the washing and anointing ordinances are performed to this day, I will refer to these in the present tense.

### Initiation

Initiation practices were common throughout the empire. In Quechua, the rite is called *karpay* [car-PIE]. The chronicler Cristóbal de Molina linked the ritual to the beginning of Inca history.<sup>41</sup> Although it could vary, the initiation at this temple usually began ten days before one entered the temple. Contrast this with Sarmiento's report that Prince Topa Inca, only fifteen years old, "remained in the temple, preparing for his initiation ceremony."<sup>42</sup> Only those chosen and worthy could come to the temple. To qualify, the chosen had to demonstrate the "use of reason." It usually begins with a three-day fast and meditation prior to the initiation.<sup>43</sup> Thereafter, the *Humu* priest goes to the home of the person and escorts him or her to

the temple grounds. The first step is the northern fountains for the washing ordinance. Five of the six fountains still operate as of this writing, and the water runs year-round. There are three bathing fountains on each side, forming a 90° angle. Men are bathed on the south side, and women are bathed on the west in addition to the following description of spiritual washing by the shaman.

### **Washing and Anointing**

The participant removes his or her shoes. Cobo noted that the Inca became accustomed to removing his shoes two-hundred steps before entering the sanctuary of any temple.<sup>44</sup> The participant is given a white tunic to wear (see Figure 12). This is similar to a poncho that extends to the knees and has no sleeves but is sometimes sewn loosely up along the sides. The participant remains standing throughout the washing ordinance. After the Initiation, he or she walks to the temple door barefoot, a distance of approximately two-hundred meters. This constituted a consecration or a pilgrimage to the temple. No shoes were allowed in the temple.

The purpose of the washing is to purify the eternal soul. The washing is as follows:

1. The person is brought standing before the priest or priestess performing the ordinance.
2. The priest or priestess cups the sacred water with both hands. He or she speaks to it, asking permission to clean the person with these words: "Holy purified water, clean and purify thy son (or daughter)."<sup>45</sup>
3. He or she then pours the water on the top of the head of the participant, placing his or her hands palms down on the top of the head.<sup>46</sup> Then with wet hands, he or she slides down the neck to the shoulders, to the outside of the arms, and to the hands. When he or she passes the end of the fingers, he or she forces his or her hands down quickly, shaking off energy.
4. Next, he or she retrieves a little more holy water (less than a teaspoon) and places it on the heart, saying "That your heart may be activated."<sup>47</sup>
5. Again, he or she retrieves more water in his or her hands and swipes down the legs and feet, including the bottom of the feet.





*Figure 12. White Tunic Worn During Washing and Anointing.*

6. He or she repeats retrieving water and does the back of the person, starting at the neck, then the shoulders, the loins, the buttocks, and the legs again.
7. Finally, he or she gets more water, places a wet cross in each palm. Then with water, he or she swipes the forehead from left to right with the index finger of his or her right hand. He or she places one hand on the top the head for a few seconds, then moves the hand to the participant's heart, pressing lightly and then presses his or her hand to his or her own heart and bows his or her head.

The washing is followed by an anointing, which purpose was to “seal against bad spiritual things.”<sup>48</sup> The participant is led to the *ushnu* [ceremonial platform] just east of the bathing fountains and instructed to kneel at the *usnu* [altar].<sup>49</sup> The oil consists of a coca leaf extract mixed with llama fat or oil from plants.<sup>50</sup> It is also sometimes mixed with a reddish clay or iron rich dirt. This oil-clay mixture is first placed on the forehead with a single finger from left to right using the left hand of the priest or priestess while a blessing was pronounced. This anointing is called the *tuiro*, and it takes form as a line or a cross.<sup>51</sup> The participant is then given five other similar marks: both palms, the soles of both feet, and the navel. During the anointing, a blessing is given to the participant. The content of the blessing appears to be spontaneous at the discretion of the priest or priestess, but it must include a blessing to connect the participant on all three realms of existence: *Hanan pacha* [the upper world], *kay pacha* [the world we now live in], and *uku pacha* [the spirit world of dead men, the inner world, or “depths of the soul”].

### Renaming or a New Name

After the washing and anointing, the rite of renaming (*renombrar* in Spanish) is performed. In Quechua, the rite is referred to as *munay suti*, meaning “beautiful name.” While at the altar, the participant kneels and is given a new name by the same priest (or priestess) performing the earlier ordinances. As an example, the legal name of the shaman in my interview is Martina Mamani Arosquipa, but her new name is *Siwar Qoyllor*, meaning “messenger of the stars.”



Figure 13. Stone endowment from the Temple of Wiraqocha at Raqch'i.

### Stone Endowment

Cieza wrote that the Incas “in ancient times had their religions and superstitions, and worshipped in some stones so large as eggs, and others larger, of different colors.”<sup>52</sup> After the Renaming, while kneeling at the *usnu*, the person is then given a stone. The purpose of the stone is to facilitate communication to the individual from the heavens. It is unknown how the stone communicates. The stone is usually egg-shaped but is sometimes round or cylindrical. The stone is a gift and is taken home by the participant. Figure 13 is an endowment stone found during excavation of the Raqch'i temple grounds.

### Pilgrimage and Entrance to Temple Worship

After successful completion of the above rituals and ordinances, the individual makes a pilgrimage to the temple from the *ushnu*. This

is about 250 yards. It is considered a spiritual walk or path (perhaps symbolic to the *Qhapaq Ñan*, or Holy Path). The participant walks to the southern fountains, where he bathes his own feet and then walks directly south to the east side of the temple. At this point, the currently performed ordinances are finished. What follows is a description by the shaman of what occurred in the temple before it was destroyed.

### Temple Clothing Endowment

It is not clear if the person was dressed in temple clothing at this point or if it was done earlier at the washing fountains, but they could enter the temple without proper clothing. Clothing for the temple was woven in an open courtyard between the east side of the temple and the *yanacancha* [housing for temple officials]. In this temple, participants wore white robes that came down to just under the knee for men and to the ankle for women. Men and women had a beige colored apron or sash (the *chumpi*) tied around their waist. Around their heads they wore a beige colored headband that is approximately one-inch-wide, and it went all around the head. They also refer to this as a *chumpi*. Apparently, only the priest wore a mitre at this temple. The women covered their hair with what they called a *llik'lla* [YEEK-yah], previously a white veil made of fine white wool. After the Spaniards arrived, the women changed the color of the veil to black, signifying their mourning of the conquest. Everything else is white or light-colored.<sup>53</sup>

### The Ritual of the Temple

The only known description of temple ceremony in the empire by Spanish chroniclers was given of the Temple of Wiraqocha in Raqch'i by Garcilaso de la Vega. He described how the temple participants processed inside the temple through a series of passages. The men entered on one side and the women on the other and then moved through the temple in a zigzag manner, meeting at the wall of the veils and progressing upward until they reached the upper chapel.<sup>54</sup> The shaman independently confirmed this. Garcilaso describes,

Entering by the door of the temple, they turned down the first lane to the right until the wall on the right-hand side of the

temple was reached. Then they turned down the second lane until they reached the other wall. Then they turned down the third lane, and so on (according to the spaces on the plan) until they came to the twelfth lane at the other end, where there was a staircase leading to the upper story of the temple. . . . At the top the chief altar faced the staircase. . . . In the place of the high altar there was a chapel, twelve feet deep. . . . Within the chapel, in the thickness of the wall of the temple, there was a sanctuary containing the image of the apparition Wiraqocha.<sup>55</sup>

Archaeologist Bill Sillar wrote,

It is highly significant that the design of the building means that, on entering its two known doorways, progress of visitors is immediately blocked by a series of tall pillars that they are forced to walk around. If devotees took this as a suggestion as to how to proceed through the building, they would have begun to trace a path similar to Garcilaso's description of a carefully choreographed zig-zag motion. My view is that the layout of the temple was deliberately designed in this way to express aspects of Inka cosmology, particularly their relationship with Viracocha [Wiraqocha]. In processing through the temple, the devotees would have wound their way towards the statue of Viracocha.<sup>56</sup>

Beyond the process described above, instruction was also given in the temple. The people sat in divisions. The men met privately and then sat in a large circle. The women sat in a smaller, concentric circle. They were all given "teachings of spirit worlds" taught by the *yachaniyo* [he that knows], who is "a disciple of God."<sup>57</sup>

The shaman suggested (without prompting) that instruction in the temple included the story of the creation of the world. Thus, one entered the temple and, after instruction on the creation, progressed toward the symbolic presence of Wiraqocha. At some point during the ceremony, they performed a sign called *Yanantin*. This sign is still performed today outside of the temple.

### **Prayer Circle—Sign of Yanantin**

To perform this sign, the people in the circle stand and raise both hands high above their head and then lower their hands downward with the palms facing the earth. This is repeated three times and is



Figure 14. Prayer Circle and Sign of Yanantin.

accompanied by the words *haylli, haylli, haylli* [give life] or *hampuy, hampuy, hampuy* [come unto us], also repeated three times.

The intent of the ritual is to reach to heaven and pull energy down to the earth. This sign is also performed while kneeling at the *usnu* outside of this temple, and the action is not always accompanied with words. See Figure 14 below showing the sign performed today by the villagers of Raqch'i. The ruins of the temple are approximately five-hundred yards to the right of the gathering in the photo. There is sufficient ethnohistorical evidence to suggest that the sign was performed standing up as well as kneeling at an altar during Inca times (see Figure 2).

No other information about the temple experience was provided by the shaman. She concluded that the purpose of the ordinances and endowments at the temple is to prepare the participants to link to their ancestors in the next life. Andean scholar Sabine MacCormack explained it this way, "Death was a leveler because by means of it humans were reintegrated into a *network of parents and offspring* that embraced the entire natural order."<sup>58</sup>

### Conclusion

Evidence of a bearded white god was ubiquitous in the Inca Empire when the Europeans arrived. Known by many names, the Lord Wiraqocha created and commanded the heavens and the earth, yet he sojourned among the people along a straight path in the form of a "brightly shining man." He taught them, healed them, and answered their prayers. After Wiraqocha visited Raqch'i and continued his journey along the Holy Path toward Cuzco, the people

of Raqch'i built a *wak'a* [shrine] to him on the spot whereupon he had stood. Centuries later, while returning to Cuzco from the Lake Titicaca region, Inca Huayna Capac passed by the province of Raqch'i and noticed the shrine in the middle of the plain. He inquired what it was for and was informed of the visit of Wiraqocha to the place. Huayna Capac then ordered the construction of this unique temple on the sacred site some thirty to forty years before the Spaniards arrived.<sup>59</sup>

In 1998, Emily Dean and her team of archaeologists traversed the surrounding area of Raqch'i and found no fewer than 226 archaeological sites with the remains of hundreds of structures.<sup>60</sup> Half the sites predate the Inca period, with at least two sites from the Wari period (600-1000 AD) within one kilometer of Raqch'i. Archaeologist Bill Sillar discovered ceramic fragments on the grounds of the temple complex with images of duck heads and other features indigenous to the Titicaca region.<sup>61</sup> These sites and archaeological findings attest to the pilgrimages of centuries past and the endurance of this sacred ground.

Despite centuries of environmental decay and destruction—the varying influence of the Inca, the Spanish, and now the Peruvian Republic, with its juggernaut of commercial tourism—there is still a remnant of holiness felt on the temple grounds at Raqch'i. The Spaniards called it “*casa de Wira Qocha*” from the Quechua *willka wasin wiraqocha*.<sup>62</sup>

In English it renders, the *House of the Lord*.

## Notes

1. Constance Irwin, *Fair Gods and Stone Faces* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1963), 262. Wiraqocha is a name in the Quechua [KEH-chew-ah] language spoken by the Inca people. In a few cases, I will Hispanicize Quechua words and spell them in a consistent manner, such as Inca and Cuzco. I will maintain the Quechua spelling of Wiraqocha, however, as Andean scholars hold the spelling more accurately reflects the pronunciation of the sacred word in the Quechua language. It is pronounced “weed-a-KO-chuh.” In Spanish it is rendered Viracocha ([Diccionario Espanol, 1998], 112). Since the invaders arrived, the word Wiraqocha has taken an etymological journey to common usage today. The Quechua-Castellano dictionary (Lira and Huamán, 2008) includes *caballero* [gentleman] as the third definition for the word. Even after

the Spaniards were no longer seen as gods, their appearance on the scene was already consistent with the Andean world view, and given they were otherworldly, the name stuck. When I speak to indigenous Peruvians in Quechua, they too address me as Wiraqocha. For a careful treatment of the usage of the word Wiraqocha since the conquest, see Antoinette Fioravanti, "El regreso de Viracocha," in *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Etudes Andines*, vol. 16 no. 3–4, 71–83.

2. Titu Cusi Yupanqui Inca, D. de Castro, Urteaga, H. H., and Romero, C. A. (1916 [1570]). *Relación de la conquista del Perú y hechos del Inca Manco II*. Lima: Sanmartí y ca., f11.
3. Nathan Wachtel, *La vision des vaincus: les Indiens du Pérou devant la conquête espagnole, 1530-1570* (Gallimard, 1971), 52–53.
4. The original manuscript uses the word *mediodía*, which means "noon," but in the 16th century *mediodía* also meant "north." In this case, it means "south" because Cieza is using the northern hemisphere as his point of reference. This is corroborated by Cieza who contrastingly uses the word "north" in the same block of text. Garcilaso also made the same mistake (Verónica Salles-Reese, *From Viracocha to the Virgin of Copacabana: Representation of the Sacred at Lake Titicaca* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997], 189).
5. Pedro Cieza de León, *Crónica del Peru*. Segunda parte. Edición, prólogo y notas de Francesca Cantu (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru, Academia Nacional de la Historia, (1985 [1553]), ch. 5.
6. Cieza de León, *Crónica del Peru*. Segunda parte, ch. 5.
7. Pedro de Sarmiento de Gamboa, "History of the Incas by Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa and the Execution of the Inca Tupac Amaru by Captain Baltasar de Ocampo," in *Hakluyt Society* (1907 [1572]), ch. 7.
8. Juan de Betanzos, *Suma y narración de los Incas*. Prólogo, transcripción y notas por Maria del Carmen Martín Rubio, (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1987 [1551]), ch. 2; English version: Juan de Betanzos, *Narrative of the Incas*, ed. Dana Buchanan, trans. Roland Hamilton, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).
9. Sarmiento de Gamboa, "History of the Incas", ch. 7.
10. Bernabé Cobo, *Inca Religion and Customs*, ed. and trans. Roland Hamilton (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990 [1653]), ch. 4.
11. Cieza de León, *Crónica del Peru*. Segunda parte.
12. Sarmiento de Gamboa, "History of the Incas", ch. 6.
13. Fioravanti, "El regreso de Viracocha," 71–83.
14. Alonso Ramos Gavilán, *Historia del Célebre Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Copacabana y sus Milagros, e Invención de la Cruz de Carabuco*. P. J. M. van den Berg and A. E. Oehrli (Archivo y Biblioteca Nacionales de Bolivia, 2015 [1621]), ff18, 79.
15. Bernabé Cobo, *History of the Inca Empire: An Account of the Indians' Customs and Their Origin Together with a Treatise on Inca Legends*,



- History, and Social Institutions*, ed. and trans. Roland Hamilton (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979 [1653]), ch. 3. See similarity to 3 Nephi 11:8.
16. Betanzos, *Narrative of the Incas*; Sarmiento de Gamboa, "History of the Incas", ch. 7.
  17. M. J. Sallnow, *Pilgrims of the Andes* (Smithsonian, 1987).
  18. Gavilán, *Historia del Célebre Santuario de Nuestra*, f39.
  19. Blas Valera, *Relación De Las Costumbres Antiguas De Los Naturales Del Pirú De Tahuantinsuyus Prischis Gentibus*, f156, accessed May 1, 2019, <https://kuprienko.info/blas-valera-relacion-de-las-costumbres-antiguas-de-los-naturales-del-peru-de-tahuantinsuyus-prischis-gentibus-1586/>; Jorge A. Lira and Mario Mejía Huamán, *Diccionario: Quechua-Castellano, Castellano-Quechua* (Lima: Universidad Ricardo Palma, Editorial Universitaria, 2008), 514, 568.
  20. Cobo, *Inca Religion and Customs*, 21.
  21. Miquel Cabello de Balboa (sometimes Valboa), *Miscelánea antártica: una Historia del Perú Antiguo* (Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Facultad de Letras, Instituto de Etnología Lima, 1951), 144, emphasis added.
  22. Cobo, *History of the Inca Empire*, ch. 33.
  23. Gavilán, *Historia del Célebre Santuario de Nuestra*, book 1, ch. 25.
  24. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno*, eds. John Murra, Rolena Adorno, and Jorge Urioste (Madrid: Historia, 1987 [1615]).
  25. Niki R. Clark, and Amy Oakland Rodman, "Ancient Andean Headgear: Medium and Measure of Cultural Identity," in *Contact, Crossover, Continuity: Proceedings of the Fourth Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America* (Los Angeles: Textile Society of America, Inc., 1995), 295.
  26. Lira and Huamán, *Diccionario: Quechua-Castellano, Castellano-Quechua*, 111.
  27. John Murra, "La Función del Tejido en Varios Contextos Sociales en el Estado Inca," in *II Congreso Nacional de Historia del Perú* (Lima: 1958), 158.
  28. Fernando de Montesinos, *Memorias antiguas i nuevas del Pirú*, (Madrid: Biblioteca nacional, 1642). 5, Manuscript #3124 [Madrid MS], as quoted in Sabine Hyland, *The Quito Manuscript: An Inca History Preserved by Fernando de Montesinos* (New Haven: Department of Anthropology, Yale University, 2007), ch. 19;. Valera, *Relación De Las Costumbres Antiguas*, f120v; Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, *Nueva crónica y buen gobierno*, eds. John Murra, Rolena Adorno, and Jorge Urioste, (Madrid: Historia, 1987), 186 [188].
  29. Max Uhle, *Pachacamac*. Report of William Pepper, MD (Doctoral dissertation, LL. D., Peruvian expedition of 1896, 1903), 343.

30. Uhle, *Pachacamac*, 344.
31. Cobo, *Inca Religion and Customs*, chs. 1, 12.
32. Betanzos, *Narrative of the Incas*, ch. 2.
33. Betanzos, *Narrative of the Incas*, ch. 2.
34. Pedro Cieza de León, *Crónica del Peru*. Primera parte, (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru, Academia Nacional de la Historia, 1986), part 1, chs. 5, 98.
35. Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, "First part of the royal commentaries of the Yncas by the Ynca Garcilaso de la Vega," in *Hakluyt Society's Works*, vol. XLI, ed. and trans. Clements R. Markham, (London: 1869), ch. 22.
36. Betanzos, *Narrative of the Incas*, ch. 45.
37. Graziano Gasparini and Luise Margolies, *Inca Architecture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).
38. Cobo, *Inca Religion and Customs*, ch. 18.
39. Susan A. Niles, *The Shape of Inca History: Narrative and Architecture in an Andean Empire* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 246.
40. Moustakas holds it is acceptable in qualitative phenomenological studies for the author to present a personal statement of experiences or to write from a personal, first-person, subjective point of view in which the researcher positions himself or herself in the narrative (Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* [Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994]). I have done no less in this report. Further, under a social constructivist paradigm, researchers rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied and "researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. [Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009], 8). Julien writes, "One of the criticisms of a historicist interpretation of the Spanish historical narratives was that not enough attention was paid to the question of values.... That criticism can be expanded. For us to understand what now appear to be the various forms that recorded Inca memory took, we would need to penetrate the system of values and meanings that gave these stories their reflective or explanatory power. That may or may not be possible, since the translation of the interpretation of Inca forms into Spanish may prove to be an insurmountable barrier to understanding what was meant in the original" (Catherine Julien, *Reading Inca History* [Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2009], p. 295). Given the foregoing, I do not pretend to know if the Incas or ancient Andeans interpreted temple ceremonies and teachings as Latter-day Saints do, but perhaps through gospel restoration, the reader is able to "penetrate" those values and

meanings in ways that baffled Spanish chroniclers and contemporary historians.

41. Cristóbal de Molina, “Relación de las fábulas y ritos de los incas,” in *Crónicas de América*, vol. 48, (Madrid: Edición de Henrique Urbano y Pierre Duviols, 1989 [1571]), ch. 5–6; see also Cristóbal de Molina [El Cuzqueño], *Relación de las fábulas y ritos de los Incas* (Lima: FA Loayza, 1873) in *Narratives of the Rites and Laws of the Yncas*, ed. and trans. Clemence Robert Markham, (Literary Licensing, LLC, 1873); Cristóbal de Molina, *Account of the Fables and Rites of the Incas*, ed. and trans. Brian S. Bauer, Vania Smith-Oka, and Gabriel E. Cantarutti, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).
42. Sarmiento de Gamboa, “History of the Incas,” ch. 42–43. Topa Inca would most likely have been in the Temple of Coricancha or Quishuarcancha in Cuzco. We can see that the initiatory rite is not unique to the Temple of Wiraqocha at Raqch’i in Inca times or at present. Even today, the Munay-Ki are a series of nine empowerment rites based on the initiatory practices of the Q’ero shamans of Perú. See J. E. Williams, *The Andean Codex: Adventures and Initiations among the Peruvian Shamans* (Newburyport: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2005).
43. Molina noted that all initiations began with fasting (Molina, “Relación de las fábulas y ritos de los incas,” ch. 5).
44. Cobo, *Inca Religion and Customs*, ch. 18.
45. Original Spanish: “Agua sagrado purificador, limpia y purifica a tu hijo.”
46. Santa Cruz reported that in the Colla, after Tunupa preached to the people, “water was poured on their heads and the Indians watching understood the manner with which they were washed” (Santa Cruz Pachacuti Yamqui Salcamayhua, J. de. (1993 [1613]). *Relación de antigüedades deste reyno del Piru*. “Editor: Institut français d’études andines, Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos Bartolomé de Las Casas. Cusco. f5).
47. Original Spanish: “Que tengas activación en tu corazon.”
48. Original Spanish: “Sellar contra malas cosas espirituales.”
49. The *usnu* is a stone altar with a stone kneeler and is not to be confused with the *ushnu*. The latter is a terraced ceremonial platform and astronomical observatory. They are sometimes located at the intersection of ritual pathways called ceques and near subterranean waterways. Pino (2004) states that “in some provincial capitals the ushnu was the first point to be located in space, and on that basis they designed the layout of the settlements” (José Luis Pino Matos, *El Ushnu Inka Y La Organización Del Espacio En Los Principales Tampus De Los Wamani De La Sierra Central Del Chinchaysuyu Chungará [Arica]*, vol. 36, no. 2, [2004], 306). This exemplifies Eliade’s construct of man’s need

- to create the *imago mundi*—that is, we create a sacred point on earth and spread out on the ground from the center of that world (Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, vol. 144, [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1959]).
50. In ancient Israel, the Lord commanded the “holy anointing oil” be made of olive oil, which is not indigenous to Perú (Exodus 30: 24–31).
  51. This marking occurred at other times. The Inca would mark newly constructed walls of temples with blood as a way of consecrating them. He would similarly mark the Vilahoma, the mamaconas (temple matrons), and other Incan nobles. This was done with *pirani* (sacred blood of a sacrificed lamb). During the men’s initiation, the line was drawn from ear to ear across their faces. Santa Cruz says this anointing was done so that the soul can reach the next world (Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Perú* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991], 112–113; see Leviticus 16:14–19).
  52. Cieza de León, *Crónica del Peru*. Segunda parte, ch. 81.
  53. Original Spanish: “Todo es luz.”
  54. Garcilaso de la Vega, “First part of the royal commentaries of the Yncas.”
  55. Garcilaso de la Vega, “First part of the royal commentaries of the Yncas,” ch. 22.
  56. Bill Sillar, “Pilgrims past and present: the ritual landscape of Raqchi, southern Peru,” in *Archaeology International*, vol. 3, (1999), 51.
  57. Original Spanish: “enseñanzas de mundos espirituales” and “un discipulo de Dios.”
  58. MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes*, 98, emphasis added.
  59. Niles, *The Shape of Inca History*, 237–238; Bill Sillar, “Caminando a través del tiempo: geografías sagradas en Cacha/Raqchi,” in *Revista Andina*, vol. 35 (Perú: departamento del Cuzco, 2002) 230.
  60. E. Dean, A. Perez Trujillo, Bill Sillar, *Proyecto Arqueológico Raqchi: informe preliminar sobre las prospecciones* (Cuzco: unpublished report presented to the Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1999) in Bill Sillar, “Pilgrims past and present,” 49.
  61. Sillar, “Caminando a través del tiempo,” 240.
  62. Zadir Milla Euribe, *El Código de Wira Qocha: simbolismo milenario andino*, ed. Carlos Milla Villena (Lima: Escuela Intercultural Andina Kontiti, 2017), 12.