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Rituals of the Past

Rosenfeld, Silvana, Bautista, Stefanie

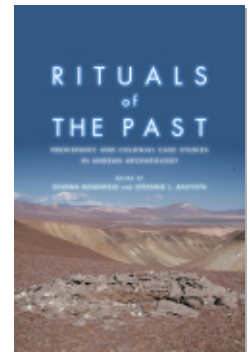
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This chapter explores the spatial organization of a major mound from Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke known as Huaca A, as a means to examine the sociopolitical dynamics manifested in specific human practices such as ritual performances. Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke is a large architectural complex located in the lower Casma Valley that was built and occupied during the early Formative period (1800–1200 BC) of the Central Andes.

The architectural design of Huaca A was analyzed through Gamma Analysis (Hillier and Hanson 1984) to determine its spatial structure and evaluate different possible movements, according to the arrangements of rooms and corridors. In the Gamma Analysis approach, architectural space establishes boundaries that generate discontinuous sets of spatial units or cells; the connection of these sets requires a complex system of controlled permeabilities (ibid.:144–46).

Following specific graphic conventions, Gamma Analysis reveals different structural arrangements, understandable in terms of asymmetry and distributedness. These variables might indicate, on one hand, the degree of hierarchy in the organization of spatial units and, on the other hand, how centralized or exclusive are the routes that connect the spatial units within a building (ibid.:147–55). The results of Gamma Analysis in Huaca A reveal a highly centralized but weakly hierarchical spatial structure. Such a structure and its inferred possibilities of movement suggest the existence of a large-scale social entity, such as a regional system, in which

*Architecture and Ritual
Practices at Huaca A
of Pampa de las
Llamas–Moxeke*

RAFAEL VEGA-CENTENO
SARA-LAFOSSE

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several smaller units (communities or lineages) were allowed to participate in ritual activities at the Huaca A summit.

This scenario of congregating social units under a larger entity has not been reported for the organization of other early buildings. Thus, it can provide new insights for discussion of the nature of early Formative period societies in the Central Andes.

The analysis of Huaca A is preceded by a review of the theoretical discussion of the social significance of ritual and its archaeological study, as well as of the debate over the development of social complexity in the early Formative period of the Central Andes.

RITUAL IN SOCIETY

The social significance of ritual was outlined in the beginning of the twentieth century by Durkheim (1995 [1912]:532), who defined it as a mode of action that recreates society. In a similar direction, more recently Rappaport (1999:27, 30) noted that the ritual recreation of society was manifested in the construction of conventional orders invested with morality, which compel participants to accept a “social contract,” often established within a singular time frame invested with eternity. Furthermore, ritual is currently recognized as a powerful means to mobilize and congregate collective entities, which develop through ideas of membership but also of dependence on the social group (Kertzer 1988:82). In addition, ritual can conjure feelings of solidarity and conviction even in social groups that, as a result of inequalities or competing agendas, lack consensus (*ibid.*:78–79).

The effectiveness of ritual in shaping and reshaping social relations and power positions lies in its communicative power, as rituals are displayed and received through schemes of perception deeply rooted in material conditions of existence (Bourdieu 1977:116). However, the communication of messages cannot be fully understood without taking into account the nature of participation in rituals. Ritual does not describe actions or phenomena but constitutes an action and puts something into practice (Connerton 1989:57–58). This action (unlike performances, which involve actors and audiences) implies that all participants are, albeit in different ways, performers.

Indeed, it is through this active participation that individuals and groups not only transmit messages about themselves but also transmit themselves in those messages. Moreover, in ritual, the transmitters of messages are often the most important receivers of those messages. Through ritual participation individuals and groups transcend their private selves and enter into a public,

canonical order, where they might acquire a social category that will frame their own private process (Rappaport 1999:51, 106).

Rappaport noted that ritual participants, while becoming both transmitters and receivers, are fused with the messages displayed in ritual. As a consequence there is an intrinsic acceptance of such messages by those who participate in it—although acceptance does not necessarily mean belief or total compliance. Therefore, ritual becomes a fundamental act of acceptance of certain messages and in that way forms the basis for a public order (ibid.:119, 122–23).

Several authors have noted that the extraordinary time signaled by ritual implies a de-structuration of social structure or organization, as well as a dilution of social identities. This state is what Victor Turner defined as the experience of *communitas*. According to Turner (1969:95–96), most rituals include a stage defined as liminality, which implies the detachment of daily existence and the creation of common bonds by participants. In a liminal state social structure and organization are ignored, and an undifferentiated community (i.e., *communitas*) is generated. Rappaport adds that the experiencing of *communitas* alters not only society but also consciousness, with the inhibition of rationality and an increase in emotional aspects. Consequently, *communitas* also becomes a state of mind in which canonical messages are transmitted (Rappaport 1999:219–22).

Thus, the social significance of ritual is explained by its capacity to transmit persuasively several meanings that reinforce social and political relations. Such a capacity lies in the performative nature of ritual, which merges convention with behavior. In this way ritual presents the conventional and its morality as factual and, consequently, as a natural phenomena.

RITUAL, ARCHAEOLOGY, AND ARCHITECTURE

Within the archaeological record, “ritual function” is commonly applied to contexts that are difficult or impossible to explain. This negative definition makes many scholars doubt the validity of interpreting ritual functions. To address these doubts, it is necessary to construct a behavioral definition of ritual and its material correlates.

Several authors have stressed the need to unpack the religion-and-ritual phenomenon and address ritual as a social practice with its own dynamics and cross-cultural regularities (Kertzer 1988:2; Walker 1995:67). Thus, as a social practice ritual can be defined as a set of formalized, standardized, repetitive, and sequentially ordered acts (e.g., movements, gestures, and postures) and utterances through which meaningful information is transmitted and

communicated among its participants (Connerton 1989:44; Kertzer 1988:9; Rappaport 1999:3, 24).

These utterances and acts in ritual are highly formalized and even stereotyped (Kertzer 1988:9) as a means to ensure that performances will be conducted in a correct way (Rappaport 1999:115–16). Utterances and acts have differentiated roles in the transmission of messages. While utterances transmit canonical messages, physical displays often signal the participation and acceptance of such messages (*ibid.*:152). I have proposed that the utterances and physical acts, as well as their interactions, generate eight categories of ritual behavior: congregation, code reciting, musical display, simulation, physiological exercises, consumption (of both intoxicating and edible substances), offering, and competition (Vega-Centeno 2005:50–55; 2006).

Congregation is probably the most socially weighted category of ritual behavior. It implies the displacement and meeting of participants in the space for ritual, including long walks and processions. The activities involved in this category are particularly significant, as rituals are concerned not only with the performances conducted within the ritual space but also with the way participants engage with that space. Thus, congregation acts provide meaningful information about the participants of ritual, as one can observe the rhythm of displacements, their directionality, the pathways and entryways participants need to pass through, and finally, the positions they take and locations they occupy immediately before the beginning of the activities within the ritual space. As mentioned, the ritual sphere is often marked by the dilution of social structure through the experience of *communitas* (Turner 1969:95–96); such a structure is often reinforced immediately before or after entering into the *communitas* state. Consequently, congregation acts are particularly informative on the nature of the social structure of the participant group.

Messages related to congregation are strongly related to architectural design, as architectural units potentially carry meanings and provide specific cues and signs for those who experience them (Moore 1996; Rappaport 1999:20, 106). Consequently, through its ability to transmit meaningful information on congregation acts, architectural design might orient the displacement and distribution of participants within the ritual space. As a result, the size and configuration of spatial units might indicate the number of allowed participants. Similarly, the use of architectural features for internal divisions, such as benches, ramps, or steps, might indicate the spatial distribution of participants within spaces. Finally, the number, location, and characteristics of entryways might reflect and orient the frequency, intensity, and amount of simultaneous movements, as well as their required sequences within the overall ritual

space. In sum, architectural space might reflect the way people are spatially organized (and thus socially structured) for their participation in ritual. These characteristics explain why architectural designs of ritual spaces are often highly patterned and formalized, as they are responsible for transmitting correctly the meaningful messages of congregational behaviors and activities (see Chicoine et al., this volume).

Ritual spaces are usually identified by different names in the archaeological literature. They can be defined as “public architecture,” “monumental architecture,” or “religious architecture.” I suggest that these definitions outline different characteristics that are usually related to ritual spaces. The notion of “public” refers to spaces whose construction and related uses are beyond the household sphere. The idea of “monumental” addresses the scale, quality, and durability of the built space. Finally, the concept of “religious” notes the usual concerns and commitments that motivated the construction and use of ritual spaces (Abraham, this volume). These definitions, however, do not address the specific functional or behavioral dimensions of an architectural unit. According to their function, the built ritual spaces could be labeled “ritual architecture” or “ceremonial architecture.” Nevertheless, a careful analysis of the architectural design is necessary to apply this definition to any architectural unit.

Architectural designs always have a spatial dimension, which can be understood as a structure in which spatial units are differentiated, distributed, and interrelated through a given access system. Hillier and Hanson (1984) have proposed a methodological approach known as syntactic organization to understand the spatial structure of such designs. Gamma Analysis reduces the structure of buildings into basic spatial units (cells) and the connections between them. The spatial arrangements are translated into graphs, on which spatial units are represented by circles, and their connections, or permeabilities, are represented by lines.

These graphics reveal different structural arrangements, which can be understood on the basis of two variables: (1) symmetry/asymmetry and (2) distributedness/non-distributedness. The degree of symmetry or asymmetry is related to the number of spatial units and the number of levels in which these units are organized. A highly asymmetrical structure might include several levels in which a limited number of spatial units are organized. In contrast, a highly symmetrical structure will include few levels for numerous spatial units sharing the same spatial restrictions. As a result, this variable indicates the degree of hierarchy in the organization of spatial units in terms of the distance between them and the outer space. In contrast, the degree of

distributedness or non-distributedness is related to the number of spatial units and the number of permeabilities among them. A high distributed structure tends to include multiple pathways that inter-communicate the spatial units, while a low distributed structure includes a limited (even a single) pathway for the connection of spatial units. As a result this variable demonstrates how some access routes can be more central or exclusive than others (Hillier and Hanson 1984:147–55). Both variables can be measured through specific procedures. The first one can be quantified through an index of relative asymmetry (RA), defined as follows:

$$RA = \frac{2(MD - 1)}{K - 2}$$

Where MD is the mean depth (calculated after adding the number of spatial units weighted by their depth level) and K is the number of spatial units or cells in the structure. The second variable is quantified through an index of relative ringiness (RR). This index denotes how, when there is more than one pathway connecting two units, the second pathway must be represented by an encircling ring. Consequently, the number of rings over the maximum possible straight lines will reveal how distributed the spatial organization is. The RR is defined as follows:

$$RR = \frac{r}{2p - 5}$$

Where r is the number of distinct rings identified in the structure and p is the number of unit cells of the structure (ibid.:108–9, 152). Especially for understanding congregation acts, the measurement of degrees of hierarchy and centralization in the spatial structure of buildings becomes particularly insightful for the study of ritual spaces.

As previously stated, liturgical orders regulate congregation activities by transmitting canonical messages that indicate correct displacements, entries, and positioning. In addition, the conduct of those acts by participants is a source of self-referential messages, as they can be related or differentiated as a result of their displacement routes or their capacity to pass through certain spaces. These differentiations often reveal diverse social states or conditions (either situational or structural). Consequently, the definition of boundaries and regulated access systems within a ritual space may reflect and also reinforce self-referential messages about social personae and their relations, defining how differentiated or undifferentiated their participation is. Following these considerations, the outlined Gamma Analyses reveal the existence of

both vertical and horizontal spatial differences, thus providing a unique means of evaluating how social differentiations might have been outlined through architectural design during ritual acts of congregation.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND RITUAL ARCHITECTURE IN THE ANDEAN FORMATIVE PERIOD

Several lines of evidence demonstrate the development of social complexity during the Andean Formative period (ca. 1800–200 BC). Research at several sites has revealed populations that show internal differences in the quality and location of their dwellings (Burger and Salazar-Burger 1992:125–26; Pozorski and Pozorski 1989; Siveroni 2006:126–36), as well as differences in the elaboration of and investment in mortuary practices (Larco Hoyle 1941:193–203; Onuki 1994:15–19). Unfortunately, current data are too scarce to attain a comprehensive view of these phenomena for the entire period.

The most studied manifestation of “sociopolitical complexity” for the Formative period has been what is commonly called “public architecture.” This emphasis on architectural data can be explained by the conspicuous presence of impressive and elaborate buildings throughout the Central Andes. Archaeologists often define public buildings as religious architecture and interpret their presence as the manifestation of a theocratic social class that concentrated astronomical knowledge and ritual paraphernalia (e.g., Lumbreras 1987). Even without this kind of interpretation, several authors have outlined the need for a centralized decision-making entity to have overseen the construction of such buildings (Haas 1987:32; Lanning 1967:94; Pozorski 1987:23). Alternatively, Burger argues that early public buildings were the product of weakly stratified societies in which communal ideology was more important than individual differentiation (Burger 1992:54–55).

Beyond the competing explanations for monumental architecture, one of the most significant problems is the limited information on the architectural design of Formative period buildings. It is common, for example, to find descriptions of Formative buildings already defined as “platform mounds” or “open areas” based on surface records or limited excavations that do not account for the true architectural design. A satisfactory record of an architectural design should provide the complete configuration of architectural units, including the number and size of spaces and access systems.

As a consequence, significant dimensions of social and political organization cannot be addressed from an archaeological perspective and remain ignored or mentioned only in tentative or speculative ways. Reliable data



FIGURE 5.1. Air photo of Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeque (source: Esri, Digital Globe)

on the architectural design of a public building would allow researchers to investigate human interactions involved in the building’s use and their organizational implications. Fortunately, such information is provided by the excavators of Huaca A, a building at the site of Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeque in the southern branch of the Casma Valley (Pozorski and Pozorski 1986, 1987, 1991, 1992:855, 1994).

PAMPA DE LAS LLAMAS–MOXEKE AND HUACA A

The site of Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeque consists of an architectural complex (figure 5.1) oriented along a southwest-northeast axis that is dominated by two major buildings: Moxeque at the southwestern end and Huaca A at the northeastern end. Several open spaces or “plazas” are aligned between these mounds. In addition, around seventy smaller platform mounds are aligned along the northwestern and southeastern sides of the complex. Finally, clusters of domestic structures have been recorded on the east side of the complex. Pozorski and Pozorski reported nine radiocarbon dates that place Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeque in the early Formative period, between 1800 and 1200 BC (Pozorski and Pozorski 1987:10–11).

Archaeologists consider Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke to be the center of a polity that spread throughout the Casma branch of the Casma Valley (Wilson 1994:192–94) because of its large size and the absence of competing sites of the same scale in the surrounding area. In addition, the excavators reported significant inequalities among residential units, evidenced by the differences in size, construction materials, and differentiated access ways to more “domestic-like” ritual structures (Pozorski and Pozorski 1986:393–96, 1992:857–58).

Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke also displays evidence of internal social differentiation based on the variations in architecture and restricted accesses. However, how was this society articulated or integrated? Pozorski and Pozorski noted the presence of the two main buildings (Moxeke and Huaca A) as clear manifestations of an authoritative body that integrated Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke’s inhabitants and possibly other surrounding sites (Pozorski and Pozorski 1987:32–34, 1992:853). The authors, however, proposed that the mounds had different functions. While Moxeke was designed to be a religious building, Huaca A became an administrative one. Together, they embodied a highly centralized state-like polity (Pozorski 1987:34, Pozorski and Pozorski 1992:853). This statement is based mainly on the differences observed between Moxeke and Huaca A: while Moxeke is seen as a U-shaped mound, Huaca A has a “peculiar multi-room organization” at the summit that provided storage functions (Pozorski and Pozorski 1986:386–93, 397–98) (figure 5.2).

THE FUNCTION OF HUACA A

The proposed storage use of Huaca A rooms can be assessed on the basis of the summit’s spatial organization, as well as the reported associated artifacts and figurative features. For example, controlling the spread of pests and decay would have been better accomplished with numerous small spaces. To facilitate administration, storerooms should have been of uniform size. Nevertheless, the supposed storage rooms of Huaca A present considerable variability in size; some are large rooms with additional elements such as niches, which are more suited for display than storage purposes. In addition, the access system between the various rooms is variable, which implies that some rooms have restricted accessibility. Many of the rooms, for example, can only be reached by passing through other rooms. While the rooms could have functioned as storage, this theory does not account for the differences in room accessibility. Why are some rooms more restricted than others? I suggest we consider the limited accessibility as a meaningful cue for people’s movement throughout the summit spatial organization.

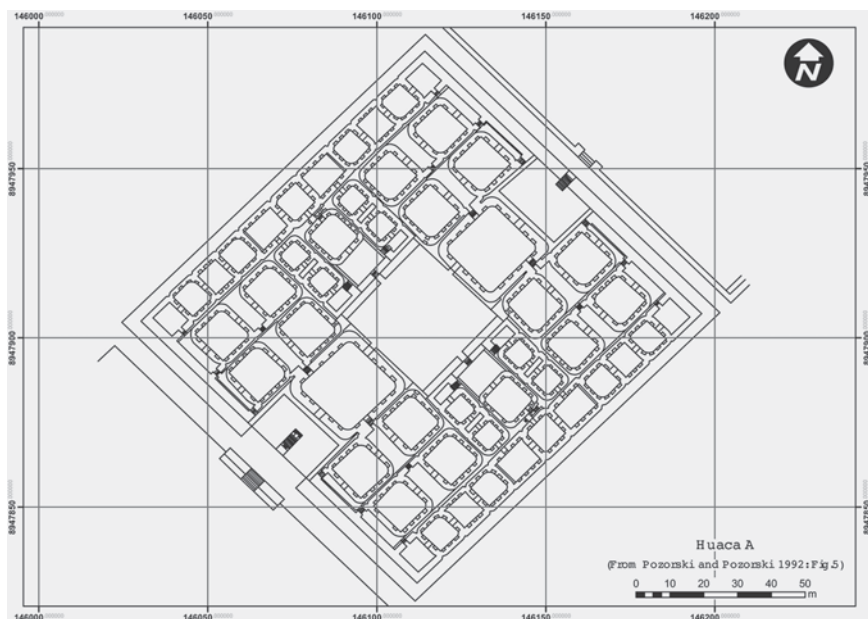


FIGURE 5.2. Plan of Huaca A (redrawn by A. Tranlavina, from Pozorski and Pozorski 1992:figure 5)

The consideration of a more “secular nature” of Huaca A in contrast to Moxeke has also been stated on the basis of the location and configuration of associated friezes (Pozorski and Pozorski 1992). While the friezes from both mounds appear thematically different, both are incomplete records of iconographic compositions (Pozorski and Pozorski 1986:388–89, 1994:58–59; Tello and Mejía Xesspe 1956:60–64). Moreover, the published reports are the product of excavations in specific places and do not demonstrate conclusively the absence of friezes in other areas (e.g., the indoor atriums of Moxeke or the outdoor platform walls of Huaca A).

The inferred administrative function was also based on the massive presence of rodent bones and traces of pollen. Both lines of evidence suggest but do not prove that these rooms were used for storage. At Huaca A, pollen identification has been qualitative in nature (Ugent, Pozorski, and Pozorski 1983), with no comparison samples from other contexts. Hence, it still needs to be ascertained whether there is a particular pattern of pollen deposition in the Huaca A rooms in contrast to other areas within the site. Second, although the gathering of rodent colonies in the rooms can be explained by the accumulation of foodstuffs

during the building's use-life, it could also have happened after abandonment. Even if one accepts that these rooms were used for storage, foodstuffs were not the only items found during excavations. A jet mirror, a wooden figurine, and turquoise beads were also recovered (Pozorski and Pozorski 1986:387), which suggests that the rooms could have stored ritual paraphernalia (Burger 1992:84). Hence, the potential distribution of the stored goods should be discussed. Were they transported to distant places, or were they consumed within the Huaca A summit? If the second scenario is correct, how were they consumed or used?

While acknowledging the possible storage function of the Huaca A rooms, the activities conducted within the summit spaces should be evaluated in the context of (1) a highly formalized architectural design that influenced the displacement and organization of the activity participants, (2) the presence of iconographic devices, and (3) the presence of artifacts with symbolic value—that is, mirrors, figurines, turquoise beads—along with the inferred foodstuffs. I consider that this design and features reveal that the summit organization was conceived to cope with the requirements of a ritual order. In short, activities might have involved significant dimensions of social life far beyond administrative purposes.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND RITUAL AT HUACA A

To test the possible functional properties of Huaca A's architectural design and its relation to ritual performances, a definition of the different kind of spaces is required. Then, an analysis of the spatial organization will be conducted, complemented by considerations of how the defined architectural spaces might have been experienced. The spatial units found at the summit of Huaca A (figure 5.3) include:

1. **CORRIDORS:** Defined as spaces that are located between rooms and open areas in the mound's summit. We also find stairs that connect parts of corridors placed at different summit levels.
2. **OPEN SPACES:** Usually labeled as atriums or plazas, they are unroofed areas that connect with rooms, platforms, and other enclosed spaces.
3. **ROOMS:** Square units with one or two entryways and rounded corners, which vary in size from 20 m × 20 m to 8 m × 8 m. The walls are between 4 m and 7 m high and show niches in the upper parts.

Generally, the first two kinds of spaces have intermediate functions of connecting and isolating rooms. To fully understand the relations among these

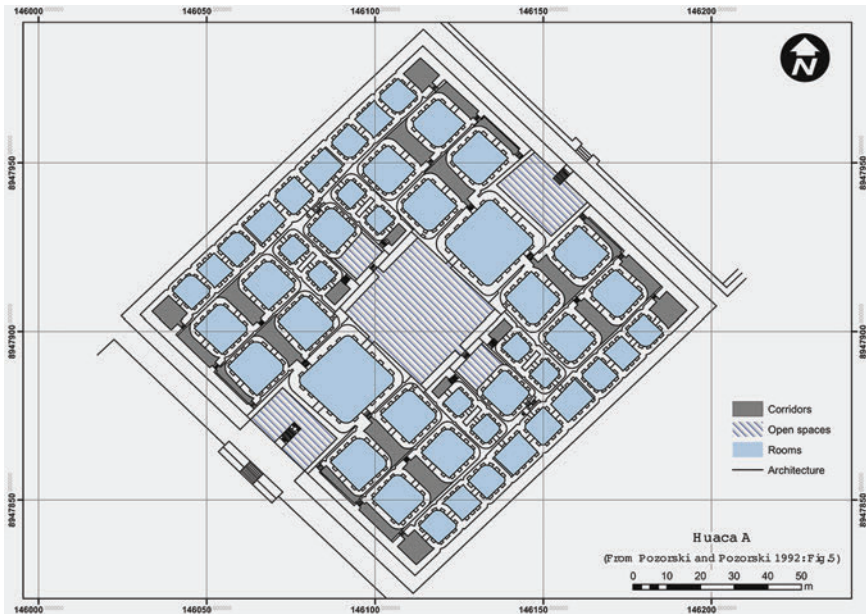


FIGURE 5.3. Plan of Huaca A indicating corridors, open spaces and rooms (redrawn by A. Tranlavina, from Pozorski and Pozorski 1992:figure 5)

features, it is important to observe the possible circuits or movements the architecture allows in the summit (figure 5.4):

1. After reaching the summit, from the outer atriums: movement can be through lateral corridors, toward a set of three aligned and interconnected rooms, or toward a large central room.
2. From the central room: movement can be through lateral corridors, toward a set of four rooms arranged at both sides of the corridor, or toward the plaza.
3. From the plaza: movement can be toward the lateral atriums.
4. From the lateral atriums: movement can be to two lateral and interconnected rooms or to a larger central room with three aligned back rooms.

Within the general design, there seems to be a basic unit consisting of an atrium, central rooms, and lateral rooms that adapts to spatial restrictions (figure 5.5).



FIGURE 5.4. Plan of Huaca A indicating possible movements (redrawn by A. Tranlavina, from Pozorski and Pozorski 1992:figure 5)

Pozorski and Pozorski have recorded this type of architecture as a repetitive pattern in several buildings at the Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke site, which they labeled “Intermediate Architecture” (Pozorski and Pozorski 1989:26–27). This architectural pattern is composed of a platform and a central room, often accompanied by two lateral rooms and a central atrium, which gives the entire summit a U-shaped form. This pattern has also been identified at Moxeke, which the Pozorskis labeled as having a U-shaped architectural mound (Pozorski and Pozorski 1987:34). Tello and Mejía Xesspe (1956:67) published a map of Moxeke’s summit that depicts the presence of several rooms, which appear to have been arranged by two large U-shaped platforms, thus defining two hierarchical levels.

Similar arrangements were reported for other architectural complexes, such as the earliest building of Cerro Sechin (Maldonado 1992:77) and Bahía Seca (Pozorski and Pozorski 1992:848). These and other sites configure a well-defined architectural pattern for public buildings on the southern North Coast (Vega-Centeno 1995, 1999), and the summit configuration of Huaca A appears to be a development of this basic pattern.

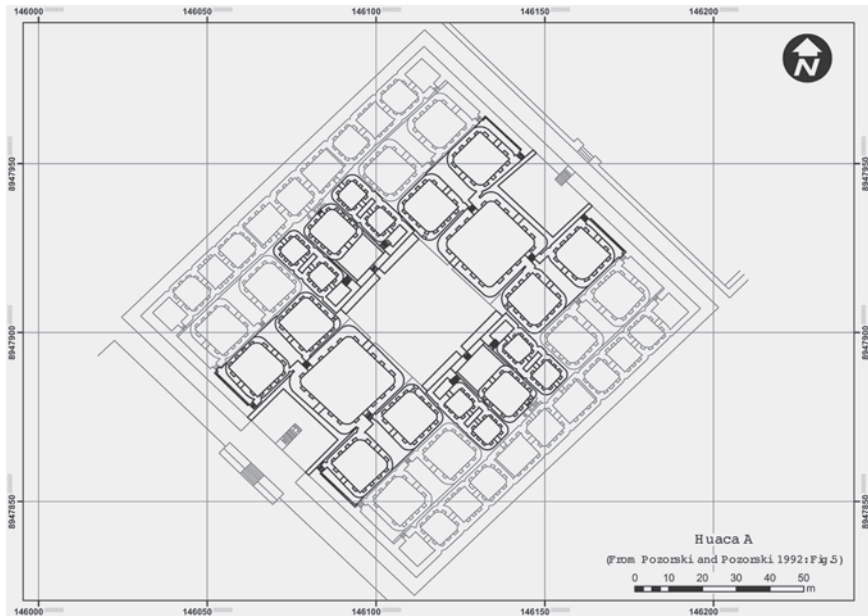


FIGURE 5.5. Atrium U-shape forms at Huaca A (redrawn by A. Tranlavina, from Pozorski and Pozorski 1992:figure 5)

SPATIAL STRUCTURE AT HUACA A

To analyze the spatial structure of the Huaca A summit, a Gamma Analysis was conducted (Hillier and Hanson 1984:147–55). Gamma Analysis depicts spaces as circles and access systems as connecting lines. This graphic convention goes beyond visual examination, providing a quantifiable basis for effective comparison among different spatial units. In the case of Huaca A, there were a total of seventy-five spatial units among the rooms and open areas. The analysis also reveals a spatial organization that outlines a dual arrangement of rooms, previously noted by the Pozorskis (1989) (figure 5.6). Furthermore, it shows that this dual organization is repeated at different levels, showing a careful arrangement of spaces into paired clusters.

It is significant that the spatial organization of Huaca A has a very low RA (0.095) (table 5.1), which suggests that the design emphasizes symmetry and horizontality rather than asymmetry and hierarchy in the spatial organization. The RR index, which reveals the degree of alternative pathways within the structure, is also extremely low (0.0068), indicating a highly centralized access system.

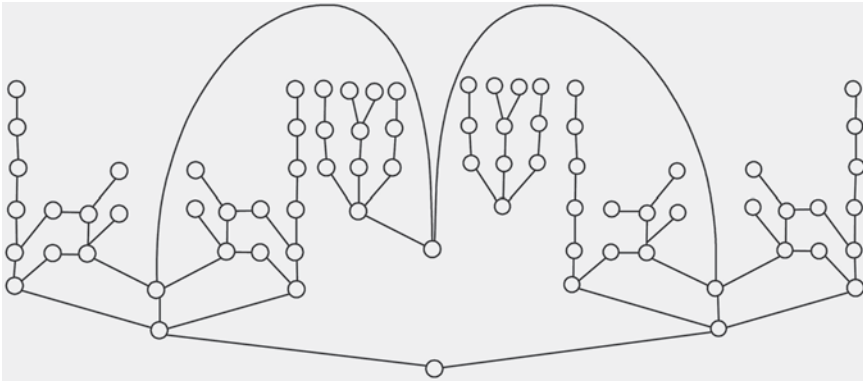


FIGURE 5.6. *Diagram of Gamma Analysis*

TABLE 5.1. Gamma Analysis results

<i>Depth Levels</i>	<i>Spatial Units per Level</i>
Carrier	1
1	2
2	6
3	13
4	18
5	14
6	10
7	12
Total spatial units	76
Mean depth	4.52
Rings	10
Relative asymmetry	0.095
Relative ringiness	0.0068

SPACES AND DISPLACEMENTS: EXPERIENCING HUACA A ARCHITECTURE

The design of Huaca A enabled a visual contrast between open and closed spaces enhanced by the combination of narrow corridors that lead to a medium-sized or large room, atrium, or plaza. Thus, the final destinations, which are the rooms or set of rooms, might have been perceived as remote spaces.

The rooms also generate a distinct visual impact. First, the walls are unusually tall (4–7 m) and have niches, features that allow the deposition of goods in a visible location. In that sense they reinforce the visual dimension of the room design. Thus, individuals performing an activity in a room may have passed through several intermediate narrow spaces, with the corresponding experience

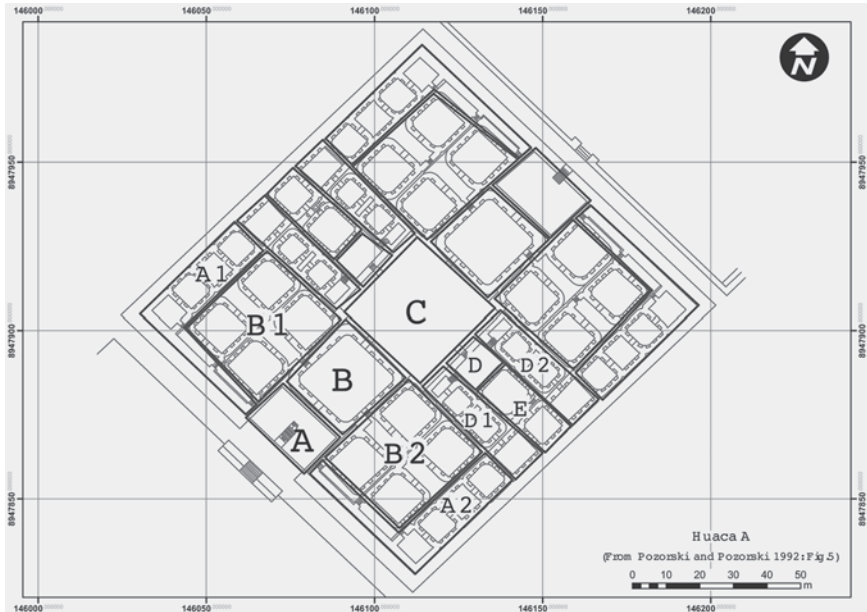


FIGURE 5.7. Plan of Huaca A and possible organization of groups within rooms (redrawn by A. Tranlavina, from Pozorski and Pozorski 1992:figure 5)

of isolation and difficult access. In addition, within the room individuals experienced the visual impact of a large space in which several elements may have been placed in the walls' niches. Whatever the activities performed in the rooms, visual performance characteristics may have played an important role.

While the rooms vary in size, the most important feature is that they all share the same design and inner components (e.g., high walls and niches). Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that these rooms were designed to conduct similar activities. Hence, the disparity in room size relates to the number of people able to congregate in the room. It is therefore important to evaluate how people moved and organized themselves throughout and within the rooms (figure 5.7).

According to the spatial units' dimensions and the access pattern, the summit allowed the access of a certain group of people (Group A). From the atrium this group could have divided into two groups (Groups A₁ and A₂) to reach the three aligned lateral rooms. The same re-gathered group or another group or sub-group (Group B) could have reached the large central room. From this room, the group could have subdivided into two groups (B₁ and B₂), and each of them could have also subdivided according to the existing rooms, becoming eight subgroups that might have performed similar kinds of activities in the

same number of rooms. Afterward, the same group or a smaller one (Group C) could have passed to the inner plaza. From this position an even smaller group (Group D) could have reached the inner atrium and divided to get into the smaller lateral rooms (Groups D1 and D2) and return to the atrium, while a final group (Group E) could have reached the central and back rooms. Notably, this performance could have been done by two different and equivalent groups of individuals, arriving at the summit by the two stairways.

RITUAL, DESIGN, AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS

On the basis of the observations and analysis of the spatial structure and possibilities of displacement at Huaca A, some inferences about the social and political characteristics of its participants can be made.

First, the design of the Huaca A summit suggests the existence of two equivalent social units that, while performing similar activities, may have had a symmetrical relationship. These units could be subdivided into two, then also be divided into four sub-units. Each resultant group of eight sub-units had the same level of access to an autonomous space for ritual activities. However, there seems to have been a smaller group in each larger social unit that was allowed to reach the inner, less accessible spaces. This smaller group was again subdivided into two sub-units.

What kind of social units participated in the activities at Huaca A? To answer this question, we must return to the basic architectural units identified for the Early Formative sites of the Casma region. As mentioned, they were composed of an atrium, a rear room, and two lateral rooms, depicting a U-shaped organization. This design suggests a social entity that could split into two groups after reaching the atrium to get into the lateral rooms. This kind of organization seems to correspond to a social unit of a communal nature, which organized ritual participation in moieties beyond a lineage or familiar range. This kind of organization has been proposed for architectural units of the late Archaic period, such as Cerro Lampay (Vega-Centeno 2005:330–38).

If the described units represent communal groups, Huaca A definitely represents a larger social unit with a regional range. This interpretation is reinforced by the absence of similar structures in the southern branch of the Casma Valley (Wilson 1994:192–94). Nonetheless, the settlement layout of Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke, with the simultaneous presence of buildings that represent both communal and regional entities, seems to imply a set of relationships that are more complex than a mere two-level hierarchy. Such complexity is also revealed at the Huaca A summit.

As we have seen, the spatial organization of Huaca A presents a low degree of asymmetry but a high degree of centralization. It also includes several rooms for similar activities in which the social groups were dispersed and clustered in different moments. In this way the horizontal differentiations revealed by the design suggest that participants came from sixteen social units organized into two moieties, while the vertical differentiations suggests that a sub-group of these sixteen units (a sub-group or representative of each one?) could only have reached the outer area.

In this context the access system seems to correspond to a highly centralized liturgical program that enhanced the large-scale institution that congregated the constituent social units. By its devices and structure, the spatial organization of Huaca A appears to be a “sociopolitical map,” a physical representation of a regional polity and its constituent social units. From outside, the building displays the idea of a central entity, whereas the summit organization materializes a scenario of sub-units with autonomous spaces. This contrast suggests that the development of centralized institutions by no means implied the canceling of smaller representations during ritual acts.

CONCLUSION: SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION DURING THE FORMATIVE PERIOD

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that the access devices and spatial units of the Huaca A summit were designed to organize congregation acts of a large social unit with a dual division that also involved sixteen basic social units that appeared to be supporters of the larger entity. Although I suggested that Huaca A's design might be considered a sociopolitical map, the extrapolation of such a model to a real sociopolitical scenario requires caution. The spatial organization of Huaca A might have represented a sociopolitical reality, but it might also have expressed an ideal that may or may not have corresponded exactly to the sociopolitical reality at Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke.

To further the evaluation of the sociopolitical characterization of this entity, Huaca A (or Moxeke) designs should be compared with the general distribution and configuration of intermediate architecture within Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke and neighboring sites. In addition, the range of the Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke polity and its sphere of influence should be assessed to evaluate the number of social units involved in its region. Additional research would clarify the nature of Pampa de las Llamas–Moxeke society. Nevertheless, the results of the Huaca A design analysis show how the development of a regional system is much more complex than a simple or mechanical process of power

concentration or wealth accumulation. It surely involved the development of power relationships and sociopolitical representations (like those materialized in the spatial organization of a ritual building) in which hierarchy, autonomy, membership, and subordination could be constantly developed, assured, or negotiated.

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