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Drinking, Identity, and Practice Becoming Inca at Purun Llacta de Soloco (Chachapoyas)

Journal of Global Archaeology 2025: pp. 78–103

<https://doi.org/10.34780/rm77n214>

her:

Herausgebende Institution / Publis

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ABSTRACT

Drinking, Identity, and Practice

Becoming Inca at Purun Llacta de Soloco (Chachapoyas)

Lorenzo Risco Patiño – James M. Crandall

This article examines two silver vessels (aquillas) from the Early Colonial Period, discovered in a ritual context at the archaeological site of Purun Llacta de Soloco (Chachapoyas, Peru). These aquillas feature eight graphic scenes represented in a realistic style. This pair of objects is analyzed here from the perspective of nonverbal communication to identify the message they conveyed. An assessment of the material condition and agentive substance of the aquillas suggests that toasting among authorities, ancestors, and deities reaffirmed the sociopolitical relationships of Purun Llacta. Furthermore, we consider how these vessels functioned as a medium of political communication, by which elites at Purun Llacta expressed the adoption of a new identity and its maintenance into the Spanish colonial period.

KEYWORDS

Aquillas, Uncus, Nonverbal Communication, Inca, Chachapoya

Drinking, Identity, and Practice

Becoming Inca at Purun Llacta de Soloco (Chachapoyas)

Introduction

¹ The Inca conquest of the Chachapoya drastically changed the sociopolitical organization of the Utcubamba Basin in Northern Peru (Schjellerup 2005: 454). Following Túpac Inca Yupanqui's incursion, and his son Huayna Cápac's conquest, a large multiethnic population was incorporated into the empire between the 1470s and 1490s AD. The changes brought about by this occupation are particularly evident in the urban planning of the mixed resettlement pattern consisting of the creation of administrative centers and public spaces (Crandall 2017: 284), the distribution of imperial ceramic wares (Crandall 2018), and through the incorporation of ethnic Inca into local burial traditions (Wild – Guillen – Kutschera et al. 2007). During the Spanish invasion, Francisco Pizarro appointed Alonso de Alvarado to establish a city in the province of Chachapoyas in 1538 (Schjellerup 2005: 145). Once again, local communities experienced a second radical imperial transformation which impacted their fundamental social structures and practices. During these periods of imperial governance, Chachapoya, Inca, and Spanish cultural expressions converged. The settlement of Purun Llacta de Soloco embodied these three influences, and the practices of its people exhibit the construction of a new ethnic identity.

² The site of Purun Llacta de Soloco is located 15 km southeast of the city of Chachapoyas (Fig. 1, Fig. 2) and was occupied contemporaneously with the regional center of Kuelap, situated 40 km by foot to the southwest by foot. Similarities in ceramics and funerary traditions have been documented between the two sites (Crandall 2018). Purun Llacta is divided into two sectors. Most of Sector A lies in a low, flat area near the *Qhapaq Ñan* and contains much of the site's Inka and Spanish colonial period buildings. Sector B covers the southern part and is centered on a peak of Cerro Lic Lic, surrounded by Chachapoya circular houses located on high terraces, and was built before the Inca conquest (Crandall 2017: 288).

³ In 2014, a pair of silver *aquillas* were discovered in a structure adjacent to the southern side of the colonial plaza at Purun Llacta. The vessels had been stacked, one inside the other, in a small pit dug down to the bedrock surface 70 cm below the surface

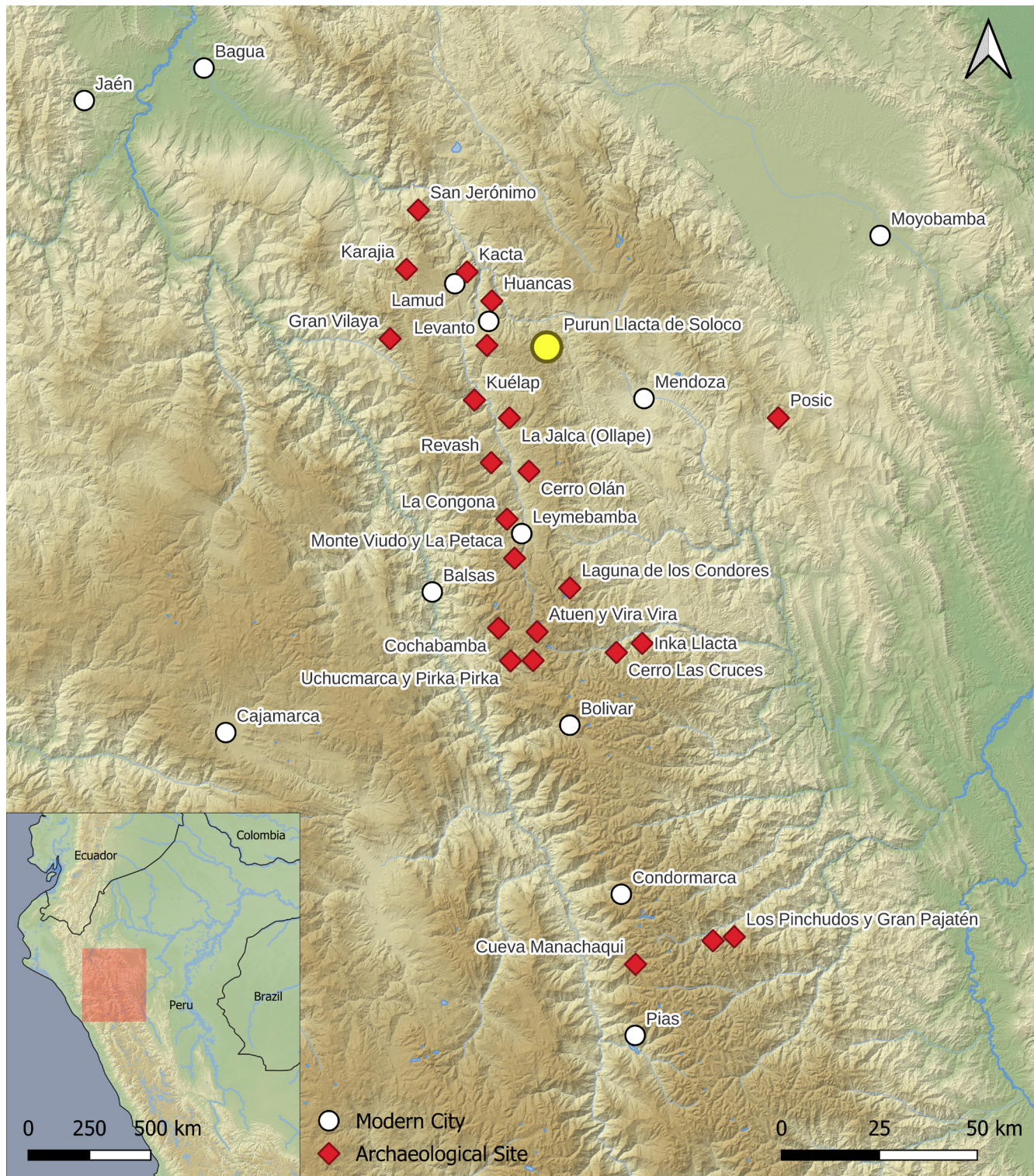
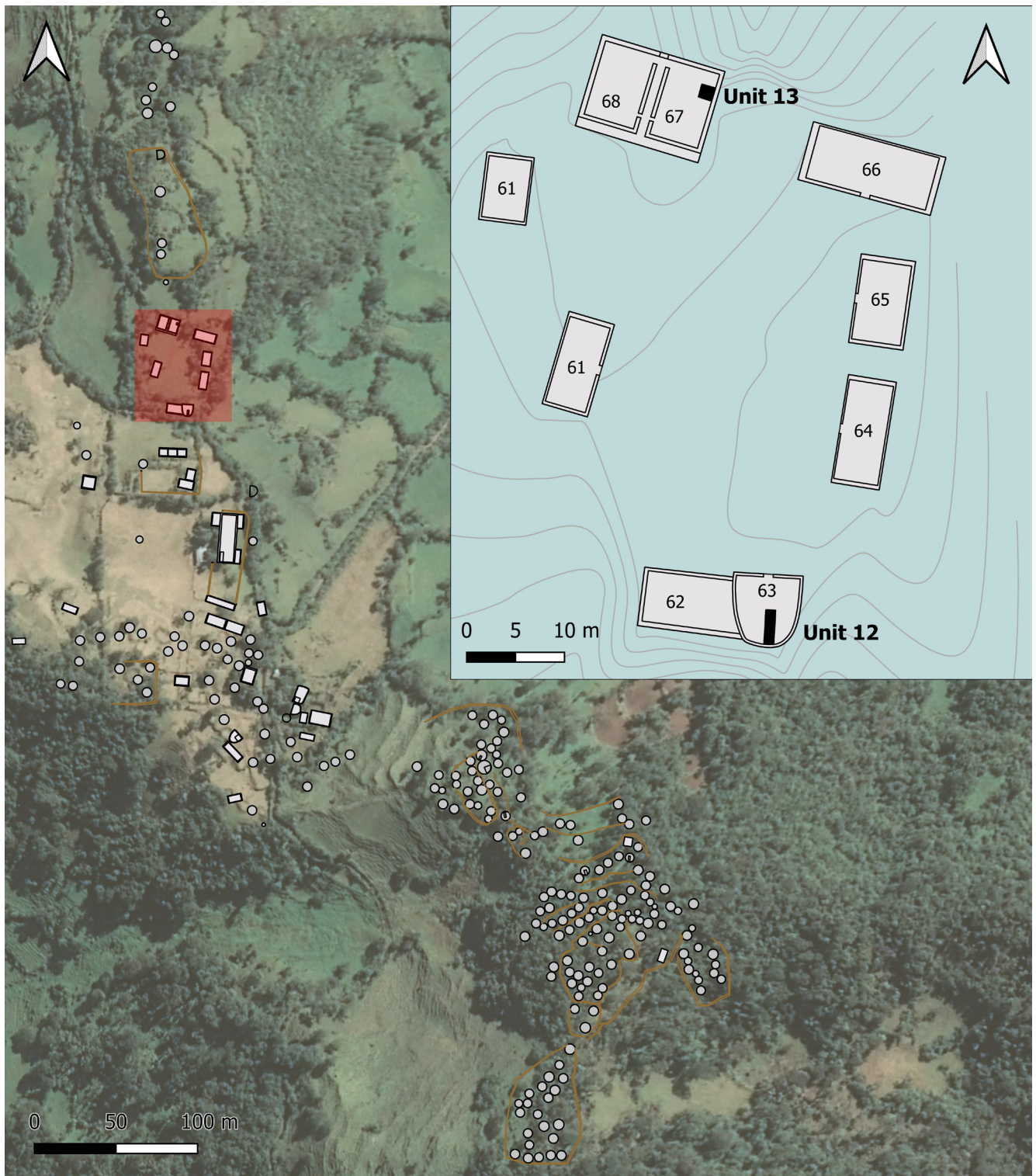


Fig. 1: Map showing the extent of Chachapoya sites and the location of Purun Llacta de Soloco.

through the lower of two floors (Fig. 3) (Crandall – Risco 2024: 3). The context of their discovery suggests that the *aquillas* were probably buried between 1536 and 1580 AD¹,

1 Carbon dates in multiple contexts indicate that the site was occupied from the 1st century AD and may have been utilized periodically until the 17th century after its abandonment in the late 16th century. No usable carbon was recovered from the strata associated with the *aquillas*, but carbon associated with Chachapoya-Spanish colonial period ceramics and redwares in the *aquillas* context matching those found elsewhere at the site date from the Late Horizon to the early Spanish colonial Period (Crandall 2018, Crandall – Risco 2024). Another excavated structure on the opposite end of the plaza facing the building where the *aquillas* were found only contained an ephemeral Spanish colonial occupation with iron tools and green glaze ceramic wares.



and demonstrates linkages to an Indigenous community from the Amazonian highlands with religious, social, and political practices of *Andean* reciprocity (Crandall – Risco 2024: 6).

4 While many decorated *aquillas* can be found in museums throughout the world, this find is the first evidence of a pair of decorated colonial *aquillas* found in a primary archaeological context (Fig. 4). The upper band of both vessels is notable for the presence of engraved scenes, which mirror each other, but are not identical. Men and women are depicted alternately, dressed in clothing from the Inca and colonial periods (*uncu*, *anacu*, and *pillu*). Each pair holds a set of objects that are repeated in divided scenes. These objects include a *chiktana* (axe), what appears to be a *chuspa* (coca

Fig. 2: Map showing the colonial plaza and the location of Unit 12 where the *aquillas* were excavated.

Fig. 3: Archaeological context of the discovery of the aquillas from Purun Llacta de Soloco.



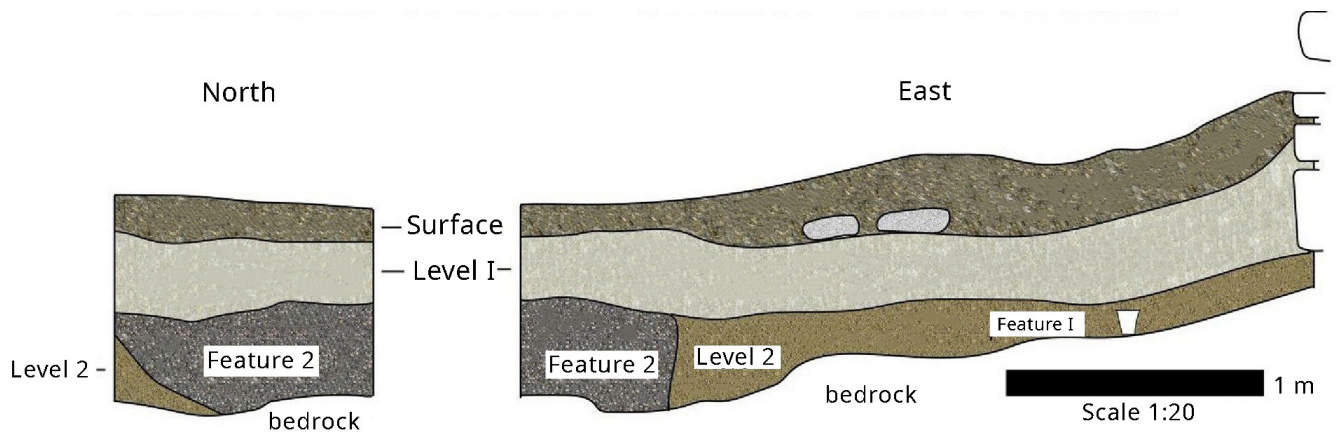


Fig. 4: Stratigraphy of Unit 12, detail of the north and east profiles. The location of the *aquillas* (feature 1) can be seen above the bedrock.

bag), a *waqtana* (an agricultural clod-buster), and a possible *chakitaqlla* (Andean foot plow) (Crandall – Risco 2024: 5). However, a deeper reflection on these objects opens a range of questions about their significance and how they relate to the construction of identity during the transconquest period. The goal of this paper is to understand the historical context of Purun Llacta during this period and observe the scenes on the *aquillas* as a concrete sequence of events that could have occurred in a ritual setting. We explore how such objects might have a form of social agency as a signifier of nonverbal communication. We explore their possible origins, iconography, and their ritualizing aspects. Consequently, we ask in what ways did the *aquillas* have agency in the creation of identity? Finally, how did their use as part of a larger constellation of social practices contribute to how some Chachapoya ‘became Inca?’.

Nonverbal Communication and the Agency of Inca Objects

5 Archaeological theory and practice over the last few decades has taken seriously the various ways that object agency influences social fields (Gell 1998, Robb 2010; Joyce – Lopiparo 2005; Harrison-Buck – Hendon 2018). While recent parallel concerns of this nature have shifted toward the broad relationships of matter via ‘new materialism’ (Whitmore 2014; Govier – Steel 2021) we assert that it is helpful to examine the specific aspects of repeated action involved in the process of structuration; specifically, structuration surrounding the construction of identity. As Swenson and Cipolla (Swenson – Cipolla 2020: 320) have observed it is important to recognize how different entities (human or otherwise) build and gather relations, and by extension, represent and signify. For instance, metal production in the Andes has been linked to the creation of political subjects in practices which espouse worldviews of *camay*² surrounding shared life force between humans, ancestors, and materials which are enmeshed in a web of life, death, and creation (Swenson – Warner 2012). In this section we examine how one particular group of Inca objects gathered diverse persons into shared ceremonial practice and came to signify new forms of social relations.

6 Gold or silver *aquillas*, along with wooden or ceramic *queros*, were ceremonial objects. The *quero* has been defined as the most representative form of Inca ceremonial ware. As an instrument of ritualized political and social mediation, it was one of the

2 A Quechua term which means ‘to charge’, ‘animate’, or ‘give form and force’ (see Bray 2009: 359).

gifts that the Sapa Inca sent to local rulers to initiate political negotiations (Cummins 2002). In this way, the *quero* was transformed into a vessel of anticipatory assimilation into the Inca imperial apparatus, with the toast offered by the Cusco ruler serving as a gesture to avoid armed conflict (MALI 2023: 212). Additionally, the Inca required that their most important calendrical rituals be performed simultaneously throughout the Tahuantinsuyu, and such objects necessary to participate. Consequently, vessels (*aquilla/quero*) and also *cumbi* cloth (*uncu/anacu*) were used in ceremonial feasts (Cummins 2015: 183), both of which often contained signs of imperial signification, such as tocapu and diamond bands (Rowe 1979). Many of these rituals revolve around cycles of agricultural production detailed in the works Guaman Poma de Ayala (Guaman Poma de Ayala n.d.: 252, 1163)³. When depicting the materials associated with these practices, Guaman Poma de Ayala did not clearly distinguish whether the vessels used for ceremonial toasting were *aquillas* or *queros*; however, it is inferred that these ritual vessels were an active medium, whose role was to convey messages. Recent scholarship on colonial ritual objects in the Andes have focused on how such objects may be ‘read’ to transmit oral traditions as they reflect both communication that mirrors written narratives recorded during the Spanish colonial period (Martínez – Martínez 2013; Ziolkowski – Arabas 2023) as well as a material agency which obtained value via their use in feasts as a part of imperial incorporation (Cummins 2002; Zori 2022: 64).

⁷ Cummins (Cummins 2002: 27) notes that the *querocamayoc*, after manufacturing the *queros*, would release them from their natural state, giving life to the object and its image. The vessel and its design were interdependent in relation to its substance, maintaining an inseparable connection between appearance and essence. The agential role of ceremonial vessels suggests that our approach should consider the ontological relations of material things. In this way, the vessels can be recognized as “speaking” or “acting” objects that mediated between the Inca and members of conquered groups. *Queros* and *aquillas* were integrated into the economic, political, and religious systems of various societies. They were objects that anchored the system of mutual obligations to the community and the empire via their performative use by local political leaders and members of the state; and between the world of the living, ancestors, and their deities via the act of the toast in performative ceremonies (Ramírez 2005; Noack – Nowack 2023: 48). When considering ‘what difference such objects made in the course of some agent’s action?’ (Latour 2005: 71) Their use and acceptance by political subjects in ritual actions to reaffirm an association to the Inca state attests to their communicative power and their ability to be seen as an agential force.

⁸ The active role of the *aquillas* was reflected upon by Titu Cusi Yupanqui in Vilcabamba (Yupanqui – Julien 2006 [1570]), at a meeting between his grandfather Atahualpa and Francisco Pizarro. Noack and Nowack (Noack – Nowack 2023: 56 [trans. author L. Risco]) reflect on this discourse by suggesting that, “the importance that Titu Cusi assigns to the golden drinking vessels, *aquillas* and the offered beverage, *chicha*, marks the essential difference between his account and the Spanish eyewitness reports. For him, these objects and actions are not incidental elements, as they are in the Spanish texts. Rather, the drinking vessels replace the book as the object in a failed exchange between the Inca and the Spaniards. The book thrown to the ground by Atahualpa, which in all Spanish accounts expresses hostility, is of little significance in Titu Cusi’s narration”.

⁹ This overt act revealed the essential place that the agency of the *aquillas* maintained in the symbolic actions of political agents of the Inca state. Furthermore, during the Inca and early colonial periods, they were an effective means of nonverbal

³ <https://poma.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/252/es/text/?open=idm219>. <https://poma.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/1163/es/text/?open=idm747>.

communication through which status, as well as social and political relationships, were represented and negotiated (Noack – Nowack 2023: 63).

10 The space where ritual toasts took place served to heighten such communicative acts. Inca plazas, often trapezoidal, featured a ceremonial platform (*ushnu*) on which religious and political leaders performed propitiatory ceremonies. The main plaza of Inca settlements always presented a sacred context, functioning as both a conceptual and material space. These spaces, understood even as the material union of the physical and the spiritual, can be imagined as an axis for the binary and quadripartite divisions that organized much of Inca cosmology. This is partly because recursive duality exists in all Inca imagery and architecture and also appears in the geometric design of *aquillas*, *queros*, and Inca vessels.

11 The use of paired vessels reflected the performative heterarchy of the nature of rituals where those who were Inca brought outsiders into the fold of state. The exchange of cups expressed the profound dualities of Andean social relationships, and the toast embodied many of the principles and paradigms underlying Inca artistic production and design (Cummins 2015: 173–177). The agency of the Purun Llacta *aquillas* materialized in the sacred space of the colonial plaza, where their use marked a metasensory act which not only communicated their textual qualities, but acted to bind the participants in relations where social distinctions were made real. As other scholars of the Chachapoyas region have noted these settlements contained few civic spaces before the Inca conquest and ritual activities likely took place within households or specialized structures such as the one where the *aquillas* were found (Guengerich 2014: 5, Crandall 2018: 322). The use of the Purun Llacta *aquillas* in the adjacent building on the plaza merged the habitus of ritual praxis. The maize beer (*aqha*) consumed as a fluid sealed the act, embodying the fundamental bond between the earthly – food production and the Inca sociopolitical order – and the needs of divine beings conceptualized within the Inca telluric cosmology (Goodman-Elgar 2008: 77).

12 The archaeological context of the *aquillas* at Purun Llacta de Soloco is the result of changing cultural practices during the early years of the Spanish occupation, a time when the transcultural sphere came into being. When evaluating the archaeological context of the discovery – the toast, agricultural ritual ceremonies, and plaza – we can observe this assemblage that communicates a range of social relations. Sixteen characters, both Inca and perhaps Chachapoya, were depicted in eight scenes, and immortalized in the community's memory and exalted during the ritual toast. In this same act, these characters simultaneously acquired an active role that confirmed their presence, mutual meaning, and interlegibility.

The Purun Llacta de Soloco Aquillas

13 The “D”-shaped house where the *aquillas* were found, along with its seven neighboring rectangular houses, surround a rectangular plaza (40 x 20 m, oriented N–S). Six of these houses, including the “D”-shaped one, open directly to the plaza's flat expanse (Crandall 2017: 300). The arrangement of the residences and the central plaza defines the public character of the space where these objects were used.

14 Within the deposit, *Aquilla* 1 was placed inside *Aquilla* 2, within a 30 cm wide hole placed on the bedrock surface below the house above. It is clear that both vessels had been produced as a pair with nearly identical measurements and weight (Crandall – Risco 2024: 4). Each *aquilla* was manufactured from the casting of a sheet of silver, then hammered with the *recopado* technique, and then decoration was applied with the techniques of embossing, chiseling, and polishing (Seclén 2015). This production process has also been documented in the crafting of silver-alloy effigy vessels on Peru's



Fig. 5: Seven pairs of *aquillas* were recovered from the submerged Spanish ship *Nuestra Señora de Atocha*, which sank off the coast of Florida in 1622 AD. These two examples exhibit similar decorative elements and quadripartite divisions in the upper band, the same as the Purun Llacta *aquillas*.

central coast during the Late Intermediate Period and the Late Horizon (Carcedo – Vetter – Diez Canseco 2004: 164). Similarly, the production of Chimú vessels appears to have utilized a similar process (Carcedo 2017: 42–45). Silversmiths hammered a flat circular sheet of silver alloy and then manipulated the form around a preformed mold. Design details were incised using chisels and burins. Variations on the surface of the *aquillas* indicates that designs were engraved on the exterior covering earlier embossing on the interior (Crandall – Risco 2024: 3). Unfortunately, the *aquillas* of Purun Llacta bear no marks indicating their place of production, unlike those recovered from the *Nuestra Señora de Atocha* which sank off the coast of Florida, USA in 1622. The silver vessels found there have a similar form, size, and quadripartite division of space (Fig. 5). The Atocha vessels were identified as being made in Potosí and feature “maker’s marks” of their producers.

15 Samples taken from the interior of one of the vessels from Purun Llacta revealed the presence of *Zea mays* starch grains, suggesting that the *aquillas* were used for the consumption of *aqha*, or maize beer (Crandall – Risco 2024: 5). The physical context of their deposition suggests that community members, likely of high community status given the abnormally large size of the houses, periodically gathered within the plaza. This space appears to have been used by Spanish authorities, similar to the Inca, to conduct public activities (Crandall 2017: 304).

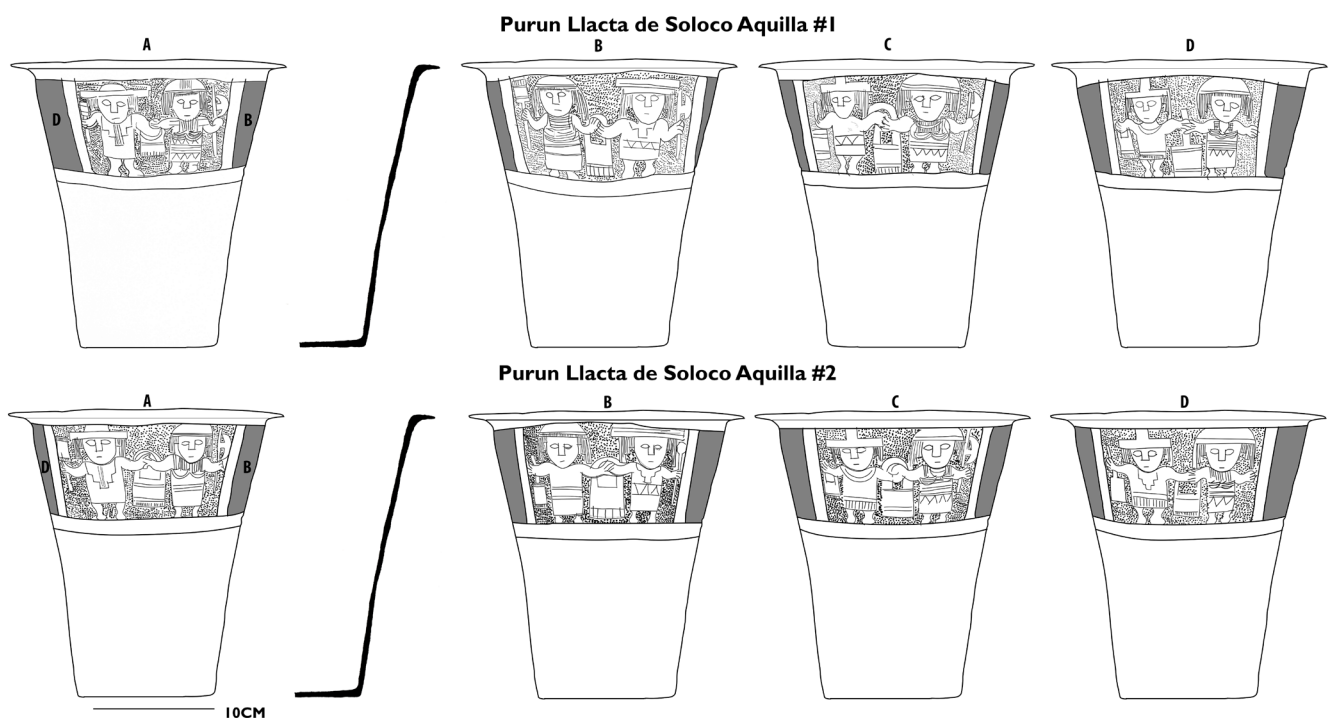
16 Other such vessels have been found elsewhere in the Utcubamba Basin, for instance, a pair of Inca wooden *queros* were found at the Lagunas de los Cóndores, a large collective burial site (von Hagen 2007: 46), suggesting that Inca feasting practices had been widely adopted into the social fabric of Utcubamba peoples before the Spanish colonial period. Both *aquillas* and *queros* were used in ceremonial feasts. As Albornoza noted in 1582, their use in ritual ceremonies continued during the colonial period (Cummins 2015: 183). It is likely that the *aquillas* of Purun Llacta de Soloco were similarly used in the colonial plaza for ritual toasts until the site was forcibly resettled. The imagery engraved on the vessels offers insight into the sociopolitical relationships during the early years of Spanish colonial rule in the Chachapoyas region.

Scenes on the *Aquillas*

17 *Aquillas* 1 and 2 feature four panels of scenes, in which the characters are depicted in a front facing position (Fig. 6). A common trait across the eight graphic panels is that the male and female characters are depicted with one hand extended clutching a bag. In the other hand, they carry various objects, except in the “D” scenes, where the female character’s hand is free. In the “D” scene on *Aquilla* 1, the male character holds a bag, and the characters hold another object in the center. The objects held, regardless of gender, can be interpreted in several ways. Certainly, they include five axes and nine small bags. The other items may be maces or agricultural soil clod busters, and perhaps Andean plows. Some may also reflect some kind of banner, given the cloth fringe detailed in several scenes. Additionally, only in the “B” scenes does the character sequence alternate, beginning with a female figure on the left, rather than a male figure.

18 The tradition of decorating the upper delineated space of *aquillas* was common in the Inca Period, where the designs were often geometric rather than realistic. For example, one pair of the *aquillas* discovered at the archaeological site of Yuraq Rumi (Ñusta Hispana) in Vilcabamba⁴ (Agencia 2023) depict framed human faces without an upper division and another unmatched pair similar in size and form to the Soloco *aquillas* with animal faces, geometric shapes, and flower designs in the upper band. Similarly, Cummins (Cummins 2007: 271; Cummins 2015: 177) reports this tradition in private collections elsewhere. However, this framing practice continued into the later Spanish colonial period, with designs that are figurative and clearly European in theme (MALI 2023: 285). These comparisons help us understand the evolution of stylistic influences, which consistently appear in the upper band of the *aquillas*. In the case of the Purun Llacta examples, the artist’s intent was likely the production of a realistic theme similar to those found elsewhere in the Spanish colonial period (Martínez – Martínez 2013), rather than symbolic or metaphorical abstractions. When the temporal style of the vessels is considered, they differ from the geometric abstractions of Inca *aquillas* and appear as a transitional style towards the polychromatic pictorialism of *queros* produced in the colonial period.

Fig. 6: Detailed drawing of the Purun Llacta de Soloco *aquillas*.



4 <https://andina.pe/agencia/galeria.aspx?GaleriaId=18928&FotoId=959175>.

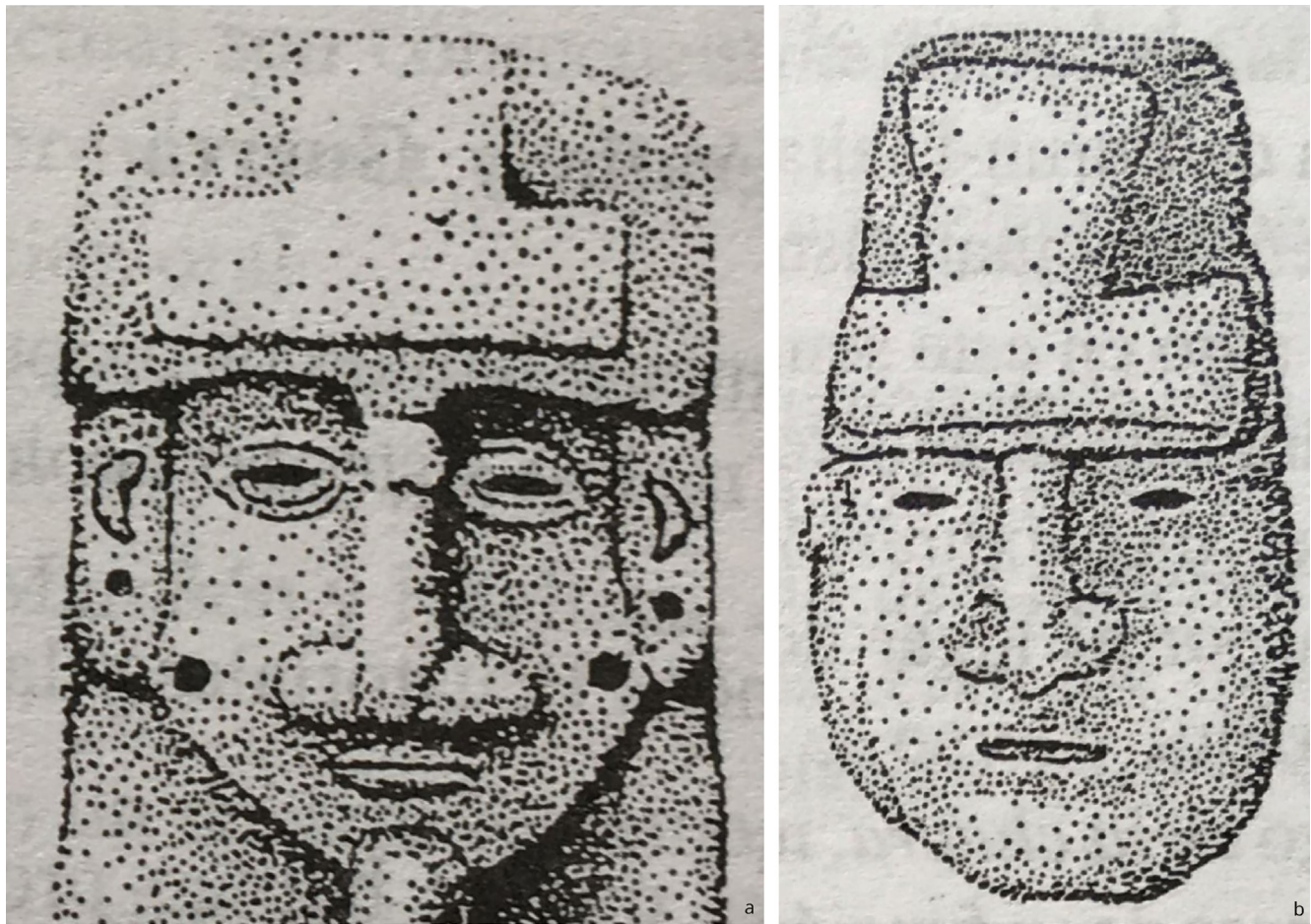


Fig. 7: a, b: Figures engraved on stone sculptures found in La Jalca (Chachapoyas Province, courtesy of Peter Lerche).

19 The depictions of the paired individuals, with varied clothing and headgear, may allow for the identification of diverse social groups. For example, as Garcilaso de la Vega recounts when documenting group-specific traits, “traen estos indios Chachapuyas por tocado y divisa en la cabeza una honda, por la cual son conocidos y se diferencian de otras naciones (...)” (Vega 1967 [1609], Book VIII, Chapter I: 12, in Schjellerup 2005: 61). Among the eight scenes, the style of clothing and accessories worn by the characters is not identical. The women on *Aquilla* 1 wear dresses with a common iconographic pattern, but none have the same design; the same applies to their semicircular headdresses. While diamond or linear bands are present on Inca textiles during the Colonial Period, diamond bands are also seen on the painted dresses adorning sarcophagi burials in the Luya district of the Utcubamba Basin at sites such as Pueblo de los Muertos (Koschmieder 2012: 63). All four men wear *uncus* with different patterns, some of which are of a clear Inca style. Headgear worn by several characters could be Chachapoya (Fig. 7); several are comparative to headgear seen on stone sculptures documented at La Jalca (Lerche 1995: 35,47) and wooden sculptures from the mausoleums at Los Pinchudos (Kauffmann 2013: 284–88). Many headdresses are flat and rectangular, and the hanging fringe elements of these are likely reflective of some form of Andean *pillu*, or regionally specific headbands worn throughout the Andes (Rowe 2011). Three women on *Aquilla* 2 wear elongated tunics or dresses with the same iconographic pattern but differing designs, while the fourth (“B”) wears a plain dress. Several also are also represented with stylized cloth in their upper torso that could be the depiction of a *lliclla*, or cape. All four share the same semicircular headdress. Among the men, three wear Inca-style *uncus*, but the fourth (“C”) has a different style. Two of the characters’ headgear might be expressive of a localized Chachapoya-style, like those on *Aquilla* 1. The other headdresses could represent a Spanish-style hat with a flat, rectangular shape, or another form of

pillu. It is notable that all the characters, except the one in scene “A” on *Aquilla* 2, wear horizontal bands with zigzag lines, a typical Chachapoya iconography. Inca tunics commonly have such bands, and these banded representations of zigzag iconography may be reflective of a syncretic design. Many of these bands are still visible today in the clothing of the *palla* dancer in the district of Levanto (Fig. 8) (Cueva – Alvarado 2024: 21).

20 Clothing depicted on the vessels’ figures suggest a mix of foreign Inca stylistic patterns with local Chachapoya patterns. If Spanish influence is present, it is manifested through the two hats. Overall, it can be stated that the sixteen characters on the *aquillas* share the same general clothing tradition, with some stylistic variations. These differences may correspond to subgroups within the same social sphere yet clearly reflect broader Late Horizon traditions in dress.

21 The two silver *aquillas* exhibit a close physical and decorative similarity, reflecting a binary relationship in their manufacture. Both *aquillas* display the same consecutive order of scenes. Each pair has a corresponding counterpart distinguishable by their identical identity markers (Fig. 6). This depiction suggests the possible representation of four defined subgroups. The Inca partitioning of regional social divisions was outlined in colonial documents summarized by Espinoza (Espinoza 1967: 260), who recounts that “Ataohualpa introduced in the Chacha region the system of two principal curacas to govern a single Huno, with equal power and authority. He designated their respective second persons. This system was implemented around mid-1532”. One of the documents summarized by Espinoza (Espinoza 1967: 263), indicates that when Atahualpa was captured in Cajamarca, “he sent messengers to all nearby provinces to bring supplies to the Spanish conquerors. One of the messengers was dispatched to the province of Los Chachapuya, from where the curaca Zuta and the second persons, Chuquimis Lonquín and Lucana Pachaca, traveled to Cajamarca”. Several ‘*cacique principales*’ of Purun Llacta de Soloco and the Soloco region in the 16th and 17th centuries share the Zuta surname (Crandall 2018: 369). Alonso Chuquimis Lonquín was the leader of the town of Pipus, a few kilometers north of Purun Llacta, and the *segunda persona*, according to the genealogy of the Chuquimis lineage (Schjellerup 2005: 166). It is clear that the imposed political positions, and dual social divisions, under the empire were operating in the communities surrounding Purun Llacta de Soloco at least 60 years after the Spanish conquest. These dual social divisions may be reflected on the depiction of a dual procession of images carved on the *aquillas*.

22 An unchanging feature of the scenes is that each pair holds a bag, which, based on scale of the figures, is represented in realistic proportions. Additionally, the male characters in scene “D” (*Aquilla* 1) and scene “C” (*Aquilla* 2) hold a smaller bag in

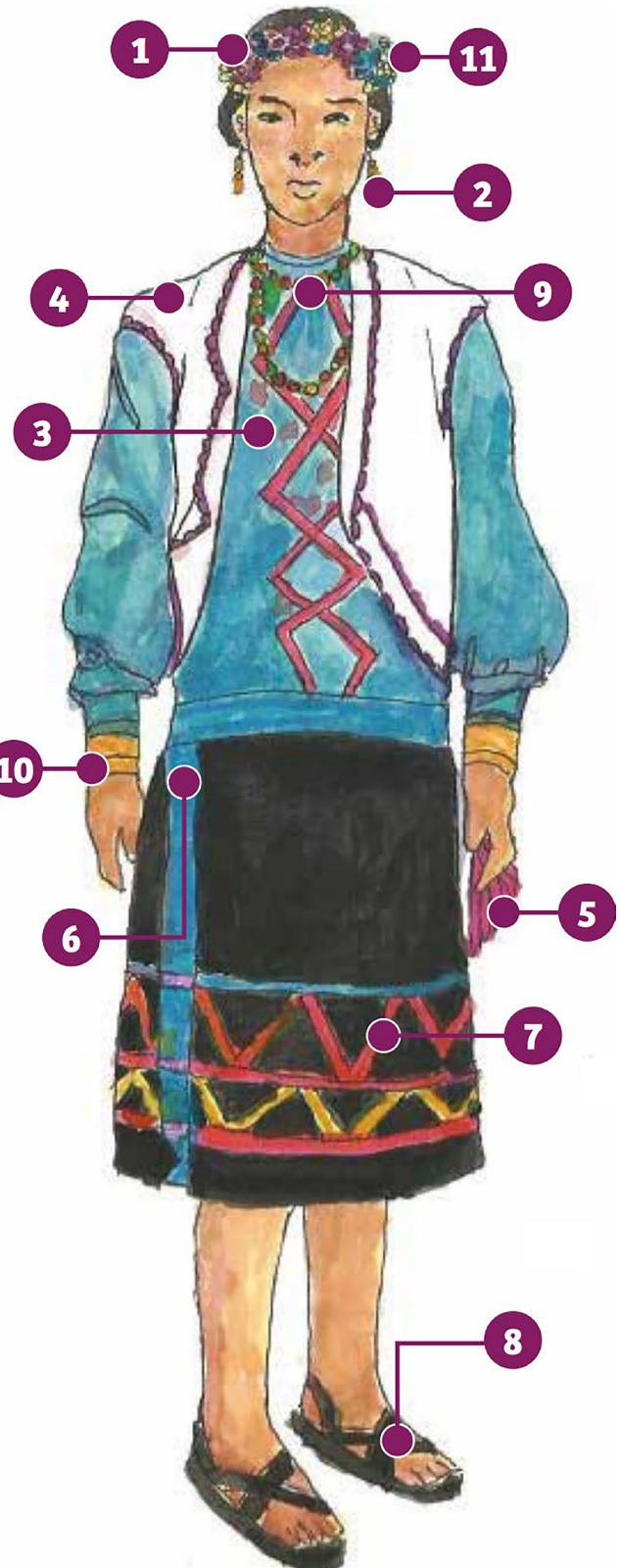


Fig. 8: Dancing Palla woman. Note 7 indicates the Mantilla, a rectangular black fabric garment that fits closely to the body over the skirt and is fastened at the waist, leaving an opening on the right side. Its design features horizontal lines and zigzag patterns created with colorful ribbon appliqué (Regional Bureau of Amazonas-Peru) (Cueva – Alvarado 2024).

Fig. 9: a: Purun Llacta de Soloco aquilla 1, scene "A." b, c: Sarcophagi from two sites in the Luya District, within the Utcubamba Basin (photos by James M. Crandall and Timothy Galowicz).



their right hand. Visual depictions of Inca bags appear in Martín de Murúa (Murúa 1590: f.84), in an illustration titled “Service of the Bride”, in which the father-in-law gives the son-in-law a *chuspa* (Inca bag) containing coca leaves as payment for labor (Arnold 2016: 172). The *chuspa* is decorated with vertical bands. A similar bag in miniature has been documented, accompanying a small gold figurine and its tunic as part of a diminutive bundle (Pillsbury 2002: 73). Additionally, three male gold and silver figurines holding miniature *chuspas* were found in the Painted Temple at Pachacamac (Narváez 2017: 129). *Chuspa* are still used today to carry coca, and their specific use has a long history. Square cotton textile objects called “Coca Cloths”, have been found in archaeological contexts such as in the cemetery of the Temple of the Sun at Pachacamac, which were used to carry coca leaves (Tiballi 2010: 333–336).

23 The male characters in scenes “A” and “B”, as well as the character in scene “D” on *Aquilla 2*, wear Inca-style *uncus*, or tunics. These five tunics feature a standard design with an inverted stepped triangle. The *uncus* in scenes “A” have a central vertical band that crosses the triangle from the neckline to the waist. Those in both “B” scenes are decorated with a horizontal zigzag pattern beneath the triangle, while the *uncu* in scene “D” has a decorative band along its lower edge with small vertical lines.⁵ These details appear to correspond to Chachapoya iconographic traits, similar to those found on the other three *uncus*. The combination of imperial and local designs has been observed in *uncus* from the textile catalog of the Leymebamba Museum (Phipps 2015: 205), specifically in a tunic exhibiting a hybrid Chachapoya-Inca style (Bjerregaard 2007: 78). It has also been established that high-quality *cumbi* textiles were produced in

5 Costin (Costin 1998: 128) suggests that embroidered zig zag designs may be a sign of “Inka royalty, nobility and ethnically Inka persons of rank”.



Fig. 10: a: Circular neck collar design on Purun Llacta de Soloco aquilla 2, scene "C." b: representations of uncu on a rock art panel at the site of Chanqui, Luya District (photo color saturated using D-Stretch software).

Chachapoyas during the Inca and colonial periods⁶, where master weavers revived local textile traditions while blending them with Inca stylistic influences (von Hagen 2007: 45–46). This syncretic condition has also been identified in the *uncu* from Caleta Vitor in northern Chile (Correa-Lau – Agüero – Splitstoser et al. 2023).⁷

24 The stepped triangle on the tunics of the five characters is clearly Inca, resembling the well-known military *uncu* that features an inverted stepped and checkerboard design (Pillsbury 2002: 71), although the checkerboard pattern is absent here. However, variations of this design are also present elsewhere in the Chachapoyas region. Recent work by Crandall and Galowicz (Crandall – Galowicz 2023) have documented sarcophagi burials on remote cliffs in the Luya District, which commonly have painted exteriors depicting textile clothing. These two examples of sarcophagi, from two separate sites, approximately 25–30 km northwest of Purun Llacta, appear adorned in similar *uncu* with alternating textile colors of red over white and white over red, in inverted stepped designs (Fig. 9). Additionally, the different style of *uncu*

6 In late 16th-century Cusco the “*chumbis chachapoyas*” were well known belts used by women to tie their dresses or *acsus* (Ramos 2010: 131).

7 The analysis of this *uncu* has demonstrated the flexibility of local communities in introducing their own set of variations, modifications, and idiosyncratic substitutions. At the same time, local weavers understood the fundamental importance of preserving certain fixed, immutable, and essential traits of imperial significance, ensuring that their technical actions did not compromise the symbolic function of the pieces (Correa-Lau – Agüero – Splitstoser et al. 2023: 20).

represented on *Aquilla* 1, scene “D” and *Aquilla* 2, scene “C” has been documented at the site of Chanqui (Fig. 10). Koschmieder (Koschmieder 2012: 112) has documented a clearer depiction of this *uncu* design adjacent to an axe elsewhere at Chanqui, both axe and *uncu* are like the ones depicted in the Purun Llacta *aquillas*. Certainly, Chachapoya warriors were identified as having a clear role within Huascar’s army during the civil war, and perhaps this variation of the ‘warrior’s tunic’ was a reflection of regional identity in the Utcubamba basin.

25 There is a mutuality between the vessels (*aquillas* and *queros*) and the fine textiles (*cumbi*) which, when given, comprise the Inca gift. This gift transcends sociopolitical exchanges and engages with cosmological interactions (Cummins 2007: 276–280). The practice of their offering binds the nature of the gift between the objects, giver, and receiver. Under this relationship, the clothing and objects carried by the characters on the *aquillas* from Purun Llacta, combined with the narrative of the scenes, form a bidirectional metamorphosis. In this transformation, the *aquillas* serve both as ritual drinking vessels and as manifest entities, using the characters’ attire as a medium of communication along with the performative act of the toast.

Contact Networks and the *Mitmaquna*

26 Determining the origin of the *aquillas* is difficult and it is unlikely they were produced locally.⁸ However, examining exchange networks, specifically those shaped by the distribution of Chachapoya *mitmaquna* (relocated work populations), may shed light on the production, transport, and design of the imagery on these vessels. During the Inca Period, the exploitation of metal mines was tightly controlled, and the extraction process was closely monitored by the state (Vetter 2016: 36–37). During this time, *guayras* (wind-powered furnaces) were used to smelt metals, requiring two-thirds high-grade silver and one-third lead ore containing silver, a process that persisted in Potosí until 1571 (Vetter 2016: 42, 66). In 1572, after the reformation of the *mita*, or forced labor system, by Francisco de Toledo (1570), the amalgamation process was introduced, requiring abundant labor for mercury extraction (Vetter 2016: 60–61).

27 While the *aquillas* from Purun Llacta may have arrived through exchange networks, the exact location where their scenes were produced via repoussé techniques is uncertain. They likely originated from Cusco or Quito. During the Inca Period, Andean silversmiths were often relocated as *mitmaquna*, mainly to Cusco. Ethnohistorical studies suggest that under Huayna Cápac, specialized silversmith *ayllus* from the central coast were relocated to Cusco (Carcedo – Vetter – Diez Canseco 2004: 181). Here, in the colonial period, most Indigenous silversmiths were concentrated in the parish of Santiago, with some also in Santa Ana and San Sebastián (Vetter 2016: 88). Additionally, silversmiths often worked covertly in churches and the homes of *encomenderos* to avoid paying the “royal fifth” tax. This practice ended after the 1572 ordinances mandated that all silversmiths be grouped in workshops in Cusco. Similar reorganizations occurred in La Plata (Sucre), Potosí, and Arequipa (Vetter 2016: 87–91).

28 There were also “Indian silversmiths” in Cuenca and Quito, organized into guilds starting in 1585. In Cuenca, silversmith artisans were active as early as 1557 (Paniagua – Truhan 1995: 58 in Vetter 2016: 99). In 1574 a mandate entitled “Ordinances of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo, prohibiting the crafting of gold and silver *aquillas* as

8 Given the style of their production, it is unlikely the *aquillas* were produced locally. However, several individuals from near the modern post-*reduccion* town of Soloco formed a company to exploit a silver mine in the area in 1653 (A.R.A., P.N. 63, f. 319v–320v, 1653). It is unclear if this was successful as its location is unknown.

objects of idolatry” was circulated among Indigenous silversmiths in Alto Peru (Vetter 2016: 88). This prohibition likely extended to all silver production centers, including those in Cusco and Quito. If produced later, this ordinance may have prompted changes in the narrative style of the upper bands of the *aquillas*. The production of the Purun Llacta *aquillas* during an intermediate phase, before a shift towards purely European design motifs, may reflect broader struggles experienced by Andean communities which in part lead to revitalizing and syncretic Indigenous movements such as the *Taki Onqoy* (Norman 2019). The scenes on the Purun Llacta vessels may depict a narrative event rooted in this historical context, with participants assuming specific roles in a ceremonial setting.

29 Purun Llacta de Soloco’s connection to displaced Chachapoya *mitmaquna* throughout Tahuantinsuyu could be one possible origin for the Soloco *aquillas*. During the Inca occupation, much of the population in and around Purun Llacta was forcibly relocated as *mitmaquna* to areas around Quito by Atahualpa’s captain, Rumiñahui (De los Chuquinbalquis 2019 [1749]: f.3v). In 1535, colonial documents mention “a place [...] near Cotocollao, past the bridge by the settlements where the *Chachas* of Juan Díaz reside”. This suggests a *Chacha* colony was established on the northern outskirts of Quito (Salomon 1986: 159–160). Further south, in the Chilllos Valley, names of local wives married to men of Chachapoya origin appear in 1559. By 1587, “the son of ‘Juan Chacha the blacksmith’ identified himself as ‘Juan Yoplachacha, a native of the mitmaj of this city’” (Salomon 1986: 160). Juan Yoplac was a common surname for *caciques principales* in the community of Levanto, adjacent to the modern city of Chachapoyas in the 17th century (Crandall 2018: 377). Connections between Quito and Chachapoyas, pre-Hispanic and colonial mines in southern Ecuador (Vetter 2016: 54), and silversmith guilds in Quito and Cuenca suggest a strong silversmithing tradition north of Chachapoyas, possibly the origin point of the *aquillas*.

30 On the other hand, Chachapoya *mitmaquna* groups were also relocated by Huayna Cápac to areas near Cusco, such as Chinchaypuquio, Carmenga, Santa Ana, and Cayantambo (Schjellerup 2005: 126). After the fall of the empire, many silver workshops in Cusco continued operating to supply new vessels for Spanish institutions, though Andean objects were still being produced. Before Toledo’s ordinances (1570), the Chachapoya population could have secretly commissioned any Cusco workshop to acquire a pair of *aquillas*. As Inca distribution networks diminished, local governments began controlling exchange flows with their own dispersed *mitmaquna* enclaves, maintaining Indigenous relationships through the Andes. Another possibility is that the Purun Llacta silver vessels reached Cusco from Potosí, as they share manufacturing and design characteristics with the seven pairs of *aquillas* from the Atocha shipwreck (Crandall – Risco 2024: 3–4). Regardless of their origin, the production, circulation, and termination of socially significant objects like the *aquillas* indicate that modes of ritual production and exchange were maintained into the early Spanish colonial period.

Inca Social Reorganization

31 The deposition of the *aquillas* in a ritual context was part of a broader series of practices which indicate Chachapoya and other Utcubamba peoples had become socially integrated into the Inca state by the start of the 16th century in many enduring ways. The ultimate source of authority for Chachapoya political leaders⁹ in

9 Legal documents of the *protocolos notariales* in the Archivo Regional de Amazonas indicate people living in the area around Purun Llacta de Soloco refer to themselves as “indios naturales de los Chachapoyas” as early as 1575 AD (e.g. De los Chuquinbalquis 2019 [1749]: f.5v).

the Utcubamba basin has been obscured by the collective suppression of Indigenous histories during the conquest period. The lack of differentiated architecture and the minimal presence of specialized structures in these communities indicates that, at least from an infrastructural perspective, certain families may have been ascribed minimal social distinction in terms of the investment, quality, and position of community architecture (Guengerich 2014, Crandall 2018). Chronicles allude to vague statements about the transitional nature of Indigenous authority being based on individual merit or social convention. For instance, Sarmiento de Gamboa (Sarmiento de Gamboa 2000 [1572]) suggests that Chachapoya leaders were chosen due to their bravery. Evidence for this kind of meritorious authority is shared by neighboring groups of the upper Marañón where the children of *caciques* married into the families of *caciques* in the Middle Utcubamba (Crandall 2018: 87, Martos 1994 [1604]: 78). This of course should not be surprising given that many societies imbued temporary transactional authority either seasonally or in times of crisis (see Graeber – Wengrow 2021). If demonstrable valor was the origin of community authority, the Inca appear to have institutionalized some degree of hereditary authority in community *caciques* during the Late Horizon. This kind of authority appears to have also carried broad responsibilities of public religious life where the *aquillas* became a medium of communication for local political allegiance to the Inca state.

32 When Túpac Inca Yupanqui entered Chachapoya territory around 1470 AD during a period of Inca expansion, he partially subdued it. In a second campaign, his son Huayna Cápac led the first military offensive. After three years of warfare, the territory of Levanto was conquered, serving as a base for future military operations led by Huáscar's commanders (Nowack 2011: 118–119). Part of the conquest strategy also involved extending the presence of the royal lineage. For instance, Túpac Yupanqui left descendants in Levanto, including grandchildren and great-grandchildren who ensured coca leaf production (Schjellerup 2005: 144). During the Inca Period, Chachapoya *ayllus* were reorganized into *pachacas* and *huarangas*, thereby unifying them and integrating them into the state superstructure (Espinoza 1967: 235). A *pachaca*, for example, might consist of one or more *ayllus* (a grouping of several nuclear families) but ideally composed of 100 individuals (Espinoza 1967: 238). While Chachapoya social reproduction was centered on this household, this may have been how communities like Purun Llacta de Soloco were reorganized to meet obligations of the state.

33 The socio-historical reality of the early colonial period was tumultuous, a factor crucial to understanding the production and use context of the *aquillas*. The Vilcabamba conflict in Cusco (1536–1572) (Bauer – Fonseca – Aráoz 2016) had repercussions in Chachapoya territory, where two factions emerged. The majority, led by *curaca* Guaman¹⁰, aligned with the Spanish; while a minority, led by Guayamulos, may have remained loyal to Manco Inca. The southern Chachapoya region, between Cajamarquilla and Leymebamba, supported the Spanish cause, while the northern region and the rest of the territory followed the orders of Cayo Tópac, one of Manco Inca's captains (Espinoza 1967: 273). This perhaps confirms that the Pípos Valley, where Purun Llacta is located, was loyal to Huáscar's Cusco faction. Certainly, some members of the community of Purun Llacta de Cheto, 3 km east of Soloco, referred to themselves at *yanaconas* into the 16th century and may reflect a change in social status for these communities after Huáscar's defeat (Archivos Regionales de Amazonas, Protocolos Notoriales [A.R.A., P.N] 12, f. 179v, 1587; 18, f. 83–84, 1592). Support for this political affiliation appeared during the Battle of Chupas (Huamanga) in 1542, when allied Chachapoya warriors fought alongside Vaca de Castro. On the opposing side, supporting Almagro the Younger, were

10 Principal *curaca* of Cochabamba y Leimebamba's *Huno*, and he was baptized in Cajamarca as Francisco Pizarro Guamán, by the Marquis (Espinoza 1967: 265).

the Cusco forces (Espinoza 1999: 301–304). As in Vilcabamba, local communities often supported Inca resistance. In the case of Purun Llacta, this alliance may have originated during Túpac Inca Yupanqui's reign when kinship relationships were first established. These loyalties might have persisted under the leadership of Huáscar and Manco Inca.

34 During the Spanish colonial period *caciques*, or *kurakas* in communities surrounding Purun Llacta de Soloco held authority to make community decisions regarding the payment of debt and the disposition of land within the Spanish legal system. Land transactions were indicative that dual social structures had been institutionalized around community land tenure rights during the Inca conquest and continued into the early 17th century.

35 Legal authority to make decisions on behalf of Chachapoya communities was often ceded on behalf of neighboring *caciques* to a third-party legal representative residing in the city of Chachapoyas. For instance, in 1586 Andrés Tomanguilla “Cacique y Señor Principal de [H]atun Luya” and “Juan cacique segunda persona de Japacato” invested his legal authority on behalf of their community with Andrés Benche, principal of their repartimiento who resided within the city Chachapoyas (A.R.A., P.N. 11, f. 46v, 1586). The practice of delegating legal authority appears to have occurred out of necessity but gave some agency to communities by engaging the Spanish legal system by addressing abuses by regional *encomenderos*. For instance, a set of lengthy legal documents described that in 1570 the community of Cajamarquilla in part challenged the rights of Inés Nieta Príncipe, the *encomendera* of Cajamarquilla and Hatun Luya, regarding the limits of her authority over the community, the distribution of tributaries, and rights of tribute (A.G.I. Justicia, 444, N.1, 1571; A.G.I. Justicia 446, N.2., R.4, 1575). The connections which tied various communities were likely bound via kinship as it likely that during the 16th century children of at least some *kurakas* appear to have been preferred marriage partners (Crandall 2018: 116–119).

36 *Kurakas* often acted as community interlocutors for the purchase, selling, or leasing of land. In 1621 Diego Lobato de Sosa, “cacique” and “Protector de los naturales de Chachapoyas” and Alonso Rirco “Gobernador y ‘segunda persona’ de Tim[a]l” were invested with the authority of the community of Timal¹¹ to sell a portion of land to Gonzalo García de Málaga¹² near the city of Chachapoyas, a visible distance from Purun Llacta de Soloco (A.R.A. 1621, P.N., 47, f. 93v–100v). In turn, payment was said to be owed to the community rather than the individual *kurakas* (A.R.A. 1621, P.N. 47, f. 101–101v). That *kurakas* acted as the legal arbiters of their communities is not surprising. However, the frequency with which “caciques principales” and “segundas personas” of communities acted in tandem for legal purposes suggests that long-term legal obligations shared between neighboring communities by persons with shared titles of office indicates that dual structures in community decision making was not a local phenomenon.

37 In examining land tenure records and payments, ‘caciques principales’ and the ‘segundas personas’ of neighboring districts often confronted the Spanish legal system in tandem as a standard practice. For instance, in 1587 Cristobal Chuquimes Solsol, “cacique” and “Gobernador of Olía y Chelel”¹³ in conjunction with Juan Chero Lin, “segunda persona de Chasmal, Chelel, y otros” neighboring communities of Purun Llacta cede their legal authority to Diego Solsol (*cacique principal* de Chasmal) to act on behalf of their communities (A.R.A. 1587, P.N., 12, f. 255–255v). In 1590 Juan Chilcho the “Cacique principal de los Chilchos” and Fernando Jatan the “Cacique y segunda persona de La Jalca” follow suit (A.R.A., P.N., 15, f. 60–60v, 1590). Andrés Tamón Cullop “cacique de Luya” in conjunction with Juan Gupio and Alonso Loachi “segunda personas

11 Likely the original name of Purun Llacta de Soloco (see Crandall 2018).

12 A merchant who owned a large amount of land to the west of Purun Llacta de Soloco.

13 Neighboring communities to Purun Llacta.

de Luya” collectively agree on the quantity of clothing that was to be given as tribute by the community of Luya (A.R.A., P.N., 15, f. unordered, 1590). In 1593 Francisco Huamán “cacique principal de Leymebamba” and Alonso Chuquimes “segunda persona [de] Santo Tomás de Quillay” collectively invested their legal authority in legal representation to remove Lorenzo Pérez de Vivero “Cura de Santo Tomás” for their communities’ collective grievances against him (A.R.A., P.N., 19, f. 45v–46v, 1593). In 1624 Pedro Cuta Guablocho “Cacique principal de la Jalca” and Felipe Culqui Puzcán “Cacique de segunda persona [de la Jalca] y otros” collectively made a series of transactions related to court lawsuits against Juan Miguel the “principal de las encomiendas de Chávez Guevara (A.R.A., P.N., 50, f. 72–75v, 1624)”. These cases demonstrate that Chachapoya political leaders were dependent on broader networks for collective legal decision-making power. Additionally, some kin groups, perhaps brought together by the imposition of the Inca conquest, and legal divisions of Indigenous and Spanish colonial authority likely continued to influence the political economics of land rights and legal decisions into at least the mid-17th century.

38 Cumulative change in the everyday praxis of political leaders at Purun Llacta led to the adoption of new political strategies. Chachapoya leaders moved from ritual participation in Inca state sponsored ritual through the use of objects such as the *aquillas* in small plazas or households, to the construction of the new ideological domain of an early 16th century Catholic Church (Crandall 2018) and actively engaged in the dual legal system of the viceregal state of Peru. The participation of political leaders in the Spanish political economy indicates that many Indigenous leaders had adapted to the forced indoctrination of the Inca political economy which changed the nature of community leadership and political relations. Ritual practices surrounding the communicative use of the *aquillas* came under scrutiny by the extirpation of idolatry in the early 17th century. In response, these objects which communicated broad ideas about agricultural renewal, violence, and reciprocity under the Inca political regime were ritually treated the same as bundled ancestors at Purun Llacta when their owners decided to terminate their ‘lives’. They were intentionally buried within a floor of a building that likely held an important space for ritual conduct carried out by the community’s *kurakas*.

Conclusions

39 From the encounter between Francisco Pizarro and Atahualpa to the implementation of Viceroy Toledo’s ordinances, Peru experienced a period of dramatic social transformation, marked by population decline, war, and political instability. The Chachapoyas region, including the Purun Llacta community, was not exempt from these changes. The realistic representation of individuals on the *aquillas* of Purun Llacta conveys a sense of transitional identity-driven expression of participatory action steeped in the political economy of the Inca state. Representational designs such as those seen on the *aquillas* may reflect a syncretic period where a hybrid Chachapoya-Inca style emerged and may reflect an ideological centering and reconstitution of identity under a broader arena of conflict. The northern part of the Chachapoyas region may have remained loyal to Manco Inca and the Vilcabamba rebels. Within this historical context, the representation of the *ayllus* of Purun Llacta depicted in the *aquillas* may symbolize a coalition. As César Itier explains, the division into *ayllus* was a fundamental principle of the organizational structure of Inca armies (MALI 2023: 26). Furthermore, the bags held by the eight pairs of figures could represent material contributions and offerings from multiple subgroups.

40 The silver vessels of Purun Llacta were objects of Inca tradition which continued to be used for ritual toasts during the early decades of the Spanish colonial

period. The vessels, the toast, and the drink formed a ceremonial paraphernalia that aimed to reinforce social and political ties among the *ayllu*. Each group may have been represented by one pair of principal characters and one pair of secondary ones. This could indicate that leadership within each *ayllu* was established on primary and secondary levels, requiring coordination, organization, negotiation, and political unity. The distinction between multiple identities is made possible by the designs on their represented garments. Based on the stylistic similarity of clothing, it appears that multiple ethnic identities may have coexisted within the communities around Purun Llacta, or at least that multiple identities were narrated upon during the use of the *aquillas* in performative toasts.

41 During the period of social upheaval, Chachapoya contact networks, which tied them to broader Tahuantinsuyu, may have enabled the *aquillas* to have been procured from Quito, Cusco, or Potosí. It is also highly likely that the raw material for the silver vessels was obtained using the *guayra* smelting technique.

42 The offering of *aquillas* in a building adjacent to the colonial plaza of Purun Llacta communicates the intertwining of confrontational images with agricultural ones. The illustrations of Guaman Poma de Ayala depict the use of *queros* in agrarian ritual toasts, such as during August ceremonies which opened farmlands and June rituals which toasts to the success of the “rest of the harvest”¹⁴. In another image drawn by Guaman Poma de Ayala (Guaman Poma de Ayala n.d.: 252)¹⁵, agricultural rituals and festivals begin narratively with the Sapa Inca and his wife, symbolizing a paradigmatic union (Houston – Cummins 2004: 382). This paired union is also seen in 16th-century Quito, where male Chachapoya *mitmaquna* married local women (Salomon 1986: 160). This may explain the pairing of characters on the Purun Llacta *aquillas*, representing the complementarity of opposing halves. For example, in a scene depicting their use Guaman Poma de Ayala, (Guaman Poma de Ayala n.d.: 1163)¹⁶, depicts an agricultural festival performed in pairs, including “an elite Inca man and a woman placing a kero in his hand” (Goodman-Elgar 2008: 86–87). Extrapolating this agricultural ritual to a conflict-oriented setting, it can be argued that the ceremonial vessel, whether wood or metal, transitioned from a subjected object to one which guided the social fields of ritual ceremony as a part of outsiders joining members of the state to become Inca. The toast with authorities, ancestors, and deities reaffirmed sociopolitical relationships, including the bonds of affinity within Purun Llacta (Crandall 2017: 301). Just as the pair of *aquillas* symbolized the transfer of power (Houston – Cummins 2004: 380–381), the *aquillas* of Soloco and the paraphernalia present at the ceremony may have elevated and confirmed mandates supporting the resistance of the Chachapoya Inca faction.

43 An objective of this paper was to examine the pair of *aquillas* as entities that (re)produced actions and emerged as a medium of political communication between the Inca and Chachapoya in the creation of a shared cosmology. It was not only the drinking ritual with the *aquillas* and the eight depicted scenes but also all the objects – tangible and intangible, human and non-human – which were perceived by all the attendees as an assemblage in the plaza as a collective reconstitution and reassertion of relational ties. Their use was one of the social, political, and mortuary practices in the Sonche and Utcubamba basins by which Chachapoya peoples became Inca and endured as a new identity under Spanish colonialism.

14 <https://poma.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/248/es/text/?open=idm219>.

15 <https://poma.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/1163/es/text/?open=idm747>.

16 <https://poma.kb.dk/permalink/2006/poma/252/es/text/?open=idm219>.

Acknowledgements

⁴⁴ We thank Meggan Jordan, Lisa Johnson, Lucas Johnson, and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper; also, thanks to Professor Markus Reindel for his support and encouragement in publishing this article. And finally, thanks also to Christian Hartl-Reiter for helping us with the layout of the maps.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Cover: J. M. Crandall

Fig. 1: Christian Hartl-Reiter (KAAK), after Map of region by James Crandall

Fig. 2: Christian Hartl-Reiter (KAAK), after Map of region by James Crandall

Fig. 3: J. M. Crandall

Fig. 4: J. M. Crandall

Fig. 5: J. M. Crandall

Fig. 6: J. M. Crandall

Fig. 7: P. Lerche

Fig. 8: Regional Bureau of Amazonas-Peru

Fig. 9: J. M. Crandall and T. Galowicz

Fig. 10: J. M. Crandall and T. Galowicz

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METADATA

Titel/*Title*: Drinking, Identity, and Practice:
Becoming Inca at Purun Llacta de Soloco
(Chachapoyas)

Band/*Issue*: JoGA 2025/2

Bitte zitieren Sie diesen Beitrag folgenderweise/
Please cite the article as follows: L. Risco Patiño – J.
M. Crandall, Drinking, Identity, and Practice:
Becoming Inca at Purun Llacta de Soloco
(Chachapoyas), JoGA 2025/2, 78–103, § 1–44,
<https://doi.org/10.34780/rm77n214>

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Online veröffentlicht am/*Online published on*:
02.07.2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34780/rm77n214>

Schlagworte/*Keywords*: *Aquillas*; *Uncus*; Nonverbal
Communication; Inca; Chachapoya

Bibliographischer Datensatz/*Bibliographic
reference*: [https://zenon.dainst.org/
Record/003096469](https://zenon.dainst.org/Record/003096469)

