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## The concept of Inca province at *Tawantinsuyu*

**Abstract:** Although Inca ‘provinces’ are frequently mentioned and the existence of the ‘province’ as a fundamental unit of Inca state organization has largely been taken for granted, there is little detailed discussion of what this concept would have meant within ancient Andean society and there is a need to critically evaluate the many varied and sometimes conflicting conceptualizations of the Inca province. Given the extremely diverse views on the subject, this paper aims to critically evaluate existing concepts and propose a new conceptualization based on the idea of administrative archipelagos.

**Keywords:** Inca; Tahuantinsuyu; State-organization; 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

**Resumen:** Aunque hay menciones de ‘provincias’ Incas y la existencia de la ‘provincia’ como una unidad fundamental de organización del Estado Inca se da por sentada en gran parte, hay poca discusión detallada de lo que este concepto habría significado dentro de la antigua sociedad andina. De esto surge la necesidad de evaluar críticamente las acepciones varias – y a veces contradictorias – de la provincia Inca. Teniendo en cuenta los diversos puntos de vista, este trabajo pretende realizar una evaluación crítica de los mismos y proponer un nuevo concepto basado en la idea de ‘archipiélagos administrativos’.

**Palabras clave:** Inca; Tahuantinsuyu; Organización del Estado; Siglos XV-XVI.

During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Inca State expanded to incorporate many ethnic groups over a vast area of the Andes and coastal South America. This large territory was managed through a series of planned centres where buildings used for Inca state administrative and ceremonial functions were imposed on the local settlement hierarchy. The Inca State collapsed during the period of European colonization in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Spanish brought with them the European practice of dividing territories into ‘provinces’, an administrative device arguably inspired

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by the political jurisdiction of the Roman Empire. Spanish officials not only used this term to delimit the administrative regions within the viceroyalty, but Spanish authors struggling to understand the society they had colonized also used the term 'province' to describe the administrative organization of the Incas.

Previous research has suggested that the Inca provinces were an important unit of organization and administration through the centrally controlled Inca institutions (cf. D'Altroy 2002; Morris 1998; Murra 1978; Rowe 1963). These provinces were not, however, mapped or physically marked by any boundary points and ethnohistoric accounts are unclear, or contradictory, about their administrative and/or economic role (Hyslop 1984; Ramírez 2005). Ethnohistoric accounts state that the Spanish understood that the Inca ruled a continuous territory divided into provincial jurisdictions as in Europe (Pease 1978: 28). However, the territorial discontinuity of the Andes has also been highlighted (Murra 1975; 1985; Ramírez 2005).<sup>1</sup> Thus, Inca provinces may not have been clearly demarcated territories in the European fashion.

Earlier scholars emphasized several features associated with the concept of an Inca province. Based on ethnohistorical sources, ethnohistorians have assumed that the 'Inca provinces' were administrative and political units, constituted on the basis of ancient tribal and linguistic groups (e.g. Rowe 1963: 185), provinces thereby being defined as ethnic territories. Other investigators have considered that an Inca province corresponded to the area occupied by a specific number of tributaries providing 'labour tax', these tributary groups being constituted both of the original indigenous population under a local *curaca* ruler (who supported the Inca state) and settlers transferred to the area (Murra 1975: 194).

Other approaches to the Inca province have also been developed. Favre's ethnographic research prompted him to suggest that the *Wamani* or Inca provinces were constituted on the basis of pre-Inca religious allegiances that unified a set of individuals or groups who shared devotion to the same mountain deity; thus the circumscription of an Inca province would be directly comparable with the prestige area of a mountain deity also named *Apu* or *Wamani* in Quechua (Favre 1967: 139-140; see also Arroyo 2004). Gonzáles, based on archaeological research, proposed that the Inca province could be a geopolitical subdivision established by the Inca and maintained by the *pax incaica*. Accordingly Gonzáles has suggested that, in order to delimit Inca provinces, it is necessary to classify Inca settlements in categories of hierarchy and function (Gonzáles 1982: 320-321).

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1 Here, groups of people from the same ethnic group settled in distinct, unconnected territories in different ecological zones maintaining their political allegiance and economic integration with their home ethnic group. This can be contrasted with the bounded territory of present day nation states. Territorial discontinuity is mainly related to scattered populations (cf. Ramírez 2005). Harris states: "[...] Murra evokes this discontinuity with the image of the archipelago and scattered islands of the ethnic unit" (Harris 1985: 311, Note 1).

Salomon has proposed a more diachronic, dynamic and complex conceptualization of the ‘provinces’ in the Northern Chinchaysuyo. According to Salomon, the shape and extent of an Inca province, as well as its administrative organization, would change and develop from the period of conquest to full incorporation within the Inca State, from a military to a civilized order based on the Andean dual system of moieties (*Hanan*, high and *Hurin*, low) (Salomon 1986: 110-115; 1998; see also Wernke 2006).

Recently, discussion about the Inca province has been revived by Ramírez (2005), who has argued that the ‘Inca province’ was an early colonial construction. Ramírez argues that because the term ‘province’ suggests a single delimited space it is not useful in understanding the discontinuity of Andean ethnic groups who were distributed scattered over a wide geographical area (cf. Murra 1975).

In addition to Andean discontinuity, dual, tripartite and decimal organizational principles have been considered the essence of the socio-political organization that has characterized Prehispanic societies and Inca provinces. These principles are not mutually exclusive and have been documented in different regions such as Cuzco (Zuidema 1995) and Collaguas (Wernke 2006: 179, 206), and the role of *curacas* has been highlighted as the administrative base of Inca provinces. In the case of the Collagua, Wernke assessed: “[...] how local elites played a key role in articulating local community organization with Incaic ideals of rank, hierarchy and order [...]” (Wernke 2006: 177). This overview shows a more “[...] complex and dynamic mosaic of imperial control over the more than eighty provinces that composed Tawantinsuyu” (Wernke 2006: 176-177).

Although Inca ‘provinces’ are frequently mentioned, there is little detailed discussion of what this concept would have meant within Andean society and there is a need to evaluate critically the many varied and sometimes conflicting concepts of the Inca province as the administrative partitioning of the Tawantinsuyu (cf. Astuhamán González 2006). Thus, the question of what an Inca province was remains unanswered. Given the extremely diverse views on the Inca province, this paper aims to critically evaluate existing concepts and propose a new conceptualization based on old findings.

## **1. The Inca province: previous concepts**

The first systematic studies on Inca provinces were started by Sir Clement Markham, in his works *The Incas of Peru* (Markham 1910) and *Las posesiones geográficas de las tribus que conformaban el Imperio de los Incas* (Markham 1923). Markham used information provided by ethnohistorical sources and fieldwork conducted in South Peru and around Cusco in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (1852, 1859-1860) (Markham (1910: v-ix) to list provinces formed in relation to Pre-Inca ‘tribes’ (e.g. Soras and Canas), nations (e.g. Huanca nation), civilizations (e.g.

Chimu) and confederations (e.g. Chíncha, Chancas, Collas), distributed into the four main parts that defined the Inca Empire.<sup>2</sup>

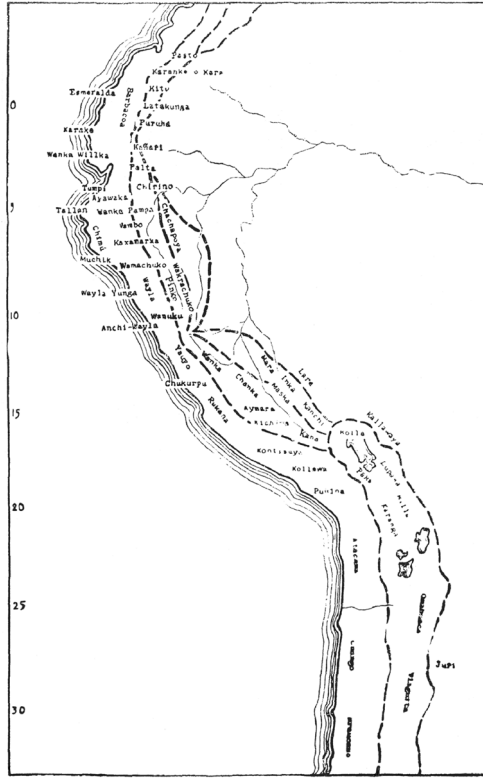
Max Uhle started a tradition in archaeological studies that focused on major and minor Inca centres; archaeological surveys and excavations were conducted and contrasted with information provided by ethnohistorical sources (Uhle 1903; 1923).

Tello's works summarized and pictured the spatial distribution of Inca provincial centres in the drainage basins of the Central Andes in two maps, the first entitled "Peru Precolombino, III Epoca, Tawantinsuyu" (Tello 1930), see Figure 1, and a second map locating the ethnic groups dominated by the Inca entitled "Las principales naciones incorporadas al Tahuantinsuyu" (Tello 1942), Figure 2; many of them were surveyed by him and his team before Rowe's works. Tello argued that a main feature of the Inca Empire were the great Inca cities distributed along the Central Andes, they had similar settlement planning and were built with rocks and adobe (Tello 1942: 93-108). Tello stated that Inca civilization was the last stage of a long historical development; the Inca Empire was a confederation of nations linked by strong and traditional ties which were harmoniously co-ordinated by the Inca nation who incorporated them (Tello 1942; Espinoza 1983).<sup>3</sup>

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- 2 "The Incas respected the organizations they found among the people who came under their rule, and did not disturb or alter the social institutions of the numerous tribes they conquered [...]. The Incas found the system of village communities prevailing among the tribes they conquered, and made as little alteration as was possible compatible with the requirements of a great empire [...]. The Incarial system of government bears some general resemblance to a very beneficent form of Eastern despotism [...]. The Incarial government finds a closer affinity in the theories of modern socialists [...]" (Markham 1910: 161, 165).
- 3 "[...] corresponde a la etapa de desarrollo y organización de las Confederaciones tribales que culminaron con la gran Confederación de los Inkas o Imperio de Tawantin-Suyo. Pertenecen a esta Época las confederaciones Chimú, Kuis-Manko, Choke-Manko, Chíncha, Konchuko, Wanka, Rucana, Chanka, Keshwa, Kolla, Kollawa, e Inka, todas las que fueron sometidas al gobierno central del Cuzco [...]" (Tello 1929: 25).



**Figure 1.** North part of Tello's map, "Peru Precolombino, III Epoca, Tawantinsuyu" (Tello 1930).



**Figure 2.** Tello’s map, “Las principales naciones incorporadas al Tahuantinsuyu” (Tello 1942: LAM II). Rowe elaborated a map showing the supposed division of Inca provinces (1963: 189), entitled “Map 3: Tribes and provinces of the Inca Empire (Peru-Bolivia), circa 1530 (Drawn from data compiled on the Quechua by John H. Rowe and on the Aymara by Harry Tschopik, Jr.)”. Although this map (Figure 3) has been quoted and reproduced in numerous pieces of writing on the Inca Empire (e.g. D’Altroy 2002: 42), it is important to highlight its problems and limitations.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the limited ethnohistoric support for the concept of the Inca province, it is useful to identify why this has been so central to modern discussions of the Inca Empire. What follows is a classification of concepts of the Inca province as

<sup>4</sup> In Rowe’s own words: “This political and linguistic situation makes the composition of any list or their representation on a map extremely difficult [...]. Although our knowledge of the Inca provincial divisions is also incomplete, the provinces are still the most convenient units by which to describe the area, and the named areas on the accompanying map (map 3) correspond as nearly as possible to the Inca provinces” (Rowe 1963: 185).

reflected in more recent publications, although it should be noted that several of these are closely linked or overlap.

### *1.1 The province as an ethnic and geographical unity*

The most common assumption by historians and archaeologists is that the ‘Inca provinces’ were administrative and political units, constituted on the basis of ancient tribal/ethnic and linguistic groups. The most important proposal within this approach was elaborated by John H. Rowe and his map of Inca provinces has been influential (see Figure 3).<sup>5</sup>

For the coast, Rowe (1963: 185) used a geographical feature (drainage basin of river valleys) to define the provinces administered by the Inca but he did not do the same for the Peruvian Highlands.<sup>6</sup> The reason for this choice is not explained. Thus, in the highlands where Rowe did not use the rivers’ watersheds to suggest the area of an Inca province, instead he clearly demarcated the borders of each province/tribe; in contrast, on the Peruvian coast where he used drainage basins to define provinces, these sharp boundaries are absent.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, while on the North Coast, where the Chimu Empire extended over several valleys inhabited by ethnic groups that were subsequently ruled by the Inca, no provincial boundaries were demarcated on Rowe’s map; however, within the highlands, the borders of pre-Inca expansive states (e.g. Chancas and Colla) were demarcated.

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5 “At the time of the Inca conquest, the whole Andean area was divided into an almost unbelievable number of small political units, for many of which we don’t have even the names [...]. This political and linguistic situation makes the composition of any list or their representation on a map extremely difficult. The Inca simplified the map of the Andean area rather arbitrarily, however, by dividing their Empire into provinces based on the old tribal and linguistic units, but with small tribes combined or added to neighboring large ones” (Rowe 1963: 185). And also: “Each quarter was subdivided into provinces (WAMA~ or WAMANI) (RGI, 1881-1897, 1: 80, 105; Senores, 1904, pp. 201-202; Santillan, 1879, p, 17), many of them corresponding to the native states and tribal groups which the Inca found when they conquered the area” (Rowe 1963: 262).

6 “[...] The divisions of the coast used in the list and on the map are individual valley. In most known cases, each valley was administered by the Inca as a separate province, but some of the small ones may have been combined” (Rowe (1963: 185).

7 Wedin suggest that from early chroniclers’ accounts: “[...] The general impression is that a province was formed simply of a valley or another natural dwelling area. The province was usually given the name of the tribe or of the principal place [...]” (Wedin 1966: 136). Also: “[...] se puede sacar la impresión de que distritos naturales, como eran los valles, por ejemplo, formaban provincias. En algunos casos, el nombre de la tribu se usa para designar tal provincia, en otros el de su sitio principal. Estas entidades territoriales eran también entidades de población y lengua [...] [in Castro and Ortega]. Los conceptos de “provincia” y “valle” son idénticos [...]” (Wedin 1965: 46-47).

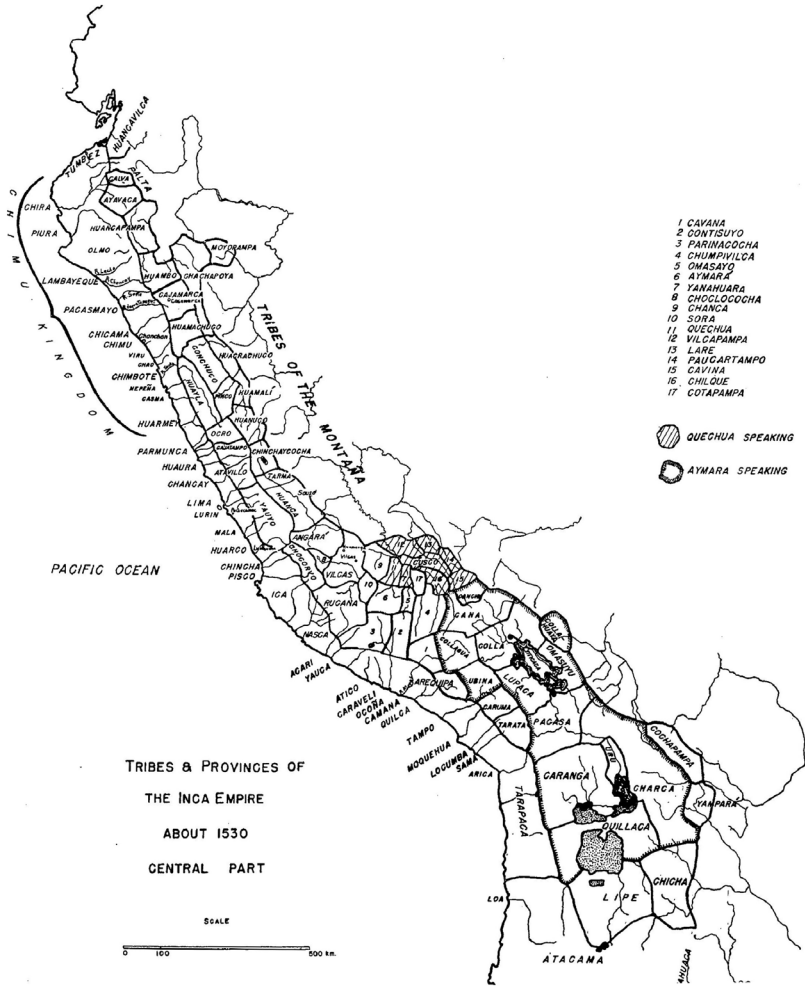


Figure 3. Rowe’s map (Rowe 1963: 189).

I could suggest a practical reason for Rowe’s choice, which is that, prior to 1944, no suitable map of the Peruvian drainage basins was available (the first one was elaborated in the 1970’s, cf. SENAMHI 1972). Also some of the geographical imprecision and influence within Tello’s maps (1930; 1942) were still present on Rowe’s map (1963).<sup>8</sup> It is also possible that Rowe’s conceptions of Inca expansion

<sup>8</sup> Rowe (1963: 187, 330) used Tello’s classic 1942 work and his map “Las principales naciones incorporadas al Tahuantinsuyu”. Some scholars suggest that Rowe’s map is a European colonial



and administration were influenced by his historical context, working as he did during and after the Second World War.

During the Huánuco Project, the borders of the Inca provinces were not clearly defined. Initially, boundaries of ethnic groups were researched and a map elaborated (Morris 1967; Thompson 1970). However, this line of analysis was not continued in later research.

Julien partially followed Rowe's approach to ethnicity. However, Julien argued that:

[...] Beyond the division into quarters, the empire was further divided into provinces. In the Qollasuyu quarter, the Inca provincial division can be traced at least as far south as Lipes and Chichas in what is now southern Bolivia [...]. The Inca provincial division utilized existing organization in the Lake Titicaca region [...]. The Inca provinces were based loosely on what the Spanish called *naciones* or nations [...]. Earlier political organization may well have had something to do with the bounded provinces the Incas established [...]. Language, occupation and wealth served to divide the native population of the area along lines very unlike the Inca provincial division [...] (Julien 1983: 9, 35-36).

Julien is critical of using external evidence of ethnicity to define Inca provincial divisions, because her study mainly focused on the nature and degree of Inca control in the Lake Titicaca region through an analysis of the administration of tribute and population movement (Julien 1983: 63). Julien has proposed reconstructing Inca provincial territories in six areas that were the focus of archaeological study in the Lake Titicaca Region using Spanish administrative records from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, especially the *corregimientos*.<sup>9</sup> However, Julien's proposal is less useful in other regions, e.g. Chachapoyas (Schjellerup 2002: 49).

On the basis of his investigations around the region of Quito, Salomon (1998: 62-63) disagreed that an 'Inca Province' consisted of a unique 'ethnic group' living in the drainage basin of a river, as argued by Rowe (1963: 185) for the Peruvian coast. Salomon considers that this traditional vision of political-administrative units as geographically closed and ethnically homogenous is simplistic and anachronistic.

Matos correlated ethnohistoric and archaeological sources to define the geographical region of Chinchaycocha in the Central Peruvian Highlands as a *Wamani* of the Inca State, with territorial demarcation, historical identity and tributaries; this region had an ecological, ethnic, economic, historical and linguistic unity (Matos 1994: 15, 106), where according to ethnohistoric sources there were two ethnic groups (Yaru and Chinchaycocha) living within the river basin; they sup-

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device: "[...] it says little about the Andean conceptions of space as meaningful people-landscape relations" (Herrera 2005: 68).

9 because they can "[...] provide information to document the continuity between late Inca and early Spanish colonial era boundaries in this region" (Julien 1983: 9).

posedly shared a common cultural tradition (San Blas pottery style and settlement pattern), including a language and ideology. Matos also analysed relationships between the provincial centre (Pumpu), and other Inca centres (Warautambo, Tar-matambo and Chacamarca), and ethnic groups under imperial rule. Matos argued that the Inca Empire was not a homogeneous entity but variable: the Inca treated each group as a distinct political sub-unit; but the indigenous political unit was not always relevant to the Inca (Matos 1994: 106). However, Matos's concept of province reflects Rowe's influential work and his cultural history approach, and many variables need to be evaluated to test his statement. It is unclear what type of material evidence he used to define an ethnic group, and how this was different to that used to define its archaeological features (e.g. pottery and settlement), and to justify why this province included two ethnic groups. With regard to boundaries and territorial organization of the Inca province, Matos argued that these could be identified by examining the exploitation of natural resources (Matos 1994: 105).<sup>10</sup>

The *Chachapoyas* region has been researched by Schjellerup (1997; 2002) using archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence, research having focused upon the provincial centre (Cochabamba), Inca and local settlements, and the Inca Road. Schjellerup argued that the Inca province of Chachapoyas was shaped by local ethnic groups for administrative reasons under Inca rule (Schjellerup 2002: 49, 51); however the boundaries of this province are not clear.

Previous approaches to the province as an administrative unit defined by the Pre-Inca ethnic groups emphasized the use of Spanish ethnohistoric accounts, in particular certain references to continuity into the colonial period of Encomiendas. These ethnohistoric sources emphasized that the Inca ruled a continuous territory divided into discrete provincial jurisdictions managed by an organized bureaucracy (Pease 1978: 28).<sup>11</sup> However, the supposed spatial continuity of the Inca Empire and the bounded territory of Andean ethnic groups has been criticized (cf. Murra 1978; Ramírez 2005). In some cases more than one ethnic group was integrated within a single province for administrative purposes. Early ideas of ethnicity in the Andes have been questioned and ethnicity is difficult to assess on purely archaeological evidence.

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10 “[...] la demarcación geopolítica de los Inka tuvo como fundamento los recursos naturales y su explotación, los cuales a nivel de la estructura del Estado fueron organizados territorialmente en la administración de cada provincia” (Matos 1994: 105).

11 “La opinión de Cieza de la administración civil coincide en lo esencial con la de sus predecesores. A la cabeza de cada provincia puso el Inca un tucricuc, que tenía el poder principal sobre ella. Debajo de él estaban los michos. Estos, más algunos inspectores, formaban el elemento incaico de la provincia, y la ‘provincia’ era el territorio de la tribu vencida [...]” (Wedin 1965: 36-37).

### 1.2 *The province as a taxation unit*

The economic approach to Inca provincial organization was developed by Murra's doctoral thesis "The Economic Organization of the Inca State" (Murra 1978). He explored how the Inca conquered territories for their resources such as land, minerals, herds, water, and control of the labour force which allowed for agricultural intensification and consequently storage of food and goods. Based on ethnohistoric sources (e.g. Santillan 1968: 381-382), other researchers have suggested that an Inca province corresponded to the area occupied by a specific number of tributaries or 'labour tax' people, consisting of both the indigenous population and the new settlers (*mitimaes*) transferred to the area. According to Rowe, the ideal was to have 20,000 families in a province under an Inca governor. In turn, this was subdivided into two *sayas* or halves of 10,000 families each (Rowe 1963: 262).<sup>12</sup> Rowe's proposal of territorial divisions based on the decimal system and groups was, and still is, frequently referenced by scholars (cf. Murra 1975: 194; Julien 1993: 224; D'Altroy 2002: 232).<sup>13</sup>

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12 "Each province was divided into two or three parts (SAYA). The ideal pattern was undoubtedly the dual (moiety) division found among the Inca themselves, and the divisions were known as Upper and Lower (HANAÑ-SAYA and HORIÑ-SAYA) (Cobo, 1890-1895, bk. 12, ch. 24). The province of Yauyos we know was divided into two moieties only (RGI, 1881-97, 1: 66). However, in very populous provinces where a dual division would result in moieties containing more than 10,000 taxpayers each, three divisions were organized" (Rowe 1963: 262). See Wedin (1965: 46-54; 1966: 136-137) for discussion and refutation of the supposed relationship between the number 10,000 and the population of an Inca province: "El primero que sucumbe a la tentación de generalizar, poniendo la cifra 10,000 en relación con el concepto "provincia", es Bartolomé de las Casas [ca. 1559] [...] La cifra 10,000 nada tiene que ver, en realidad, con la población de la provincia" (Wedin 1965: 47, 52). I suggest that the phrase "lord of 20,000 indios" was an Inca title and not a real number of subjects ruled over by one ethnic lord.

13 For example: "The Incas thought of a province as an enumerated population which was typically based on the societies that were native to a region [...]. Each province was divided into two or three parts called sayas. The partitions also correspond in some way to ethnic division, although they could include more than one group or parts of several. The goal was to create units whose composition came as close as was convenient to multiples of decimal figures [...]" (D'Altroy 2002: 232). See an early and challenging critique of this tendency in Wedin (1965: 16, 79-80, 85, Note 15). Wedin argued: "For a long time, investigators have successfully maintained a connection between the figure of 10,000 (hunu) and the concept of 'province', but a check of the sources on that point leads to a new result if one takes into account the difference between the earlier and the later sources. In the earliest ones, not much attention is paid to the matter [...]. But in later material, such a connection appears and every province is said to have comprised 10,000 adult men (sometimes 20,000, 30,000 or 40,000). A very important part is played by the so-called hunu-curaca, 'the head of 10,000 men'. But hunu does not only mean '10,000' but also 'uncountable', and the hunu sometimes proves to be 'the master of the valley'. It is not possible to prove any connection between the figure of 10,000 and the division into provinces" (Wedin 1966: 136-137).

Focusing on tribute data and settlements to determine local economic specialization during Toledo times (1569-1581), Julien has suggested that:

[...] The Incas appear to have been involved in classifying provincials on the basis of occupation and wealth (Julien, 1985), so the types of resources available in an area may have influenced the division of territory under the Incas [...] (Julien 1991: 4-5).

So, Julien was able to identify differences in the organization of provinces through population analysis, and interpreted it “[...] as evidence that there was more than one type of province [...]” (Julien 1991: 121). Julien concluded that, in contrast to Spanish administration, “[...] The Inca territorial order was characterized by larger units with a far more complex internal structure” (Julien 1991: 128).

When summarizing the Inca provincial boundaries of Andamarca, Lucanas, Chile, Chupachos, Cuzco, Huamachuco and Lake Titicaca, Julien (1993) highlighted the variability of Inca provinces and their different functions but Julien’s conception of Inca provinces is primarily taken from an economic approach close to the traditional ethnohistorical view (i.e. an Inca province was defined by the tributaries of an ethnic group).

In the Peruvian Central Coast, the Inca province of Pachacamac (Lurin, Rimac and Chillón valleys) has been analysed by Cornejo (2000, 2002). From one ethno-historic reference provided by Bernabe Cobo,<sup>14</sup> it is argued that the ‘large double’ Lima valley consisted of three *huno-curaca* units, and Rowe suggested that this valley had a population of about 150,000 during Inca times (Rowe 1963: 184, 191), based on the assumption that one *huno-curaca* unit was shaped by 10,000 tributaries or domestic units and that each domestic unit consisted of approximately five members. However, Wedin criticized this assumption for the Rimac valley (Wedin 1965: 65-67), stating that the Quechua word *hunu*: “[...] significa 10.000, pero a la vez “incontable”, “incalculable”. La palabra podía, por lo tanto significar simplemente un grupo muy grande de hombres [...]” (Wedin 1965: 73-74).

In some cases, the information about the ‘labour tax’ was recorded on *quipus* and ‘read’ during court cases or *visitas* in the early colonial period, leading to their contents being written into Spanish legal documents, e.g. in the Lupaca province.<sup>15</sup>

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14 “Antes de la venida de los españoles a esta tierra estaba este valle y comarca muy poblado de indios, como lo muestran las ruinas de sus pueblos; eran dos naciones que lo habitaban, con lenguas distintas [...]. Los naturales de Caraguayllo y sus terminos eran de la una nación [...] y desde el mismo pueblo de Caraguayllo hasta el de Pachacamac habitaba la otra nación. Dividiase esta valle, conforme al gobierno de los reyes Incas, en tres Hunos, o gobernación de a diez mil familias cada una: el pueblo de Caraguayllo era la cabeza de la primera; el de Maranga, que cae en medio del valle, de la segunda, y de la tercera, el de Surco; era este postrero pueblo el mayor de todos [...]” (Cobo 1964, t. 2: 301).

15 “The tributary counts contained in the khipu census provide key information about the decimal organization of Lupaca province (see Table 4). The total number of tributaries, 20,280, approximates two *hunu* (units of 10,000)” (Julien 1983: 68).

Urton (2001) has also examined one of 32 *quipus* recovered from the cemetery of Laguna de los Condores (Chachapoyas) and, based on the configurations of the knots on the *quipu*, calculated the number 3,005 as the total of tributaries of ‘labour tax’ in the three *warangas* of Francisco Guaman (Urton 2001: 142). However, in both cases the size of population was not an exact decimal amount.

The administration and organization of domestic units (households) under imperial rule is a difficult issue to assess in any concept of the Inca province because it requires the researcher to define the size of the population involved through settlement size or the largely undecipherable *quipu* knots, neither of which can be argued with confidence.<sup>16</sup> One alternative approach would be to project early colonial accounts of the size of the population onto Inca times (cf. Julien 1983; Urton 2001). However, it is important to consider the population decrease caused by European diseases as well as by the war of conquest.

Nevertheless, Rowe’s ideals contrast with reality, as population sizes are never stable, for example there were provinces whose sizes oscillated between 5,000 and 50,000 families (Wedin 1966: 136; Pärssinen 2002: 24). Thus, other scholars emphasize different sources, e.g. Santillán (1968) and the *Relación anónima* or *Señores* ([ca. 1575], cited in Pärssinen 2002: 24) to suggest that an Inca province included 40,000 families (Pärssinen 2002: 24). With regard to the Inca province of Huánuco, Cieza ([1551] cited Grosboll 1993: 44) recorded that Huánuco Pampa was served by 30,000 natives, who paid tribute and served the Inca.

The main critique of Rowe’s second proposed conceptualization of the Inca province was argued by Wedin, who refuted the application of the decimal system taken from Inca military organization to civil organization.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if the size of the population of ‘labour tax’ was not stable then the size of Inca provinces may also have varied.<sup>18</sup>

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16 Another critic stated: “The number of households became a proxy indicator for a population’s ability to support a priest’s material needs and one of the fundamental criteria used by the Spanish to establish the parishes, not any pre-existing Inca provinces, encomienda territories, or boundaries as claimed by Julien, Gibson, and others” (Ramírez 2005: 51).

17 “El sistema decimal perteneció, en primer lugar a la organización militar. Ha podido ser aplicado a la administración civil también, pero tal desarrollo puede estar alejado de la realidad y ser debido a los efectos indicados de las fuentes tardías. Lo único que sabemos con seguridad científica es que el sistema decimal ha tenido su función original en el ejército incaico [...]. Faltan prueba seguras de que haya sido aplicado a la organización civil [...]” (Wedin 1965: 40-41, 46, 58-61, 65-67, 74-77).

18 “Lo que formaba una provincia en el imperio era, por consiguiente, un valle u otro territorio natural de una tribu. La idea de que comprendiese tal territorio 10.000 (o decenas de mil) hombres adultos es absurda de por si y carece de apoyo en las fuentes tempranas. Los territorios así incluidos en el imperio eran de distintos tamaños como también lo eran las tribus que se sustentaban de ellos [...]” (Wedin 1965: 50).

### 1.3 *The province as sacred landscape*

The nature of sacred landscapes, e.g. sacred mountains, involves religious and symbolic meaning expressed in ritual practices around features of the landscape that assumed a sacred character for peoples in the past.

Favre offers an original idea on the concept of an Inca province, based on ethnographic research in the Centre and South of the Peruvian Andes into the cult of sacred mountains, which are called *Wamani*, the same name given to the Inca provinces in some ethnohistoric references. To explain this coincidence, he proposed that the *Wamani*, or Inca provinces, were constituted on the basis of previous religious units that included a set of individuals or groups, all of whom were associated with the same mountain; within this interpretation, the circumscription of an Inca province would be directly comparable with the prestige area of an *Apu* or *Wamani* (Favre 1967: 139-140). Even if this is correct, however, the boundaries of pre-Inca religious units are not clear and they were probably transformed during Inca times prior to the reports in the Spanish chronicles.

An ethnohistorical case from the Cajatambo Region that relates the idea of province to a sacred landscape has been analysed in detail by Zuidema, and focuses on the supposed sacrifice of Tanta Carhua and her subsequently becoming a deity (Zuidema 1989). The cult of the tomb of Tanta Carhua was investigated by Hernandez Príncipe who reported the following features: inter-visibility and observation lines; worshipping from different hills; association with channels or water; the importance of this hill-tomb at Inca State level and its incorporation into the hierarchy of religious cults (Zuidema 1989: 163, 166, 175, 184, 188). It is clear from Hernandez Príncipe's account that the *curaca* (Tanta Carhua's father) authority both locally and in relation to the Inca rulers was increased through his role in the ritual sacrifice which helped to legitimate and maintain stability for the person responsible for supplying the Inca with the labour tax. Archaeological evidence supports ethnohistoric sources related to several mountain sacrifices as a unifying feature of Inca rule between Cuzco and the provinces during Capacocha rituals (Reinhard 1997; 1998; Ceruti 2003). Thus, ancestor cults and cults focusing on sacred mountains were an expression of provincial organization at ceremonial and political levels under Inca rule.

In the Northern Andes, the research of Idrovo (2000) in the province of Tomebamba continued the pioneering research conducted by Uhle at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Uhle 1923; 1969). Idrovo had emphasized in the study of the provincial centre and its relationship with Cuzco how the creation of a 'new' Cuzco is related to provincial organization through reproduction of a sacred geography and transmission of religious symbols from Cuzco towards Tomebamba (Idrovo 2000: 83). However, the concept of the Inca province and its probable border was not developed by him.

In Northern Peru, the Inca province of Huamachuco has seen investigation in terms of the sacred landscape (Topic 1998; Topic & Topic 1993; Topic, Topic & Melly 2002). The researchers identified the provincial centre under the modern town of Huamachuco and conducted excavations around the sacred mountain of Catequil (Cerro Icchal). They also identified the location of places that were quoted in the myth of Catequil and conducted surveys in the region to try to define the ethnogenesis of ancient populations and the territorial limits of the Inca province of Huamachuco (Topic 1998: 112). The territory of the province is thought to have been closely related to the sphere of influence of the cult of the sacred mountain of Catequil in the context of mythical creation (Topic & Topic 1993; Topic, Topic & Melly 2002: 309). They argued that the Inca used the cult of ancient prestigious deities for their territorial and religious conquest to preserve the unity of the people linked by the cult of Catequil, which was extended around Cajamarca (Topic, Topic & Melly 2002). From this information, Topic argued that three ethnic groups (Huamachuco, Cajamarca and Guambos) were integrated within the province of Huamachuco.<sup>19</sup> However, the remains of the main Inca settlements have disappeared under the present-day capitals and now it is not possible to contrast the differences or similarities between them during Inca rule to test the Topics' proposal.<sup>20</sup>

Cornejo argued that the main objective of the Inca in the Pachacamac Region was the symbolic capture and administration of the ancient temple of Pachacamac, and the lands where the 'sons' and 'women' of Pachacamac lived; this capture was materialized in enclosures of trapezoidal shape that surrounded local buildings (Cornejo 2000; 2002).

Julien has drawn attention to the role of Inca roads as symbolic dividers and unifiers within the landscape (Julien 1991: 112-116, 162).<sup>21</sup> Julien argued:

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19 "The Inca administration manipulated ethnicity, at least in the Huamachuco area. They split closely related groups, like Huamachuco and Conchucos, into different administrative units. They modified the guaranga groupings within the resulting provinces. Chaupiyungas groups, defined mythically as enemies, were appended to the unit. They then lumped Huamachuco together with less related groups, such as Cajamarca and even Guambos, to form a larger administrative unit and they used *mitmaq* policy to create a 'spurious ethnicity' (cf. Gailey 1987) to support their administrative restructuring" (Topic 1998: 120).

20 This proposal fit with Pärssinen's hypothesis of interprovincial confederations, some of which he suggest existed before the Inca conquest, so they were created by the Incas or reflect shared concepts (Pärssinen 2002: 24, 34). Most of these confederations were integrated by three provinces (e.g. Collao and Huancas) and some ethnohistoric references support Pärssinen's idea (e.g. Pizarro 1978: 220).

21 Before Julien's work, Thompson (1973: 87-89) suggested the symbolic function of the Inca centres and the Inca road in Central Peru, arguing that they were a physical manifestation of the sovereignty and dominion of the Inca, and were more elaborate than necessitated by simple utility.

[...] The road also served as a boundary between Collasuyu provinces. A division into provincial territories in Condesuyu may have been similarly related to the Condesuyu road [...] we might be closer to an autochthonous concept of spatial division by conceptualizing Condesuyo as a territory divided by a central band [...] (Julien 1991: 121).

In a further work, when discussing the organization of the Inca provinces, Julien proposed that the Inca used this division into four parts to link indigenous populations and sacred places, and increase imperial identities (Julien 2002: 11-12). She examined ethnohistoric sources of the cult to sacred mountains in Arequipa and the cult to the Sun on Titicaca Island.

As each *suyu* was composed of several provinces, the same principles for the definition of *suyu* could be applied to the provinces, e.g. quadripartite division by roads and integration of local sacred landscape features as focal points for Inca ritual and control. Therefore, I observe a correlation between the ideas of Favre (1967) and Julien (2002: 17) concerning the link between indigenous populations and sacred places used by the Inca to organize their empire.

#### 1.4 The province as geopolitical division and hierarchy

Prehispanic settlement patterns were studied by Gordon Willey at the Viru Valley from a functionalistic and regional approach, and remain an important topic in Andean Archaeology; these patterns were the material expression of socio-political hierarchies and social differentiation and have been studied from a variety of perspectives.

Schreiber proposed studying empires through the provincial centres and the local settlements under imperial rule (Schreiber 1992). However, the pioneer of archaeological studies of Inca provinces was Gonzáles who tried to delimit the Inca provinces of Tucuman in the Northwest of Argentina. He proposed that the Inca province could be a geopolitical subdivision established by the Inca and maintained by the *pax incaica* (Gonzáles 1982: 320-321).<sup>22</sup> He suggested that, in order to delimit Inca provinces, it is necessary to classify Inca settlements into categories of hierarchy and function. Research into the Inca settlement hierarchy assumed that provincial centres were discrete and recognizable archaeological units (e.g. Thompson 1973; Morris & Thompson 1985; Hyslop 1990; Matos 1994), with probably only one main Inca settlement within each province and further secondary settlements and State infrastructure. However, this also necessitates a classi-

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22 Ethnohistorical sources state the following with regard to the internal and hierarchical organization of Inca provinces: “[...] Según las fuentes más tempranas, la gente de una provincia se quedó, por consiguiente, con sus caciques de antes y el elemento incaico constante se componía de un gobernador a la cabeza de la provincia y de sus intendentes en los pueblos. Estos funcionarios tenían a su cargo recaudar los tributos para el Inca [...]” (Wedin 1965: 37).



fication of the hierarchy and function of local settlements, and changes to these under Inca rule.

Following González' (1982) proposal, which defines the province as an Inca geopolitical division with a hierarchy of Inca settlements, Cornejo has argued for the identification of the province on the basis of the hierarchy of Inca architecture and settlement patterns (according to size, attributes and functions), and other material evidence, e.g. pottery, figurines and burial patterns (Cornejo 2000; 2004: 785, 805, 811-812).<sup>23</sup>

When writing about aspects of the hierarchy of the Inca State cult, the Anonymous Jesuit (Anónimo 1992: 70) suggested another model for the organization of the Inca provinces based on Inca ecclesiastical jurisdiction, possibly identifying another form of hierarchy relating to the religious importance of Inca shrines/oracles. The content of this chronicle has, however, been criticized by historians for its use of parallels with Catholic religion which suggest Inca religion was forced into a Catholic model.

From ethnohistoric sources Pärssinen examined eleven cases of internal division of Inca provinces; he argued that dual, tripartite and quadripartite principles were all used in the internal organization of Inca provinces. However, the local socio-political tradition of organization could have had a strong influence on the organization of Inca provinces (Pärssinen 2003: 269-323). Unfortunately, few archaeologists have conducted their research on the same regional scale to test Pärssinen's proposal, rather the tendency is to uncritically adopt concepts derived from reading ethnohistorical sources when discussing broad regional or empire-wide patterns (e.g. D'Altroy 2002). I emphasize that organisational principles could change during different periods of the Inca occupation of a region, from simple to complex principles, and this may be expressed by changes in the settlement patterns.

In my opinion the problem with hierarchy and the function of Inca settlements at provincial level derives from the fact that the main sample studied is from the Peruvian Central Highlands (Huanuco Pampa, Pumpu and Hatun Xauxa), which in quantitative terms is not a representative sample of the whole empire, being around 3% of the probable total number of Inca provinces. Thus, there is a need to compare this with other regions of the empire. However, from a qualitative point of view the pioneering archaeological studies conducted in the Peruvian

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23 For instance, Cornejo's concept of the Inca province of Pachacamac o Ychsma argued that the Inca state: "[...] Al tener el control total de todos los curacazgos y señoríos, creó una administración compleja con capital en Pachacamac, regido por un orejón, un sacerdote cusqueño, conformando una provincia Inca. Esta provincia estaba compuesta por distritos y subdistritos, es decir unidades políticas definidas a partir de su estructura local de curacazgos y señoríos [...]" (Cornejo 2004: 785). Also, Julien (1983; 1991) proposed that some Inca roads defined internal provincial division at Collasuyu and Condesuyu.

Central Highlands have established some paradigms for Inca studies, in particular concerning the hierarchy and function of settlements (cf. Morris & Thompson 1985; Hyslop 1990). Probably, this hierarchy and function was adapted in response to regional, temporal, and administrative emphasis, and the focus on site function may have changed over time from one aspect (e.g. political) to another (e.g. economic or religious).

### *1.5 The province as process*

It is occasionally pointed out that the organization of the Inca provinces could be related to the dynamic process of state expansion (cf. Murra 1975; Covey 2006). Salomon proposed a dynamic and complex concept for the ‘provinces’ of Northern Chinchaysuyo (Salomon 1986: 110-115; 1998), in which the main Inca settlement initially performed political-military and administrative functions and only later were these re-organized in accordance with the diverse ethnic groups that inhabited a drainage basin in two interdependent halves, *Hanan* and *Hurin*. Within this analysis, the shape and extent of an Inca province, as well as its administrative organization, changed and developed from a military to a civil order. Salomon’s concept is mainly based on ethnohistoric documents relating to Pasto, Otavalo-Quito and Puruhá. Unfortunately, his proposal has not yet been tested by archaeological research on the same regional scale.

Julien (1979; 1983; 1993) has explored the Inca administration of the Lake Titicaca Region, on the modern Peruvian-Bolivian frontier, focusing on the few remains of the provincial centre at Hatunqolla. Her main aim was to define two historical stages of the Collas: during autonomy and under Inca rule (Julien 1979: 199). Julien discussed the methodological problem of combining historical and archaeological research, but archaeological evidence was used to complement and support her ethnohistorical research. Her archaeological research consisted of a surface collection within Hatunqolla town, and eleven small excavations to attempt to resolve the chronology (Julien 1979: 203; 1983: 2-5). This material evidence had little influence, however, on her interpretation of the ethnohistoric sources and her basic assumption that the Collas ethnic groups’s territory defined the Hatunqolla Inca province in the Lake Titicaca Region.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the absence of fine chronology for Inca times due to dating problems, I highlight the importance of using material evidence to study the life span of Inca provinces as a historical process. This approach will allow us to consider a diachronic perspective of Inca provinces which is absent from most previous concepts.

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24 “[...] The archaeological evidence turned out mainly to supplement the conclusions reached in the historical part of the study, providing additional information [...]” (Julien 1983: 3-4).

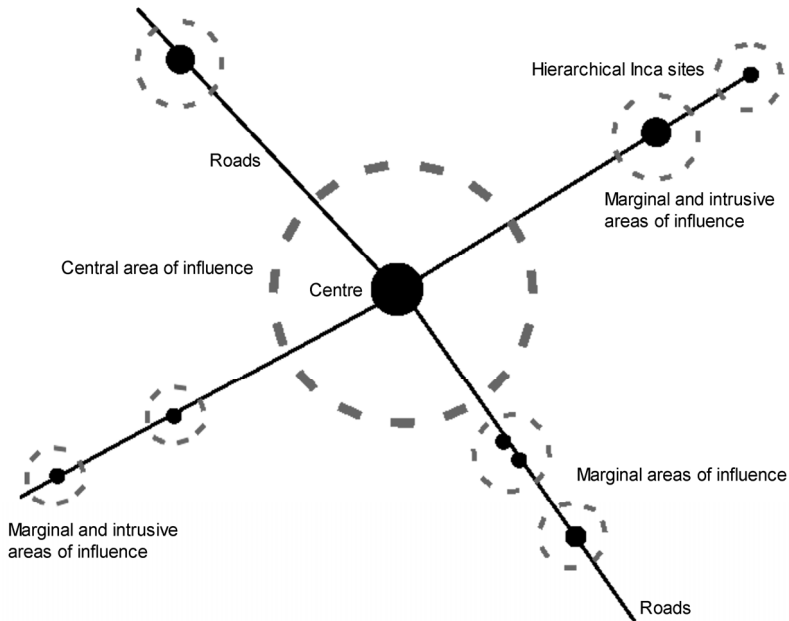
From this classification of previous concepts of the Inca province it should be noted that the first four concepts explore synchronic aspects while the last one has a diachronic dimension. The first two concepts, province as an ethnic and geographical unity and as taxation unit, were closely linked with Rowe's work (Rowe 1963) and have become the dominant concepts adopted by most scholars. Although the concept of the province as being formed in relation to sacred landscapes was originally based on ethnographic research, this concept is supported by ethnohistoric sources.

## 2. The case for the province as archipelago

From the preceding review it can be seen that in general all concepts of the Inca province coincide in their emphasis on the presence of some administered peoples according to jurisdictional, organisational, and cosmological principles expressed through administrative structures of roads, buildings and state ceremonies and applied on different scales from the Inca centre to a wider Andean space during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. These concepts diverge largely in the degree to which they consider the provinces to be a single bounded territory and the relationship of the state province to pre-existing ethnic groups and their leaders.

Drawing on the earlier works of Murra (1972) and Morris (1985) I would also elaborate a concept related to the idea of administrative archipelagos: an Inca province could be shaped by discontinuous 'islands' of intrusive administrative institutions within scattered indigenous ethnic group territories controlled by ethnic lords forming an 'archipelago' pattern under Inca rule. Tribute, in the form of labour from the local population, was supplied through local *curacas* and used for the benefit of the Inca State, while activities of control (e.g. installation of garrison and espionage), some productive activities (e.g. intensification of agriculture, construction and mining) and collection of other tributes were conducted by Inca officials and by foreigner *mitimaes*. The essence of this concept is shaped by discontinuous 'islands' which form an 'archipelago' but it was only in the final stage of a long process that some Andean *curacas* came under the full control of the Inca state.

I propose an image for the archipelago concept of the Inca provinces as a radial network of lines and nodes (see Figure 4.). This has the following features: a centre (provincial centre); a central area of influence; scattered and hierarchical Inca sites connected by roads and some with state infrastructure (such as storage, terracing, mines or cult sites); marginal areas of the core province's influence; largely surrounded by the marginal areas of other provinces though with some intrusive sites and areas of influence from other provinces, but with no defined border to the overall territory of the province.



**Figure 4.** Inca province as archipelago.

This conceptualization could resolve the limitations of the traditional approach that defines a province by its ethnic and geographical unity, a definition that is difficult to apply to prehispanic Andean geo-political organisations that were not characterized by clearly defined territories;<sup>25</sup> it does not exclude the possibility that several common features were shared in a province and that it is possible to distinguish one province from another through material markers or boundaries such as isolated points in the landscape.<sup>26</sup> The scattered distribution of sacred landscapes is directly related to ancestor cults (e.g. *paqarinas*, *chullpas*, shrines) and their relationships with the ethnic identity of dispersed human groups along different ecologies in Tawantinsuyu have been emphasized by several authors (cf. Patterson 1985; Rostworowski 1992; Topic, Topic & Melly 2002). This could also have contributed to the Inca concern to control nodes of ethnic identity rather than defining and policing bounded territories.

25 “[...] Ethnic boundaries are not continuous, but are fluid and sporadically distributed over complementary ecological zones. Western concepts of well-defined ethnic frontiers do not coincide with this Andean model of political geography [...]” (Stanish 1992: 43; Salomon 1998; Ramirez 2005).

26 To analyse Inca provincial borders from ethnohistorical sources, Ramirez (2005: 50-51) and Julien (com. pers. 2006) suggest using Bueno’s distribution of parish (*parroquias*) and *curatos*, and also Martinez de Companon’s map of North Peru which proposed the creation of *parroquias* and *curatos* during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The ‘archipelago’ conceptualization of the Inca province still includes the idea that a province was also a geopolitical subdivision established by the Inca (cf. González 1982: 320-321), and that its expression was related to a hierarchy of scattered populations and dispersed settlements in a region; it merely eliminates the assumption that this was a single bounded territory. Also, since much of the Andean economy was driven by agricultural rather than industrial activities, there would be very little benefit obtained by urbanization within the Inca centres, instead the Inca seem to have promoted dispersion albeit under a hierarchical order. So, a provincial ‘archipelago’ could have organized hierarchical subdivisions.

If discontinuous ‘islands’ form an ‘archipelago’ pattern then, in the same way, some ‘archipelagos’ form a ‘macro-archipelago’ pattern. It is an issue of scale and complexity. For this reason, provinces grouped as provincial confederations are a possibility (cf. Pärssinen 2002).

At a theoretical level, Murra’s (1975) and Morris’s (1985) analysis of the origin, florescence, crisis and collapse of the ‘archipelago’ concept can be used to explore diachronic aspects of provincial organization, offering some advantages in contrast to other concepts which have tended to focus on synchronic views of the function of Inca administrative systems. The size, development and importance of an Inca province was related to the dynamic process of Inca state expansion (cf. Murra 1975: 109-111, 114-115; Covey 2006: 206). For instance, the process of negotiation with indigenous *curacas* and ritual offerings to shrines as well as the later capturing of shrines could be seen as a first stage of state expansion under this archipelago concept.<sup>27</sup> For this reason, and also for pragmatic reasons, in some regions the organization of Inca provinces was not fully completed (e.g. in present-day northern Argentina and the Ecuadorian-Colombian border) and other types of organization could be applied there. Thus, probably “[...] The Inka did not impose a single provincial model throughout their empire [...]” (Morris & Covey 2006: 152). This approach argued that the Inca, faced with the pre-existing diversity in the Andes, used multiple strategies of governance, or combinations of these, to adapt to such diversity. However, I am suggesting the existence of several regularities and probably the archipelago concept of provincial organization was one of them. Indeed part of the variation across the empire must relate to the fact that different provinces were at different stages of their incorporation into the still expanding Inca state. Perhaps with a longer period of consolidation the pattern would have become less heterogeneous, but there were also significant differences in the size, range and layout of contemporary provincial centres that require explanation.

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27 Cieza’s description of the incorporation of Canas into the Inca Empire is a good example of this (cf. Sillar 2002, Sillar & Dean 2002).

The archipelago concept is also expressed in Smith's more recent reconsiderations of the Inca road system, where Smith highlights the role of roads in contrast to provincial territories for Inca governance:

[...] a nodes-and-corridors model may also more closely approximate the way premodern rulers actually conceptualized the workings of their domains. As the sixteenth-century writer Cieza de Leon observed, "The Inkas understood or conceived of their domain through roads, and not through provinces (cited Hyslop 1990, 58)" (Smith 2005: 840).

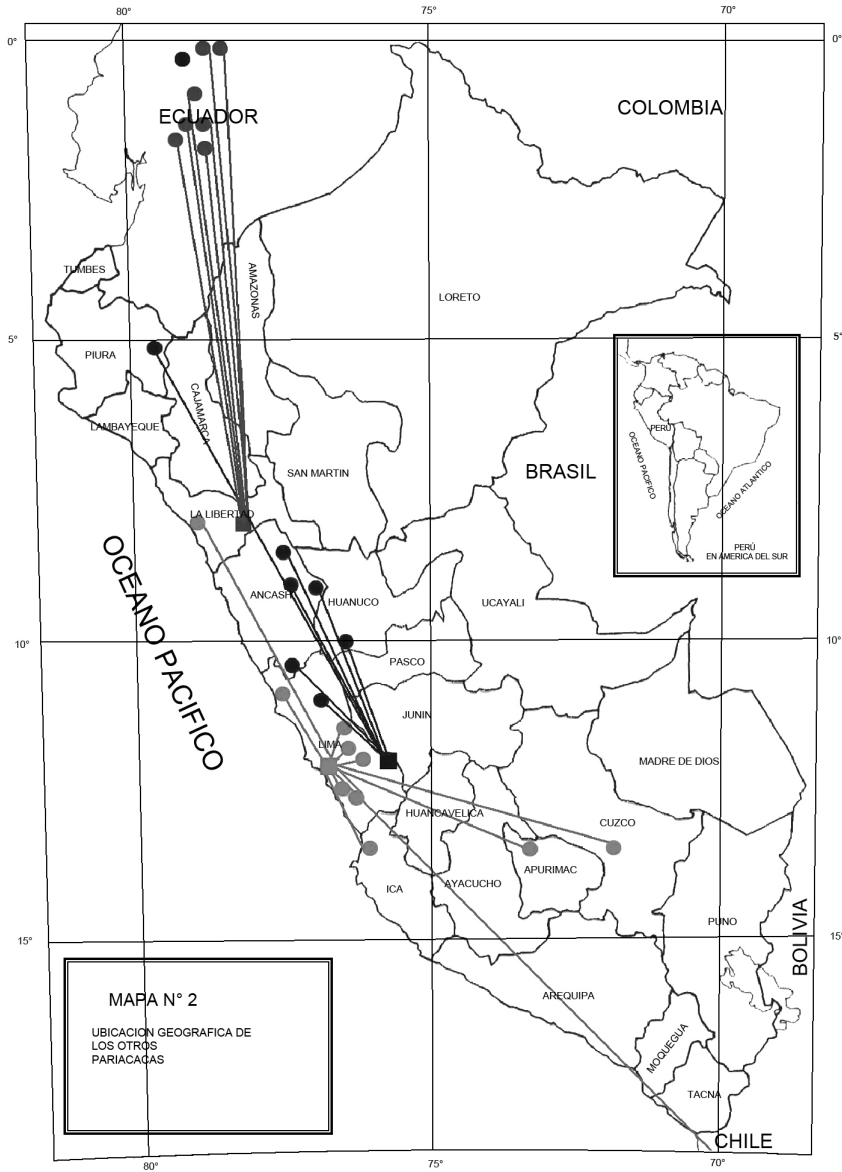
This reference to roads and nodes may recall the image of an Inca *quipu* with its interlinked strings and knots, a recording technique and conceptual metaphor which the Inca could have used in the absence of maps on which provincial jurisdictions and territories could be represented. The *quipu* is an Andean artefact and image that arguably materialises this concept; it is comprised of several vertical strings with knots united by a single horizontal string. Thus, the scattered points (e.g. settlements) were connected by lines (e.g. roads) and these are articulated when all the strings with knots were integrated within the Inca *quipu*.<sup>28</sup> The *quipu* can be seen as an Inca material metaphor for the concept of the province as an archipelago and the empire as an archipelago of provinces or *quipus*. The applicability of this proposal can be assessed in the spatial distribution of the place names related to Andean deities (e.g. Pariacaca). Figure 4 shows a map distribution of the networks of three major Andean deities (Pachacamac, Apo Catequil and Pariacaca).<sup>29</sup>

I propose that this distribution could be the expression of a religious archipelago of Andean shrines or sacred places located within mountains and lands under Inca rule. This is characterised by the scattered distribution of ritual sites along the Andean landscape and defined by a network of sacred places, with a centre (represented by rectangles in Figure 5), satellite sites (represented by circles) and linked by routes (represented by lines). The centres of each network have an area of influence and also a more distant influence through their satellite sites. However, in some zones these networks overlapped, and this seems to be a main feature of the archipelago concept.

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28 Recently the link between the concepts of landscape and *quipu* as documents have been highlighted because Andean history was strongly interrelated with the landscape, and this "writing geography" was a form of governance and social organization (Platt, Bouysse-Cassagne & Harris 2006: 31-32).

29 See research related to Andean oracles: Pachacamac (Patterson 1985; Rostworowski 1992), Apo Catequil (Topic, Topic & Melly 2002), Pariacaca (Astuhamán Gonzáles 2007: 2008).



**Figure 5.** Distribution map of three networks of affiliated sacred places/cult sites showing an archipelago pattern: Pachacamac (centre), Apo Catequil (north) and Pariacaca (centre and north). Sources: Rostworowski (1992); Topic, Topic & Melly (2002: 324-328); Astu-huamán Gonzáles (2007, Mapa 2).

### 3. Conclusion

The existence of the ‘province’ as a fundamental unit of Inca state organization has largely been taken for granted, however discussion about the conceptualization of the Inca province was absent. In this paper I analysed and discussed several concepts of the province. I suggest that the archipelago concept offers a useful alternative view and is more deeply rooted in Andean traditions of organization (e.g. economic and religious) and representation (e.g. *quipu*) than drawing bounded maps of provinces. The archipelago concept fits well with both the archaeological evidence of a road network linking larger administrative sites with smaller sites (e.g. for storage, military, productive or ritual activities) and ethnohistoric descriptions of provincial organization being dependent on the authority of local *curacas* to draw in labour through the allegiance of their ethnic group. The existence of scattered control points or material markers (man-made or topographical features) distributed on the Andean landscape supports the presence of nodes of territorial administration but not of continuous borders. This proposal not only fits better with earlier studies of the archipelago as a way of conceptualizing Andean social and economic organization, it is probably a better way of conceptualizing many pre-capitalist expansive states.

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