

**Processions in the Ancient Americas:
Approaches and Perspectives**

Dumbarton Oaks Pre-Columbian Studies Symposium 2014

Traci Ardren, *Sacbe Processions and Classic Maya Urban Culture.*

Classic Maya cities utilized pageantry and performative spaces to cement the experience of living in a city. Plazas, patios, and especially sacbes were arenas for the performance of movement, stages for sacred and political rituals available only to those who lived within the city's generative space. Evidence for the movement of captives along the sacbe from Yaxuna-Coba coincides with a period of increasing hostility in the northern Maya lowlands. This sacbe is the most monumental of ancient Maya roads, constructed in the Late Classic period. Production of a huge processional space created new social relationships and social practices that changed both cities. This paper explores this sacbe as a uniquely urban space, shaped by the political and urban forces emanating from the largest polities of the Classic period, and also creating and perpetuating Maya culture by the movement of people and ideas along this road.

Barbara Arroyo and Lucia Henderson, *Walking the Earth, Walking on Water: an Integrative Approach to Procession, Iconography, Archaeology, and the Hydraulic Landscape of Kaminaljuyú, Guatemala.*

Over the past two centuries, Kaminaljuyú has been almost completely destroyed by the urban sprawl of Guatemala City. Its stone monuments are fragmentary and lack original context; early excavations were left unpublished, and innumerable salvage operations have left a disjointed archaeological record behind. Kaminaljuyú, then, poses an important question: how can we engage with the topic of processions in cases where we lack the direct evidence that scholars have traditionally used to frame their discussions? In this paper, the authors use an integrative approach to the archaeological and iconographic records of Kaminaljuyú—investigating material remains, architectural structures, archival evidence, and sculptural iconography—in order to approach the ways in which human movement intersected with sacred landscape in Kaminaljuyú's built and natural environments. What is revealed is a watery landscape traversed by kings, an "aquascape" inhabited and animated by people and water in both tangible and sculptural manifestations.

Johanna Broda, *Landscape and Aztec State Rituals in the Valley of Mexico.*

This paper explores the dimensions of geographical space, political territory and ritual landscapes in the Valley of Mexico during Aztec times (15th and 16th centuries A.D.). It applies an interdisciplinary perspective combining anthropology, ethnohistory, archaeology, cultural geography and archaeoastronomy to reconstruct Aztec vision of place that transformed the Basin of Mexico into a sacred geography where lakes and mountains, volcanic landscapes, rocks and boulders, temples as well as towns and settlements of other ethnic groups were reinterpreted by the Aztecs according to their *cosmovisión*. This space was the stage for the performance of ritual dramas enacted by the Aztec State. Several distinct ceremonies will be analyzed related to water worship as well as to the seasonal annual cycle and the Aztec solar calendar. Finally, I will add some comments on an ongoing comparative study with Inca sacred landscapes in the area around Cuzco (Perú) that I have begun recently.

Marco Curatola Petrocchi and Jean Pierre Protzen, *Approaching the Oracle: Pilgrimage, Ritual and Sacred Space at Titicaca and Pachacamac.*

Titicaca and Pachacamac were the most important oracles of the Inca Empire. As part of a precise and highly planned imperial project, at the time of the Inca Tupa Yupanqui these two ancient regional

places of cult were transformed through the investment of enormous resources into these major religious centers and hubs of pan-Andean pilgrimages and theater of both grand sacrificial ceremonies and esoteric rituals. Why and how did the Incas organize and promote their oracular cult? In this paper we will try to answer these two undoubtedly related questions by examining in a comparative way the pilgrims' journey and their approach to the shrines, as well as the landscape, architecture and structure of both sanctuaries and of the rituals that took place there.

Susan Toby Evans, *Processional Space and Water Worship at Teotihuacan*

At Teotihuacan, processions were crucial to the social and religious life of the city, as evidenced by murals and also by the plan of the city and the relationship of its built environment to the surrounding vista. A large city in a region where water was the critical resource in least supply, Teotihuacan was always a center of water worship, and as the city's relation to different water sources changed, so did their veneration of particular deities. Extrapolating from the belief system of the Aztecs, we would interpret the city's great expanses of avenues and canals as arenas of ritual and processional activity. Looking at probable processional routes within the city we detect the intent of the planners as they manipulated distant vistas and constructed impressive and meaningful spaces for performance.

John Janusek, *Processions and the Production of Ritual Landscapes in the Pre-Columbian Americas.*

In this paper I cull out several broad themes relating to the importance of processions across the pre-Columbian Americas, and tie them to broader anthropological and archaeological debates. I draw on ongoing research in the southern Lake Titicaca basin of the highland Andes to illuminate core questions and issues raised by the various papers in this symposium. First, I question just what it is that makes a specific mode of movement a procession. To delve into this topic, I discuss the diversity of ritualized movements discussed in the various papers and question the diverse characteristics that render particular forms of human movement ritual processions. Second, I discuss the centrality of built environments and natural landscapes in ritual movements. Many papers demonstrate that processions were critical for the appropriation, production, and transformation of built and natural spaces in the pre-Columbian Americas, and thus enacted a reciprocal production of places and subjects. Third, multiple papers address the active roles of material things (water, stones, celestial bodies) as critical elements of ritualized human movement. I ask how we might critically engage ontologies in which humans are not the only dynamic agents in the world, in order to craft a robust approach that considers humans, spaces, and certain things as mutually constituting elements that afforded processions the power to construct and transform worlds in the pre-Columbian Americas.

Elizabeth Jiménez García and Robert H. Cobean, *Ritual Processions in Ancient Tollan: The Legacy in Stone.*

The many sculptural images that are conserved in the ancient city of Tula indicate the existence of at least two types of ritual processions led by kings or nobles, priests, and warriors. Depicted in stone, the processions were placed in buildings of the sacred precinct, which are located on the highest points of the ancient settlement, thus giving the sculpted processions great symbolic value. A specific type of sculpted procession seems to represent personages who have participated in very emotive events (such as military conquests), which were celebrated with the exhibition of the warriors, their weapons, and their uniforms to the public in the principal plaza. Another procession group appears to be composed of symbolic personages, such as warriors who are being transported on the backs of feathered serpents. In these processions, the serpents are probably guides and protectors.

Zoila Mendoza, *Contemporary Indigenous Pilgrimage: An Approach to the Andean Sensory Model.*

Using the example of pilgrimage among Quechua-speaking inhabitants of Cuzco, Peru, I explore the role of the senses in the predominant form of knowledge and memory in Andean Culture. I hypothesize that the keystone of such form of knowledge and memory is the intrinsic relationship between the visual, auditory, and the kinesthetic sensory experiences. Understanding this allows us to explain why Andeans have chosen music, dance, festivals, and other kinds of public performances as privileged forms of social action throughout history. I look closely at the dance troupes that walk for three days and two nights to the sanctuary of the Lord of Qoyllorit'i (Lord of the Shiny Snow) accompanied by the incessant music of flutes and drums.

Stella Nair, *A Plaza Like No Other: Space, Ritual, and Movement in the Sapa Inka's Pampa.*

Plazas are key theaters for processions in the Americas. Colonial period records and modern ethnographies provide rich details about the performances that have taken place in these open-air settings. To stage such distinct events, these large theaters had to be highly flexible in their design. Yet, it is this flexibility that makes trying trace the echoes of choreographed events in the architectural remains so frustratingly difficult. How can one materially determine the types of plays which once took place upon a simple stage? This quandary is particularly relevant for plazas at Inca royal estates. Although we know a lot about the types of rituals the Inca conducted in open-air theaters in Cuzco, the capital, we know very little about the processions that may have taken place in the plazas at royal estates. In order to address this quandary, I will examine several seemingly insignificant details of a royal plaza. In doing so, I will demonstrate how these small architectural gestures provide critical clues as to who the diverse players in these royal theaters were and how the rituals of the plaza connected to the sacred landscape.

Charles Stanish and Henry Tantaleán, *Processions and Regional Fairs in Andean Prehistory.*

Processions -an orderly movement of people in a ceremony or festival— are integral components of Andean culture. We propose that formal processions began at least in the Early Initial Period on the coast. During the subsequent centuries, processions, pilgrimages, and prosaic trips to barter markets or fairs constituted the means by which nonstate societies in the Andes created complex regional economic exchange systems. These barter markets were ideally situated in areas between rich ecological zones. In particular, the "chaupiyunga" zone between roughly 200 and 1200 masl, was a favored area for the location of these barter markets. As in all nonstate societies, economic life was deeply intertwined with the ceremonial and the social. We here provide a model of early complexity that incorporates processions and other ceremony with the development of inter-regional production and exchange through periodic fairs.

Timothy Sullivan, *Theatres of the State: Changing Practices of Ceremony and Sovereign Authority from the Middle to Late Formative periods in the Chiapas Central Depression, Chiapas, Mexico.*

From the Middle to the Late Formative period in the Chiapas Central Depression the layout of civic-ceremonial spaces changed substantially, from sprawling plazas, suggestive of processional ceremonies, to increasingly smaller and less visible spaces, suggestive of more restricted ceremonial practices. In this paper I analyze changes in the organization and use of civic ceremonial space at political centers in the Chiapas Central Depression and the implications of these changes on the evolution of relationships between rulers and ruled. I also explore the notion that changing conceptions of ceremony and rulership were linked to changing alliances that accompanied the decline of the Gulf Coast Olmec center of La Venta, and the rise of Lowland Maya political centers.

Juliet Wiersema, *Ritual Processions and Sacred Space on Moche Fine Ware Vessels.*

For the Moche, visual evidence for processional activity is preserved on Moche fineline vessels and in monumental architectural remains. Both sources reveal a connection between processions and single-room structures. Fineline scenes, such as the Arraignment of Prisoners, suggest that ritualized activities (presentation, detention, and sacrifice of captives) were anchored and linked by small, free-standing constructions. In the main plazas at Huaca de la Luna and Huaca Cao Viejo, this idea is corroborated by the presence of elaborately decorated rooms which likely served as venues for key events and influenced the direction of movement within the *huaca*. Further evidence that connects independent structures to processional activity can be found on Moche architectural vessels. These objects, which convey information both two- and three-dimensionally, suggest a central role for small structures in Moche ritual activity. They also reveal a propensity for processional activity that moved in an upward direction.