

DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART

How to Build an Empire: Performance and Spectacle as Inca Expansion Strategy

Lawrence Coben

October 15, 2009

Duration: 54 Minutes

Lisa Kays:

I would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Ned Boshell and the Boshell Family Foundation for underwriting our series. I'd also like to recognize our partners, the Adolphus Hotel and WRR for their support as well.

Our speaker tonight is Lawrence Coben. Mr. Coben is a recognized leader in a new area of archaeological research, the archeology of performance. He is the co-editor of a seminal book entitled, *Archeology of Performance: Theaters of Power, Community and Politics*. This book presents a wealth of research on the nature and political implications of theatrical performance at public events in ancient societies.

Larry is pursuing his PhD in Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania and he also holds degrees from Yale University and Harvard University. He is the Executive Director of The Sustainable Preservation Initiative. It's an organization which utilizes sustainable economic development to preserve archaeological sites around the world. And I hope that he'll tell us some more about this project tonight.

He is also a member of the governing board of the Archaeological Institute of America. Tonight he will discuss, of course, performance and spectacle as Inca expansion strategy. Please join me in welcoming Larry Coben.

Lawrence Coben:

Thank you Lisa. That was much nicer than anything I would ever say about myself. And I also thank you for not mentioning that one reviewer said, "The book was a great substitute for Ambien, but nowhere near as addictive."

I really do want to thank the Dallas Museum of Art for inviting me and the Boshell family for their support. I think it's wonderful. I hope you all have had a chance or will have a chance to see the fantastic exhibit on performance. I was incredibly surprised and pleased that this -- what I think of is seminal and yet terribly under-studied area--was actually being featured in a museum.

[00:02:03.16]

And I noticed that all the curators made a contribution to it, which is really phenomenal.

So I think it points out, if you go and look at the objects in there, how ubiquitous and how diverse performance is, all the different contexts it can place and all the meanings that it could have, and how important it is to us as a society, and how much the different types of performances that we engage in really tell us about what kind of society that we are. And this is one of the things that really led me to want to study performance archaeologically. Because, as I'll talk about a little bit, archaeologists have done an outstanding job, I think, of ignoring many of the important and seminal features that surround performance.

And when I talk about performance I'm not talking about the performance in a day-to-day kind of life place, but rather those kinds of special events which are really a little bit removed from our normal existence.

Now, I promise to talk about how to build an empire. And this is a good thing because then you can go home and build your own if I've done a good job. So in recent years, we've often heard a lot about how empires are built, how they are constituted, how they expand, how they survive. You have seen all kinds of things about the American Empire. There have been a million books on it. And people don't even talk about what is an empire? How do you create one and how you go about incorporating other people in it? Is it enough simply to conquer people militarily or do you need to win their hearts and minds as well? Why would you want one empire and what are the benefits and what are its costs?

And while a lot of the recent articles of course have been written in the context of Iraq and Afghanistan, they are equally relevant to more ancient empires that sprung up around the globe, such as the Inca Empire, which will be the primary thing that I talk about.

My own research for the last ten years has focused on this empire and how it grew from a single valley in Peru, where you see Cusco in the center there, to this gigantic empire ranging north to Ecuador and Columbia; south to Chile and Argentina; east to Bolivia and Paraguay. And doing it without many of the tools the scholars had traditionally considered very, very critical to such expansion.

[00:04:10.17]

There is no writing system that we know of, no horses, no wheels just to name a few, and yet somehow the Inca manage this kind of expansion through this very broad area, which is almost 3000 miles from top to bottom there, in a period of less than a hundred years. It's rather extraordinary and probably the most rapid imperial expansion ever in history.

And in particular, while I don't want to comment on current events, I think there may be some interesting lessons about imperial strategy for modern policy-makers that might be learned through the study of ancient empires. And in particular, how to retain the support of your own subjects while winning or at

least maintaining control over conquered people, at as low a cost as possible. I don't know why that might be relevant, but feel free.

And in particular, I want to focus on how the Inca use performances, massive spectacles, as a critical strategic element of imperial expansion and how these performances really intensify in areas of the greatest conflict and there is a tremendously close relationship in this empire and I would argue in any empire, among war, revolution, and ceremonialism.

So perhaps I should begin with: what do I mean by an empire? An empire is a political unit, usually having an extensive territory and usually comprising a number of territories or nations. Ruled by a single supreme authority and always comprising a variety of nationalities, a variety of different people are involved in the administration and constituents and subordinate portions of it. Empires are multi-national; they are multi-cultural and much broader than a single state.

[00:06:05.04]

Empires are generally the strongest and most dominant polities in their geographic region of the world. One might think of them as super states or agglomerations of states. They possess all of the states' characteristics like a standing army, usually some kind of bureaucratic structure and enforcement of laws and rules.

Some of you may have read, this is taken out of Jared Diamond's book, he ranks various types of polities by hierarchies and empires are on the top. They are usually held together not just by armies, but on economic integration, shared ideology, and a combination. And empires, of course, are not inherently good or inherently evil. The term is descriptive and it might just depend where in the social hierarchy of the empire you stand. And there's no truth that that's me after a hard night of drinking.

So let me tell you a little about the Inca, because I don't know how much any of you do know about it. The Inca are located here, as I said, in South America with its capitol in Cusco, Peru there in the center. The initial ceramic of the architectural evidence of the Inca is found in this valley. The only place you'll find evidence of the Inca prior to probably around 1400 or 1450 is in the valley containing Cusco, and all of this expansion that I am showing you takes place by the time Francisco Pizarro, the conquistador, arrives in Ecuador and Peru roughly in 1523.

So the Inca are reaching their peak, of course, therefore the end of the 15th and the early 16th century. Their armies are legendary and they had long, long campaigns as you might imagine when you are walking around all of these areas in order to get to places.

So what do we know about the Inca? You may recognize some of this very fine cyclopean stonework.

[00:08:01.04]

What's very interesting about it of course is this was all plastered over--you never actually got to see it. When people talk about Inca stonework, it's as if I would be talking about the plumbing and electric wiring in these walls. It was never seen and yet it's remarkable.

You might know it and the stonework is probably best epitomized by this very famous stone, which is twelve-sided and fits perfectly. You'd have a hard time slipping a playing card between this stone and the stone next to it. You'll also notice how enormous that stone is. The person on the left there is about 5'9" tall just to give you a sense of scale. And these stones are moved great distances and really carved without the benefit of modern tools.

This kind of stonework really only exists in the Cusco area and one or two other places in the empire. You don't find it everywhere that we go.

Now, some of you may also have heard of Machu Picchu. You can't give an Inca talk without showing the most beautiful site in the world. This was actually a royal palace and retreat. So those of you who have second homes, you can compare it to that and decide which you like better.

Now, some of you also may have read of course about the discovery of Inca mummies on mountain tops such as this one here. Many of these mummies were, in fact, teenagers and likely were buried during the ceremony which is known as *Capacocha*. And I'll come back to this later, but this and other ceremonies probably did involve animal and perhaps human sacrifice, and that was fairly prevalent in Inca ceremony.

[00:10:06.21]

The Inca left their architectural signature everywhere in their empire. Massive temples such as this one at Raqchi in Peru; this is known as a ritual stage or *ushnu*. You'll hear me use that word a lot today. In this particular iteration it's a stepped platform. A lot of very long, thin buildings, some of which are as many as 80 meters long that border on plazas with multiple doors--about which people debate what they are, and you'll hear me refer to those as kallankas. There will be a test later.

Fortresses, you can see and again another one I hope up on top of the back hill there following the road up, and palaces. So, much of this architecture I would suggest to you and what I am going to argue today was a critical part of Inca's imperial strategy of expansion and intrinsically related to the performances that took place throughout their empire.

The Inca create a series of evocative spaces, things that evoke their cosmology, that evoke their ideology, that evoke their power, and they utilize them in conjunction with a very resource-intensive, extensive, intrusive and frequent set of ritual and ceremonial performances, which follow a fixed form and calendar. And they do this to reinforce their identity and to inculcate others into the Inca. So as not to require a military occupation at all times and places.

If you think about how in a pre-literate, pre-media empire, how do you know you are part of the same state or empire as the other people? I would tell you the primary way, of course, is that you are performing the same ceremonies that they are. And if you are performing those in particular spaces then that's very particularly powerful.

But before I really go deeply into the Inca, let me just talk for a second about what I mean by an archeology of performance. Lisa mentioned that that's what I write about, and it is, and the problem with studying performance of course is that archeology is the study of material objects, real tangible things that we can see and touch.

In theory, at least, archeology is not what's going on in my mind, it's what I am finding in the field and its interpretation thereof.

[00:12:00.15]

Performance of course is exceptionally ephemeral. You can perform and unless you can record it, it's gone. If you come back into this room tomorrow, I will not be standing here, I assure you.

And even if you record it, duplicating the context, the audience, the historical and physical setting, the shouting, the noise, the smells, all these things presents an extraordinary challenge.

So let me talk for a second about how archaeologists dealt with performance. And I always think about this, a play called *Apology of Actors* by Thomas Heywood. One of the things I found interesting is that the same quote is in the Performance exhibit but of course the dates showing in there are 35 years before the dates that I have in my talk. So I have an archaeological quandary right here. But the quote is "The world's a theater, the earth a stage, which God and Nature do with actors fill."

Now Heywood was writing a defense of theatrical performance against the Puritans. The Puritans, understanding the importance of performance, were trying to control and stamp out anything that they felt was contrary to their ideology.

This particular play reflects the potential power of performance both for those in power and for those on the outside. To control performance is to control power. And this is particularly true in the Inca Empire.

Now archaeologists of course have focused primarily for a long time on administrative and economic systems. Performance was considered, and this is one of my favorite words, take it home, *epiphenomenal*.

Someone said to me that performance was epiphenomenal so I of course had to go to the dictionary and see what it meant the first time I heard it. What epiphenomenal means is that performance is secondary or a byproduct.

The only reason people performed or participated in performance that they went on was that it was part of some economic system. In fact one archaeological colleague with whom I still work frequently, every time he would find a flat stone would tell me, it's a dance platform, go dance on it.

[00:14:00.07]

I am happy to say that he now cites me frequently and I never remind him of that fact.

If you read most of the literature on this, you would find no matter what the space looks like the following kind of statement: "This was a ritual/performance/spectacle space. People came together and established senses of community with their fellow worshipers and fell into hierarchies of control with those who were in-charge of the performance." 100% true and yet missing all of the essence of performance that makes performance so important and not even taking into account the different natures of all the different kinds of spaces. Space seemed to be irrelevant.

Now one would never say that this space, this is the theater at Epidaurus in Greece where some of the most outstanding theater in the world was going on. The same thing was going on in this space, of course the Roman Colosseum where many of the top gladiators fought and navy people fought, or even this space where a third place NFC East football team is now. No Cowboy fans? Good!

Similarly one of the things that drew me to this in the Inca Empire of course was that a lot of things recalled this thing ushnu that I describe ritual platform. Here is one, and I am showing you this just so you can see a terrible job, by the way, of rebuilding and site preservation. This is the before and this is the after and it's woefully inaccurate, poorly done with materials that have made it much, much worse.

But it's hard to imagine that that particular stage, which is on the side of a small plaza, is doing the same thing as this larger but not as high platform, which is the middle of a gigantic plaza that you see here, which is the same as this particular ushnu which I excavated, which matches the description to both that and the capitol of Cusco, which is a small platform with a sugarloaf face stone and the stone is broken so it's lost its sugarloaf state.

[00:16:07.02]

And the same is this one, which is just on top of a mountain with no other surroundings around it.

Some of these contain offerings, and I thank my friends Frank Meddens and Colin McEwan for sharing these. You notice those are sugarloaf shape stones, at least they argue that in a forthcoming article, and you see that there are special floors layered in. And I've also now met my obligation which is you should never give an archeology talk without showing one pit and one profile.

But the point being, it seems to me even the most basic knowledge of performance is such that these particular types of ushnu cannot be for the same types of performance, or if they are, that's fairly quite, quite fascinating. It would suggest the same types of performances would be going on in Texas Stadium as they are going on in this room here, and no, I am not a football player.

So you look at these things and you see that performance is really critical to almost any type of performance you go through, and I would argue the more complex the society, the more important the performance is. It's where power relations are established, negotiated, reinforced, broken down and recreated. And it is a critical strategy for elites when they are starting out, trying to attract followers. It is impossible for an elite person to attract followers over a long-term basis without performance and ideology being a central element to it.

Now Michel Foucault of course argued that antiquity was nothing more than a civilization of spectacle and modernity was a society of discipline. I would argue that even today of course, we have as much a society of spectacle as we do before, some days worse than others. But if you think about "Mission Accomplished" or President Obama's recent speech on healthcare, the media has changed but the notion of central political actors appearing before potential followers to persuade them and lead them is still central.

[00:18:01.27]

I mean one anthropologist, very well-known, Clifford Geertz argued that in some of the Balinese states the only goal of power in the state was to create the best performance. I don't happen to agree with that but I think it's still important to show the centrality of performance in all of these things.

Now in many early societies the roles of religious and political specialists have overlapped significantly. I mean, here is a drawing by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala showing the Inca performing a variety of his functions, still another shape of ushnu. We know that Mayan kings danced, we have that. Greek leaders orated. This is where Pericles gave his famous Peloponnesian War--the list is endless. And it is critical in modern society. In fact, I think you could imagine

some day that an actor would become governor of a major state, or even President of the United States.

Ronald Reagan in fact was quoted as saying that, "He could not imagine that someone who was not an actor could be President of the United States." I'll let you all decide what that means but I think it's an important comment.

So let's talk about some of the existing approaches, the first has been something which is called *proxemics*. Essentially what proxemics is talking about is how special relations shape our communications, both verbal and non-verbal.

Proxemics is really a science of the physically possible. It's how far can I project my voice. It's how many people can fit into this room. It's who can see me from what vantage points. All things which I think from performance are extraordinarily, extraordinarily important without question.

[00:20:01.16]

The problem with proxemics is it doesn't tell you anything about what is actually being performed and what is the context of performance. It doesn't tell you about things like costumes and scenery and movement, and all of those kinds of things. I mean proxemics functions identically in a space regardless of any of these contextual issues. And it doesn't talk anything at all about what is the relationship, if any, between speaker and audience.

So while it's extraordinarily, I think, important, I don't think any of you are going -- I hope none of you are going to go home tonight and say, "well, I am glad I went to that talk, that was a really great space I was in" and leave it at that. I don't think that you probably do that very often. You admire the space. It's a wonderful place to lecture but most people don't go simply to look at the architecture.

The response to that in archeology has been something called phenomenology, which has really been how do you consider experience an emotion and communicative import? How do you bring the senses into it? It's to incorporate the senses in, and I think it's a wonderful approach for examining the relationship of a performance space and its emotional and psychological impact upon an audience. And it brings this issue to the forefront away from the physically capable.

The problem with most phenomenological research is it hasn't been tied in any way, shape, or form to the material record. And the best place or worst place depending on your point of view of this has been its Stonehenge, where both New Age people but also serious archeologists have written books. There is one by Barbara Bender, it is the worst archeological book I've ever read and I've said it to her face, so I don't mind saying it here.

She interviews a bunch of archeologists about how they feel about walking around the site and then they present it as Stonehenge research. Well, that has about as much to do with Stonehenge research as how I feel walking around up here has to do with the history of the Dallas Museum of Art--very little or nothing, except perhaps with the history of modern Stonehenge.

[00:22:07.00]

It doesn't consider and tie the nature of the material record back in. If you really want to analyze a theater, you have to think about a lot of factors, its shape, its entrances and exits, where is the stage, lighting, sound, costumes. If you talk to theater professionals and I do that all the time, space is only one element, all of the things that I just mentioned are really, really critical. So my goal has been to kind of try to move beyond the sensorial possibilities of proxemics without descending into the idiosyncratic or personal nature of phenomenology.

Now I used to say in a talk that my goal is to create a scientific and systematic method of doing this and after one of my talks, a colleague raised his hand and said, I didn't hear the systematic and scientific method. And he was right and so I don't say that anymore. But I do try to talk about some different approaches in terms of how we can deal with performance.

And one of these is a semiotic approach. For those of you who've ever read the Charles Sanders Peirce and probably no one. He writes about something called a [inaudible] replication, and I think of it as repeating something in a particular way, not just for the sake of repetition but for evoking a particular type of experience that you may have had before. So I always start with this expression which is from our Declaration of Independence which is, "We the People."

Now today, we think of this as including everybody in the United States, some people would extend it to immigrants; some would extend it to the entire world as a declaration of rights. And yet while we are repeating it the context is obviously changed over time, because that the time it was written of course it referred only to white male land owners.

[00:24:02.10]

So iconicity and evocation is important, but it changes through time.

Now coming back now into the Inca space, I want to start thinking about how do you design a space such that when you go to another space, you feel like you've been there before. It's almost like a sense of creating déjà vu. And it's not simply enough to repeat the features but you have to repeat them in the order and then the method to the extent possible that you experience them. If you think about the street you grew up on and let's assume it had six houses on it and it was a flat street. If I take you to another flat street with six houses upon it, it's going to remind you of home.

If I take one of the houses away, probably reminds you of home but a little different. If I tilt the street up at a 10 or a 15 degree angle, a little more different, each time it gets less-and-less evocative or it evokes a different type of memory, and the most powerful memory I can evoke if I want to evoke your home is the one that matches your home completely.

So having said that, I now want to take it as an example of performance-based research. I am going to make the argument that what the Inca do is take their capitol city of Cusco. Cusco is their cosmological center, it is the center of their most sacral performances, every critical ceremony that they have [inaudible] to the sun, to the moon to the thunder God takes place there. They invest new warriors there, and when they capture idols of other people they even take them back to Cusco and make people worship them there. And a lot of these ceremonies in fact are so sacred that the Inca kicked everybody out who was not of a particular Inca social class, they have to go outside the boundaries of the city.

What I am going to do and I want to argue to you here, is that the Inca, in order to expand, they need more of these sites outside of the area of Cusco.

[00:26:03.04]

Because when you get this big going back to Cusco where your own performance becomes impossible, and so what you really need these are particularly in border-type locations or your fighting wars where it's very important to call upon your gods to reinforce your own identify with sacral ceremony, and also to inculcate other people who you've just conquered in these border regions into what you're doing.

And there are six places with asterisks up there and these are sites that I would argue in different places are new Cuscos. Now not all are on borders, but some become new Cuscos and then as the Inca continue to expand they take on different purposes. But I am going to go talk about one in particular; the one in Bolivia down there, Incallajta where I led a project for several years, excavation and survey and talk about this, just a bit.

So here is the site of Incallajta, it's pretty impressive. You'll notice just a few features I want to point out. You'll notice there is a double plaza there, one that looks more or less rectangular and one that looks triangular below it to the right, that building on the far right is a giant kallanka, it's 80 meters long by 26 meters long it's the largest building in the western hemisphere prior to the arrival of the Spanish.

Here is a map of the city of Cusco, and again I'll just point out a few things. You'll notice that there are three main hills there: One in the center, one on either side. That in the center there are two plazas, I hope you can see them, I have another slide. There are a couple of rivers that fall down through the mountains and another one that cuts through it. Those of you who – and there is a tail,

what's known as the Tail of the Puma and a little bit above it a temple of the sun.

Those of you who have been to Cusco--people who have been to Cusco? Oh good! Well, hopefully you recognize this map.

[00:28:01.07]

So I am going back to Incallajta now, let's look at a few of the similarities between Incallajta and Cusco. Incallajta by the way, here's where it is on the map, middle of Bolivia.

So take a look these two maps together, and I think you can see a bunch of similarities, and if it's not clear on that, that might be a little clearer. I am showing you this digital reconstruction because that's another area and I am going to show you a couple of virtual reality walkthroughs in a couple of minutes. Doing digital reconstructions and virtual reality walkthroughs I think is really the cutting edge of where we are going to go in performance studies. This will really enable us, using the data we collect in the field, to explore the potential of different types of performance, be they sight, sound, smell throughout the empire.

But if you take a look at this slide I think you can see pretty clearly there--now I have written a long article on this--but you see the three hills on the top-- there is a zig-zag wall on the middle hill, two plazas in the center. The southeast corner you have a confluence of rivers, the Sun temple slightly above it.

This isn't just a replication of features. If you are walking into this site, either Cusco or Incallajta from the north, the first thing you see is the zig-zag wall. So here is the zig-zag wall and there is another one. So if you are coming in from the north, either the north-east or the north-west, that's what you are going to see first. So it's not just repeating, the Sun would be in a particular position, the mountains would be very similarly located.

Again the double plaza there in the center just like the double plaza on the map of Cusco. The giant kallanka which exists all around the main plaza in Cusco. I could go on and on in this vein, my point being that what you have here is a replication. And that means you may not need the Inca himself who leads the ceremonies because the space itself is so powerful another noble might do.

[00:30:01.07]

If you capture an idol from someone in this area, you don't have to take it 500 miles or 700 miles back to Cusco. You can take it and keep it here and perform the same ceremonies. By creating sacralized experiential places you enable yourself to expand more rapidly.

However, what you also do is create a very powerful space that someone can manipulate to their own end. I don't have time to make the argument here, but one of the things that I do argue is that one of these spaces becomes a second Inca capitol called Tomebamba, and then the people from Tomebamba and the people from Cusco fight a civil war because all the resources are also being collected here. It's not just about the dancing. All of the idols are coming here, all of the tribute is coming here, everyone is coming and giving to these temples. And therefore, if you are controlling the performance it also can be a weapon against your own heart as opposed to a weapon against the external. Here you see kallankas and other new Cuscos.

So with the little time I have left I want to talk about a couple of other performance buildings in particular. Now I showed you that giant kallanka which is 80 meters and by 26 meters, one might wonder, how do you hold the roof up? And so how do you find out? We dug. And we started finding these kinds of column holes. These column holes turned out to be foundations, turned out to be two meters in diameter. You can see at the bottom there, I hope, a little burnt mark. The dark brown where the arrow is, that's from trees. This was this site, we don't know whether it was by lighting or during war burned down, but you can see that there were giant trees in the middle. Now what I didn't tell you about Incallajta is that Incallajta is about 10,000 feet of altitude.

Those of you who are skiers, no, there aren't a lot of giant trees at 10,000 feet of altitude. And yet, as I'll show you, in order to build this particular kind of a structure; and here you see us taking out some of the column base.

[00:32:05.17]

You need trees of roughly 50-feet in height.

So now I am going to take you into a reconstruction (if technology works) of this building. Notice the enormous amount of wood that's required to support this roof. This was done on an auto-desk architectural program so we are pretty sure the roof would not in fact have collapsed. But you notice we need an enormous amount of beams.

The second thing that you notice is there is not a lot of natural light in here. There are a few small windows on one side and the other, nothing in the roof, and all the doorways are over here. Now the doorways are south facing, but before you think that means that there is a lot of light in here, remember that we are in the southern hemisphere, this is facing away from the sun.

So clearly if performance is going on in here, it's either going on in the dark or with some evidence of torches which we did not find in excavations or some other form of lighting. Now of course the stars in this area are remarkably bright, given the altitude, lack of modern lighting, things of that nature. So some of them may have taken place by starlight.

This is the kind of work we can now do in terms of reconstructing ancient theatrical spaces. And then you might say, well, that's nice, but what about people moving through the spaces? Well, I am glad you asked.

This next thing I am going to show you is based on-- We have one chronicled account of people moving through a similar temple to this one. And essentially zig-zagging snake-like through columns. And so we tried to recreate what would be the experiential nature of doing this.

[00:34:04.23]

And it's something like this.

And notice the moments from dark to light, the twisting and the turning. One of the things that you find when you do more and more of these at Inca-related sites is the twisting and turning, moving from dark to light is a critical element of Inca performance. It happens in almost every space that they design. And this is one of the things that my research is really now focusing on along with what are all those different types of things that we call ushnu or stage really mean can they be the same, or is it more like a Roman situation where you have colosseums, bouleuteria, odea, all kinds of different spaces with particular types of purposes.

And even just now in addition to this temple and performances going on it, of course things were going on in the outer plaza. So let me take you out there.

Now we are going to come in first from the west side of the site and then from the north, and I am going to show you how convoluted the routing into the plazas is.

Notice you've got high walls on both sides of you. So the only people you are going to see are those who are marching with you. This particular thing I think we did at 12 noon, it probably would not be this bright because we'd be casting giant shadows at other times of the day.

We are at about 17 degrees of south latitude, look at this giant tunnel, that wall there is roughly 14-feet high, and all of a sudden you are emerging out into this plaza seeing these massive buildings. And as you move through the plaza what appears is this giant temple. This temple, which is the center of all of the performance, it's a temple dedicated to the creator god, and it's absolutely the centerpiece of all of the performance that's going on at this site.

[00:36:07.15]

And here coming in from the other side, you'll notice that it's extremely similar zigging sagging, light to dark.

I use to show these a little more quickly, a couple of people complained they were actually almost getting seasick from the twisting and the turning.

Now imagine this with people beating on drums with fires burning, drinking *chichi*, corn beer the Inca drink, shouting, chanting, yelling, drunkenness for days and then trying to -- and doing this walk, I think it would be -- by the time you got to the main plaza, you would be kind of susceptible to whatever you might be hearing by the time you got there.

And yet, when you go to an archeological site now, none of these rooms are here, the walls are not this high, you miss this whole essence of the site. One of the things I always notice when I go to a site, especially if it's not reconstructed, I can see for miles, I can see from one end to the other. And people think, well, why do they build such open sites? And the answer is, they didn't, they built things like that. I am just going to show you one more thing, it's an over-flight. It again gives you another perspective on the incredible numbers of buildings and things that are going on here.

Look how much massive construction is going on, and this is all about theater. Now one of the things that's of course hard to discern is, what's the backstage area?

[00:38:01.24]

Where are the entrance gates? There is one at the far end. There is one at this end, but who gets to go in the top plaza, who gets to go in the bottom plaza? All some things that I have written a bit about, but all social organizations I would argue is encompassed in a site like this.

The music starts at 8:00, I know, and it's 7:45 and I want to leave a few minutes for questions, but I hope at least through this very brief description, I have given you a sense of how archaeologists are beginning to deal with performance and ways that we haven't done it before, utilizing both anthropological and other theory as well as modern technology. We have a long way to go because we are missing this incredibly seminal element in human performance. Thanks very much! Yes sir!

Audience: The thing that comes to my mind, the physical site gets replicated for those political purposes. It seems to me that it must be a very common arrangement of two rivers coming together with a way in between them leaving a number, rectangular or triangular [inaudible]. I think of Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh.

Dr. Lawrence Coben: You don't have the matching, not just of the rivers, but the hills, the plateau, the sloping, some of which I can't show here -- it's really rather remarkable and one of the things that I took, the architect who did these recreations for me had never been to Cusco until after we did them.

So I took him up to the zig-zag wall at the top and said, "Hey, look around." He looked around and looked down and said, "That's what I have been redoing." And so I was like, "Thank god! Somebody besides me sees it."

[00:40:00.21]

But it's actually quite -- it's surprisingly uncommon. I mean I started working at this site and I didn't really notice it at first, and until we started doing mapping and re-creation, and that's one of the things that's important about this technique, it really gets to be more three-dimensional and experiential.

It's not just that you have a kallanka and you have these plazas and you have these rivers. It's that the geographic orientation is almost identical in terms of north, south, east, west. The slope of the land is almost identical. All of those factors together I think are what makes it not just the confluence of rivers and that's why it's not feature-matching, it's experience-matching.

And I think you see it in the United States. If you look at our capitol, at the national capitol building and numerous state capitols, which are these buildings that are domed on top of hills with long kinds of walls and approaches to them. For us, that's a very evocative symbol of power. And once you see it once, when you go to another state capitol, you always know it's a state capitol you are going to see. And when you go to other countries, you don't see buildings that have those kind of features serving similar roles, in general. You would never confuse the houses of Parliament or the Bundestag or the United States Capitol or a state capitol building.

Male Speaker: [Inaudible: 00:41:27 – 00:41:31]

Dr. Lawrence Coben: Thank you!

Male Speaker: [Inaudible: 00:41:32 – 00:42:27]

Dr. Lawrence Coben: Look, I think Chavin is one of the most dramatic sites and I do think there are probably replicas of Chavin in other sites that I've seen, without buying into the argument of Chavin to Tiahuanaco to Inca about which we could have another whole day. But I think, I would not argue that this kind of replication is particular to the Incas, I would argue just on the other hand that most great -- I mean, if you go to Roman planned cities, you find certain features in certain places and certain kinds of performance spaces with certain types of entrance. When you are in a Roman city, you know it's a Roman city. And I think that's really the critical element of this. But you know it not just because there is a colosseum there but you can have a colosseum or a stadium anyplace, it's how do you get there, what is the experience of doing it, where is the backstage, where do you go in, where are the actors, all of those kinds of things.

Yes, in the back.

Female Speaker: To what extent is the material that shapes your symbol of power--I mean for instance with the roof, the angular roof and you would say the Incas were described then as an aggressive, they're a conquering people. If you translate that to here and you mentioned the dome which is essentially not a male symbol, as a symbol of power and relate that to later symbols of power which is the skyscraper which is definitely. Isn't it the material that shapes it?

[00:44:09.18]

Or is that the nature of.. Which goes first-- how does scholarship from political to financial --?

Dr. Lawrence Coben: I mean I think what we probably have now, first of all, modern society is a more distinctive separation between financial and political power, perhaps, though they are closely related than before. But in terms of their symbolism being distinct I think that they are far different. I think it's a combination -- I think a lot of times the material, in terms of what you're actually using is -- what is available first of all and what technologies that you have available to you. Having said that, throughout time and space people have managed to build massive symbols of power, and there's great debate -- and I think shape which you've pointed to I think is a critical element of that.

Theater in the round is very different, then, proscenium theater. I don't know whether I would take it to the male/female place, but a lot of people do and some of the work is quite good. So I think it's all of those factors together. I think it's the creativity, I think it's the material, I think it's the landscape, and I think it's the shaping. And I think it's also the inter-relationship between buildings and sites, because people have a tendency to focus on one building and forget -- I mean when you came here, you all took a route here, you all parked here, that's all part of the experience.

Now that may not be what's on the forefront though. You may think the most fun thing you did this evening was park your car, but that's still part of the experience that you can't lose site of, how hard is it to get here? What do you have to go through to get here?

[00:46:01.20]

What's in the museum that you've encountered on your way here? Those are all critical elements of power.

Yes!

Female Speaker: So I'm more familiar with the ancient cultures of Mexico and South America and I know that there are at least some sketchy contact descriptions from the Spanish [inaudible]....Is that not the case.....

Dr. Lawrence Coben: There are? Yes, as there are of some of massiveness of these ceremonies.

Female Speaker: So let's say if you do have descriptions of some --?

Dr. Lawrence Coben: We have ones that are generally recorded say starting in 1550, 20 years after the Spanish get here. People, elders, describing what performance was like 20 years before. So one of the things that a challenge is to try to decide which of that, how much of that is true, how much of that is people's memory, how much of it is conflated, and then of course you have people in different political groups with their own ends, who would say, "Well, my ancestor was Lawrence Olivier!" And someone else says, "No! My ancestor was Lawrence Olivier. Yours was --" Well, I am not going to mention any actors that I don't like. But yes, it's absolutely critical, and what we have to do is try to come from hypothesis of those.

Some of these chronicles, for example, talk about replicas of Cusco. But that doesn't mean that they necessarily existed and in -- when I read archaeological literature, I kind of have a test that I've tried to set out from Cusco and then apply it to a series of sites. And I've applied it to all of the sites that were mentioned. Some of them fitted very well. Incallajta happens to be the one that fits it the best. Some of it fit it less well and then it's up to me to decide is it -- therefore not a new Cusco or something else intervene, because of course Cusco was a changing city through time.

So a new Cusco in 1450 shouldn't look the same as a new Cusco in 1525, anymore than Dallas 50 years ago looks like Dallas of today, and a replication of Dallas would be terribly different.

[00:48:09.10]

Female Speaker: I will say that walking through the streets of Cusco you do have that feeling of narrow spaces and tall [inaudible].

Female Speaker: Is there any evidence that the landscape was manipulated to look like Cusco?

Dr. Lawrence Coben: No, I mean, no. I mean, these hills are massive, these streams are massive, we didn't find any evidence of canalization though. You are absolutely right. The Inca are big landscape manipulators, but not here. And we know for example in Cusco, they canalized the rivers running through it. We have evidence of the canals. We did not find any evidence of canals, and believe me, it was a pretty hairy walk up some awfully steep areas in order to find them.

Now in this area there's been an enormous amount of erosion and unlike Cusco there wasn't a Spanish city put on top of it. So it may be that we've lost evidence from an either being washed away, people taking the stones elsewhere because canals without maintenance often don't survive for 500 years. So it's a great idea and I wish we had.

Yes.

Male Speaker: So conversely would you say that if the landscape had been similar [inaudible] similar geological features that they would have been as successful in developing their empire standing?

Dr. Lawrence Coben: I think they would have had to develop their experiential methods in another way. I think that the landscape really emphasized and drove home for them. And some of the ones don't have the landscape as perfectly, and it's one of the tests that I use.

If you read some of the older literature about Incallajta; Incallajta, which is a gigantic site, is in this little side valley.

[00:50:05.15]

For years until we were there, no one found a road and the road we found is fairly minor compared to a lot of the other. Everyone was, "Why are you putting this giant site in this off-handed place?" And my conclusion is, somebody walked through there and all of a sudden the geography hit them in the face one day, the same way that it hit me in the face, and decided this is the right place to put this site. So I think they actually look for these kinds of replicas.

And there are enough hills and -- with canalization and manipulation, you can't do it. Some of the other new Cuscos do show evidence of that kind of manipulation and canalization.

Yes!

Male Speaker: Hi! Is there any evidence that as the empire expanded that they would maybe alter their ritual or adopt ones...?

Dr. Lawrence Coben: Absolutely they do. Actually in some of the Cuscos including this one I think, they built, they used to take their people's idols and they build them temples. And they let them perform side-by-side but always under the watchful eye of the Inca god being paramount. There are no question that there were ceremonies that only occur in certain times and places and not other ones.

It's a little bit hard to tell often from archaeological evidence. It's very easy to see where the Inca have come to somebody else's place and super-imposed one of their performance spaces. A mixed performance space is harder. Now sometimes you'll see it particularly in ceramic evidence. You'll see a fusing of styles and if you find them in a performance space, you might at least posit that that's the case. But there is definitely, that's going on. The Inca are known for being very, very syncretic in terms of not imposing their religion but super-imposing it instead.

Sir!

[00:52:00.21]

Male Speaker: You showed Darth Vader before, you know. These people, this whole empire was probably brought down by a few number of people. Is there anything about this approach that, in the replication by the intellectual capital invested in replicating or so forth, that makes it fragile? Inherently is there vulnerability like the Death Star?

Dr. Lawrence Coben: Well, what happens is the actor--the lead actor--becomes particularly, particularly important. And of course what the Spanish do according to their accounts is they capture the lead actor and they not only keep him -- and they keep him from performing his ceremonies in front of his people and his people think that they need him back there, in order to maintain their sacrality.

So the answer is -- and plus as I mentioned there is a civil war going on at the time, and plus they've just recently conquered a lot of people who decide they're going to throw in with these new guys--they can't be as bad as the guys who just conquered us.

So, on the other hand if you look at the Roman Empire, there's an enormous amount of this going on, and yet, in the Roman system it works. Now the Romans of course have several multiple performance spaces which I think diffuse the power a little bit better.

And the Inca at least in these sites don't seem to be doing that, but we don't have either the accounts or quite frankly enough archaeological evidence because there aren't a lot of us who like to work at these altitudes. One of the things I like is it's unexplored, but it's not easy. So it's a great hypothesis, and one, I'd actually like to test, if you don't mind if I steal it.

Male Speaker: Yeah, you can have it.

Dr. Lawrence Coben: Okay! Thank you!

Lisa: Thank you everyone, and thank you Larry so much!

Dr. Lawrence Coben: Well, thank you all!

[00:54:00.19]

Audio file: 20091015_DrLawrenceCoben.mp3