## The Architecture of La Quinta:

Interpreting colonial strategies of conquest and conversion at Pukara, Peru

Sarah Abraham-University of California Santa Barbara & Aileen Balasalle

### Introduction

La Quinta is a colonial chapel built on top of the monumental terraces of Pukara, a prominent archaeological site in the northern Lake Titicaca Basin located just south of the modern town of Pucará<sup>1</sup>. It represents one of the first physical manifestations of the Spanish empire in this area as well as the last stage in the occupational history of this important Andean site. The goal of this preliminary study is to examine the architecture of La Quinta to understand:

- the chapel's placement within Pukara and how it articulates with the site's pre-conquest architecture and,
- how its architectural style compares to other early colonial churches in the region

### La Quinta Chapel Location —

### History of Occupation at Pukara

Although occupation dates back to 1400 BC, Pukara is best known for its monumental architecture, which includes a series of large terraces and multiple sunken courts (together referred to as the Qalasaya) constructed during the height of the Pukara culture (200 BC – AD 200). Following a long abandonment, the site was reoccupied AD 1250 by the Colla, who used a part of the Qalasaya as a cemetery. After multiple attempts, the Inca conquered the Colla ca AD 1470, and founded a settlement where Pucará is today. The Inca also modified the Qalasaya, adding buildings and features as a demonstration of their newly established control. Finally, the Spanish occupation began in 1550's with the founding of Pucará and the construction of La Quinta. It is believed that La Quinta fell out of use after the completion of Santa Isabel church in 1610.

### Early Colonial Architecture in the Altiplano

Little remains of the churches from the earliest decades of the colonial period in the altiplano. Many were temporary adobe buildings or repurposed existing structures that were erected until a Spanish town could be founded and a formal church constructed. Starting with the Toledan reforms of the 1570's, ecclesiastical architecture became permanent and more homogeneous as populations were resettled in Spanish-style towns with churches constructed on the main plaza. In the altiplano, churches built during this period are remarkably uniform in plan and are characterized by a simple nave, apse, bell-tower, and arched portals with facades that featured elements of classical

A handful of new architectural forms were developed during the colonial period to aid in the conversion of a large indigenous population; atria and open chapels were built to accommodate large crowds receiving religious instruction and witnessing mass<sup>3</sup>. These features paralleled the plazas and sunken courts where Andean traditions of open-air worship took place and are seen as a compromise between Spanish missionary objectives of and local beliefs<sup>4</sup>. These features fell out of favor when initial approaches conducive of local customs failed and were replaced by more coercive strategies of conversion<sup>5</sup>.

### Typical Colonial Chapel



### Methods

Fieldwork consisted of mapping La Quinta and recording structural features and construction episodes. The data were then entered into AutoCAD to generate an architectural plan and were then compared to regional examples of colonial architecture.

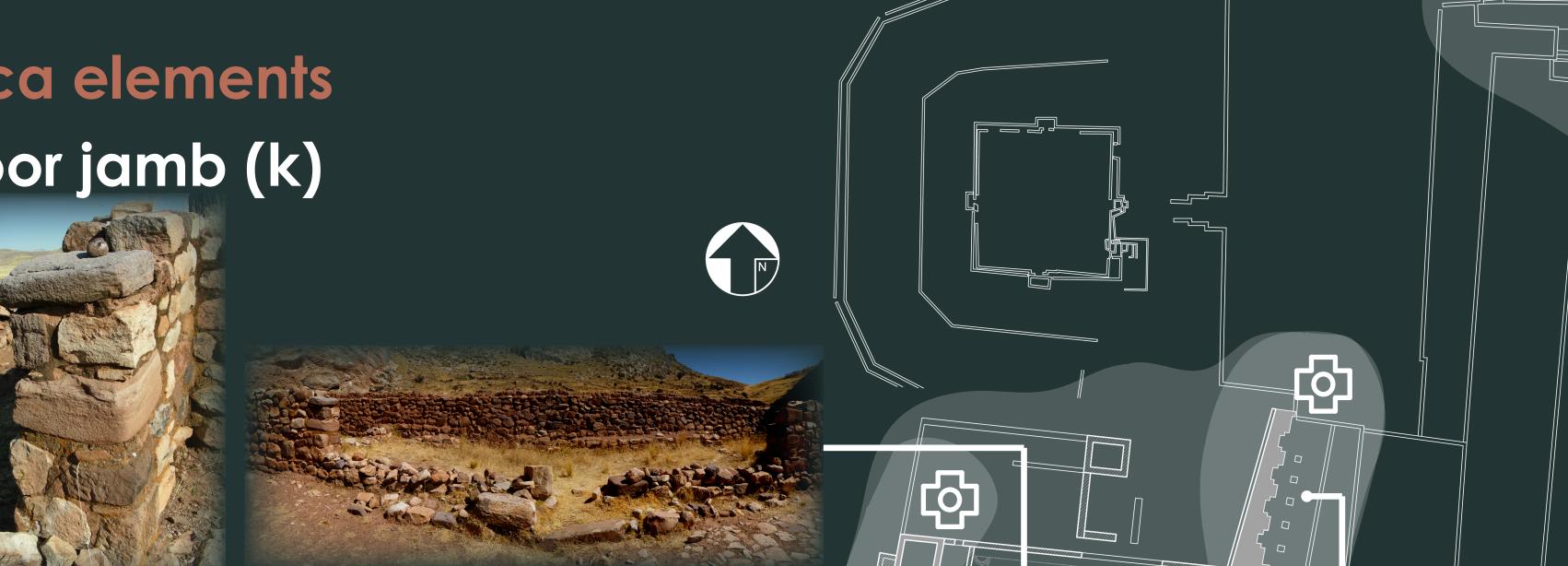
### Results

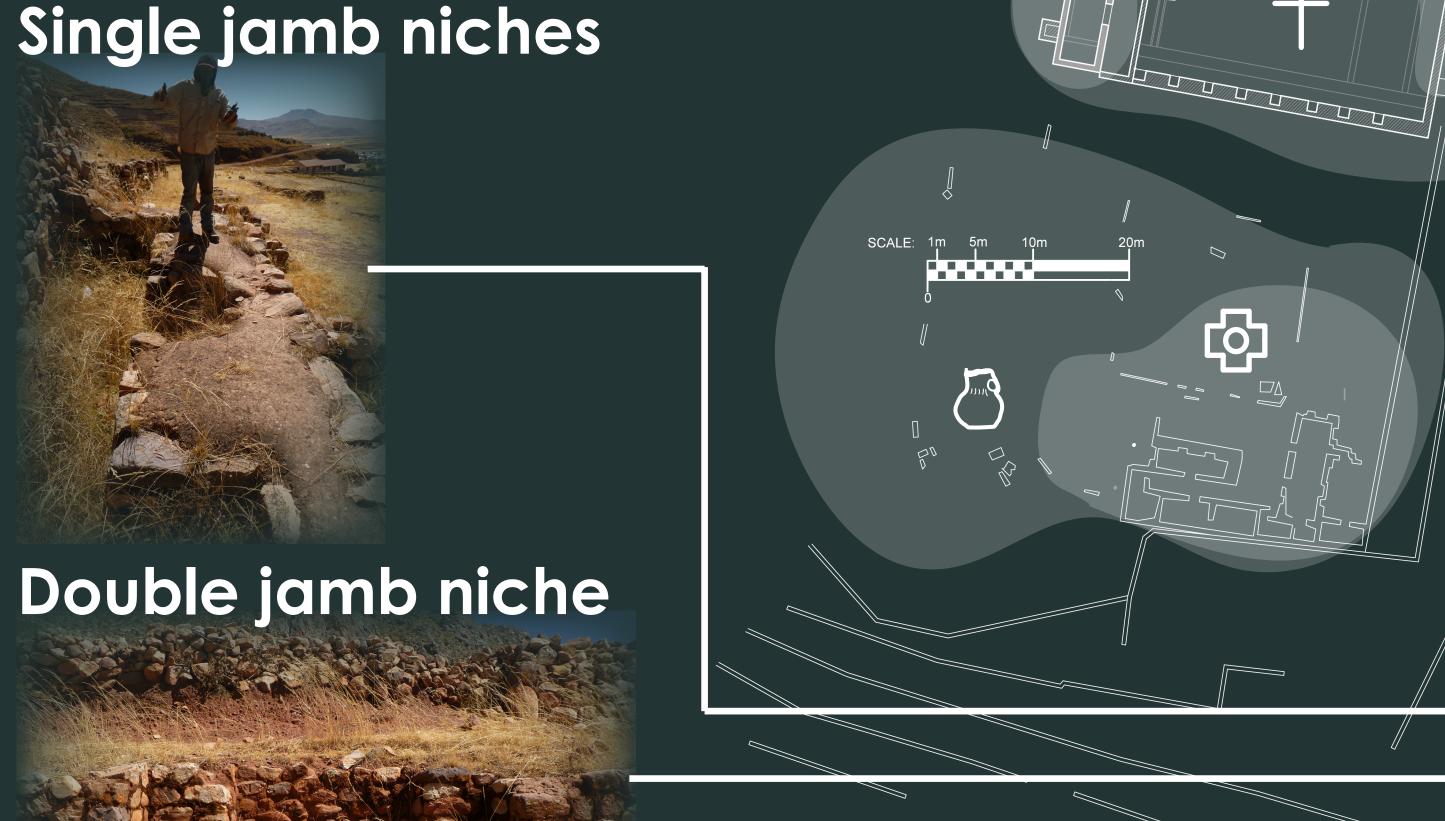
La Quinta is located on the top of the Qalasaya complex, in between two Pukara sunken courts. It has a trapezoidal floor plan and is oriented roughly east-west with the eastern end abutting the closed entryway and the niched Inca wall and row of columns. The chapel consists of a rectangular enclosure (a) that opens onto a rectilinear patio with a paved floor (b). A set of stairs connects the patio to a sunken atrium (c), with a row of arched niches along its southern wall (d) (e).

However, upon closer examination, multiple construction events are evident. The rectangular enclosure has a different alignment than the rest of the structure as well as a distinct masonry style (h) (j). Moreover, four corners were found along with the remains of two jambs (k) along the eastern wall, suggesting the enclosure was once a stand-alone structure. These original architectural features are common in Inca construction. Colonial modifications include removal of the eastern wall, the addition of apertures in the north and south walls (g), the addition of buttresses (f) on the west wall, and the construction of the atrium. Hence, the architectural analysis suggests that:

- La Quinta does not represent a single construction event and but consists of at least two distinct building episodes, the first dating to the Inca occupation. Thus, an Inca structure was modified and then added on to during the colonial period to create the chapel.
- The architectural style and floor plan of the chapel are atypical and do not fall into the regional typology of colonial churches.
- La Quinta may be an early example of an open chapel. Located between two ancient ritual spaces, it served to create a similar space of open-air worship that was familiar to the indigenous population.

# Santa Isabel Location Inca elements Door jamb (k)





### Colonial elements

### North corner (j)



South corner (h)



Buttress (f)



Arched niche (e)



200 bc

### Pukara Site Occupation





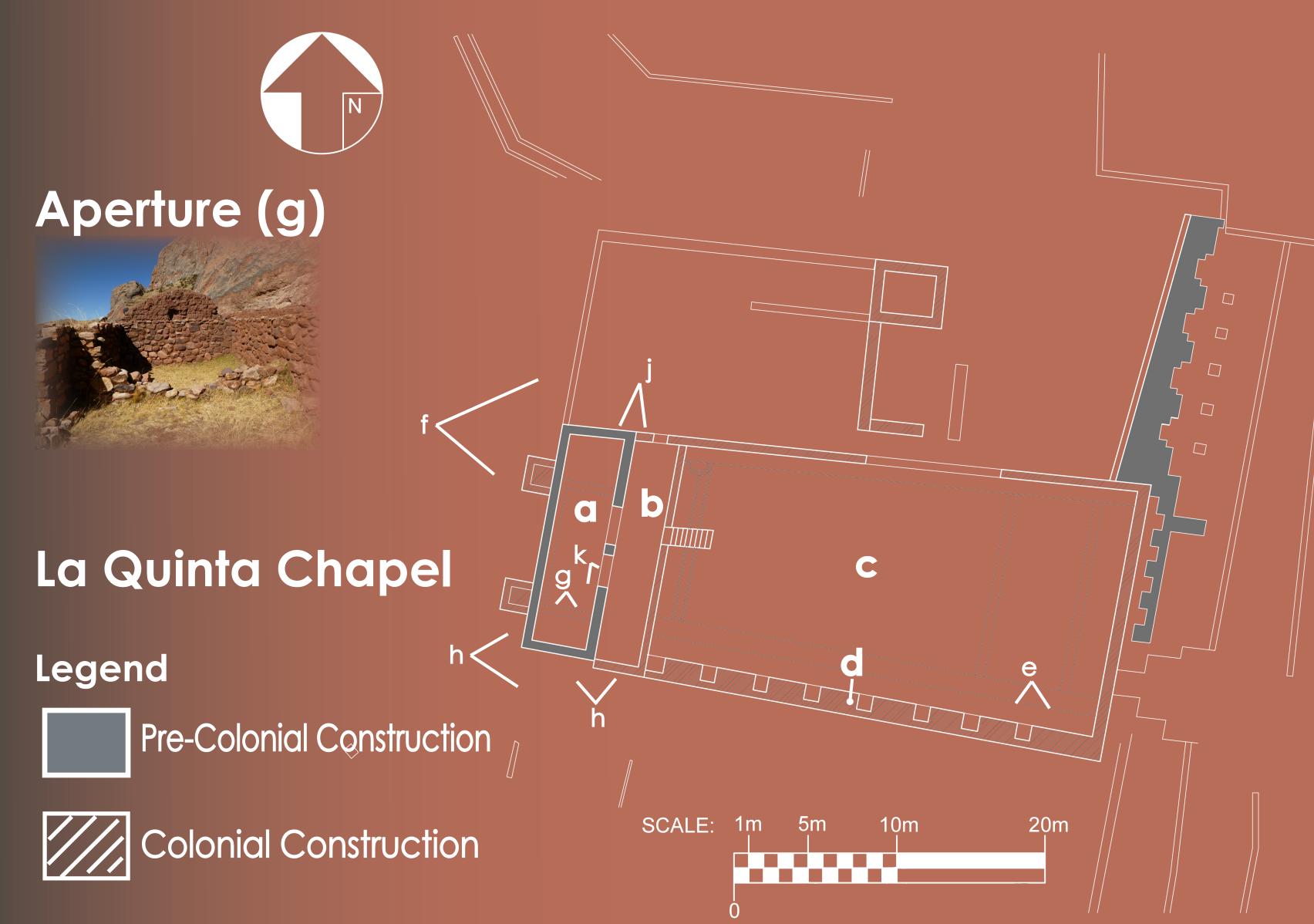


### Conclusions

Based on the results of the architectural analysis, we argue the following:

- The reuse and remodeling of the Qalasaya during the colonial period is the final phase of a long and ancient tradition of appropriation and manipulation of the monumental architecture of Pukara. The co-option of local sacred and ceremonial spaces was an effective tool of Spanish conquest, a strategy that was also used by the Inca empire in their defeat of the Colla.
- La Quinta's combination of Inca and colonial architectural features and location on the Qalasaya places it in the earliest decades after Spanish conquest<sup>6</sup>. Undoubtedly, it predates the Toledan reforms that aimed to stamp out indigenous influences in evangelical policy. The architecture of La Quinta suggests that initial colonial strategies of conversion that allowed Andean traditions to continue alongside Catholic ones created not only hybrid religious practices but material culture as well.

Plans for future research include additional architectural analysis, archival research, and excavations to investigate these crucial early post-conquest years in the Andes.



- 1. The modern town is Pucará but the archaeological site and culture are
- 2. See Ramón Gutiérrez, Carlos Pernaut, et al., Arquitectura del altiplano peruano (Buenos Aires, Libros de Hispanoamérica, 1978) for an extensive history of colonial architecture in the altiplano. 3. For more on these new architectural forms, including open chapels, atria
- and posas, see Jorge Bernales Ballesteros, "Capillas abiertas en las parroquias andinas del Perú en los siglos XVI-XVII," Arte y Arqueología 3 (1975):113-13 and Teresa Gisbert, and José de Mesa., Arquitectura andina: Historia y análi sis (Bolivia, Talleres-Escuela de Artes Gráficas del Colegio Don Bosco, 1985 4. Valerie Fraser, The Architecture of Conquest: Building in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1535-1635 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990):130. 5. See Sabine MacCormack, "The Heart has its Reasons: Predicaments of Missionary Christianity in Early Colonial Peru", The Hispanic American Historical Review v.65 n.3 (1985).

6. For a similar case of early colonial chapels, see Steven Wernke, "Analogy or Erasure? Dialectics of Religious Transformation in the Early Doctrinas of the Colca Valley, Peru," International Journal of Historical Archaeology v.11 n.2 (2007):152-182. 7. The Pukara culture occupied the entire Qalayasa complex including the pampa below and to the east of the terraces.

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200 ad

1250 ad