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The Circular Plaza of Campanayuq Rumi : A Preliminary Consideration

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7. The Circular Plaza of Campanayuq Rumi: A Preliminary Consideration

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1. Introduction

Sunken circular plazas are one of the common architectural features in ceremonial centers associated with monumental architecture in the initial phases of the Andean Civilization such as the Late Preceramic Period, Initial Period, and Early Horizon (3000–200 BC). The earliest examples have been confirmed on the central and northern coast, where they date back to the Late Preceramic Period (3000–1800 BC). In the Peruvian highlands, circular plazas appeared after 1000 BC in the Initial Period and the Early Horizon and the sites that have this type of architectural features are scarce and distributed mainly in the northern highlands and in the northern part of the central highlands (Figure 7-1). However, in our archaeological investigations at the ceremonial center of Campanayuq Rumi (Vilcashuamán, Ayacucho) in the 2016–2018 field seasons, we identified a circular plaza, which is a rare example in the south-central highlands of Peru. This article has two objectives: first, to provide basic data on the circular plaza at Campanayuq Rumi, focusing on its morphology, architectural style, and tentative chronological position; and second, to consider the implications of the presence of this circular plaza in the interregional interactions in relation to the Chavín Phenomenon.

2. Brief Overview of the Site of Campanayuq Rumi

Campanayuq Rumi is a ceremonial center of the Initial Period/Early Horizon located in the Peruvian south-central highlands in the province of Vilcashuamán, in the Ayacucho region (Figure 7-1). Our research from 2007 shows that the site comprises a monumental area of 3.5 ha with public architecture in a U-shaped layout, and the residential areas cover an area of at least 12 ha (e.g., Matsumoto et al. 2013). The significant complexity and monumentality of Campanayuq Rumi when compared to other nearby Initial Period and Early Horizon centers of the south-central highlands seems to suggest its exceptional importance in the region (e.g., Burger and Matos 2002; Cruzatt 1971; Lumbreras 1974; Mendoza 2010, 2017; Young 2017, 2020). The architectural style of the monumental core presents a clear stylistic affiliation with Chavín de Huántar, which was probably one of the most important centers of widespread exchange and religious networks referred to as

the Chavín Horizon or Chavín Interaction Sphere (Burger 1988, 1992, 1993, 2008; Figure 7-1). Campanayuc Rumi is located approximately 600 km to the south of Chavín de Huántar. Despite this distance, they share several strong similarities such as the shape and “U-shape” arrangement of the platforms around a quadrangular plaza (Figure 7-2), the construction techniques represented by the presence of polished stone stairways, drainage channels, and the gallery found in the southern platform (Matsumoto 2010; Matsumoto and Cavero Palomino 2010, 2012).

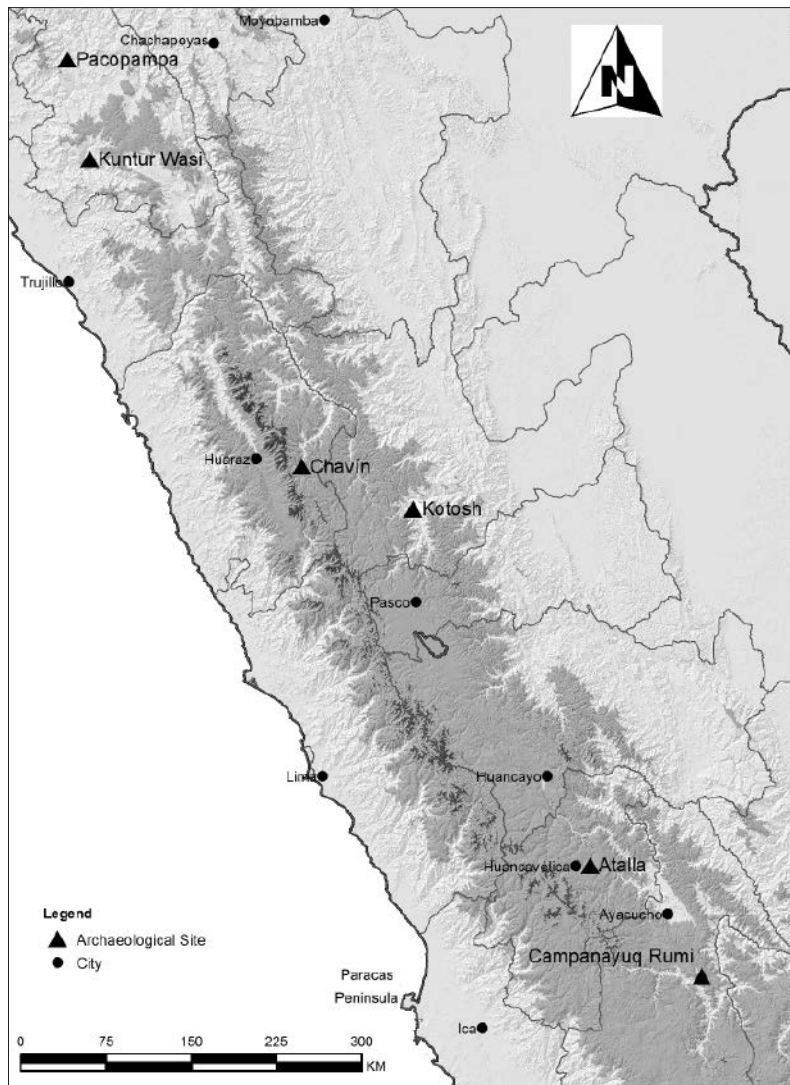


Figure 7-1 Map of the sites mentioned in the article (illustration by Bebel Ibarra, used with permission)

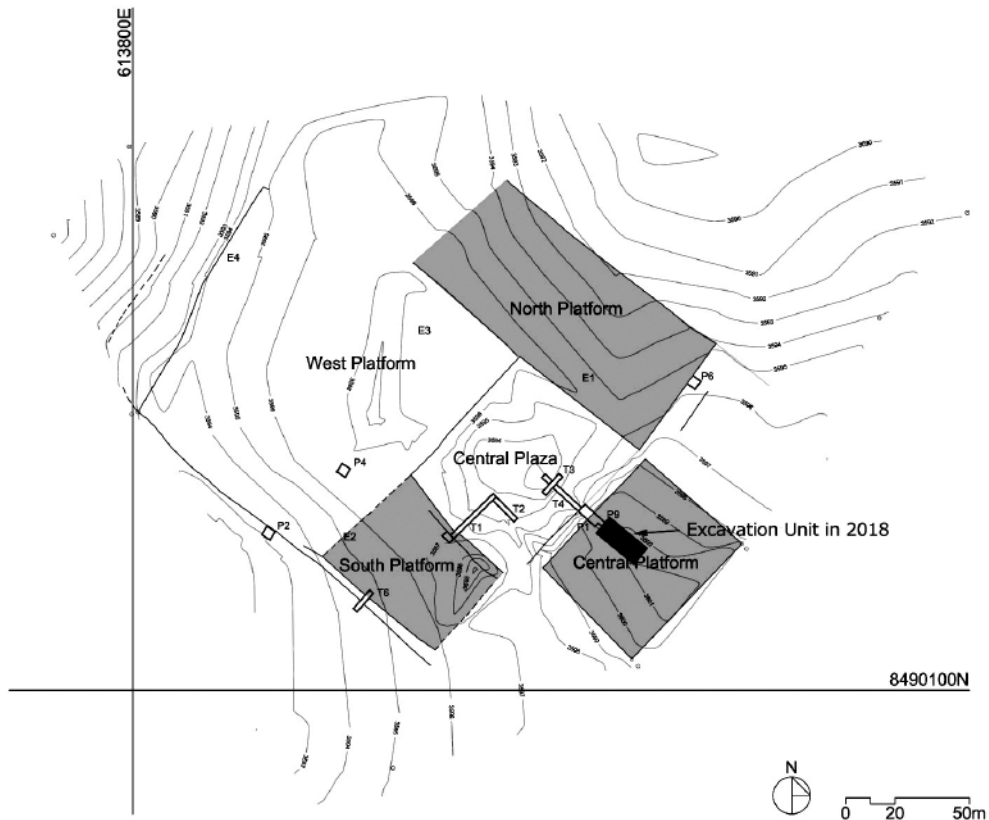


Figure 7-2 Map of the monumental core of Campanayúq Rumi showing the Excavation Unit of 2018 (illustration by Gentaro Miyano, used with permission)

2.1 The Chronology of Campanayúq Rumi

A summary of site chronology is presented to provide a baseline for subsequent discussions. The following chronological sequence is supported by 48 radiocarbon dates of charcoal samples recovered from residential and monumental areas (for more detailed information on the site chronology of Campanayúq Rumi, refer to Matsumoto 2010; Matsumoto and Caveró Palomino 2010).

The Pre-Platform Phase (1300–950 BC) corresponds to the first occupation in Campanayúq Rumi. Despite the scarce archaeological evidence, it can be assumed that there was no monumental architecture in this phase. Human occupation was probably limited to villages of modest scale, similar to the societies distributed contemporaneously in the south-central highlands, for example, Waywaka in Andahuaylas (e.g., Grossman 1972).

The Campanayúq I phase (950–700 BC) is characterized by the first monumental construction projects at the site, which took place in around 950 BC. Campanayúq Rumi was established as a ceremonial center of magnitude in this phase. The basic layout of

rectangular platforms distributed around a quadrangular plaza, configuring a “U-shape,” and at least one gallery, were completed in this phase. These characteristics suggest the possible beginning of the marked influence of Chavín de Huántar. Given the presence of internal structures at Campanayuc Rumi, it is possible that the designer was aware of the constructive technique used in the monumental architecture at Chavín de Huántar. However, the material culture does not match the strong architectural similarities mentioned above. The ceramic assemblage of the Campanayuc I phase comprises multiple styles that are distributed over a wide geographic area of the south-central highlands such as Pirwapuquio in the Mantaro Valley (Browman 1970), Marcavalle in Cuzco (Mohr-Chávez 1977), Waywakaen Andahuaylas (Grossman 1972), and possibly a part of the southern coast, as is the case of Acha in the Acarí Valley (Riddell and Valdez 1987–1988; Robinson 1994).

The Campanayuc II Phase (700–450 BC) is characterized by a series of radical changes in monumental architecture, material culture, and socioeconomic organization. In monumental architecture, a new technology of cut and polished stone was adopted. This feature is evident in the main stairway of the central platform. This new architectural feature at Campanayuc Rumi is important because the technique was applied to the buildings of Chavín de Huántar, perhaps contemporaneously (e.g., Kembel 2001, 2008).

The changes recognized in the material culture are all the more evident. In this phase, there are typical ceramic styles that show clear links with the Early Paracas culture from the southern coast and the Janabarriu phase of Chavín de Huántar (e.g., Burger 1988, 1992; DeLeonardis 2005; Dulanto 2015; Menzel et al. 1964; Isla and Reindel 2006; Splitstoser et al. 2010). In the Campanayuc II Phase, the social organization was more hierarchical than in the previous phases, as evidenced by the presence of various personal artifacts such as assorted bone artifacts, exotic stone beads, stone, ceramic, and gold ear spools, and another gold object with a Chavín style religious iconography. Funerary contexts contained offerings of fine vessels with religious iconography (Matsumoto 2010, 2019a, 2019b; Matsumoto and Cavero Palomino 2010, 2012).

2.2 Other Ceremonial Centers in the Ayacucho Area

Research conducted in the Pampas River basin has revealed the presence of ceremonial centers that was possibly contemporary with Campanayuc Rumi. At least four ceremonial centers with monumental architecture were built in this area, two of them, Arpiri (Nesbitt et al. 2019) and Tukri (Mendoza and Vivanco 2019), possibly depict the “U-shape,” and have certain similarities with the monumental architecture of Campanayuc Rumi. Arpiri is located 2 km to the southwest of the modern city of Huancasancos and about 20 km to the north of the Quispisisa obsidian source, at an altitude of 3,440 m above sea level. This site is located on the upper part of the right bank of the Caracha River. It comprises eight or nine natural hills that have traces of human occupation. Based on the characteristics of the ceramic sherds found on the surface, it seems reasonable to assume that the site belongs to the Initial Period and/or Early Horizon. The mounds show artificial modifications like terracing and/or perimeter wall constructions, and those listed

as Arpiri 6, 7, and 8 show greater modifications, as evidenced by the presence of massive retaining walls distributed around the bases of low natural hills. Arpiri 6, 7, and 8 were distributed to form a possible U-shape associated with at least two sunken rectangular plazas located in the space between these mounds. The similarity between Arpiri and Campanayuc Rumi is that the platforms on both sites are built to adapt to the natural topography; and both show the total configuration of the U-shaped layout (Nesbitt et al. 2019).

The central platform of Campanayuc Rumi is stepped and rectangular, and thus its total configuration seems artificial. However, this final shape was achieved only during the Campanayuc II Phase and the platform was lower and different during the Campanayuc I phase. Platform construction began in the Campanayuc I phase, and took advantage of the presence of a small hill that was later covered by the construction activities of the ceremonial center in the Campanayuc II Phase (Matsumoto 2010: 78). Our excavations carried out atop the central platform identified the bedrock at a level that was much higher than the level of the base of the perimeter walls of the platform. Therefore, it is possible that the upper part of the hill was partially exposed above the platform at least during the Campanayuc I phase. The use of the natural hill described above is common with Arpiri, where the natural hills were artificially transformed through the construction of perimeter walls around the lower parts of the hills (Nesbitt et al. 2019).

Tukri is located at the “Tinkuy” or the confluence of the Pampas and Caracha Rivers, which flow down from Arpiri. At Tukri, Edison Mendoza and Cirilo Vivanco (2019) reported the discovery of a ceremonial center with monumental architecture with the “U-shaped” layout, where they recognized the presence of a gallery with constructive characteristics similar to those in Chavín de Huántar and Campanayuc Rumi. It is still difficult to identify whether the monumental architecture at Tukri was built by adapting the natural topography. However, given its extreme similarity with Campanayuc Rumi, it seems reasonable to assume that the two centers adopted the same architectural style and construction technique.

With these data from the first millennium BC, it is difficult to consider the central highlands a peripheral zone in the formation of the Andean civilization. While it is true that Campanayuc Rumi, Arpiri, and Tukri share the U-shaped architectural layout and ceramics related to the Janabarriu phase of Chavín de Huántar, they also have another important element that clearly differentiates them from Chavín de Huántar. In these sites, especially in Campanayuc Rumi and Arpiri, the “U-shape” was achieved through the selection, modification, and conditioning of a place that had a natural topography with mounds, such that they were arranged in an approximate configuration of “U.” It may be possible to consider the utilization of natural topography as a local architectural technique as it was also adopted in public centers with local architecture, as is the case of Pallaucha (Mendoza 2017) and Chanin Pata (Mendoza 2010; Nesbitt et al. 2019). This is clearly in contrast to the case of Chavín de Huántar, where the monumental architecture was built on a selected flat area, and its platforms with complex internal galleries and sunken plazas were built in the process of horizontal and vertical expansion that characterizes the

growth of the site throughout its history (e.g., Kembel 2001, 2008). Based on the data described above, we hypothesize that the monumental construction, which artificially modified the natural hills with surrounding perimeter walls, represented a local type of monumental architecture that was common in the south-central highlands in the first millennium BC.

3. The Circular Plaza of Campanayuy Rumi

3.1 Season 2016 and 2018: Excavations at the Top of the Central Platform

In the 2016 season, to examine the construction sequence of the central platform, an excavation unit was placed on top of the central platform of Campanayuy Rumi following the main axis. This excavation demonstrated that the outcrop of the bedrock was exposed at the top of the central platform in the early sequence, and on the exposed part of the hill, two small, low, and carefully paved stone platforms were directly built on top of the bedrock, which were leveled and conditioned for this construction. We do not yet have radiocarbon dates; however, it is possible that these low platforms were built in the Campanayuy I phase (Cavero Palomino 2020) because the excavations in the low platforms did not yield diagnostic ceramics of the Campanayuy II Phase and they were built directly on top of the bedrock. Near the end of the 2016 season, a segment of a circular plaza was found on the southwestern side of the excavation unit and adjacent to the platforms (Cavero Palomino et al. 2019). Thus, in the 2018 season, it was necessary to open another excavation unit of 8 m by 20 m to elucidate the size, characteristics, and chronological position of the circular plaza (Figure 7-3). As in the case of the low platforms, the bedrock was artificially leveled for the construction of the circular plaza.

3.2 The Circular Plaza of Campanayuy Rumi and Its Chronological Implications

The diameter of the circular plaza is 14 m and the height of the side wall is 1–1.2 m. The spatial distribution of the plaza coincides with the main axis of the site, which runs through the middle of the central platform and the quadrangular plaza located in the

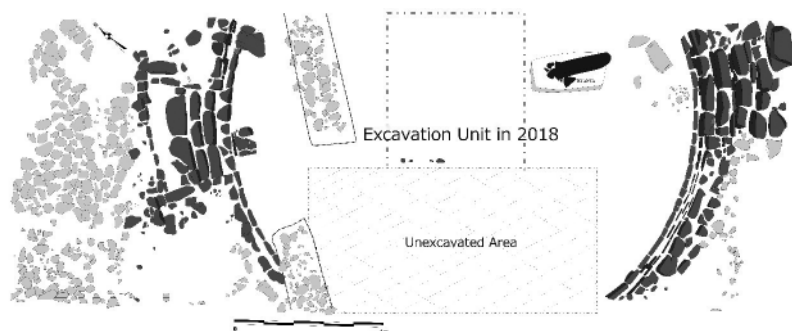


Figure 7-3 Plan of Excavation Unit in 2018 (illustration by Yuri Cavero Palomino)

lower part of the architectural complex. The circular plaza has two fan-shaped stairways on its eastern and western sides (Figures 7-3, 7-4, and 7-5). The one on the eastern side leads directly to the paved platforms and has five steps (Figure 7-4), whereas the one on the western side, which is possibly connected to the main access of the central platform, has four steps (Figure 7-5). However, in the western staircase, the steps are lower than those in the eastern staircase. A finely elaborated drainage canal runs below the western staircase. In the lower part of the side wall of the circular plaza, there is a low plinth that



Figure 7-4 Eastern staircase of the circular plaza (photo by Yuichi Matsumoto)



Figure 7-5 Western staircase of the circular plaza (photo by Yuichi Matsumoto)



Figure 7-6 Interior wall of the circular plaza (photo by Yuichi Matsumoto)

was built with flat rectangular stones arranged in a uniform manner at the same level. The wall face of the circular plaza comprises carefully quarried stones and small flat chinking stones (Figure 7-6); this construction technique and finish is similar to the wall face of the sunken rectangular plaza located in the lower part of the architectural complex that was built in the Campanayuc I phase (e.g., Matsumoto and Cavero Palomino 2010: Fig. 5).

The floor of the circular plaza is made of firmly compacted clayey soil. Few archaeological materials were recovered in direct association with the floor except for a small, undecorated bowl that was completely fragmented and deposited as an offering almost in the middle of the plaza, directly on the floor. This possibly indicates that the plaza was cleaned before closure, which makes it difficult to obtain charcoal samples and organic remains to date the time of its construction and use. However, it is possible that the construction of the circular plaza dates back to the Campanayuc I phase, considering the association with the low platforms and bedrock below it. The stratigraphy covering the floor of the circular plaza indicates it was buried and ritually covered with a layer of reddish-orange clay on which a thick layer of clayey black soil with a large amount of charcoal and ash was found. This black layer clearly corresponds to a termination ritual that was associated with burning activities and produced abundant animal bones, lithic tools, fragments of figurines, and ceramic vessels. Although the material analysis is still in progress, this evidence suggests that the termination ritual at the plaza was related to feasting activities. The ceramic style recovered from this context belongs to the Campanayuc II Phase.

These data suggest that the circular plaza was closed during the Campanayuc II

Phase. It is difficult to evaluate the exact date of its construction given the scarcity of materials available for dating. However, it seems reasonable to assume that it was constructed in the Campanayuc I phase because, as mentioned above, the plaza was built by cutting and leveling the top of a natural hill (e.g., Cavero Palomino et al. 2019; Nesbitt et al. 2019) using a classic construction technique at the site, and the sterile layer appears directly below the floor.

Given the height and architectural associations, the circular plaza clearly does not correspond to the last construction stage of the main stairway of the central platform that was exposed in the 2007–2008 season. The architectural fill associated with the last construction phase of the central platform completely covers the areas of the lower platforms and circular plaza. It seems possible that the circular plaza is associated with the lower part of the central platform and the ancient stairway built in the Campanayuc I phase, which possibly exists behind the main stairway found in the 2007–2008 season (Matsumoto 2010: 77; Matsumoto and Cavero Palomino 2010: Fig. 5). When the central platform was renovated in the Campanayuc II Phase, the old façade of the main entrance was sealed, and a cut-stone staircase was constructed. These data show that the time of closure of the circular plaza corresponds to the last renovation of the central platform, which took place in the Campanayuc II Phase.

4. Circular Plazas from a Comparative Perspective

The earliest evidence of circular plazas dates back to those found in the central coast represented by Caral (e.g., Shady et al. 2000) and on the northern and north-central coast, specifically in the Casma Valley, represented by Sechín Bajo (Fuchs et al. 2010), both of which date back to the Late Preceramic Period. However, they are too chronologically distant to consider any direct link with the circular plaza of Campanayuc Rumi.

The construction of the Circular Plaza of Campanayuc Rumi can date back to the Campanayuc I phase or the Initial Period, but cannot be dated back to earlier than 950 BC, a date that corresponds to the presence of the first constructions of monumental architecture in Campanayuc Rumi (Matsumoto 2010; Matsumoto and Cavero Palomino 2010). The only example of a circular plaza identified thus far in the south-central highlands corresponding to the Initial Period and Early Horizon is the one found in Campanayuc Rumi. This type of plaza has not been identified in Pallaucha, Tukri, and Arpiri. The architectural style present in Campanayuc Rumi differs significantly from local centers like Wichqana and Chupas (e.g., Cruzatt 1971; Lumbreras 1974). Therefore, it is difficult to consider the circular plaza a local tradition. Its stylistic origins should be outside the south-central highlands. There are three examples of circular plazas corresponding to the Initial Period that are worth considering: the plazas identified in the centers of the Casma Valley on the north-central coast, the sites of the Manchay culture on the central coast, and the circular plaza of Chavín de Huántar in the central highlands. The circular plazas in the Casma Valley, at the sites of “Sechín Alto Polity” (e.g., Pozorski and Pozorski 2002), such as Las Hadas, Sechín Alto, and Taukachi-Konkán show a morphological similarity with the circular plaza of Campanayuc Rumi (Pozorski

and Pozorski 2002, 2005, 2006; Pozorski et al. 2021). In Las Haldas and Taukachi-Konkán, circular plazas are characterized by the presence of two fan-shaped staircases located in line with the architectural axes. According to Pozorski and Pozorski (2006: 38–39), the construction of the circular plaza at Las Haldas dates back to before 1400 BC. In Sechín Alto (Pozorski and Pozorski 2005: 156), the circular plaza was built around 1500–1400 BC. Although it is difficult to define the end of the use of circular plazas in Casma, it is possible that they lasted throughout the Initial Period. Thus, in this case, it is possible that the end of their use could coincide with the moment of the construction of the circular plaza of Campanayuq Rumi. There are other general similarities such as the presence of the stepped platform and the rectangular plaza; however, the linear layout present in the representative sites of Casma differs from the “U-shape” layout present in Campanayuq Rumi. It is difficult to find similarities in the styles of material culture between the centers of Casma and Campanayuq Rumi.

Other coastal examples that require comparative evaluation are the circular plazas identified in the Manchay culture sites, where absolute dating demonstrates that the U-shaped centers and associated circular plazas appeared in the early part of the Initial Period and precede Campanayuq Rumi (e.g., Burger and Salazar-Burger 2008). The fall of the Manchay culture may have coincided with the emergence of Campanayuq Rumi as a ceremonial center of regional importance. As Burger and Salazar-Burger noted *vis-à-vis* the plazas of Cardal, the plazas of the Manchay culture do not have two fan-shaped stairways and their location is limited to the marginal areas of the site. The material culture styles, especially the ceramic ones, do not demonstrate a link between these sites and Campanayuq Rumi. In sum, it seems difficult to consider the circular plazas of the centers of the Casma Valley and of the Manchay Culture a source of inspiration for the construction of the circular plaza of Campanayuq Rumi in the same line of logic with which Burger and Salazar-Burger discussed and compared these examples of circular plazas with that of Chavín de Huántar (Burger and Salazar-Burger 2008: 102–103).

The evidence on circular plazas in the highlands is limited. Aside from Chavín de Huántar, other examples include Kuntur Wasi (Onuki ed. 1995), Huaricoto (Burger and Salazar-Burger 1985), Pallka (Pozorski and Pozorski 1987), and Chawin Punta (Brown 2017). Of these, the circular plazas of Chavín de Huántar and Kuntur Wasi have a pair of fan-shaped stairways arranged in line with the architectural axis of the ceremonial centers, showing a strong morphological similarity with the circular plaza of Campanayuq Rumi. However, there are distinctive characteristics. In Campanayuq Rumi, the circular Plaza is located in the middle of the central platform, whereas in Chavín de Huántar it is located in the lower part of the Old Temple, and in Kuntur Wasi it is located at the back of the U-shaped temple. The circular plazas of the highlands are contemporary with that of Campanayuq Rumi. However, with the exception of Chavín de Huántar, the moment of its construction is supposedly the Early Horizon, and thus, it may be difficult to treat them as antecedents and a source of emulation of the circular plaza of Campanayuq Rumi. It is important to consider the chronological position of the circular plaza of Chavín de Huántar. Given the meticulous work conducted by Silvia Kembel, John W. Rick, and their colleagues, our knowledge of the architectural sequence of Chavín de

Huántar has increased (Kembel 2001, 2008). However, there is a debate on the position of the circular plaza in the chronological sequence of Chavín de Huántar (Burger 2019; Burger and Salazar-Burger 2008; Watanabe 2013).

Given the history of Campanayuq Rumi, it is reasonable to interpret its monumental architecture as a result of the emulations of Chavín de Huántar. However, if the circular plaza of Campanayuq Rumi belongs to the Campanayuq I phase, it may precede the Black and White Portal phase and require a reconsideration of the presumably parallel process between Chavín de Huántar and Campanayuq Rumi. The U-shaped platform layout with a sunken rectangular plaza and the gallery of the South Platform that appeared together around 950 BC strongly suggest that the monumental architecture of Campanayuq Rumi was inspired by the contemporary architecture of Chavín de Huántar.

The circular plazas of Campanayuq Rumi and Chavín de Huántar share strong morphological similarities such as the presence of two fan-shaped stairways arranged according to the axis of the “U-shape” architectural layout. There are similarities in the construction technique of the stone masonry walls that use a combination of quarried but unpolished stones and flat chinking stones called “pachillas” corresponding to the early phase of the monumental construction in Chavín de Huántar. Conversely, in Campanayuq Rumi, there is no evidence of the existence of lithographs with religious iconography, as found in the circular plaza of Chavín de Huántar.

5. Concluding Remarks

We presented the recent finding of the circular plaza at Campanayuq Rumi. We are yet to conclude the analysis of the materials and absolute dating. Therefore, we must point out that the interpretations presented are still preliminary. However, the circular plaza of Campanayuq Rumi is a rare example among the centers in the south-central highlands in the Initial Period and Early Horizon. Evaluations of data on contemporary centers suggest that the source of emulation cannot be the central and north-central coastal centers. As is the case with other architectural elements, it is reasonable to assume that the presence of the circular plaza at Campanayuq Rumi reflects early interactions between this ceremonial center and Chavín de Huántar. In the future, it is necessary to consider its construction process from a chronological point of view with absolute dating and compare it with the case of Chavín de Huántar, which will contribute toward a better understanding of the Chavín Phenomenon.

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