

## Transformation Process of the Ceremonial Center and Interactions at Kuntur Wasi in the Northern Highlands of Peru

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## 9. Transformation Process of the Ceremonial Center and Interactions at Kuntur Wasi in the Northern Highlands of Peru

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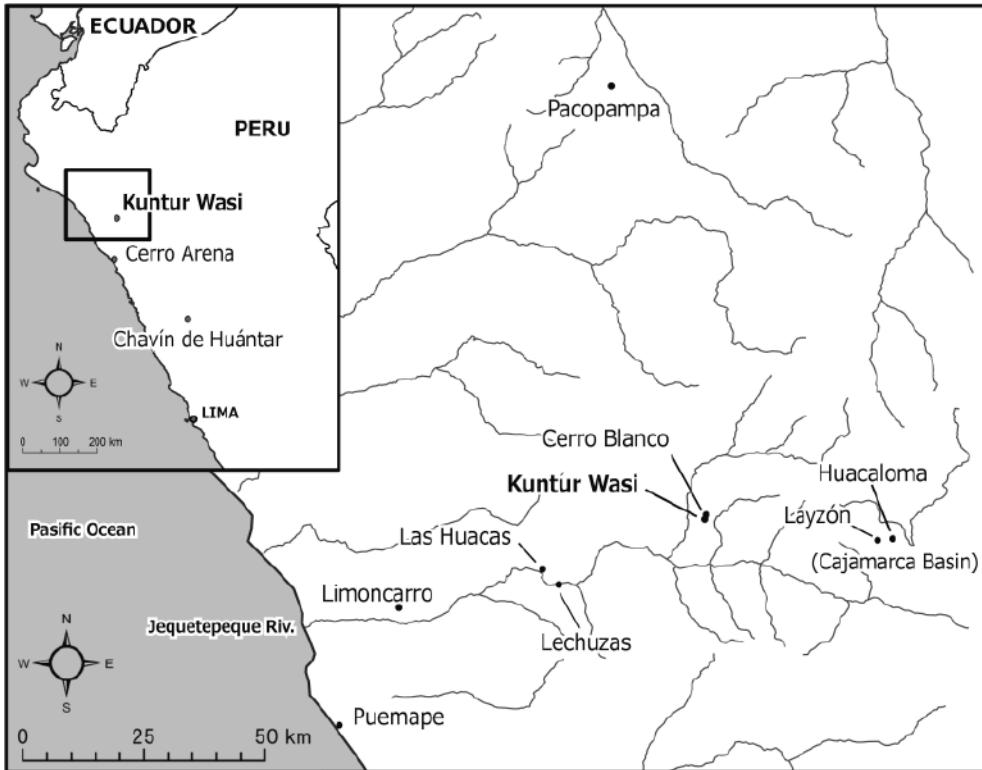
The Formative Period of the Central Andes is characterized as an era when various activities related to ceremonial centers stimulated the development of social complexity. In the process, interregional interactions that focused on ceremonial centers played a major role. The expansion and reorganization of the interaction spheres that occurred in the Late Formative Period significantly influenced the formation of power and the sophistication of monumental architectures and rituals (Inokuchi 2022). This article discusses the major changes that took place at the ceremonial center of Kuntur Wasi and its socioeconomic processes with a focus on the transformation of interregional interactions in the Middle and Late Formative Periods.

### 1. Excavations at Kuntur Wasi

The archaeological site of Kuntur Wasi, a ceremonial center of the Formative Period, is located on a hill at 2,300 masl in the province of San Pablo, Cajamarca, in the northern highlands of Peru (Figures 9-1 and 9-2). Since they began in 1988 under the leadership of Yoshio Onuki and Yasutake Kato, excavations had been conducted by the team including the author over 16 field seasons until 2022.

Based on the sequence of the architecture and ceramics revealed by the excavations, the following phases were established for Kuntur Wasi (Kato and Inokuchi 1998; Onuki et al. 1995): The *Ídolo* phase (950–800 BC), the latter half of the Middle Formative Period; the Kuntur Wasi phase (800–550 BC) and the *Copa* phase (550–250 BC) of the Late Formative Period; and the *Sotera* phase (250–50 BC) of the Final Formative Period<sup>1)</sup>. The detailed sequence of architecture can be divided into nine subphases (ID-1 and ID-2 in the *Ídolo* phase; KW-1 and KW-2 in the Kuntur Wasi phase; CP-1, CP-2, and CP-3 in the *Copa* phase; and ST-1 and ST-2 in the *Sotera* phase; Inokuchi 2010; Inokuchi et al. 2007). Compared with the chronology of the Pacopampa, an important archaeological site of the Formative Period in the northern highlands, the *Ídolo* phase corresponds to the Pacopampa I phase and the Kuntur Wasi phase approximately corresponds to the Pacopampa II phase (Figure 9-3).

This article discusses the major changes that took place in the temple of Kuntur



**Figure 9-1** Jequetepeque Valley and Archaeological sites in the Formative Period  
 ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Drawing by Yuko Ito



**Figure 9-2** Kuntur Wasi site ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project

cal BC	Period	Archaeological Sites and Phases				
		Kuntur Wasi	Cerro Blanco	Pacopampa	Huacaloma	
1800	Formative					
1500		Early		La Conga		
1200					Pandanche	Early Huacaloma
1000		Middle		Cerro Blanco		
800			Ídolo		Pacopampa I	Late Huacaloma
500		Late	Kuntur Wasi	(abandonment)		
250	Copa		Pacopampa II		EL	
50	Final	Sotera	Sotera		Layzón	

Figure 9-3 Chronology of the Formative Period sites in the northern highlands (produced by Kinya Inokuchi)

Wasi and its socioeconomic processes with a focus on the transformation of interregional interactions in the Middle and Late Formative Periods.

## 2. The Ídolo Phase (950–800 BC)

### 2.1 The Beginning of the Temple at Kuntur Wasi and Cerro Blanco

It was at the beginning of the Ídolo phase that the first temple was built at Kuntur Wasi, the hill now called La Copa. It is necessary to mention the Cerro Blanco site, located about 1.3 km to the northeast of Kuntur Wasi, as the backdrop for the construction of the temple. In the Cerro Blanco site, Onuki and Kato conducted a one-season excavation in 1985, before the start of the Kuntur Wasi archaeological project. The excavations made it clear that the construction activity of Cerro Blanco began in the Early Formative Period (La Conga phase), and ceremonial architectures were constructed in the first half of the Middle Formative Period (Cerro Blanco phase; Onuki and Kato 1995).

In Cerro Blanco, a stone-walled platform was built in the Cerro Blanco phase and functioned as a small ceremony center of the local society. The ceramic of this phase has some similarities with that of the Ídolo phase of Kuntur Wasi, but there are some differences between them in terms of the shapes and decorations (Inokuchi 1995). As the radiocarbon dating shows that the Cerro Blanco phase is older than the Ídolo phase, it is considered that after the temple of Cerro Blanco was abandoned, the hill of Kuntur Wasi was chosen as the site to build a new temple on a larger scale (Tsurumi et al. 2007).

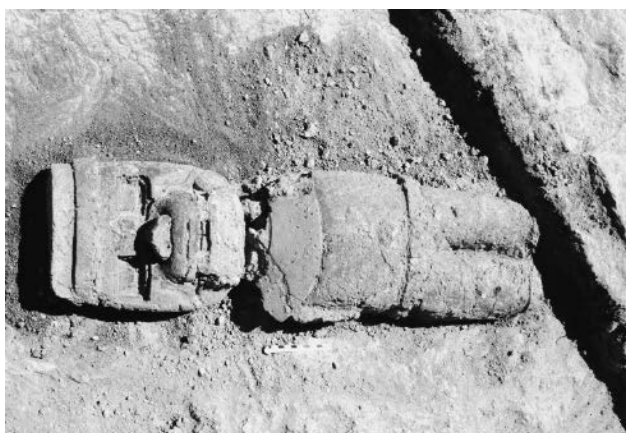
The entire complex of temple architecture in the Ídolo phase is difficult to describe in detail because it was filled with a large amount of soil and stone at the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase that followed, and were located very deep below the present

surface. However, as the solid white floor characteristic of this phase was spread across almost the entire top of the hill, it is thought that a fairly large architectural complex had indeed been built. The excavations revealed at least four platforms and four plazas. In the center, a platform of about 10 m in width and an adjacent plaza were built. The walls of the room on the west side were decorated with multicolored clay reliefs of 73.5 cm height, with a jaguar face and a human body (Figure 9-4). The temple from the *Ídolo* phase also had features that were not seen in the Cerro Blanco, such as the architectural decoration of clay reliefs with a representational motif. New practical activities conducted in that phase can also be pointed out. It is “Renovation of the Temple” in which architectures once built were buried and expanded. At first, the Eastern Platform was about 9 m wide and 14 m long, but later, it was renovated at least twice, and became a platform with a base that was about twice as large in size, that is, about 12 m wide and 19 m long.

The hill of Cerro Blanco, where the temple was abandoned, was not entirely forgotten in this society, as shown by the construction of a tomb (TM-1) at Cerro Blanco with the grave goods of several refined potteries and ornaments after the construction of the temple in the *Ídolo* phase (Kato 2010). The two hills of the Kuntur Wasi and Cerro Blanco are well within sight of each other, and the latter is thought to have been remembered in society as the place where the ceremonial center once stood.

## 2.2 Interregional Interactions in the *Ídolo* Phase

The ceramics in the *Ídolo* phase at Kuntur Wasi has a certain similarity with that of other ceremonial centers in the northern highlands in the Middle Formative Period such as Huacaloma (Seki and Sakai 1998) in the Cajamarca basin, Pacopampa (Nakagawa 2017), the pottery in the middle Jequetepeque River (Tsurumi 2007). It can be assumed that there were interactions among these ceremonial centers. However, to some extent, pottery

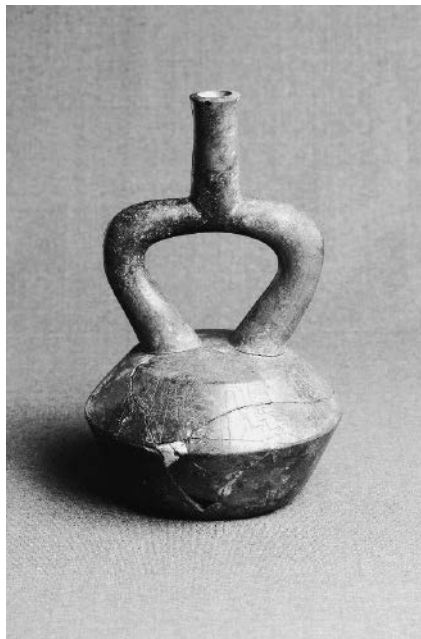


**Figure 9-4** Anthropomorphic clay figurine with the feline attributes of the *Ídolo* phase (73.5 cm high, 21 cm wide, 10 cm thick)  
©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project

with different characteristics was found in the Ídolo phase of the Kuntur Wasi. They are ceramics of the Cupisnique style in the northern coast, such as the stirrup spout bottle whose surface is gray and well-polished with a dense paste. These coastal pottery styles are less common in Huacaloma, Pacopampa, and Cerro Blanco. The same kind of pottery was observed in the latter half of the Middle Formative Period in the Las Huacas site in the middle Jequetepeque River located between Kuntur Wasi and the northern coast (Tsurumi 2007).

The grave goods of the tomb TM-1 built on the hill of Cerro Blanco included, in addition to the stirrup spout bottle of the Cupisnique style (Figure 9-5), the 1,060 beads and 3 ornaments of *Spondylus* shell and 124 blue stone beads. Both are made of resources from long-distance areas from the Cerro Blanco-Kuntur Wasi area (Onuki and Kato 1995). Petrographic analyses by Masaaki Shimizu and others showed that the raw materials of most of the blue stone beads were sodalite provided from Mt. Cerro Sapo in Bolivia (Shimizu et al. 2007). The shape of the beads is found in the sodalite beads excavated from a tomb in the Puemape site (Elera 1998) in the northern coast, so it is highly possible that they were brought from the northern coast as finished products (Shimizu et al. 2007).

This suggests that the beginning of an exchange with the northern coast in the latter half of the Middle Formative Period, and the construction of the first temple at Kuntur Wasi were closely related. From the perspective of pottery, the interaction with the Cajamarca basin, Cerro Blanco, and the middle Jequetepeque area may date back to the



**Figure 9-5** Stirrup spout bottle from the TM-1 at Cerro Blanco site (24.5 cm high)  
©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Photo: Alvaro Uematsu

Early Formative Period (Tsurumi 2007). Kuntur Wasi was advantageously located in the upper part of the Jequetepeque River, which facilitated connections to the middle and coastal valleys, extended its exchange zone to the northern coast in the latter half of the Middle Formative Period, and obtained ceremonial artifacts from a long-distance area that reached Ecuador and Bolivia through the northern coast. The ceremonial center of the *Ídolo* phase was empowered by these scarce resources, and cooperative activities, such as the renovation of the temple. Special graves were placed in the hill on which the temple had existed in the past, which suggests that the beginnings of social stratification took place in this society.

### **3. The Kuntur Wasi Phase (800–550 BC)**

#### **3.1 Innovation of the Temple**

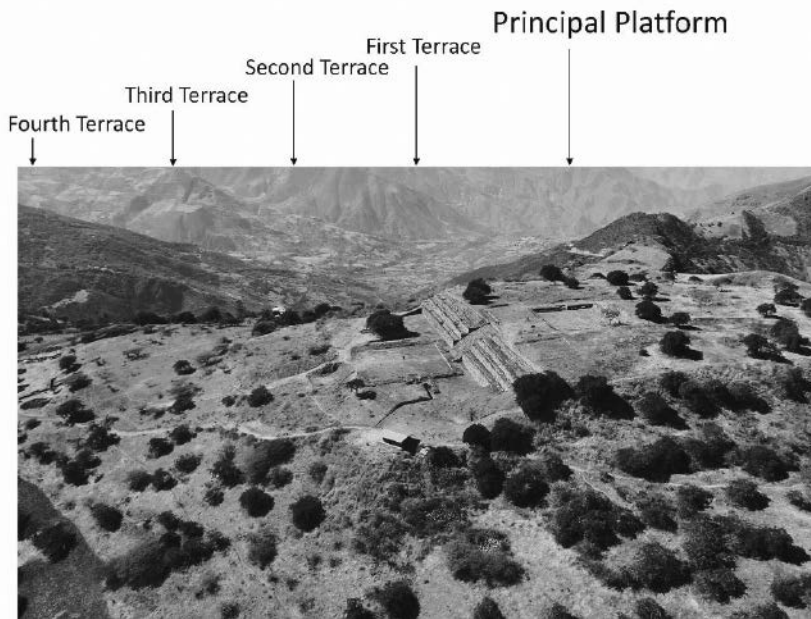
Around 800 BC, at the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase in the Late Formative Period, all constructions of the *Ídolo* phase were filled to construct a whole new set of temple architectures. The event was a great undertaking, worthy of being called the “Innovation of the Temple.” It was quite different from the activities under the “Renovation of the Temple” in the *Ídolo* phase. The renovations in the *Ídolo* and Late Huacaloma phases at the Huacaloma site extended the constructions horizontally or vertically, while respecting the original architecture and its layout. The accumulation of repetitive practice led to changes in the size and shape of the architecture. In the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase, however, all constructions of the *Ídolo* phase were not reused at all. They were built upon with a whole new layout. It was also an act of denying the social value that was contained in the renovation of the temple which was an important social practice in the *Ídolo* phase.

The pottery and other artifacts that were not found in the *Ídolo* phase were observed in the Kuntur Wasi phase. In addition to these material changes, the innovation of the temple led to significant changes in social complexity in the Late Formative Period.

#### **3.2 Architecture in the Kuntur Wasi Phase**

The following is a description of the architecture as part of the innovation of the temple. First, a three-tiered retaining wall was erected to surround the top of the hill, and the entire hill became a large platform that we call the Principal Platform. It is about 8.7 m high, and extends about 140 m from northwest to southeast, and 160 m northeast to southwest. A staircase of 11 m width, which we call the Central Staircase, was built in the center of the retaining wall on the northeastern side. On the same side of the Principal Platform, four terraces (from top to bottom, called the First to Fourth Terraces) with height differences were built (Figure 9-6). Each terrace is supported by stone walls and is connected to others by a staircase, and the centrality of the temple architecture on the Principal Platform is visually enhanced by climbing from the lower terrace up to the Principal Platform. In the First Terrace of about 125 m x 42 m, a square plaza with a side of about 32 m was constructed.

On the Principal Platform, new architectures were constructed on the two direction



**Figure 9-6** Principal Platform and Four Terraces of Kuntur Wasi  
©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project

axes of northeast-southwest and northwest-southeast. At the center of the Platform, where the two axes intersect, the Central Plaza, about 24 m on one side, was built as a major ritual space. The three sides of the Central Plaza were surrounded by platforms, in a U-shaped layout. The Central Platform is 24.5 m x 15.5 m and 1.5 m high. To the southwest of that platform, there was the Circular Plaza of 15.6 m diameter.

The innovations in the temple structure were based on a high degree of planning, as indicated by the installation of stone sculptures in the architectural complex and the construction of an underground canal system. There are more than a dozen stone sculptures at the Kuntur Wasi site, including those that were revealed before our excavations, and all of them have representational iconography that combines motifs such as jaguars, serpents, and humans, and are considered to have transmitted religious ideologies (Figure 9-7). As Kato noted, the major stone sculptures that were put in the steps of the Central Plaza, for example, are thought to have been placed with consideration given to the route that visitors took through the temple and its visual effects (Kato 2010). The openness of the stone sculptures' layout of the Kuntur Wasi phase contrasts the clay relief figures of the *Ídolo* phase mentioned above, which were decorated on the walls of a small room-like structure and were visible only to a limited number of people.

In constructing a new temple, an underground canal system was set up for ceremonial use. The Central Plaza has two entrances for the canal running under the floor. One leads to the inside of the platform on the northeastern side of the Central





Figure 9-7 Stone sculptures of Kuntur Wasi ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project

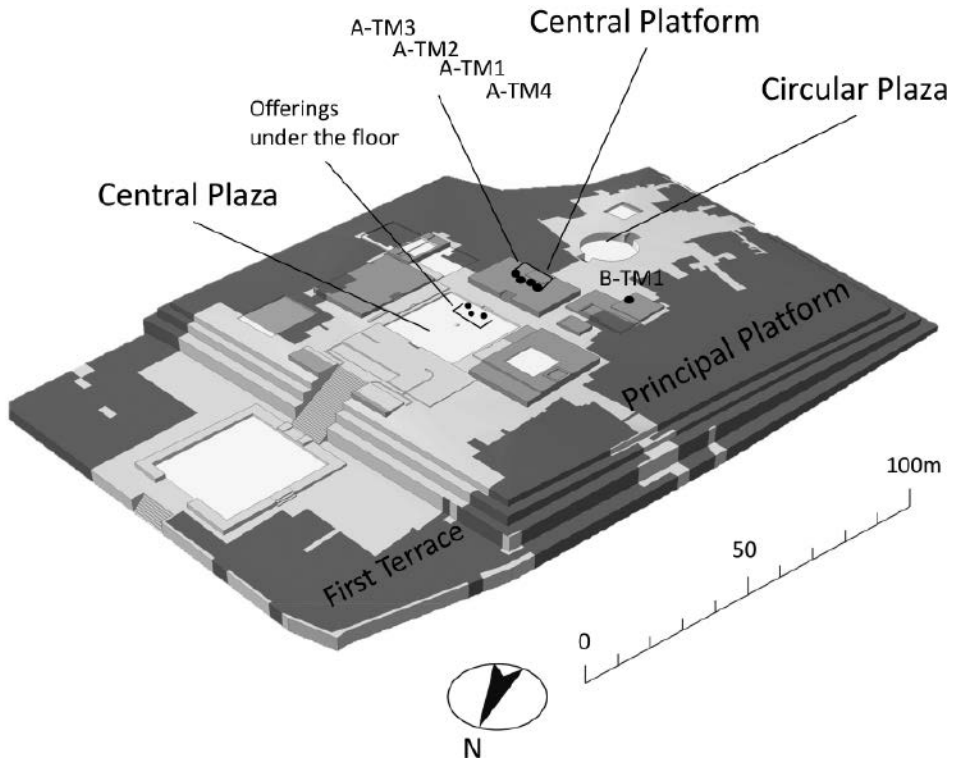
Plaza, and then to a drain on the surrounding wall of the Principal Platform. The other flows out to the First Terrace through ditches on either side of the Central Staircase. Owing to the structure of the underground canal, it had to be installed in the process of construction. It was based on a pre-designed architectural plan. The canal running under the floor was constructed as a system integrated with the temple architecture in the Kuntur Wasi phase.

The whole new ceremonial center of Kuntur Wasi was characterized by the expansion of the scale, which allowed many people to gather, and by the remarkable way in which religious messages are transmitted, as indicated in stone sculptures. It is also characterized by the refinement of ritual artifacts such as pottery and iconography.

### 3.3 Ritual Practices Associated with Temple Innovation

Excavations also revealed the practice of rituals associated with the construction of the new temple in the Kuntur Wasi phase (Figure 9-8). One was the burial of four special people during the construction of the Central Platform (Figure 9-9). One woman (A-TM4) and three men (A-TM1, A-TM2, and A-TM3) were buried, and every grave contained gold ornaments (Figure 9-10: a~e). In the *Ídolo* phase, a small platform about 10 m wide had been built there, but in the innovation of the temple, the platform floor was broken and they were buried with variable grave goods.

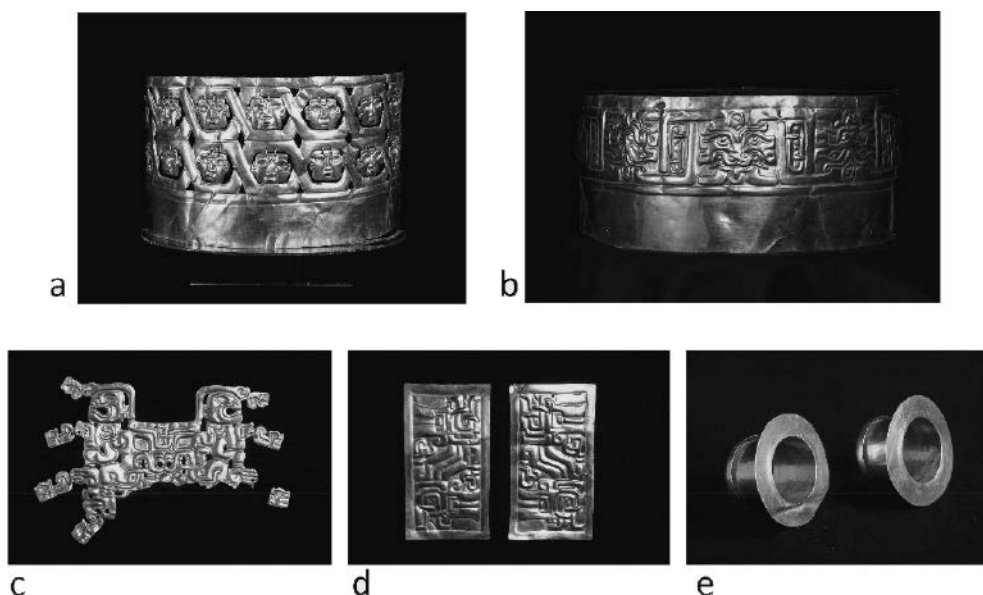
These tombs were in the form of boots, in which shafts of over two meters were dug from the floor from the *Ídolo* phase, and side chambers were set from the bottom of the shafts to put the individual and the grave goods. The four tombs were placed about a meter apart, and after all the tombs were filled, the new Central Platform of the Kuntur Wasi phase was built covering them. The heads of the deceased were stained with cinnabar as a red pigment, and grave goods included refined ceramics and various ornaments in addition to gold artifacts. There was another grave (A-TM5) made of a shallow pit with no cinnabar to the west of these four special graves. This was for a man



**Figure 9-8** Reconstruction of temple architectures in the Kuntur Wasi phase (subphase KW-1), the special tombs in the Central Platform and the offering pits in the Central Plaza ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Drawing by Yuko Ito



**Figure 9-9** Special graves in the Central Platform. From the bottom: A-TM1, A-TM2, and A-TM3. ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project



**Figure 9-10** a: Gold crown with 14 human faces (A-TM1; 18 cm high, 250 g), b: Gold crown with 5 stylized feline faces (A-TM2; 13.5 cm high, 174 g), c: Gold nose ornaments with the feline creature and human figures (A-TM2; 16.5 cm wide, 11 cm high, 34 g), d: Gold ear pendants with feline faces (A-TM2; 18 cm high, 9.5 cm wide, 62/60 g), and e: Gold Ear ornaments (A-TM3; 7 cm in diameter, 3.5 cm thick, 39/43 g)

©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Photo: Alvaro Uematsu

whose head was fatally injured and the grave goods were ornaments that were distinctly different from those of the four special graves, such as disks of sea animal bones and copper. Presumably, this man was sacrificed at the burial of these special people and was buried at the same time in the course of a ritual.

In the Central Plaza, ritual ornaments and their raw material were dedicated before the first floor was laid. Three shallow offering pits were found on the floor in the southwestern part of the plaza. The pit on the eastern side contained 113 beads of chrysocolla stone, 9 fragments of beads, and 2 raw material of *Spondylus* shell (Figure 9-11). In the pit on the western side, fragments of raw *Spondylus* shell were placed, and in both cases, the buried offerings were carefully surrounded by stones. A small pit in the center contained 894 beads made from chrysocolla and was covered with cinnabar-like special graves at the Central Platform. From the stratigraphic position, it is considered that the first floor of the Central Plaza was laid after these ornaments were placed and buried. These three offering pits and special graves are located on the northeast-southwest axis of the temple. The Central Platform and Central, which form the core of the temple, were built through these prior rituals.

The construction of the new temple in the Kuntur Wasi phase was a series of ritual practices that began with the destruction of the temple from the Ídolo phase, burial of four special people with the prominent grave goods under the Central Platform<sup>2)</sup>, and



**Figure 9-11** Offering Pit (east side) in the Central Plaza  
©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project

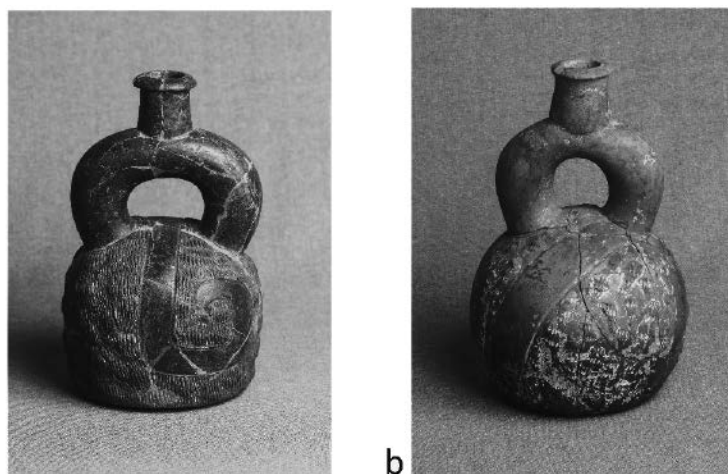
dedication of the precious ornaments under the floor of the Central Plaza. Rituals around the innovation of the temple made a deep impression on those who engaged as construction labor and those who witnessed the rituals, and were retained as a social memory while enhancing the authority of the new ceremonial center of Kuntur Wasi.

### 3.4 The Innovation of the Temple at Kuntur Wasi and Cupisnique Culture

The innovation of the temple that took place at Kuntur Wasi was the planned construction of a new temple with a large labor force, along with special rituals of a kind that was not seen in the *Ídolo* phase. Given the scale of the architecture and arrangement of stone sculptures, it can be said that it was intended to attract more people beyond the local society as a ceremonial center. Behind the drastic change was the presence of leaders who instructed people on planned construction work and special rituals. This great project was thought to have been realized under the leadership of the north coast elites and in collaboration with the local society of Kuntur Wasi (Inokuchi 2017; Onuki et al. 1995).

At the end of the Middle Formative Period, many coastal ceremonial centers were abandoned (Burger 1992; Onuki 1994). We believed that some of the leaders of the coast may have moved to the highlands where Kuntur Wasi had existed and planned to construct a new ceremonial center, and the local society of Kuntur Wasi may have accepted it (Inokuchi 2017; Kato and Inokuchi 1998). The people buried in the special graves were thought to have had a genealogical relationship with the coastal elites. In the following section, the relationship with the north coast will be described from the perspective of archaeological evidence at Kuntur Wasi.

The ceramics among the grave goods in the special tombs have a style that is similar to the Cupisnique style, such as a stirrup spout bottle with a thickened rim and polished surface (Figure 9-12). This corresponds to the “Late Cupisnique” in the



**Figure 9-12** Stirrup spout bottles associated with special graves of the Kuntur Wasi phase, a: A-TM3 (20.7 cm high, 12.2 cm in diameter), b: A-TM4 (20.6 cm high, 13 cm in diameter) ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Photo: Alvaro Uematsu

chronology and ceramic sequence proposed by Carlos Elera (1998). These are different from the “Classic Cupisnique” style seen in the pottery from TM1 at Cerro Blanco of the Ídolo phase mentioned above, in the shape of stirrups and the rim. This type of coastal pottery such as polished black, red, and gray bottles and bowls, is found in grave goods and in the pottery of another context of the Kuntur Wasi phase (Inokuchi 1999), in the pottery types named KW-Negro Fino, KW-Rojo Fino, KW-Gris Fino, and KW-Marrón Fino. The variations and amount of Cupisnique style potteries grew significantly in the Kuntur Wasi phase (Inokuchi 1995, 1999).

The symbolic iconography of some gold artifacts in the special graves is also related to the northern coast. The iconography of “Gold Crown with Fourteen Human Faces” (Figure 9-10: a) of the A-TM1 can be pointed out as a common motif in pottery from the Puemape (Elera 1998). There is also an iconographic motif common to Kuntur Wasi in gold ornaments that are said to have been found in northern coastal areas like the Lambayeque region and Zaña Valley and in the middle reaches of rivers (Alva 1992). The grave goods, boot-shaped tombs, and cinnabars scattered on individuals are common to the north coast (Larco Hoyle 1941). The bone of the person in the A-TM2 grave shows a lesion called *exostosis of the external ear canal* (surfer’s ear), which is likely to appear in people who live by the shore and dive on a daily basis (Onuki ed. 1995).

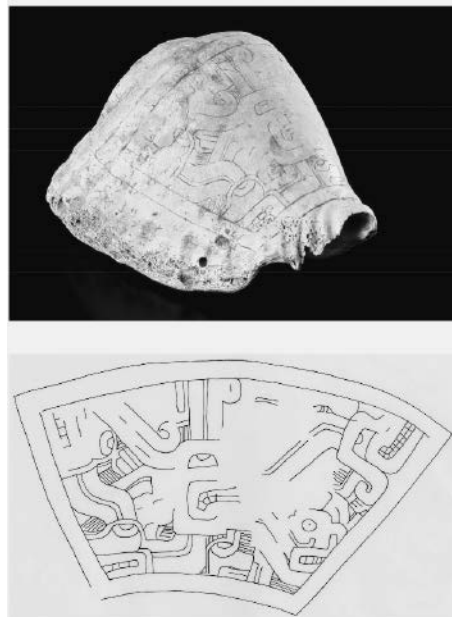
Given that the refined ceramics and gold objects had existed in the northern coast earlier than in the highlands, the lesions peculiar to people living in the seashore region found in the individual of the TM-2, and the fact that four special graves were buried at the same time owing to the stratigraphic context, it is highly likely that the special graves made at the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase were secondary burials. The buried individuals and their grave goods, which had been buried in the northern coast were brought to the Kuntur Wasi in the highlands and re-buried as a ritual for the innovation

of the temple (Inokuchi 2017; Kato 2010; Onuki ed. 1995).

### 3.5 Interregional Interactions in the Kuntur Wasi Phase

The Kuntur Wasi phase is notable for artifacts made from resources from the northern coast and from a wider area beyond that. The A-TM1 contained the three conch-shell trumpets of the Ecuadorian *Strombus* representing a feline motif with fine incision (Figure 9-13). The grave goods of A-TM4, in which the female was buried, included 849 beads of *Spondylus* and 496 beads made from Bolivian sodalite. The cinnabar placed on the individuals of the four special tombs is considered to have been from Huancavelica in the central highlands, based on an isotope analysis (Cooke et al. 2013).

As mentioned above, if the special tombs in the Central Platform were secondary burials and they were buried at the same time, it can be considered that the grave goods were also brought in at once at the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase. But other resources from long-distance areas can also be observed in the same phase. Nearly 100 pieces of obsidian that were not observed in the Ídolo phase, were found in the layer that filled the Circular Plaza containing the remnants of the activities in the Kuntur Wasi phase. The analysis showed that Quispisisa in the south-central highlands is a major source (Burger and Glascock 2009). Thus, even though the people of the northern coast played an important role in the innovation of the temple, many resources were produced in wider and more distant regions. An analysis of the animal bones by Kazuhiro Uzawa



**Figure 9-13** Conch-shell trumpet (*Strombus*) from TM-1 (23 cm long, 19 cm wide, 15 cm high) and part of the iconography ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project

identified two NISP of a puma or jaguar (*Felis concolor/Panthera onca*) and one NISP of a spectacled bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*) inhabiting the tropical forest of the Amazon region (Uzawa 2007).

The wide-area element in artifacts is also present in pottery. While the number of ceramics in the northern coast style increased in the Kuntur Wasi phase, some ceramic types named “Sangal complex” with characteristics of highlands, such as bowls with the decorations of geometric patterns with post-fire incisions and jars with red slips were observed, and the total composition of pottery became a mixture of influences from the coast and highlands (Inokuchi 1995). Petrographic analysis of the mineral admixture of ceramic shows a wide range of sources (Inokuchi and Druc 2019).

The Late Formative Period of Kuntur Wasi was characterized by increased interregional interactions and the resulting acquisition of resources from long-distance areas because of the network with the northern coast, which had existed since the *Ídolo* phase in the Middle Formative Period as a background. At the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase in the Late Formative Period, the innovation of the temple brought about by the initiative of the people of the north coast led to the incorporation of the network that the society of the north coast had previously. The society then entered various spheres of interaction, including much wider long-distance areas.

The innovation changed the characteristics of the ceremonial center. The complete burial of the temple of the *Ídolo* phase was not only to construct a new complex but also to deny the status of the temple in the past and create new social and cultural value for the new temple. The temple in the Kuntur Wasi phase grew and became more sophisticated in the transmission of religious ideology, represented by stone sculptures, and attracted a wide range of people beyond the local society.

Temple innovation also affected social complexity. G-TM6 is a special tomb in subphase KW-2 after the completion of the new ceremonial center. The gold grave goods is a chest ornament with no representational iconography (Figure 9-14: a). A stirrup spout



**Figure 9-14** Grave goods of G-TM1 (subphase KW-2). Left: Gold breast ornament (26.9–27.5 cm in diameter, 5.9 cm high, 236 g); Right: Stirrup spout bottle (20.6 cm high). ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Photo: Alvaro Uematsu

bottle representing the frog associated with the G-TM6 is Rojo sobre Anaranjado in type (Inokuchi 1999), which is a style of highlands succeeded from the *Ídolo* phase (Figure 9-14: b). Whereas the individuals buried in the tombs in the Central Platform were probably from the northern coast as mentioned earlier, the person in G-TM6 is thought to have been an elite in the local society of Kuntur Wasi. Thus, after the innovation of the temple, there was certainly a growing stratification in society. The acquisition of obsidian and other long-distance materials may become an important resource for leaders in the Kuntur Wasi phase.

#### 4. The Copa Phase (550–250 BC)

##### 4.1 Architecture in the Copa Phase

Although the architecture completed by the innovation of the temple were hardly renovated or newly built in the second subphase of the Kuntur Wasi phase (KW-2), the temple architectures were again actively renovated and newly constructed in the Copa phase, which corresponds to the latter half of the Late Formative Period.

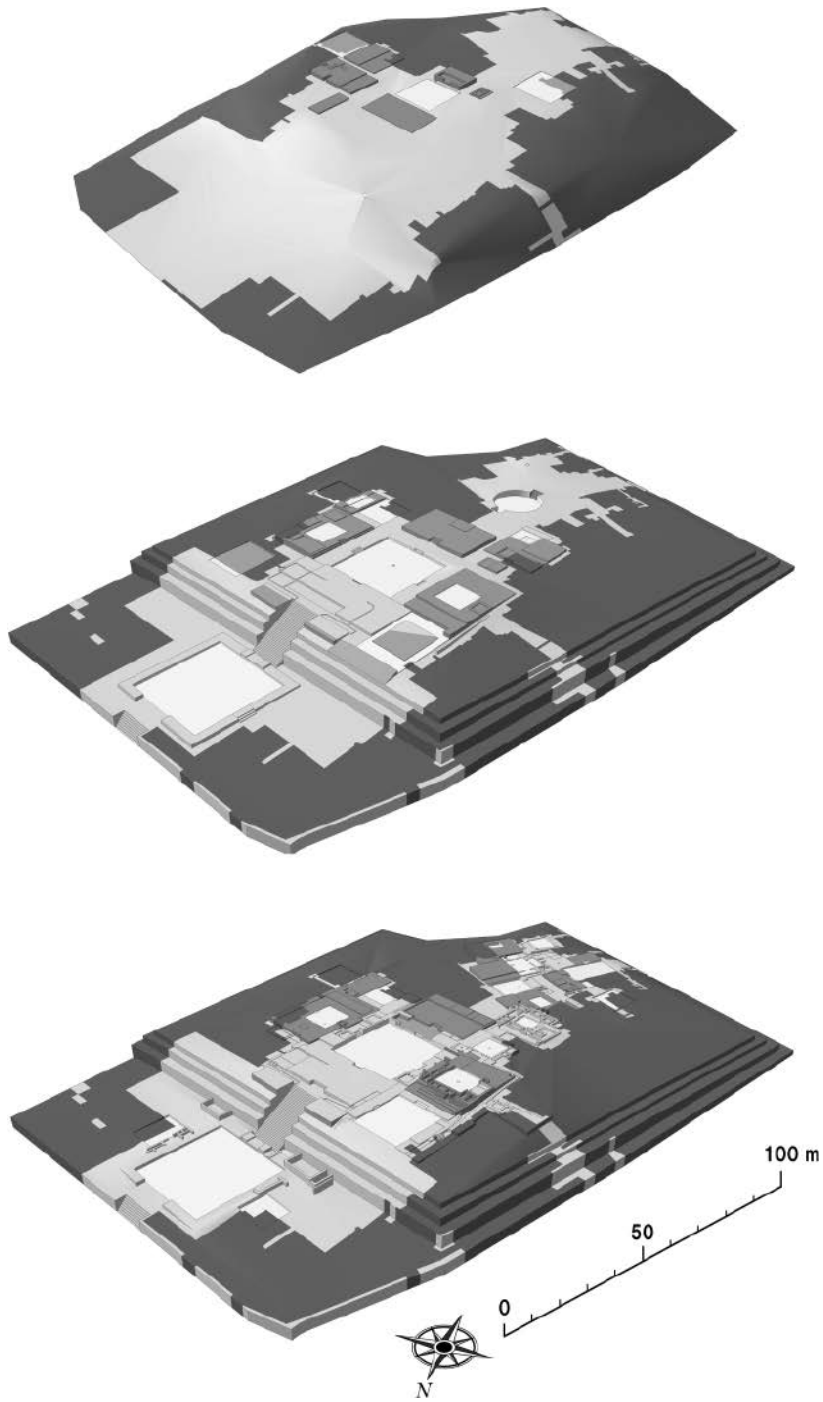
In the northeastern side of the Principal Platform, the layout of the main constructions built in the Kuntur Wasi phase was inherited even in the Copa phase. However, even though the layout was the same, the stones in the wall and floors were all renovated, which shows that it was a large-scale construction project. In the southwestern side of the Principal Platform, the layout of the temple architecture was completely changed in the Copa phase. The Circular Plaza built during the Kuntur Wasi phase was completely filled and constructions with different direction axes were built above that. A new staircase of about 2 m width was installed on the retaining wall on the southwestern side of the Principal Platform, opposite the Central Staircase on the northeastern side. In CP-2, many architectures with new direction axes were built in the southwest area (Figure 9-15).

Here, we will see how much the total volume of all platforms in each subphase had increased when compared to the previous subphase in order to measure the amount of work that went into construction (Figure 9-16). After the construction of a new temple in the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase, there was no significant renovation or construction activity in the second subphase KW-2, so the total volume of the platforms increased only slightly. In the Copa phase, the total volume increased significantly and continuously through CP-1 and CP-2.

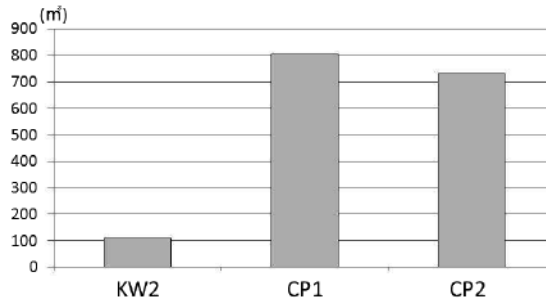
The maintenance and repair of architectures were continuously carried out in the Copa phase. The floor of the Central Plaza was renovated at least five times, and other areas, several times. White plaster was applied to many of the stone wall surfaces of construction in the Copa phase, and clay reliefs representing representational motifs were made. Although there were wall paintings in the Kuntur Wasi phase, their number increased in the Copa phase and they were thought to have become an important means of expressing religious messages (Figure 9-17). Unlike stone sculptures, continuous repair and repainting were necessary to maintain the architectural decoration made from clay.

The archaeological evidence described above shows that the construction,

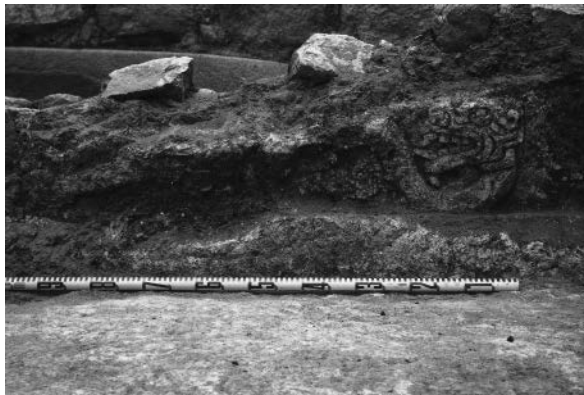




**Figure 9-15** Reconstruction of the architecture of Kuntur Wasi. Top: Ídolo phase (subphase ID-2); Middle: Kuntur Wasi phase (subphase KW-2); and Bottom: Copa phase (subphase CP-2). ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Drawing by Yuko Ito



**Figure 9-16** Increase in the total platform volume in subphases (produced by Kinya Inokuchi)



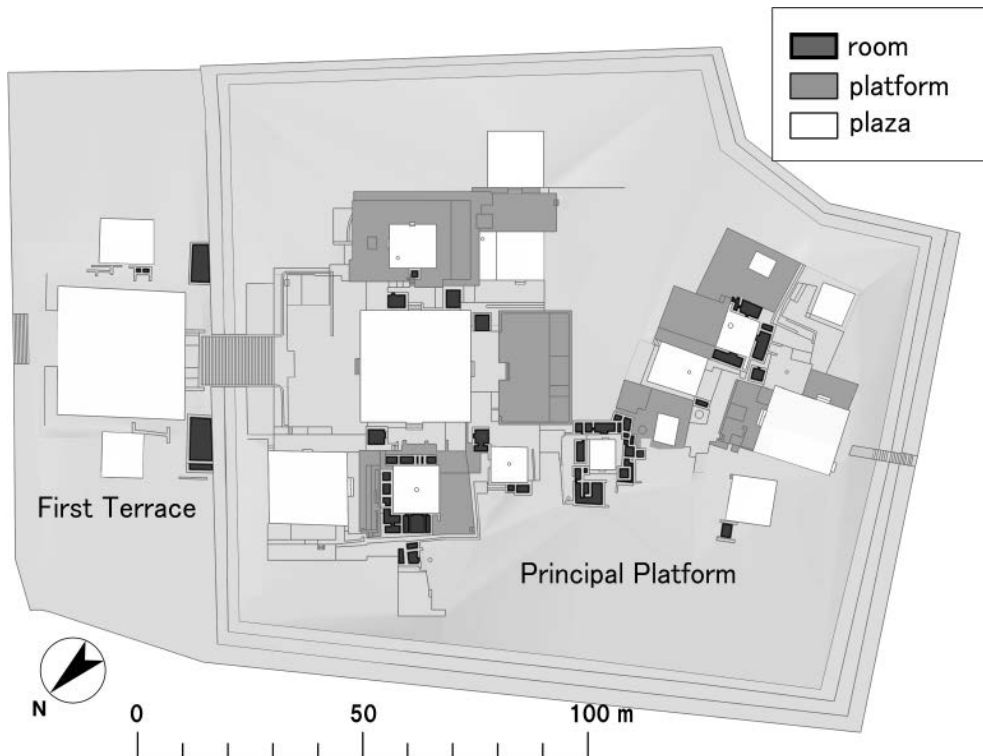
**Figure 9-17** Clay relief of the serpent-jaguar that decorated the North Platform in the Copa phase ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project

maintenance and repair activities in the temples during the Copa phase became very active, which led to continuous collaborative work in society.

#### 4.2 Changes in the Ritual Space and Activities in the Temple

Aside from renovation and reconstruction, what other activities were carried out in the temple in the Copa phase? First, we focus on changes in the layout and form of architecture. The number of active spaces including plazas and room-like structures in the bifacial wall increased from 13 in the Kuntur Wasi phase to 22 in CP-1 and 78 in CP-2. The number of small rooms that were several meters square is increasing. Since the total area of the space has hardly increased, it can be said that the space in the temple has been subdivided in the Copa phase. At the same time, during the Copa phase, architectures were built on the outside of the main architectural axis of the previous Kuntur Wasi phase. In other words, it can be said that the spatial arrangement of architecture has become diffusive (Figure 9-18).

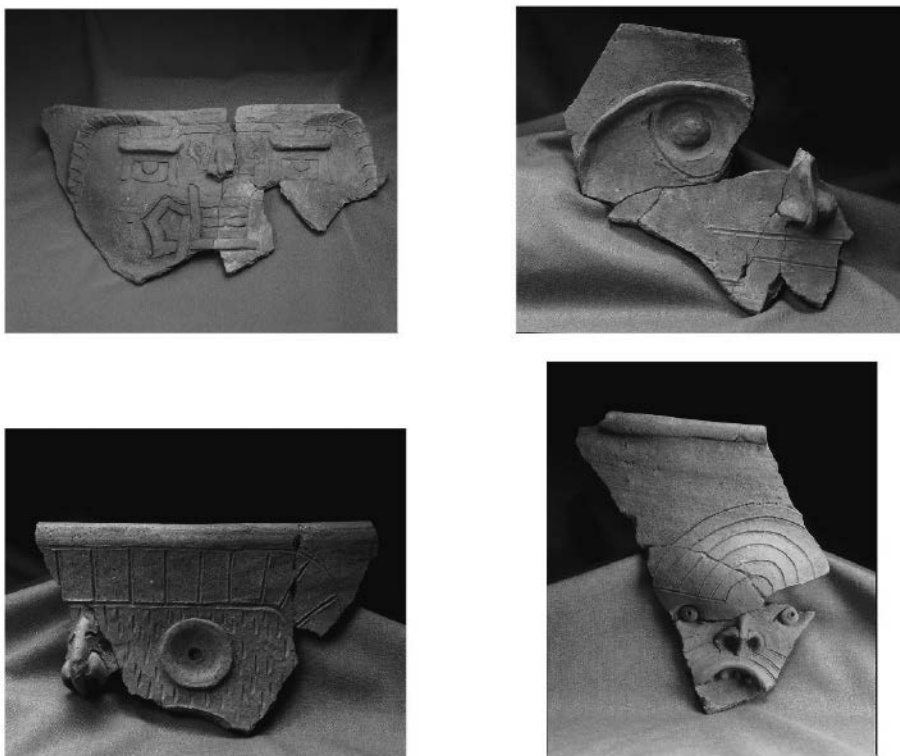
We focus on two areas of activity that took place in the temple. First, on the western side of the Central Platform, in CP-2, over 10 small rooms with low stone bifacial walls



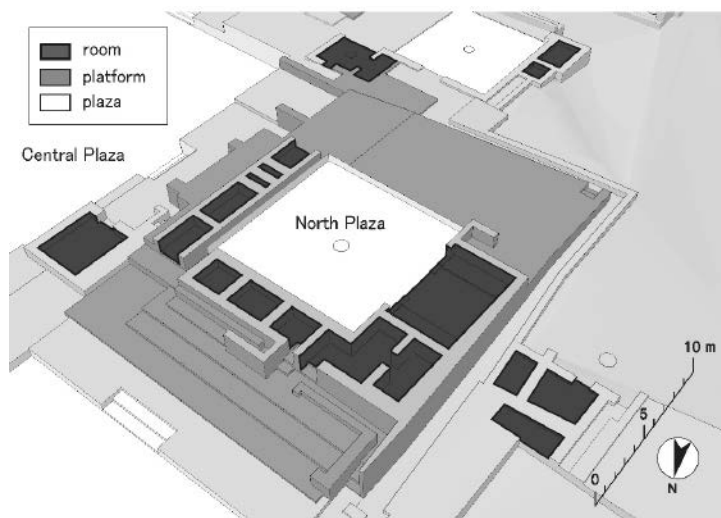
**Figure 9-18** Plan of the architecture in the subphase (CP-2) of the Copa phase. There are more than 60 rooms. ©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Drawing by Yuko Ito

that surrounded a West Plaza of 6.5 m square were constructed. At least five rooms had fireplaces lined with stones. Small fragments of pottery were intentionally laid under the floor of a room on the eastern side of the West Plaza. In the center of the West Plaza is the entrance to the canal that runs under the floor. These are considered to indicate the details of the ritual held there. More notable in this area are the traces of large jars embedded in the floor. In the West Plaza, although the jars were removed, six or seven holes in which the jars were embedded remain. In another room adjacent to the West Plaza, two large jars were excavated from the floor, where they were embedded. Overall, 10 large jars were found around the room. These jars, which we classified as pottery type CP-Marrón Inciso Tosco, have representations of feline or human faces (Figure 9-19). These jars were probably used for feasting rituals that were held in the rooms and the plaza.

Next, we focus on the North Plaza and the surrounding rooms (Figure 9-20). The North Plaza of about 10.5 m square and some 10 room-like structures were constructed in CP-2. In this area, excavations revealed a concentration of clay spindle whorls and objects made from *Agate* and *Spondylus* shell. The latter were found mostly in the form of fragmented and/or unfinished objects. We found stone tools that were used for



**Figure 9-19** Large jars (CP-Marrón Inciso Tosco) excavated from around the West Plaza  
©Yutaka Yoshii



**Figure 9-20** North Plaza and surrounding rooms of the Copa phase (subphase CP-2)  
©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Drawing by Yuko Ito

processing. It is thought to have been a workshop for ceremonial artifacts with special value set up in the temple.

Based on this archaeological evidence, it can be said that various kinds of rituals and production practices, and construction activities, took place in the spaces in the temple in the Copa phase.

The canal system that was renovated in the Copa phase deserves mention. The underground canal system constructed in the Kuntur Wasi phase became more complex in the Copa phase with the provision of new entrances in plazas and rooms, and the establishment of a connection to the canal in the previous phase. Many subdivided ceremonial spaces that we mentioned above were interconnected through a network of canals in the Copa phase. Various rituals and productive activities conducted in the ceremonial center were related to each other by the canal system.

### 4.3 Interregional Interactions in the Copa Phase

In the Copa phase, the northern coast style in the Kuntur Wasi phase had almost disappeared. In this phase, ceramics were mainly of a local style that inherited that of Sangal Complex of the Kuntur Wasi phase mentioned above. For example, there are brown and red bowls with a geometric motif and repetitive designs with narrow incised lines made after-firing (Pottery types: Marrón Inciso A/B, Rojo Inciso), and bowls with a bicolored surface of red and white (Rojo y Blanco, Blanco sobre Rojo) (Inokuchi 1998). Many coarse short-necked jars (CP-Marrón Tosco) without decorations were excavated. Characteristics shared by the northern highlands are predominant, and it is possible to point out similarities with ceramics in the Pacopampa II phase of the Pacopampa site and those of the EL phase of the Huacaloma site.

There is evidence of a wide range of interregional exchanges in the Copa phase from artifacts other than ceramics. A notable source of long-distance exchange goods is the *Spondylus* shell. The total number of artifacts made of *Spondylus* in the Copa phase was about 2,400, which was about 2.6 times as many as those in the Kuntur Wasi phase. In both phases, most of the total number were from grave goods, but in other contexts, the proportion of fragments and unfinished objects was much higher in the Copa phase (accounted for about 90%). As mentioned above, the North Plaza and the surrounding room space indicate the production of ornaments made from *Spondylus*. We found beads of *Spondylus* buried in the plaster of the wall and under the floor in three sectors, not observed in the previous phases. In the Copa phase, *Spondylus* was a rare resource in long-distance areas, and was used for making ritual ornaments and as part of newly introduced rituals. Ornaments produced in the temple of Kuntur Wasi may have been given special value and supplied to other temples (Kato 2010).

In the Copa phase, only six pieces of obsidian were found in the excavations on the Principal Platform, but in the excavations of the Terrace 4 in the 2019 field season, three pieces of obsidian were drawn from the remains of the Copa phase despite the very limited area of investigation. Although further investigation is necessary, it is possible that the network of obsidian distribution was maintained in the Copa phase, and that production was carried out in the lower terrace area. Cinnabar was found in six graves in

the Copa phase. As in the Kuntur Wasi phase, two NISP of jaguar or puma from tropical forest regions were identified (Uzawa 2007).

In relation to the interactions with other ceremonial centers in the northern highlands, we would like to note the large jar (CP-Marrón Inciso Tosco), which was concentrated on the west side of the Central Platform mentioned above. A similar style of pottery was observed in Pacopampa as well, and it is assumed to have been used for the feasting ritual based on the detailed analysis of the related constructions and associated remains (Nakagawa 2017), and a similar use is assumed in Kuntur Wasi. It is possible that they shared not only pottery styles but also the methods and contents of rituals.

A gold necklace from the special grave (“The Tomb of Serpent-Jaguar Priest”) in Pacopampa (Seki et al. 2017) had a manufacturing technique and motif that were very similar to those of gold ornaments from grave goods of G-TM5 (Onuki and Inokuchi 2011) in the Copa phase (Figure 9-21). This tomb in Pacopampa is considered slightly older than the G-TM5 of Kuntur Wasi, but as both were associated with special burials, it is possible that there was a direct network between the leaders of both ceremonial centers of the northern highlands in the Late Formative Period.

The Copa phase is characterized by the diversification and intensification of activities in the temple, such as the construction and renovation of architecture, rituals, and the production of ceremonial ornaments. The ceremonial center of the Copa phase became important as a place where many people in local society participated in repetitive and collaborative activities. The temple gained importance among the elite as they got to exercise their power to control various activities. Interregional exchanges including long-distance trade gained importance. The acquisition of long-distance resources, which increased in relation to the innovation of the temple at the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase, became an important resource for power among leaders. Then in the Copa phase, it became an essential resource to support the diversifying activities of the temple, including new rituals, production, and provision of ceremonial artifacts for other



**Figure 9-21** Gold pendants from G-TM5 (Copa phase; 2.5–2.8 cm long, 3.2–4.2 g)  
©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Photo: Alvaro Uematsu

ceremonial centers. In order to strengthen their power, leaders are believed to have increased their control over interregional exchange and use of them.

### **5. The Sotera Phase (250–50 BC): Abandonment and Reconstruction of the Temple at Cerro Blanco**

The abandonment of the temple in Kuntur Wasi began in CP-3. Major ceremonial spaces such as the Central Plaza and stone sculptures were filled in. In the Sotera phase in the Final Formative Period, the construction was completely buried and the Kuntur Wasi ended its function as a ceremonial center. On the hill of Cerro Blanco, which had been abandoned after the construction of the temple at Kuntur Wasi in the *Ídolo* phase, a platform was built at the Sotera phase, which means that the ceremonial center of the local society moved again to the hill of Cerro Blanco in the Final Formative Period.

Kuntur Wasi was not an uninhabited hill in the Sotera phase. Room-like structures were built on the northwestern side of the Principal Platform and at the First Terrace, and three graves were also found. The tombs had a simple structure with a shallow shaft, but two of them were buried with fine ceramics. In different contexts, some refined pottery has been found too, so that Kuntur Wasi may have become a place used by a limited number of people.

### **6. Tombs at the Temple**

Here, we refocus on tombs as important data in considering the social complexities developed in Kuntur Wasi, where more than 100 graves were discovered throughout all phases in our investigations.

In the *Ídolo* phase, only one simple tomb without grave goods was found, but in the Kuntur Wasi phase, about twenty graves were discovered and in the *Copa* phase more than sixty graves were found. In the Late Formative Period, many burials were carried out in Kuntur Wasi. Most graves of the Kuntur Wasi phase were put into the Central Platform in the construction of a new temple, or the innovation of the temple. On the other hand, in the *Copa* phase, many graves were built using the wider area of the temple architectures.

We present the changes in the buried persons and burial style throughout the Kuntur Wasi and the *Copa* phases, by referring to Yuji Seki (2002). Only three graves comprised people aged under 20 years in the Kuntur Wasi phase (85% were over 20 years of age). However, in the *Copa* phase, the number of buried people aged under 20 years accounted for nearly half of the total. Of particular interest is C-TM6 of an infant around the age of three years, which contains grave goods, including four clay figurines representing humans and jaguars, and animal bone pins representing a serpent, although there were no gold ornaments (Figure 9-22; Onuki and Inokuchi 2011). The buried person was a distinguished child of sex unknown, who had to be buried carefully. This may be evidence of the development of social stratification in which social differences are determined by genealogy.



**Figure 9-22** Grave goods from an infant grave (C-TM 6) in the Copa phase  
©Kuntur Wasi Archaeological Project, Photo: Alvaro Uematsu

In the Copa phase, the contents of grave goods and the style of graves were diversified. In this phase, two special graves (G-TM4, G-TM5) containing gold ornaments were discovered, and it can be said that the buried persons were in a high position. However, looking at other graves, the grave goods varied in number and composition. About 30% of the tombs in the Copa phase had no grave goods at all. There are various types of tombs, and nearly half of them are simple shaft ones. There are also five tombs with horizontal chambers. There are many types of tomb structures, such as those in which a hole is covered with a lid stone, the edge of the hole is surrounded with flat stones, and the grave is buried with stones (Seki 2002).

We focus on the artificial cranial deformation of the buried individuals. Cranial deformation is a reflection of a stratified society in which social status is determined by birth, as the head must be firmly pressed and fixed with a board from infancy. In the Kuntur Wasi phase, artificial cranial deformations were identified in 4 of the 20 individuals buried in the grave, all of whom were male and had gold ornaments as grave goods. In the Copa phase, six individuals were identified to have cranial deformations, but these graves did not have any gold ornaments among their grave goods (for the two individuals buried with gold ornaments of G-TM4 and G-TM5, it is not clear whether the crania were deformed due to poor preservation). Three of them had no grave goods at all. There were also three cases of cranial deformation among the females. It is possible that skull deformations were practiced in the Copa phase not only for a few high-status elites but also for individuals who held various social roles to distinguish themselves.

The diversity of tombs and buried persons may also be related to the diversification of activities in the ceremonial center of the Copa phase. Diversification of patterns of tomb style, attributes of buried individuals, and grave goods also indicate that social organization has become more complex in the Copa phase than that of the previous phase. In the Copa phase, the emergence of managers, or intermediate leaders, for a wide



variety of activities such as construction, ritual, and production of ritual goods may have diversified the modes of social differentiation (Inokuchi 2017).

## 7. Conclusions

Researchers have pointed out that there were major changes in ceremonial centers and their societies, in the highlands of the central Andes in the Late Formative Period (Kato 2010; Matsumoto 2020; Seki 2017; Yamamoto and Ito 2013, etc.). In the case of the Kuntur Wasi, the “Innovation of the Temple” carried out at the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase, realized the enlargement and refinement of the temple, which seem to lead to the remarkable progress of social complexity.

As Yuichi Matsumoto pointed out, interregional exchanges based at the ceremonial center were not simply a network connecting the centers, but were realized by the overlapping of different characteristics and various ranges of interaction spheres (Matsumoto 2020). Thus, the onset of direct interaction with a temple or region sometimes results in a chain of more extensive and comprehensive interactions. The establishment of the first temple in the *Ídolo* phase was related to the initiation of an exchange with the northern coast. The area of interaction with the middle Jequetepeque River, which the Cerro Blanco Temple had opened in the Early Formative Period, was expanded to the north coast during the Middle Formative Period, and the ceremonial center of the *Ídolo* phase at Kuntur Wasi enhanced its authority by acquiring long-distance resources such as *Sodalite* via the north coast, as described above. The temple innovation project in the Kuntur Wasi phase at the beginning of the Late Formative Period was realized through direct interactions with the elites of the northern coast. At the same time, the refinement of the temple and their associated objects were attempted by utilizing various resources including long-distance areas such as obsidian and cinnabar obtained from a wider area of exchange beyond the north coast. It brought new power resources to the leaders, and social stratification developed (Inokuchi 2022). According to Matsumoto, Campanayuc Rumi in the south-central highlands was the center of regional distribution of obsidian from Quisipisisa in the Middle Formative Period, and it played a major role in supplying obsidian to Chavín de Huántar, 600 km away from it (Matsumoto 2017) in the Late Formative Period. Further, in the Late Formative Period, resources from the central and southern highlands, such as cinnabar and obsidian, were found in a wide area of the central Andes. Kuntur Wasi also entered the extensive exchange zone in this period.

Kato described the temple of the Kuntur Wasi phase as a “broad-scale temple” where “monumental art” was refined and the wide transmission of religious messages and ideology was enabled (Kato 2010; Kato and Inokuchi 1998). Richard Burger expressed the establishment of a pilgrimage system for the temple of Chavín de Huántar that would draw people from a wide area of the central Andes (Burger 1988). The wide-ranging contacts with each other in the Late Formative Period contributed toward the activation of exchanges of religious ideology and rituals, and a wide range of other things including special resources in long-distance areas, technologies, and social

organization (Inokuchi 2022).

However, such social processes in the Late Formative Period soon came to an end. In the case of Kuntur Wasi, we can point out the possibility that the change in the role of the ceremonial center and the meaning of interregional exchange was related to the abandonment of the temple in the Final Formative Period. Conflicts began to arise in society when valuables acquired through interregional exchange refined and enhanced the authority of the temple and ceremonial objects, and increased their significance as the power base of leaders. In the Copa phase, in the latter half of the Late Formative Period, there was an increase in the number of elites such as “intermediate leaders,” and in cooperative activities, aside from changes in subsistence economy such as the domestication of the crop (Seki and Yoneda 2004) and of the camelid (Uzawa 2007). These social conditions included conflict and risk of a kind that had never been experienced before. When a situation occurred that could not be overcome in the society initially organized based on a relatively equal relationship with the temple as the core, the existence value of the ceremonial center of Kuntur Wasi gradually lost, and the development through the interaction between temple and society came to an end (Inokuchi 2022). The social processes of the Formative Period, which were characterized by the interrelationship between the ceremonial centers and the developments of social complexity, did not directly lead to the emergence of the early states in the subsequent periods.

## Notes

- 1) The chronology of the Formative Period in this article is based on the following classification of periods (Seki 2017);
  - Initial Formative Period: 3000–1800 BC
  - Early Formative Period: 1800–1200 BC
  - Middle Formative Period: 1200–800 BC
  - Late Formative Period: 800–250 BC
  - Final Formative Period: 250–50 BC
- 2) The tomb B-TM1 containing gold ornaments was also found in another platform located on the western side of the Central Platform (Onuki and Inokuchi 2011). This is also considered the tomb of a special person, which was made when the innovation of the temple at the beginning of the Kuntur Wasi phase was conducted.

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