The Evolution of Fragility: Setting the Terms

Edited by Norman Yoffee

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Chapter 2

Fragility of Vulnerable Social Institutions in Andean States

Tom D. Dillehay & Steven A. Wernke

State institutions are of enduring anthropological interest not only for their novel means of formalizing inequality and hierarchical decision-making, but for how they draw upon and reveal forms of cultural rationality which underlie social and economic projects, which in turn give rise to apparatuses of governmentality (*sensu* Foucault) and to wider principles of societal organization. Institutionalized political structure and policy, religion, long-distance trade and exchange, and so forth can be considered a mixture of hegemonic cultural norms, social rationality, administrative techniques, and material systems. Accordingly, our interests in this presentation are not in institutions per se but in what they tell us about the organization, practice, success, and failure of ancient state societies, in this study the Andean region. As socio-cultural forms, states shape the nature of social networks and the pace, capacity, temporality, and direction of their movements, as well as their vulnerabilities, which can under certain conjunctures lead to fragility and breakdown.

The term institution commonly applies to both informal institutions such as customs, or behaviour patterns important to a society, and to particular formal institutions such as administration and bureaucracy, codified religions, and the military. Institutions are constructed networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, and ideas and allow for their exchange over time and space. Thus, they comprise the primary social and administrative architecture for circulation, literally providing the parameters for the kinds of subjects best suited for rule, thus undergirding subject formation. In this sense, they generate the power-laden ambient environment of everyday life in rural and urban areas of state-ordered societies. When both urban and rural communities rely heavily on state institutions for services, wide-scale vulnerability and breakdown can often leave these communities fragile, especially for the non-elites within them (Scott 1998). Governmental institutions also can reify and reproduce existing power inequalities by serving only those who fulfil certain requirements, thus perpetuating existing patterns of social status, gender, race, and ethnicity. Together these processes conspire to lend the apparatuses of governmentality an air of naturalness and permanence, despite their objective constructedness and ephemerality when considered within the full sweep of the human story. Much theorizing in anthropological archaeology is dedicated to how this might be. However, the very framing of the problem as the emergence or 'rise' of complex hierarchical societies elides exploration of other forms of complexity (a point made by Carole Crumley long ago [1974]) and predisposes the observer to narratives of how institutions form in the face of various sociocultural and natural impedances and inertias. In short, archaeological theories of social complexity have underplayed the vulnerability and fragility of apparatuses of governmentality *in general.*

In this chapter, we address institutional vulnerabilities of Andean states, especially in procedures of ruler succession and in the symmetrically partitioned and hierarchically nested political organization within urban and rural settings in the states of Chimor and Inka (~AD 1200–1515; Figs. 2.1–2.2).[1] These preconditions of *vulnerability* led to some successes but ultimately to structural *fragility* within these states and to their demise. We also examine the administrative difficulties that Spanish colonial authorities had in adapting their institutions to these indigenous procedures and organizations.

In this paper, we see 'vulnerability' and 'fragility' as serially related processes. 'Vulnerability' is a precursor to fragility, entailing the relative susceptibility of the ideological, political, economic, or military apparatuses of the state to physical trauma (e.g., earthquakes, floods) and social stress (e.g., war,
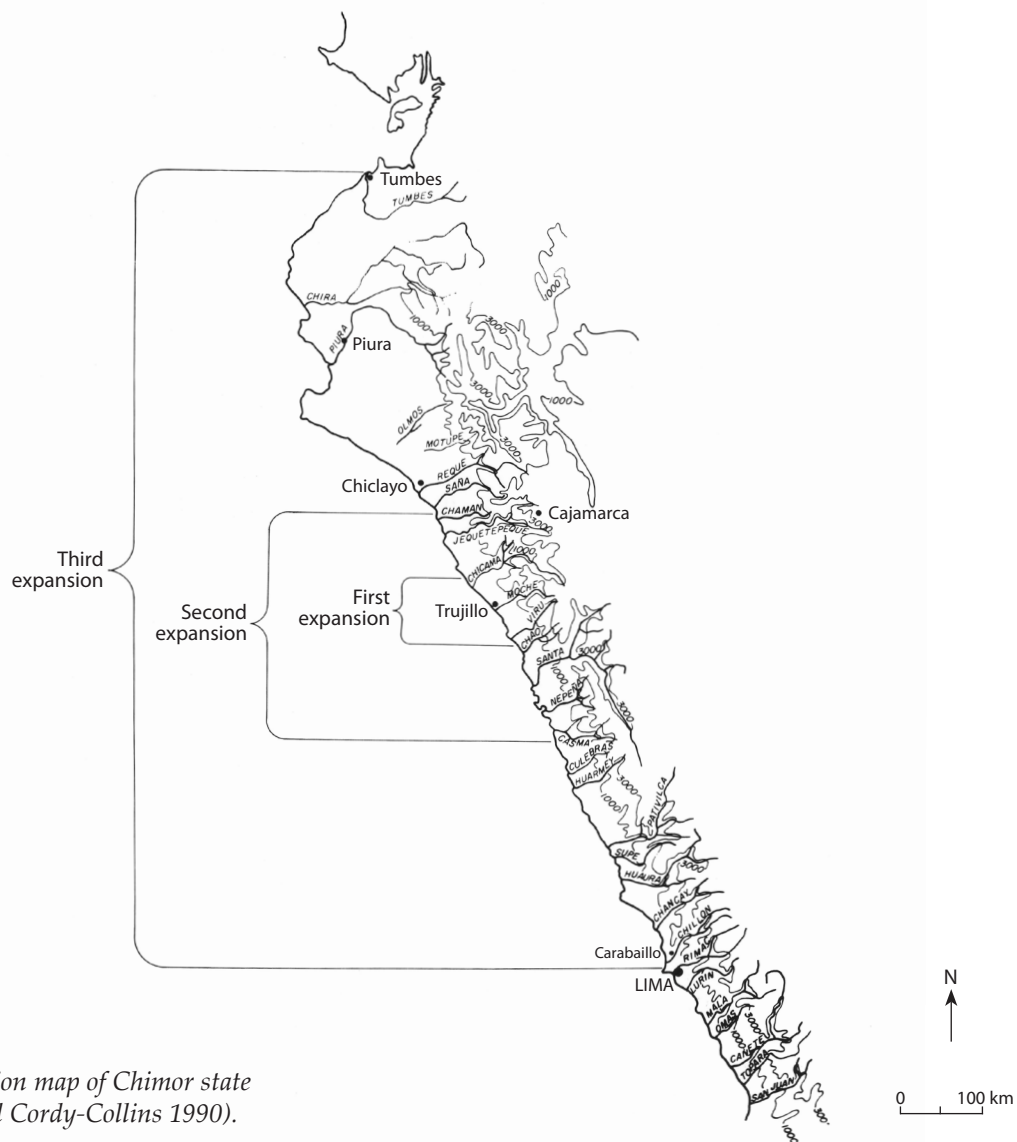
Figure 2.1. *Location map of Chimor state (after Moseley and Cordy-Collins 1990).*

famine, class conflict).[2] Vulnerability is thus a necessary but insufficient precondition for fragility. Fragility in turn refers to weakened, disintegrating, or collapsing state apparatuses. That is, before a state becomes fragile, there first must be social and/or environmental conditions of vulnerability that potentially foster its demise. Fragility comes about, to borrow from Sahlins (Sahlins 1981, 2004), as a consequence of a 'structure of the conjuncture': of the interaction of events on the vulnerabilities of a state. Fragility is conditioned by vulnerability (see also Sewell 2005). We thus envision vulnerability and fragility as two different but potentially sequential and recursively reinforcing processes. As discussed below in regard to the Inka, social institutions within the state, such as procedures of ruler succession, were inherently vulnerable to

corruption, manipulation, and coercion, which either led to socially durable and beneficial political outcomes or to ineffective and fragile decision-making and corruption. Furthermore, while the environment may be susceptible to certain types of physical stress, such as excessive flooding during an El Niño year in northern Peru, in the long run inundated land is very beneficiary, renourishing soils and increasing agricultural production for decades. Both the vulnerability and especially the fragility of states can have oscillating trajectories that determine the transient, often short-lived, nature of successful or failed states. However, neither vulnerability nor fragility necessarily implies imminent failure and collapse of the state and, in some cases, these conditions can lead to a more effective and efficient political apparatus.

We specifically consider the strengths and weaknesses in procedures of political succession of Chimor and Inka lords from one generation to another and the cleavages inherent in the partitioned and hierarchically arranged nature of Andean social structure. These procedures and structures are viewed as the vulnerable pre-conditions, which when not managed effectively by state systems, fostered fragile social and economic institutions that eventually failed and collapsed. As Andean states generally had a dual role, namely providing security and order for their citizens (internal role) and serving as the building blocks of a functional economic system (external role), state fragility would not only have affected the members of the state and communities in question, but also neighbouring polities

and the wider society at large (La Lone 1982; Kolata 1986). In the case of the Chimor and Inka, fragility was where their central administrative apparatuses did not exert effective control over their own territories or were unable or unwilling to assure the provision of vital services to significant parts of their territories in times of stress, and where legitimacy of their political organizations were questioned or rejected by intermediate- and lower-level social sectors. It should be noted that although the fall of both states was due to conquest by outsiders (Chimor by the Inka and the Inka by the Spanish), the historical and archaeological evidence indicate that it was the weakened or vulnerable internal orders of both, combined with major assistance by autochthonous rivals that fostered their fall.
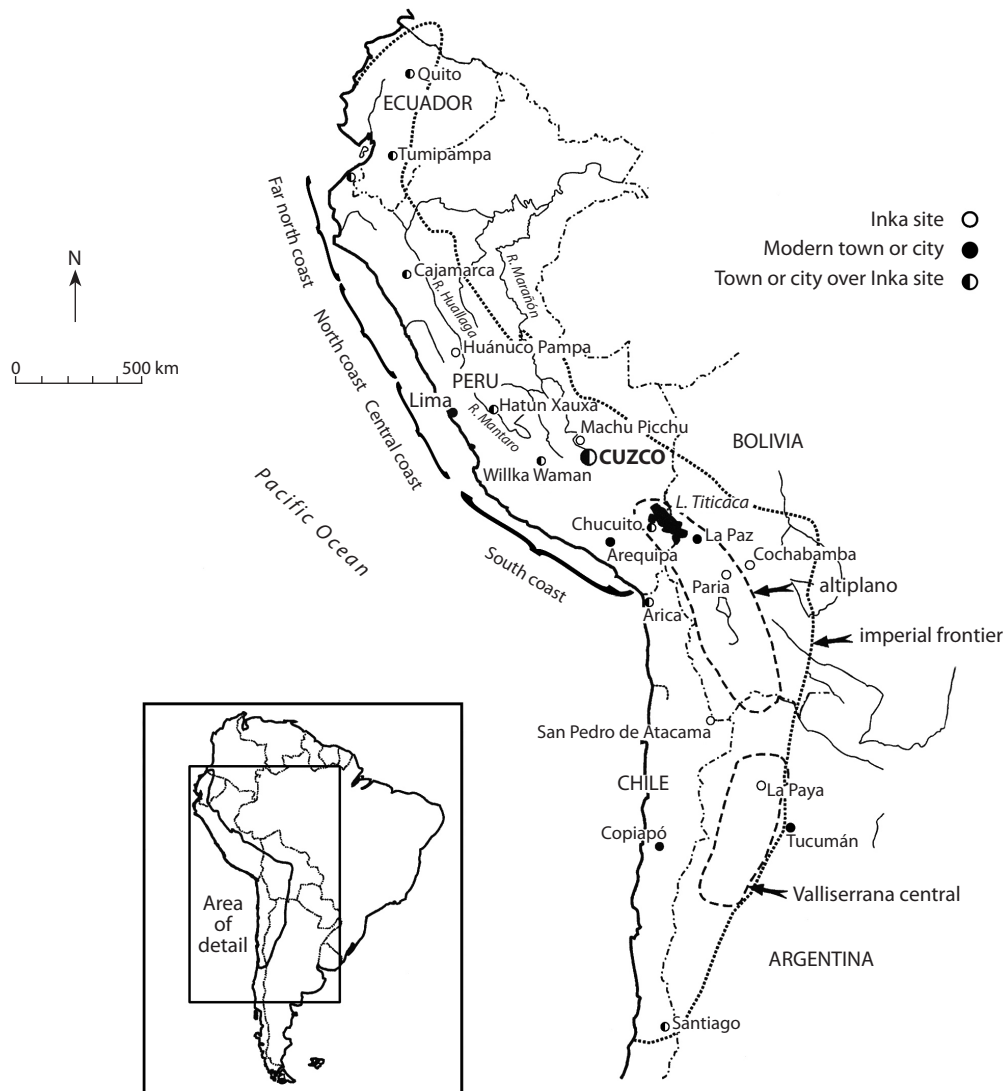
Figure 2.2. *Location map of Inka empire (after D'Altroy 2003).*

Lastly, in this paper, we do not consider climate anomalies and other processes of environmental change of natural and anthropogenic origin that often severely disrupted Andean societies throughout history (e.g., tsunamis, El Niño floods, earthquakes, droughts). It is well-documented that these processes occurred serially and generated potentially catastrophic changes in the landscape, as well as induced transformations in the social and demographic organization of regional populations. It has been argued previously that innovations in production strategies and economic infrastructures in these societies reflect differential historical social responses to both transient and protracted environmental change (Dillehay and Kolata 2004). There also are many cases in the Andes whereby local communities were only slightly or rarely impacted by environmental stress, thus indicating the differential and intermittent role of physical stress in the survivability of these societies.

Vulnerability and the fragile state

There has been some scholarly debate regarding definitions, terminology and the characteristics of 'successful', 'weak', 'fragile', 'failing', 'failed' and 'collapsed' states (e.g., Boas and Jennings 2007; Chesterman et al. 2005; Rothberg 2004). To say that a state succeeded or failed or collapsed is a normative judgment that is only meaningful in comparison to something else; in the Andes, that something else has most often been Western, successfully expansionistic, centralized states and/or city-states (e.g., Mesopotamian, Greek, and Roman polities) (see MacCormack 2007). People administered by these polities were transformed into subjects by the work of state institutions such as ideological premises, labour projects, religious events, armies, and so forth. Yet, although these states provided for (internal) order, protection, security and conflict management, they also amassed means of violence, control and coercion on a large scale. Thus, they potentially contributed to vulnerability, insecurity, and fragility within their own societal realm.

In the Andes, there is no secure historical or archaeological evidence to suggest unitary rule and that people within any early states had a single ethnic identity (Janusek 2008; Schreiber 1992). Also, none of these states appeared to have shared a common language or even a unitary pan-Andean culture. And from the viewpoint of the ethnic peoples incorporated within them, this process seemingly brought with it significant costs in social, economic, and political terms. Andean scholars have not always recognized this latter point. The state-centred literature in the Andes has been so concerned with emphasizing the benefits of states,

especially for elites, their elaborate infrastructures (e.g., temples, palaces), their great ecological reach and means of economic integration, and their expansionistic tendencies that the other side of the account has gone almost unnoticed (c.f., Isbell 2008; Kolata 2015). Historically, some of this problem lies with the 'exceptional' place of Andean civilization within the archaeological literature. John Murra, dean of Andean studies, was concerned primarily with differentiating the nonmarket, redistributive, and adaptive aspects of Andean states from capitalist or mercantilist states, rather than the diversity of forms and the inequalities that they produced (see Van Buren 1996). Yet, the social costs of state development often included the sacrifice of local ethnic identities and structures that were inimical to the hierarchies of control that states sought to impose. Furthermore, both early and late Andean states appear to have lacked roots in their recipient societies (e.g. Chimor), particularly in places where there was no unitary form of rule or pre-existing centralized government. In short, Andeanists have tended to uncritically assume that state institutions were always accompanied by the development of economic, political, social and cultural structures and capacities that provided the basis and framework for an efficiently functioning political order in the course of the evolution of the state, at least up to the point of its demise or collapse.

We argue here that the conventional perception of Andean states as *successfully expansionistic* is too short-sighted and does not adequately consider the short-lived, weaker, failed and transient aspects of these polities which led to their eventual demise. As a result, environmental or climatic factors often come in as a *deus ex machina* in narratives of the rise and fall of Andean states. As noted above, the discourse on Andean states and state development is traditionally founded upon criteria of Old World states, that is, highly centralized formal organizations with absolute rulers, great art styles, clear distinctions between elites and commoners (e.g., Moseley 1992). Yet this form of state probably never existed in Andean reality. Rather than thinking in terms of successfully built and thriving expansionistic states it might be theoretically and practically more fruitful to think in terms of different types of polities, including weak, fragile and successful ones, as well as states with *mediated* political orders derived from various local and state-wide institutions, including both high- and low-ranking rulers, intertwined urban and rural areas (D'Altroy 1992; Janusek 2002; Schreiber 1992; Wernke 2006), and often with many different cooperative and competitive socio-economic strategies operating within them (Dillehay 1976). (We use the term mediated to encompass a variety of local and non-state

forms of order and governance on the traditional kinship side, to focus on a combination of elements that stemmed from different societal sources which followed different logics, yet all fundamentally Andean in origin, and to affirm that these spheres did not exist in isolation from each other, but permeated and generally complemented each other and, consequently, gave rise to different and political orders.) We also argue that Andean states (including early and late ones) should be conceptualized along a continuum of successfully emerging and expanding polities to declining state performances or, from a different perspective, from initially successful expansionistic states to weak states through failing states to failed and finally collapsed ones. As discussed later, we believe that higher-ranking sectors and procedures of political succession in Andean states produced some conditions of vulnerability that often led to social and political fragility as opposed to intermediate- and lower-ranking sectors that managed certain degrees of social and economic independence which allowed them to survive and to sustain themselves after turmoil and political demise.

Instead of adopting a narrow state-centric view, which has and still is currently guiding most theorization of the state in the Andes, we therefore suggest going beyond it and trying to comprehend the context of what may have constituted a wide range of sociopolitical orders. As a first step, it must be acknowledged that speaking of 'vulnerable' conditions and 'fragile' states implies that, comparably speaking, there were other actor states on the stage that were strong or stronger in relation to a weak or failing state. That is, the 'state' was only one actor among others, and a 'centralized state order' may only have been one of a number of orders claiming to provide security, frameworks for conflict regulation, and ideological, social and economic services. (As an example, the Inka state initially competed with the Chanka, Chincha, Chimor and other provincial actors, which represented various types of expanding, weakened, and failing polities.) In such cases, although state institutions and high-ranking rulers may have *claimed* absolute authority within the boundaries of a given territory, in large parts of the territory only outposts of the state existed. This is certainly the case for the short-lived Inka empire (less than a century), as revealed by scattered newly constructed 'compulsory' towns and cities (Morris 1972), Inka *tambos* (way stations), road and canal networks, and other infrastructures in a vast, highly differential Andean environment that often was to a large extent stateless. In fact, the archaeological record suggests that no Andean state ever really permeated its entire rural territories and extended its effective control to the whole of its society. Statelessness or weak state

representation in these territories, however, does not mean anarchy or total independence, nor does it imply the absence of state institutions. In many places, traditional non-state institutions of governance that had existed prior to the era of the Chimor and Inka states, for instance, may have survived the onslaught of imperialist expansionary strategies from these larger societies. Although these institutions were probably subjected to considerable change and must have adapted to new circumstances, they also appear to have shown remarkable resilience. Customary law, traditional social structures, and local authorities (such as community rulers or *kurakas*, traders, religious leaders, etc.) most likely determined the everyday social reality of large parts of the population, particularly in intermediate- and lower-ranking rural and remote peripheral areas. Thus, while a direct command could be given from the highest political level, it was only an order. For it to be accepted and executed, it had to have been discussed, negotiated, and agreed upon by all intermediate- and lower-ranking levels. Issuing a command and then having it executed were two different yet not always compatible practices. Many of these polities seemed to have developed and demised as a result of continuous trial-and-error.

Mediated political orders: succession and partition

The Inka state was excessively expansionistic (Fig. 2.2). The motives for its sustained aggressiveness are not well understood but we can surmise from historical documents that the first conquest of neighbouring ethnic groups could have been undertaken for vengeance and a desire to consolidate their geo-political position in the Cuzco region (e.g., Cieza de Leon 1984; Cobo 1979). As the power and wealth of the Inka lords and royal kin groups increased, there seems to have developed an insatiable appetite for more, and each new conquest enriched the state and added to the glory of the ruling elite. The royal Inka of Cuzco by privilege grew up in an hereditary aristocracy, exempt from a labour tax, and being polygamous, they increased rapidly. The structure and expansion of the ruling elite were thus in an unbalanced condition, which required expansion in order to maintain stability.

The Inka state had two other inherent weaknesses. One was there was no fixed method by which the ruling lord designated his successor, and any of his sons by his principle wife could be chosen. The other weakness was excessive centralization in the empire. Every official was responsible to the one above him and so up to the highest lord himself, but there was little or no cohesion between those of the same grade, and lords at the highest levels increasingly lost power

and authority as they descended into the intermediate and lower ruling levels. It was a strictly structured hierarchical pyramid, but one weakly built, and when stressed, as it was at the time of the Spanish conquest, it crumbled rapidly.

More specifically, Spanish written records indicate that Inka royal successions were intense and vulnerable occasions that often led to internal strife and bloodshed between powerful families and to political scheming and ideological manipulation by some rulers in order to assure that their chosen sons and supporters gained key positions of wealth and authority (c.f., Cabello Balboa [1586] 1951; Murra 1958; Rostworowski 1961,1988, 1990; Netherly 1990; Ramirez 1986; D'Altroy 2001). Written records show that the Inka ruling elite treated eldest sons as legitimate candidates to the throne or as bastard sons, depending on the politics of the moment. Regardless of birth order, the son chosen to lead usually was the one most capable of continuing the policies of his ruling father. If a son showed that he was incapable or disobedient, another son replaced him, which often led to several brothers ruling in succession. Clearly, within the Inka state, procedures of royal succession advantaged those who manipulated the situation to their own benefit.

Among the Inka, criteria for succession of rule were both ascribed (consanguinity) and achieved (assessment of fitness for rule), and decisions regarding succession were not under the exclusive purview of the Inka ruler. The nobility of royal descent groups and the ruler's wives both held considerable influence and perhaps outright approval authority regarding the fitness of a successor. The royal insignia – the *maskapaycha* (the tasselled headdress of the ruler) – could be bestowed to a successor by the nobility without consent of the reigning emperor. In part because of these ambiguities, the chronicles are rife with tales of factionalism, succession crises and regicide among the Inka elite (Covey 2006:191–4). Prior to the Spanish invasion, the Inka had never faced a serious outside threat (indeed, all Inka militarism was *offensive* in nature), and the apex of the state apparatus had reconstituted itself several times prior to the Spanish invasion. It was only through the conjuncture of the Spanish invasion during a time of a succession crisis that this vulnerability came to manifest as an acute fragility and the swift decapitation of the state apparatus. That is to say, such conflict – a vulnerability of the apparatus of governmentality – was a feature, not a bug, in Inka courtly politics. Thus, as pointed out by Covey, 'We cannot consider Pizarro to have merely euthanized an empire that was already in its death throes' (2006:194). In short, among the Inka, factional competition implied that successful candidates obtained the throne through political intrigue, coup, assassination, and even war (Platt 1975; Duviols 1979; Zuidema 1990). Given that the earlier Chimor state had a similar system of succession (Netherly 1990), it is likely that its political system also was equally vulnerable and potentially fragile.

During the colonial period, Spanish administrators often had serious problems with succession to the Inka crown, which did not adhere to the idea of primogeniture and thus no legitimate genealogical successor. Being accustomed to primogeniture, the Spanish were puzzled by Inka succession to power. This often led to local *kuraka* leaders exploiting the situation by playing Spanish and Inka administrative policies against each other according to the circumstances at hand. Most confusing was when younger sons would be given rule, which produced numerous difficult court battles over land and other resource claims, some of which were never resolved by the Spanish.

Inka and other Andean political systems also were vulnerable to internal conflict and incapacity in administrative decision-making due to several layers of ranking or social divisions within the social structure of local communities. Traditionallly, communities were organized by at least one *ayllu* (ancestor-based corporate descent group), the most widespread kin group in Andean society, which usually contained with several lineages and hundreds of households. These communities were generally characterized by economic self-sufficiency, an asymmetrical hierarchical moiety of upper (*hanan*) and lower (*hunin*) divisions segmented into additional sub-moeties and other partitions, relatively equal gender relations, and socio-economic reciprocity. Status and rank within *ayllu* lineages and sub-lineages could differ significantly, depending on ancestry, economic holdings, and individual leaders, sometimes making decision-making and alliance-formation unpredictable and complicated. Nonetheless, as local participants within the state, *ayllus* carried out core functions on-the-ground that the state apparatus heavily depended on, especially during times of expansion.

It appears that Inka imperial policies promoting centralized and bureaucratized administration (through decimal administration, a growing network of imperial centres, shrines, and state farms, as well as a growing class of attached retainers and craft specialists) were on the rise near the end of the empire but were truncated by the Spanish invasion. Nonetheless, Tawantinsuyu is best described as a vast *fractal* political landscape, made up in the first instance by its constituent ethnic polities (arranged as described above), each conceived as an assemblage of people, things, and places that were regulated by relations of reciprocal obligation – the circulation of energy (read: labour)

and matter – between humans and their ancestors. Ancestors mediated the productive and destructive forces of the world. Thus, as humans cared for their ancestors through offerings, rituals, incantations, and the like, so the ancestors would in turn care for them through plentiful water, bountiful harvests, and so on. At the apex of each polity was a tutelary ancestral *huaca* (landscape deity), to whom all in the polity traced descent. The paramount lord (*kuraka*) of each claimed privileged genealogical descent from the paramount huaca. Thus, subjects likewise owed tribute to the *kuraka* as the embodiment of ancestral magnanimity. As a fractal political landscape, these structural properties and principles repeated down to the level of individual lineage-like arrangements (*ayllus*) and their respective huacas and *kurakas*.

The Inka represented himself and the body politic of Tawantinsuyu as merely a natural extension of these properties and principles (see Fig. 2.3). The conceit of Inka imperialism, then, was to naturalize obligation – i.e., labour tribute extraction – by likening the relationship between subject communities and the state to *ayllu* kin relations and their obligations. Indeed, the Inka claimed ancestry to all Andean ethnic polities. The root metaphor of obligation was feeding and being fed – as the patrimonial ancestors fed their *ayllu* descendants, so they were obliged to feed them in return (Mannheim and Salas Carreño 2014; Salomon 1986; Silverblatt 1988). Since the pioneering work of the late Craig Morris (Morris 1982; Morris and Thompson 1985; Morris 2013), we have come to appreciate the theatricality of Inka imperial centres and other installations – with their massive public plazas and ceremonial platforms – as a means for the production and naturalization of obligation through pageantry, and especially, commensal ritual (Coben 2006; Dillehay 2003; Moore 1996; Wernke 2013).

This arrangement facilitated an essential political legibility by which the Inka could claim legitimate rule, but it smuggled along with it inherent imperial vulnerabilities. First, it did not supplant obligations among subjects and their *kurakas* and huacas, nor their essential loyalty and intercessions to them. It instead produced partitioned loyalties through each fractal level, and partitioned political economies, as significant labour and resources continued to flow to *kurakas* and huacas qua ancestors. Such allegiances and exchanges of matter and energy thus put caps on the kinds and quantities of extractive demands the emperor could make. Second, given the reciprocal logic inherent to the relationship between subject and Inka, tribute rendered produced the necessary corollary expectation that the Inka was obliged to *return the gift*. Effectiveness and justness of rule was largely adduced on these terms.

Seen in this light, the vulnerabilities of the system become more readily apparent. But these logics and dynamics of Inka expansionism are most often cited as part of the unique genius of Inka statecraft – they feature as explanations for how the Inka empire came to expand over such a vast and diverse political and ecological landscape over such a time in the state-centric literature. That is, expansion moved by leaps and bounds as the machinery of the state (via ceremonialism, clientelism, and to a lesser extent coercion and violence) imbricated these large ethno-political blocs into an imperial fractal landscape. However, as we see, the production of authority in this arrangement depended on something like its antithesis: the communitarian ethos of kinship, of community (Silverblatt 1988). Put simply, the emergent system facilitated rapid expansion (clearly a feature of Inka imperialism), but it also created profoundly divided loyalties, limited extractive capabilities, and high expenses. With few levers to oblige more tribute from incorporated populations, further expansion was perhaps the best option. The apparent 'strength' or motor force of Inka imperialism carried with it its core vulnerabilities.

Another organizational feature found in the Andes is that lineage rulers on the north coast of Peru, even the highest ranking, shared decision-making with lower ranking individuals. Internally, *ayllu* authority took the form of a *primus inter pares* arrangement. Among *ayllus*, though one lord may have had a higher ranking within the hierarchical political structure, his power and authority (and thus control over labourers) was restricted because he directly administered *only* one part of the intermediate- and lower-levels of his *ayllu* within the polity (Fig. 2.4). Moreover, at any one horizontal level within the hierarchy, there was no political or administrative coordination among local and regional rulers, making the state pyramid of power and authority, albeit centralized, even weaker and more unstable.

The structure of *kuraka* and *ayllu* authority is therefore nested; decision-making from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy was mediated by each subordinate level below. The necessary position of lords of the intermediate- and lower-sections mitigated any unilateral decision-making and political action by the higher-ranking lord of the polity (Netherly 1977, 1990). As a ruler's command descended farther within each side of the dualistic structure, it required approval from an increasingly larger number of lower-level rulers, which could lead to his diminished power and authority in the intermediate and lower ranks. As Netherly notes, 'This conciliar political organization is one of the salient features of Andean government. Its efficiency for the mobilization of human energy

Figure 2.3. *The Inka ruler (in this case, Tupa Inka Yupanki) addresses the huacas (local ancestral landscape deities) arrayed below the apical huaca Uanacauri (Huanacauri): "Huacas, Willkas! Who among you has said 'don't rain, don't snow, don't hail?' Speak! That is all." To which they reply "It wasn't us, Inka." From Guaman Poma de Ayala,* Nueva Coronica y Buen Gobierno, *1615, f. 261/263. The Royal Danish Library, GKS 2232 4to.*

is the reason for the success of the Andean states… and how it was possible for large expansive states to grow so quickly and why lower-level political units did not disappear when the large empires broke apart' (Netherly 1990:464). But this same political structure

also can make these states vulnerable to lower-raking protest and rebellions and this rupture.

However, late prehispanic Andean polities were not crystalline structures, given the vagaries surrounding succession and structure of leadership at each of

these levels. Much of the work of Inka provincial politics can be characterized by an attempt to crystallize (and in the case of smaller ethnic polities, consolidate and amplify) latent structures into more enduring hierarchical forms. This was a two edged sword, as such latent structures were readily at hand, but carried with them multiple levels of checks on state-ordered prerogatives. Census taking and tribute assessment was greatly facilitated, but actual mobilization of labour was largely filtered through local authorities (Costin 1996). In the imperial heartland, *ayllus* had begun to be rationalized more formally into decimal administrative hierarchies, though the functional reality of decimal administration is highly variable (Julien 1988; LeVine 1987). Thus, if absolute rule existed, it was only at the highest level of the political order, yet this also was the level with the smallest support population and a population that was highly privileged and thus not involved in state labour and other projects.

This form of political organization was clearly present in Inka and Chimor states and probably existed as far back as the Huari and Tiwanaku polities, despite all the misconception of single kings or emperors in the Andean literature (Schreiber 2001; D'Altroy 2001). It is one of the unique features of Andean political organization. When it worked, the efficiency of this organizational structure for the mobilization of human energy was the primary reason for the developmental success of Andean states. The structure of this organization particularly explains why it was possible for states to expand so quickly and why intermediate- and

lower-level political structures of incorporated ethnic groups and other populations did not disappear once incorporated into an Andean state. The persistence of the polities at these lower levels of organization also explains the lines of cleavage and internal conflict found when the larger aggregation was weak or had broken up, as also was the case of the Inka conquest of the Chimor and of the later Spanish conquest of the Inka empire.

This type of ruler succession and nested social hierarchy was inherently vulnerable, often leading to insecure conditions and at times quite fragile political circumstances. The intermediate- and lower-level lines or cleavages constantly were places of potential resistance to the formal state. The vertically and horizontally partitioned yet complimentary nature of the Andean political structure required much more internal manoeuvring and negotiation among its many different levels and parts than the Spanish monarchy or a single king. These manoeuvring parts often became the subject of power struggles between competing leaders, lineages, and sub-moieties, and were utilized by those groups and leaders for their own benefit, regardless of the needs of the state or the wider citizenry.

The intrusion of large-scale, formal state impacts on local orders was disruptive in many ways. Local systems of order became subjected to deconstruction and re-formation as they were incorporated into central state structures and processes under both the Chimor and the Inka. Some local leaders (e.g., *kurakas*) adopted an ambiguous position with regard to these
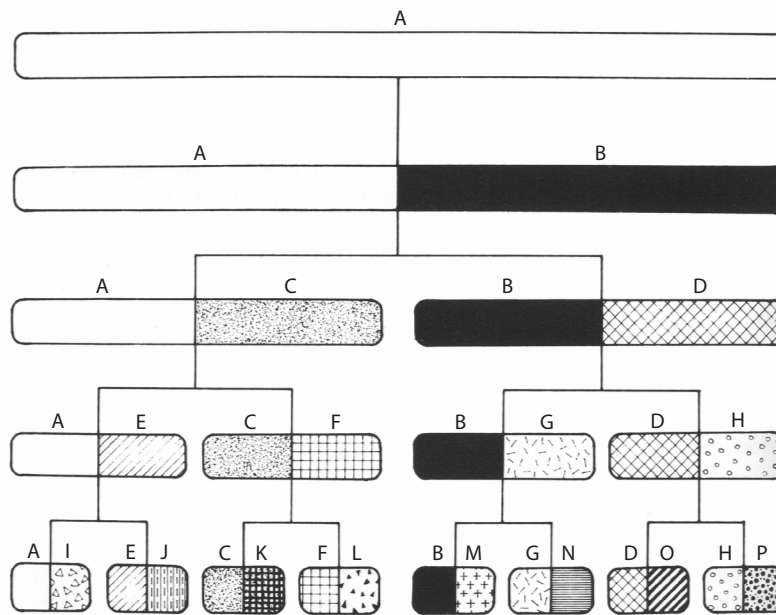

Figure 2.4. *Schematic of Andean political organization (after Netherly 1990).*

states, appropriating state functions, but at the same time pursuing their own agenda under the guise of the state authority and power. These approaches to state development, however, aimed at instrumentalizing local authorities for state purposes (e.g. taxes, *corvee* labour) and thus as a means for reinforcing the wider authority of the state, did not always constitute a genuine partnership. Under Inka rule, for instance, recognition of local leaders was conceptualized as a practice that confirmed the state's authority. Local leaders on the other hand might nevertheless have utilized their new position to reinforce their authority; but they also were in danger of losing authority in the local context, precisely because they were now perceived as agents of the state. These policies and circumstances made the state vulnerable on all levels to internal conflict and potentially to fragility.

In the best case scenario, the dual role as representatives of the communities and agents of the state put local leaders in a position to merge the local and the state domains, but they also risked losing their authority and legitimacy. Again in drawing on the Inka case, the complex fragile nature of state and local governance was further complicated due to the emergence and growing importance of institutions, movements, and formations that had their origins in the effects of and reactions to the socio-economic linkages between newly formed cities and rural areas. Occasionally, these urban formations seized power in certain regions of the state's territory. Under such expansionistic conditions, there were often combinations of forces from the local sphere – like local lineage rulers, religious authorities and their constituencies – and from the sphere of the wider Inka state itself – like the *mit'a* (rotating forced labour groups) and *mitma* (state colonizers) who often served as labourers on public projects. The protagonists of the traditional societal entities such as local lineages and religious orders, on the other hand, often introduced their own agendas into the overall picture to fill any voids of the state or to outright manipulate state administrators.

To provide an example of the latter, when the Inka state expanded across the Andes in the fifteenth century, it resettled thousands of people on newly formed labour colonies to work on state projects such as land reclamation, road building, craft production, and so forth. Within these colonies, the Inka had intended to create a class of loyal subjects but many of these resettled labourers, who were drawn from multiple ethnic groups from many different areas, manipulated their predicament to re-establish their own identify through different yet often incoherent artefact styles, architectural spatial aesthetics not typical of the state but more in line with their original homelands or newly constructed hybrid forms derived from their new mixed identities. As Kosiba (2012) has shown in the highlands near Cuzco, many of these identities, in the form of material expressions were deliberately 'unmarked', illegible and inconspicuous to the Inka, in order to purposely create labour communities that were beyond complete state control and surveillance. To be unmarked or beyond surveillance meant adaptation, resilience and empowerment by subjects which *produced weakened fractures within the state apparatus.*

This type of resistance and resilience on the part of transient labourers working under state rule might have been particularly true where not all state agencies were present on the ground and when the state did not deliver efficient services with regard to infrastructure or security. Rather, it is the mixed transient community itself, this case the *mit'a* labourers. that often provided the nexus of order, security and basic social services. In these cases, the state was perceived as an alien external force, far away not only physically (in Cuzco or other urban areas), but also psychologically. Individuals were thus more loyal to their own group, however mixed ethnically, not the state. As members of *mit'a* communities, people were tied into a network of social relations and a web of mutual obligations, and these obligations were much more powerful than obligations as an Inka state citizen. That is, whether under Inka or Chimor rule, people did not always obey the rules of the state, but the rules of their group or community. As Netherly has noted for the Chimor, legitimacy rested primarily with the leaders of local authorities, and less so with the higher-ranking state authorities – or only with state authorities insofar as they were at the same time leaders in a local societal context. We can identify this practice as a *mediated* legitimacy in the Chimor and Inka states: local legitimacy and state authorized legitimacy.

This type of mediated practice was a special problem for Spanish administrators, with their focus on absolute monarchy, concentrated their attention on the higher-ranking Inka royals rather than on the intermediate- and lower-levels of articulation subordinate to them. In fact, local leaders were largely discredited in the Spanish era because they had often been incorporated into (indirect) state rule as instruments of the Inka, and the new political elites of the Spanish crown attempted to do away with them as anachronistic and reactionary forces of the past. This made the Spanish empire vulnerable in many Andean provinces and fostered its fragility because many revolts and uprisings began in these informal lower-levels that had not received legitimate recognition from the Spanish. The problem was that the Spanish never fully understood that the Inka 'outposts' were mediated by both formal

and informal indigenous societal institutions and that local rulers followed their own cultural (ethnic) logic and rules within state structures. Local customary forms of governance persisted, and finally the Spanish authorities – like their former Chimor and Inka rulers – realized that it was more promising to incorporate them rather than try to suppress and displace and dismiss them.

The Spanish also had administrative problems with other Andean cultural institutions. Andean leadership and the political economy operated on the basis of reciprocity at all levels of society, from ruling *kurakas* to *ayllus* and local families. Apart from their administrative functions and their rights to have their lands worked, *kurakas* reciprocated with gifts, food, drink and coca for labour and service from their followers. As the sixteenth century Spaniard Cobo observed, 'In place of paying tribute, [labourers] worked in the service of the Inca, the religion, or their *caciques…* they [followers] were given the tools and…necessary equipment…they did not invest anything of their own except manual labor' (Cobo 1979, 209–10). 'Tribute', thus, consisted basically not of goods or cash but of labour that the indigenous community gave to the state and the *kurakas*.

As noted above, ignorant of the limited decision-making power of *kurakas* and the reciprocal nature of authority and labour in the Andes, Spanish officials believed that all *kurakas* had absolute power over their *ayllu* followers and thus could avoid the traditional obligations of reciprocity and gift-giving and rather easily shift to a cash economy. Due to reciprocity, however, Andeans resisted paying taxes in cash, which stymied the Spanish economy. As the decades passed, traditional institutions began to break down and by the mid-seventeenth century, Spanish administrative reforms loosened the reciprocal communal relationships central to Andean political economies. Spanish insistence gradually eventually forced Andeans into a cash economy, which eventually promoted more private than communal conceptions of property among local communities. But the traditional system never fully broke down until modern times and even today many communities still operate under reciprocal rules of labour and goods exchange. As a result, Spanish administrators spent enormous amounts of time attempting to turn a system based on multiple sets of reciprocal relationships between multiple and varying tiers of leaders and commoners into a better defined, more permanent, and neatly ordered hierarchy with power flowing from the top. Reciprocity and gift exchange were institutions that complicated and often prohibited the Spanish ability to exploit Andean peoples.

To summarize briefly, our argument is that fragility in the Andes generally occurred in times of diverse and competing claims to power and when differing ethnic logics of social and political order co-existed, overlapped and intertwined, namely the logic of the formal state, the local 'informal' societal order, and the associated social cleavages within this social order (which also likely existed in other forms: ethnic, religious, kinship, economic). In such a social environment, the state did not always have a privileged position as the political framework that provided security, welfare and representation; it often shared a mediated authority, legitimacy and capacity with other usually intermediate- and lower-ranking structures. These mediated structures were the cultural bedrock on which attempts at Andean state-building were constructed and sustained. These conditions also made the Andean state vulnerable and thus fragile and usually short-lived.

The mediated state

We believe that despite the types of structural and procedural problems discussed above, the best hope for a successful Andean state may have been in the explicit pursuit of a mediated structure – in which a central state government with limited power and capacity relied on a diverse range of local authorities to execute core functions of government and negotiated relations between local communities and the state. In this approach, the top-down project of building a central government and the organic emergence of informal polities should not be viewed as antithetical (though in some cases they may have been invariably political rivals, coexisting in uneasy partnership), but instead be seen as harmonized or nested together in a mediated division of coexistence. Such positive mutual accommodation may have resulted in Andean states that might look very different from, or not conform to, previous ideals of what absolute authority structures were supposed to have been in the Andes and thus might appear to us to have been 'weak' or 'fragile' with regard to institutions and enforcement capacities. But this very weakness also may have been a strength as the state gained legitimacy in the eyes of the intermediate- and lower-ranking people, because it acknowledged the strengths of those people and their local institutions and did not always attempt to impose its absolute supremacy, and because state authorities did not try to displace all local orders of governance, but worked with them, providing a coordinating or harmonizing organizational framework. Constructive interaction between state and local governance thus was vital in the Andes, as a formal centralized state

was not only a problem of political will, capacities, functions, institutions and powers of enforcement and implementation, but also a problem of expectations, perceptions and legitimacy. State weakness or fragility thus had two sides to it: weakness with regard to capacities of effective implementation and enforcement, especially as it expanded into new territories, and weakness of legitimacy outside of local lineages.

In particular, some Andeanists preferring to employ traditional state-centred models may have a hard time imagining that life continued in the Andes in the absence of the formal state. In reality, however, alternative actors such as local rulers performed the core state functions that the state never or no longer fulfilled when it abandoned a certain space. Accordingly, it is perhaps important to stress some of the positive potential rather than the negative features of so-called weak or fragile states – de-emphasizing weakness, fragility, failure and collapse, and focusing on mediation, negotiation, generative processes, innovative adaptation and ingenuity. This also entails perceiving local community resilience and customary institutions not so much as resisters, protesters, and problems, but as assets and sources of solutions that could have been drawn upon in order to forge constructive relationships between local kin groups and communities and centralized state governments, and between customary and introduced political and social institutions. Local kinship-based societal formations were valuable social support networks that had their own checks and balances. Through engagement and mobilization, these networks could have positively contributed to political order. Engaging and mediating with communities and non-state customary institutions was just as important as working with central state institutions and governments. For at the end of the day, the extent to which Andean state institutions were rooted in society was decisive for the state's stability, effectiveness and legitimacy. Of course, encouraging local governance on the one hand could have been at odds with building and expanding central institutions of the state on the other; strong local communities might have lacked the incentive to support central state institutions, which was the case with many provinces within both the Chimor and Inka states.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that a central driver of fragility in the late pre-Hispanic Andean states of Chimor and Inka (and probably others before them) is weakly structured social institutions such as rules of succession and hierarchical decision-making. It seems to us that studying the way social and political institutions were arranged in each type of Andean state can provide a useful way to categorize the state's regime or the specific form of government and its strengths and weaknesses.

Traditionally, Andean archaeology has been a polity or state-centred discipline, focusing heavily on the Inka, Chimu, Huari and Tiwanaku societies and not always giving consideration to the significance of local customary institutions and alternative actors such as *ayllus* and other on-the-ground socio-economic units that performed core functions not always fulfilled by the state. We have underestimated how the actions and internal inconsistencies of these institutions and units could potentially have made states vulnerable and fragile on administrative levels well below high royalty and upper-level hierarchical decision-making. The reality is that state institutions co-existed with and depended on the family, religious, economic and cultural institutions of these lower units. The extent to which state institutions were rooted in these customary institutions, especially kinship structure, could be decisive for the state's stability, effectiveness, and legitimacy (Dillehay 2018). While the state, in the final analysis, had a coercive capacity to determine outcomes which local units lacked, this does not necessarily mean that state institutions were always the primary determinant of integration, security, welfare or legitimacy. It was institutions at all levels within society much more critically determined these factors. But when state institutions did work, it also was because they were embedded in local social and cultural norms and practices The challenge to archaeologists is to find appropriate forms of mediated complementarity and interaction at all administrative levels.

By re-conceptualizing some Andean institutions as mediated political orders and as structurally and procedurally vulnerable to certain conditions and administrative levels of social and/or environmental stress, some states became weak or fragile and thus demised or collapsed. The possibilities of internally influencing procedural structures should be re-examined in the Andes, shifting our focus from narrow models of centralized state-building to understanding and engaging with a full spectrum of strong to weak mediated institutions. So far, in the Andes, we have tended to impose our Westernized idea of what a successful state is on the past. Closely related to this attitude has been a functionalist understanding of the state as a set of institutions that delivered like a product, using certain principles of institutional organization and techniques of social engineering such as large-scale public ceremonial feasting, road and canal building, etc. This approach ignores (or conceals) the fact that states were not merely technical and ideological exercises

governed from above, limited to enhancing the capacities and cost effectiveness of state institutions and their expansion into new ethnic territories. Rather, state development and sustainment were difficult political endeavours that likely involved serious internal and external political conflicts as existing distributions of power were threatened. Hence a techno-ideological approach to Andean state development, primarily guided by a centralized administrative view of the state, tends to gloss over its political and its top to bottom and horizontally across socially partitioned kinship character.

The challenge in state-level Andean archaeology is to find appropriate forms of socio-political complementarity and interaction across institutions within all types of states. These kinds of problems related to different degrees strong to weak states (or moments of weakness during the demise of a previously successful state) have attracted relatively little scholarly attention, particularly in relation to local traditional forms of governance and their interaction with state-based endeavours. Instead, dominant approaches to Andean states have rested on a narrow understanding of the sources of political and social order, mainly the place and role of elites and their control of state institutions (e.g., corporate labour) for public projects. The reality is that state institutions co-existed with and depended heavily on local kinship, religious, economic and cultural institutions. While Andean states, in the final analysis, had a coercive capacity to determine outcomes that other institutions lacked, this did not mean that state institutions were the primary determinant of integration, security, welfare or legitimacy. Andean state institutions worked because they were embedded in a wide range of legible social and cultural norms and practices at inter-regional and local levels. These institutions seemed to have been more successful when combining state institutions, local customary institutions and new elements of the wider society in networks of governance which were not introduced from the outside, but embedded in regional and local societal structures on the ground. But in the end, state failure is largely man made, not accidental. Institutional fragilities and structural flaws contribute to failure, but those deficiencies usually hark back to decisions or actions of people. So it is that leadership errors across history have destroyed states for personal gain.

Several themes require additional study. In studying the pressures, or risk factors, associated with ancient state fragility in the Andes, we need to take into account that there was no simple causal process and that each case, whether it be Chimor, Inka or earlier states such as Tiwanaku and Huari, probably shared both commonalities while being distinguishable by their unique outcomes from contingent chains of events and interactions. While each context was historically different and each vulnerability within each state distinctive, research in the Andes points to a set of common and interrelated factors that affected, either in causing or sustaining, fragility. These include: weak political institutions, economic decline, ideological rupture, environmental stress, and violent conflict. A state's geography and history could also have played a role in driving fragility, as in the case of the Inka empire spread over several thousand kilometres in highly diverse and rugged mountainous terrain. And there are other factors, such as regional influences that are linked with fragility, but also these require further study.

Another theme worth pursuing is whether states were strong beyond their centres or homelands of control, but fragile at home or the reverse. In contrast to strong states, failed states probably could not control all of their borders, losing authority over some sections of territory. Furthermore, the expression of official power might have been limited to a capital city and one or more ethnically specific zones. Plausibly, the extent of a state' s failure can be measured by how much of its geographical expanse was genuinely controlled by the ruling government, if this can be documented through archaeology and ethnohistory. The issue is how nominal or contested was the central government' s sway over provincial towns and rural roads, and who really expressed power in the hinterland.

If we assume that some failed or failing states were tense, deeply conflicted and contested by warring factions, then what are the archaeological indicators of these conditions? In most failed states, if armed conflict is involved, then the material correlates are more visible in fortresses, weaponry, and perhaps physical trauma on human skeletons. Furthermore, most failed states probably had disharmonies between communities, which should be revealed in varieties of civil unrest, different degrees of communal discontent, and a plethora of dissent directed at the state or at elite or administrative groups within the state, some or all expressed in iconographic forms or destruction of temples.

We also need to establish clear criteria for distinguishing collapse and failure from generic weaknesses or apparent distresses (e.g., social or physical), and collapse from failure. We also should examine the nature of state weakness and advancing reasons why some weak states succumbed to failure, or collapse, and why others in ostensibly stressed circumstances remained weak and at risk without ever destructing, at least in the short term. It also would be helpful to

contrast failed and successful states. Characterizing failed Andean states is thus an important and relevant endeavour for archaeologists, especially because the phenomenon of ancient state failure or success is under-researched, without precise definitions and a paucity of sharply argued, instructive, and well-delineated cases.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1 It is difficult to examine this topic for earlier Andean states, such as Huari, Tiwanaku and Lambayeque (AD 500–1200), because there is no reliable evidence to infer their socio-political organization and thus their strengths and weaknesses. It is likely, however, that their organizational structures were similar to those of the Chimor and Inka since these states derived their fundamental cultural logics from the earlier ones.

2 Vulnerability is usually more closely related to environmental hazards and the potential for loss and recovery. Socially, vulnerability is perceived as those populations living in a marginalized state of emergency or potential emergency as a result of negative power relations resulting from social and economic living conditions (Wisner 1993).