

Excavations in the Cuzco-Puno Area of Southern Highland Peru

By KAREN L. MOHR-CHÁVEZ

Graduate Student in Anthropology
University of Pennsylvania



Cuzco, once capital of the grand and extensive Inca empire before the Spanish conquest in 1532, and now justly titled Archaeological Capital of South America, is known for its splendid and abundant ruins of finely worked stone. The archaeology of Cuzco has consequently centered upon the important Inca occupations, to the neglect of those of pre-Inca times. What do we know of the earliest ceramic-producing cultures of the Cuzco area, and of its equally neglected southern neighbor Puno? The answer is simply, very little. It was precisely this gap in the early prehistory of the southern Andes of Peru which aroused my interest and stimulated the research project undertaken from 1966 to the present. Funds from the University Museum in Philadelphia, the aid of a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship, and the cooperation of the Patronato Departamental del Arqueología in Cuzco made my research possible.

The first and so far most serious work for the Cuzco area was done by John H. Rowe in 1941-43. His report of this work, "An Introduction to the Archaeology of Cuzco," was published by the Peabody Museum in 1944. Here Rowe presents a description of Chanapata, a culture named after the type site in Cuzco where he made excavations. Later, in 1954-1955, Rowe refined the Cuzco and Sicuani (southeast of Cuzco) sequences by exploration and seriation of surface collections, though lack of radiocarbon dates left the proposed relative sequences floating. In 1953 Dr. Manuel Chávez Ballón discovered a large early site near Cuzco at Marcavalle; Rowe subsequently recognized its pre-Chanapata antiquity. Test excavations were carried out there in 1963 by a University of Cuzco party under the direction of Patricia J. Lyon and Luis Barrera M. For Cuzco, then, the sequence may be pre-

sumed as follows, from oldest to most recent: Marcavalle, Chanapata, Derived Chanapata, Waru, Huari and Lucre, Early Inca, Classic Inca, and Colonial Inca. For Sicuani the sequence is: Qaluyu, Hunt'uma (like Derived Chanapata), Huari, Raqch'i (Black on Red), and local Inca styles.

In the Puno area, the Qaluyu style ceramics, named for the type site near Pucara, represent the earliest occupation before the florescence of the Pucara culture there in the first century B.C. In 1955 Alfred Kidder II made a test excavation in Qaluyu, obtaining radiocarbon dates. The Puno sequence is: Qaluyu, Pucara, Bolivian Tiahuanaco, Collao (Black on Red) and other local contemporary styles, and local Inca styles.

Now, however, there are various radiocarbon dates for the pre-Waru and pre-Pucara cultures of which we are concerned, covering a span of about one thousand years. From Chanapata there are three C-14 dates: 570 ± 150 B.C. (N-89), 410 ± 760 B.C. (N-90), and 1380 ± 240 B.C. (GX-203). Two dates from Qaluyu are 565 ± 114 B.C. (P-155) and 1005 ± 120 B.C. (P-156). The dates make these cultures all fall within the period designated by Rowe as Early Horizon (1400-400 B.C.); that is, during the development of Chavin and its various manifestations in other parts of Peru, though after the first appearance of pottery in these areas. However, the previously mentioned cultures represent the first so far known ceramic-producing occupations in the Cuzco-Puno region, and possibly the earliest here, as no pre-ceramic sites have yet been described.

My research, therefore, is directed at establishing the sequences of occupations, that is, the relative and absolute chronologies; and at clarifying the nature of these pre-Waru, pre-Pucara



Marcavalle in the Andean Valley of Cuzco. (Left) Looking west. The site is the low mound following the length of wall, between the two groups of trees. The small Cachimayo River is just below and behind the field in the foreground. (Right) Excavations on the eastern part of the site. Compare the cultivated hill in the upper left background with the geography of Qaluyu.



Qaluyu in the altiplano of Puno. (Above left) View of Qaluyu River and the Cuzco-Juliaca highway. The site is on the top of the bank at the right. (Left) Excavations on the west side of the highway which cuts through the site. Two half-buried Pucara uncarved monoliths in right foreground.

cultures, individually and as a whole. By means of controlled, though limited, stratigraphic excavation and subsequent analyses and interpretation of material, my purpose is to describe and compare the material culture, human skeletal remains, settlement patterns, ecology (including

use of natural resources and observations of environment), and economy (subsistence and trade relationships), giving consideration to local and temporal variations. So far as the evidence permits, I hope to clarify the problems of contact and diffusion inside and outside the area; the

beginnings of ceramic making, agriculture, and animal domestication for the region; and possible origins for the area. The investigation results will hopefully give life to the cultures which up to now have been scantily described.

My small-scale excavations were limited to three sites representing two different geographical zones. Marcavalle, two and one-half miles southeast of Cuzco and near the Cachimayo River, is located in a mild Andean climate at an altitude of 10,873 feet (3,314 meters). It is a very low mound with an extension of approximately 300 by 300 meters. Qaluyu, the second site, is 153 miles southeast of Cuzco in the Department of Puno, and is situated at an altitude of 12,894 feet (3,930 meters) in the altiplano, a high, almost treeless plain of a colder climate. The site has an extension of about 700 by 210 meters, though Qaluyu refuse is not represented in all of this area; and is bordered on one extreme by the Qaluyu River, now a meagre stream. Finally, Pikicallepatá, near Tinta and Sicuani in the Department of Cuzco, is located about halfway between the two sites, 70 miles southeast of Cuzco itself. This site is also in an Andean environment, at an altitude of about 11,188 feet (3,410 meters). Pikicallepatá, overlooking the Vilcanota River, is an oval-shaped mound of about 100 by 200 meters. Both Pikicallepatá and Qaluyu are near present-day ceramic-making centers.

The excavations in Marcavalle were limited to four trenches ranging in size between 5 by 3 meters and 2.5 by 2.5 meters, the depth to natural soil being about one and a half meters. In addition, anthropology students of the University of Cuzco, under my direction, made six practice trenches 1.5 by 2 meters to discover the extension of Marcavalle remains. In Pikicallepatá only one trench 2.5 by 2.5 meters was made, though the depth of archaeological material extended to almost four meters. Five trenches were made at Qaluyu, ranging in size from 1 by 1.5 meters to 3 by 5 meters, with varying depths of one to four meters.

Artifacts include approximately 50,000 sherds, about 335 stone (the majority obsidian) projectile points, thousands of worked and used stone objects, and 500 pieces of worked bone. In addition, large and small animal bones are represented, including at least llama and/or alpaca, deer, guinea pig, peccary, fish, bird, and possibly dog. Carbon samples with their respective cultural associations, were collected for radiocarbon dating and for identification of plant remains.

Though the ceramic sequences have not

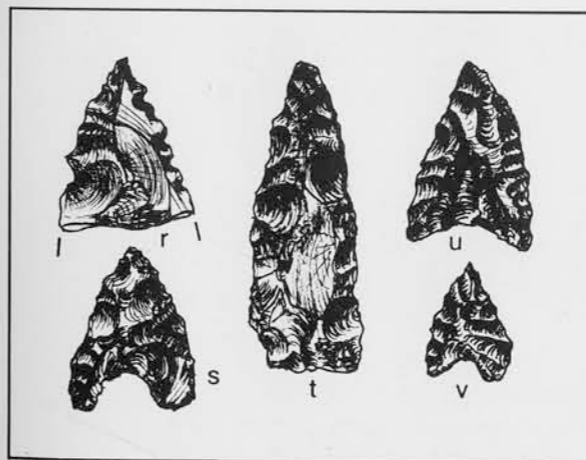
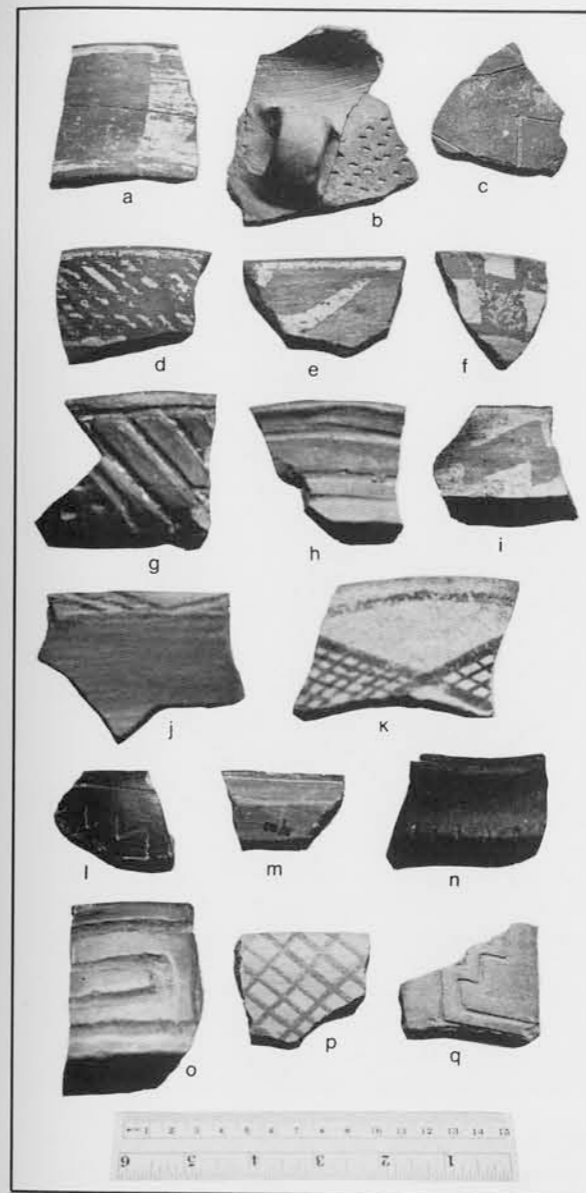
yet been completely worked out, it is notable that similar styles occur at all three sites, thus making possible the comparison and cross-dating of the local relative sequences. Petrographic analysis of a ceramic sample, that is, geological identification of constituent materials, will aid in the problem of whether similar pottery had been traded or produced locally; temporal changes in ceramic materials may also be detected. The pottery as a whole shows considerable variety, especially in decorative designs; almost all are geometric, however, and a small proportion represent animals.

The style sherd most numerous in Marcavalle is a painted cream on brown with red slip background. Also predominating is the use of an iridescent paint, first identified by Rowe as being specular hematite. This iridescent paint also occurs at Pikicallepatá, though in a different style, and with lesser frequency at Qaluyu. Spouts occur at all three sites; female figurines with a perforation at each shoulder were found in Marcavalle. Chanapata and Inca pottery are present in Marcavalle; Chanapata-like, Waru(?), Huari, Inca, and other apparently new ceramic styles occur at Pikicallepatá; and in Qaluyu there are Pucara, Collao (and/or similar styles), and Inca manifestations.

Stone artifacts include triangular projectile points with concave or straight bases (the majority from Pikicallepatá), hammerstones, scrapers, grinding stones, various other tools, and carved stone bowls. Of the 335 points from the three sites, 95 are from excavations, and hopefully a sequence will result. Their importance in subsistence and possibly warfare activities must not be slighted. Among bone objects are carved decorative pieces and various tools such as spatulas, spoons, awls, and polishers.

Burials were discovered at both Pikicallepatá and Qaluyu. Three individuals were represented at Qaluyu; the most important, simply placed within Qaluyu refuse and accompanied either casually or intentionally by only a bone tool, was notably painted with red ochre; and the skull showed pronounced fronto-occipital deformation. In Pikicallepatá ten individuals were represented, several being disarticulated, and apparently with no grave goods. Large stone slabs covered several of the skeletons, which in all articulated cases were in a flexed position.

My investigation, then, will provide a body of archaeological data previously absent, which should help in coordinating the Cuzco-Puno area with other regions and in reconstructing events in the prehistory here, especially with regard to origins, developments, and dispersals. Finally,



Early Horizon excavated pottery and obsidian projectile points from Marcavalle (a-k, r), Pikicallepatá (l-q, s-t), and Qaluyu (u-v). Points are natural size. (a) Cream on brown painted, with red slip. (b) Iridescent painted in zone of punctation. (c) Iridescent painted within incised outline. (d) Cream, oblique lines on brown painted, with red slip. (e) Cream on brown painted, with red slip; from similar sherds this can be reconstructed as tail and part of head of a bird (duck?). (f) Black on white painted, with red slip. (g) Dark brown grooved with broad punctation. (h) Red grooved, convex base. (i) Cream paint on red slip; convex base. (j) Brown on cream painted horizontally flanged rim, with red slip. (k) Dark brown (almost black) on white painted, with red slip. (l) Black incised. (m) Red and iridescent painted, zoned by incision on everted lip; iridescent paint on lip exterior, red on lip interior. (n) Black with grooved rim and punctated fillet. (o) Brown grooved; convex base. (p) Iridescent paint on buff. (q) Red incised.



(Above) The most important burial in Qaluyu: adult, flexed, oriented north-south with skull at north; bones painted with red ochre. (Below) Skull from same burial, showing fronto-occipital deformation.

hopefully my work will stimulate interest and show the urgent need for further, more extensive excavations, as many sites are in danger of urbanization and destruction. With the consequent accumulation of archaeological material, we may be able to answer with greater certainty the question, What do we know of the pre-Inca occupations in the south highlands of Peru? **Z**