

Andean Archaeology and Ethnohistory - Anthro 326: Class 13  
**The Early Horizon: The Pachacamac oracle analogy**

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- Burger proposes using Pachacamac, which was a functioning oracle center in 1530's when the Spanish were there, as an analogy to help understand Chavín de Huántar (1200?-600 cal BC)
  - Pachacamac is known from eye-witness accounts and ethnohistorical sources, as well as archaeology
  - Pachacamac was an oracle center
    - people would visit it to get prophesies, advice, seek supernatural intervention, etc.
    - it had a wide reputation and influence that cross-cut ethnic and political divisions long before the Inka politically unified the region
    - it had subsidiary "branch offices" that might provide a model for the finds of Chavín style artifacts in places far away from Chavín itself
  - if so, the first Andean "Horizon" would have been a widespread religious cult, probably existing in parallel with local religious ideas
    - not a political, economic, or military expansion
  - but nevertheless bringing people into contact over greater distances
    - encouraging the sharing of ideas
    - and exchange of goods on a limited scale
  - Burger also notes that in historically and ethnographically documented cases elsewhere, cults tend to arise in troubled times
    - when people are looking for alternative answers
    - during economic or political strife
    - so he suggests that the Early Horizon spread of Chavín ideas may have resulted from, rather than caused, the collapse of the Initial Period traditions on the coast
    - if so, the Early Horizon was not a period of increasing unity, stability, and social and political achievement
      - but rather, a time of troubles, maybe political and social disorder, in which people turned to a regional cult
  - So let's leap far forward in time to look at Pachacamac in late prehistoric and early historic times, in order to understand it as possible analogy for Chavín
  
- On May 16, 1532, Francisco Pizarro and his band of conquistadores set out on foot and horse from Tumbes, on the northernmost coast of Peru, to march inland and capture Peru
  - six months later, November 16, 1532, they captured the Inka ruler Atahualpa by treachery
  - Atahualpa told them (through an interpreter) about a rich "mosque" on the coast, presumably trying to divert Pizarro's attention in that direction
    - "Among other things, Atabiliba [Atahualpa] said to the Governor [Francisco Pizarro]: 'Ten days' journey from Caxamalca [Cajamarca, where Pizarro was holding Atahualpa], on the road to Cuzco, there is, in a village, a mosque [Pachacamac], which all the inhabitants of that land look upon as their common temple. In it they all offer up gold and silver, and my father [the previous Inka] held it in great veneration, as well as myself. This mosque contains great riches, for, though there is a mosque in each village where they have their

special idols which they worship, in this mosque there is a general idol common to all, and there is a famous sage in charge of that mosque, whom the Indians believe to have a knowledge of future events, because he speaks to that idol." (Francisco de Xeres, secretary to Pizarro, trans. C. Markham, [1970] pp. 66-67)

- Pizarro responded with a tirade about Christianity and how the idols are devils
  - but he obviously took note of the information, especially the bits about gold and silver
  - they had already heard some references to this place
- Francisco's brother Pedro tells us how people consulted the Pachacamac oracle, and what they expected of it:
  - "The Marquis [Francisco Pizarro], on learning from the interpreter what it was that Atabalipa [Atahualpa] had said, asked him why he had said that that Pachacama of theirs was not a God, since they held him to be so. Atabalipa replied: Because he is a liar. The Marquis asked him in what respect he had been a liar. Atabalipa replied: You should know, Lord, that when my father was sick in Quito, he sent to ask him [Pachacama] what should be done for his health. He [Pachacama] commanded that he be taken out into the sun, and when he was taken out, he died; Guascar, my brother, sent to ask him [Pachacama] who was to win the victory, he or I, and [Pachacama] said that he would, and I won it. When you came, I sent to ask him who was destined to conquer, you or I, and he sent to tell me that I was. You conquered. Therefore he is a liar, and is no God, for he lies." Pedro Pizarro, 1571, trans. Philip A. Means [1921] pg. 209.
- Pedro Pizarro also gives us a vivid description of a similar, but less regionally important, oracle in a different valley:
  - "Then, going onward, and having arrived at the Apurima, which means The-Lord-Who-Speaks, for here in this Apurima the demon used to speak with them, it befell that, in the presence of a Spaniard whom Mango Inga held a prisoner while he [Mango] was in revolt, and who was called Francisco Martin, this Mango Inga caused the demon to speak to him before this Francisco Martin, who said that he heard the voice of the demon reply to the questions which Mango Inga put to him, and he [Mango] said to him [Martin]: See how my god speaks to me. There was in this [valley of] Apurima which I mention a much painted hut, and inside of it was set up a thick beam, thicker than a very fat man, and this beam had many pieces hacked out of it. It was very much covered with the blood which they offered to it. It had a girdle of gold bound around it and soldered on so as to resemble lace, and on the front were two large teats of gold like those of a woman, likewise soldered to it just as the girdle was. This beam was arrayed with very fine garments of a woman, and having many copos of gold, which are like pins, and which the women of this kingdom use, most of them being large, a palm in length, and at the head they are very broad and flat, and from these heads hang many tiny little bells of gold and silver. These [pins] they [the women] used to fasten the mantles, which they use as clothes, over their shoulders. At the sides of this thick beam, which I mention, there are others, in a line, from one side to another, and they occupy the entire length of the room. These beams, likewise, are bathed with blood and robed in mantles like the large one, resembling, with their copos, statues of women. Through this largest beam they say it was that the demon used to speak to them. They called him Apurima." Pedro Pizarro, 1571, trans. Philip A. Means [1921] pg. 242-243

- Atahualpa had promised to ransom himself with immense quantities of gold and silver, so they all sat around in Cajamarca, waiting for it to be gathered up and brought in
- January 5, 1533, Fernando Pizarro sent another one of his brothers, Hernando Pizarro, out on a military reconnaissance mission
  - there didn't seem to be any threat
  - and gold and silver was starting to flow in
  - Fernando sent a message to Hernando to go check out the famous "mosque" of Pachacamac, and anything else that looked interesting
  - and to have his secretary Miguel Estete prepare a report of everything they saw on the way there and back
- Miguel Estete
  - this account pretty much speaks for itself, on many fronts...
  - but specifically relating to Chavín, note that:
    - the idol is in a close, dark chamber in a "good house, well painted"
    - it "is their God who created them and sustains them and gives them their food"
      - "all the things in the world are in his hands"
    - only a select few were allowed to even see it
      - most people could not enter, or even touch the building
      - attendants have to fast and abstain from sex before seeing the idol - they have to be in a special state to experience the idol
      - the idol spoke to its attendants, who spread its words around the land
    - people come from great distances to offer sacrifices to it
      - of gold, silver, cloth
      - "all the people of this coast serve this mosque"
      - they bring a certain tribute every year
    - there is a house of the sun adjacent to it
      - this is a temple of the Inka state religion
      - coexisting with and acknowledging the power of the idol of Pachacamac, which was there long before the Inka arrived
    - Pachacamac is a sizable, prosperous town
      - not surprising, given the flow of people and goods into it
- Pedro Cieza de Leon
  - A soldier and historian, traveled widely in Peru in the years after the Spanish conquest, observing and talking with people about events that they had seen or heard about up to several decades earlier
  - this account was written in 1553, twenty years after Pachacamac was destroyed
  - but is very clear in being based on observations and people's remembered accounts
  - things to note that are relevant to Chavín and coastal temple traditions:
    - temple on a small mound
      - but the "edifice began at the base", that is, the retaining walls of the mound were finished like a building
      - several doors

- doors and walls painted with wild beasts
- idol kept inside
- but much of the ritual is outdoors and public, for a crowd in front of the temple
  - priests made a great display of sanctity
  - performed sacrifices "before the people, they faced the doors of the temple and turned their backs on the idol"
  - the priests "were seized with a mighty trembling"... due to drugs?
  - pronounced oracles that the people believed were true
  - "On the occasion of their great annual feasts many people came there, and danced to the sound of the Indian instruments of music."
- priests were obeyed by political leaders
- near the temple were "many lodging-houses for those who came on pilgrimage"
  - for "pilgrims who brought offerings to the temple"
- the Inka respected this temple, that had been there since long before
  - but built their own temple to the sun next to it
- Maria Rostworowski
  - a Peruvian ethnohistorian
  - This is a great example of ethnohistorical work in the Andes, albeit a bit confusing
    - shows historical, linguistic, and placename methods
    - mentions some important, recurring themes of late prehistoric social organization
      - ayllus
      - hierarchically arranged caciques (principal and segunda persona(s))
      - multiethnic settlement and relations
      - stories of supernaturals that reflect human geopolitics
  - and it provides details for a possible analogy between Pachacamac and Chavín de Huantar
    - look for the evidence for, and nature of, the widespread influence of Pachacamac
    - note the "'children' and 'wives' of the idol in distant places"
  - Summary
    - In late prehistoric times, the valleys of Lima and Pachacamac were a single political unit known as the Province of Ychma
      - made up of several districts, each with its own local chief
    - controlled by a single ruler (principale, cacique, señor) based at Pachacamac
      - who was the chief of the area around Pachacamac
      - and also was the superior of the chiefs of the neighboring areas
      - i.e. the chief of Pachacamac was a local chief and a regional leader at the same time
      - the Spanish did not understand this system, and thought that all the local chiefs were on the same level
      - this is a typical Andean political arrangement shown in many ethnohistorical sources
        - reasonable to think that this model might have applied to earlier societies, too
    - the Inka recognized Pachacamac as an important sacred center
      - when the mother of the Inka Tupac Yupanqui was pregnant, she had a vision that the Creator of the World was at Pachacamac

- presumably reflects existing ideas at the time
- When Tupac Yupanqui conquered Pachacamac, he made a big show of respecting it
  - offered sacrifices
  - fasted
  - built a new temple there, supposedly at the oracle's request
- footnote: notice how Tupac Yupanqui moved a whole ayllu of silversmiths from Ychma (maybe Pachacamac itself) to Cuzco
  - this is an ayllu defined principally by profession, although presumably it was passed down a family line
  - silversmithing was a rare or valued enough skill to be worth bringing them all to Cuzco
  - what were silversmiths doing at Pachacamac?
    - making showy objects for the temple rites and staff?
    - or items for pilgrims (some of whom could have been visiting shamans or priests) to trade for and bring home?
    - supported in some way by the influx of pilgrims and offerings?
    - could this parallel the craft work at Chavín de Huántar?
- Ychma (and thus, presumably, Pachacamac) is associated with the color red, specific pigments, and body painting
  - The word Ychma may derive from
    - the word for body paint or painting one's body or face
    - the word for a red pigment made from a tree fruit, or for cinnabar, a red mineral pigment
    - the word for colored or yellow (hmm)
  - she notes a source of red clay near Pachacamac
  - and the fact that the Inka temple at Pachacamac was painted red
    - can you think of any other cases of red ceremonial architecture that we have come across?
  - all of which also suggests that red was, in general, a color associated with the sacred
- Pachacamac was already regionally important by the Middle Horizon
  - about 500 - 1000 cal AD
  - based on high-status Wari (Middle Horizon) tombs found there in levels above earlier structures
    - so its ceremonial role must have started somewhat earlier yet
  - Menzel argues that Pachacamac was the center of a pottery style that was widespread during the later part of the Middle Horizon
    - suggesting a large sphere of influence
  - and it continued to be important through the Late Intermediate Period and Inka times
- Pachacamac's regional influence
  - note that "Pachacamac" is used for the place, the temple, and the deity / oracle
  - branch-office temples in various places
    - references to them as "children" or "wives" of Pachacamac
    - note that one was important for its coca production
      - another hint of economic activities organized through the religious ones

- up and down the coast, in the highlands, even (in a highly modified form) in the jungle
- not spread by conflict, but by interest in divination
  - how might this belief actually be spread?
  - possibly by priests using the oracles to extend their area of influence to draw in more offerings
    - Jimenez Borja found exotic goods stored at Pachacamac
    - evidence of trade at the "Ica-Pachacamac" center in the south coast valley of Chincha
      - ethnohistoric evidence of thousands of "merchants"
        - presented by Rostworowski in a different paper
        - exchange of copper from the altiplano
        - for *Spondylus* shell from Ecuador
        - possibly in open marketplaces!
    - the Pachacamac branch oracles had groups of coastal priests maintaining them and receiving the offerings
      - some of the income stayed to support the local branch
      - the rest was sent to Pachacamac to support the main office
  - detailed discussion of sources that hint that Ychma (Pachacamac) may have had a branch oracle in Cuzco itself
    - before the Inka expansion, when Cuzco was just another local chiefdom
    - the Ychma group would have been one of several smallish groups in the area
    - they may have been defeated in early Inka military expansion, and then reviled with the name "dog-bellies"
  - Linguistic hints that Quechua language spread from the Pachacamac area, not Cuzco
    - during the Middle Horizon, not much later in Inka times as the Inka oral histories claim
    - linguistic arguments
      - based on glottochronology (estimated time for different dialects to diverge)
      - and on the assumption (borrowed from evolutionary botany) that the area of greatest variability is where the language first developed
    - if true, this also supports the idea of a widespread, significant area of interaction based on the Pachacamac oracle
  - footnote: notice the story of the Yauyos conquering the Mama region
    - bringing in their own gods and seating them at the sacred places of the previous gods
    - creating stories of battles among the gods that parallel the movements of the people

– Relevance to Chavín and the Early Horizon

  - maybe Chavín was an oracle center, similar to the historically documented one at Pachacamac
    - where the Spanish observed a wooden idol set up in a room atop a platform mound
      - only high-status people could actually enter
      - where they would put questions to the idol and a hidden priest would “speak” for it
      - most people just watched ceremonies from the plaza at the foot of the steps

- a shaman/priest would stand in front of the doorway in regalia and trance or perform for the audience
- Chavín de Huántar had similar concepts in the ceremonial architecture
  - decorated rooms atop a mound with a front door and staircase suitable for someone to stand facing a crowd
  - an elaborate setting for the Lanzon, where it could have been made to speak as the Pachacamac oracle did
- The small storage spaces in the temple and household-level craft workshops in the town could suggest that
  - offerings might have been brought there and stored
  - its location on a travel route and scattered home workshops might have been appropriate for exchange with people passing through
  - like the silversmiths at Pachacamac
- Another hint of visiting pilgrims: the many rooms at Pachacamac for visitors to lodge in
  - Chavín has recently turned out to have extensive residential areas just across the river from the temple
  - with a great view of the front of the Castillo and the large rectangular plaza
- Pachacamac was also the seat of a principal chiefdom
  - so maybe Chavín de Huántar was the center of a chiefdom, too?
- the Pachacamac oracle had “sister”, “son”, and “wife” centers set up in other places, paying tithes to the main oracle
  - so maybe Chavín influence at other places (highlands centers, coastal centers, coastal more isolated finds) could reflect similar "branch oracles"
  - does the cache of painted textiles from a tomb at Karwa, on the Paracas peninsula, suggest such a "branch oracle"?
    - this is very far from Chavín de Huántar
    - at least 25 large paintings in good Chavín style of the staff god, suitable for wall hangings or other form of display to large groups
      - maybe just an alternative to sculpture, decorating a fixed ceremonial center
      - or maybe intended to be mobile, like at a travelling revival meeting?
        - a road show by proselytizing missionaries? (Burger doubts this)
    - Karwa textile images are all either sexless or female
      - so were the Karwa textiles the backdrop for a “wife” or “daughter” oracle of Chavín?
        - like the "wife" and "daughter" oracles of Pachacamac?
  - Problem: the revised, earlier dating of Chavín de Huántar
    - it now looks like the Karwa textiles were used centuries after the supposed oracle center of Chavín was abandoned
    - could they be misdated, and really be older?
      - possibly, since they were found by looters and dated by the style of ceramic sherds said to have been with them -- this is not a very positive dating
      - radiocarbon dating the cloth would resolve this
    - or maybe these textiles have nothing to do with the center at Chavín... too bad...