Rethinking the Andes–Amazonia Divide
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Published by University College London

Pearce, Adrian J., et al.
Rethinking the Andes–Amazonia Divide: A cross-disciplinary exploration.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/81859.

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This chapter aims to summarise the main ecological and socio-cultural factors in a region where archaeological research had long been largely neglected in favour of other more southerly regions, where early complexity is currently assumed to have originated. The region concerned falls essentially within the modern departments of Piura, Cajamarca, Lambayeque and Amazonas in northern Peru. The main topics addressed are the particular ecological background in this region and its relevance for early connections between Pacific coast and Amazon basin, as well as cultural and technological transfers.

Ecological distinctiveness

The Piura department is home to the broadest section of the Peruvian coastal strip, more than 100 km wide, compared with only about 20 km to the south. Here is also the narrowest and lowest part of the Andean highlands, known as the Huancabamba deflection (Reynel et al. 2013, 175–8, Figures 15–17). This deflection is formed by the Huancabamba river as it joins the Chamaya river. As it turns northwards, the Chamaya widens before joining the main Marañón. Another relatively large river valley is the Quebrada Jaén, which meets the Marañón at Bellavista. From there to the north the Marañón forms, together with the Chinchipe and Utcubamba rivers, a large flood plain (about 25 km by 4 km) at c. 400 m. The Utcubamba forms a connected flood plain of its own, nurtured by the numerous smaller rivers that join it near the modern town of Bagua. The northern part of this region is the gateway to the Amazonian lowlands (see Figure 2.4.1).

The coast here abuts onto three transition zones in the Pacific Ocean, ranging from temperate waters to the south, through a transition between temperate and tropical in the centre, to a tropical sea to the north. The region hosts a suite of some 17 ecological landscapes from west to east (More Cahuapaza et al.)
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2014): islands, mangrove relics, wetlands, various types of dry forest on the coast and lower slopes, in the highlands and in inter-Andean valleys, highland shrubs, humid cloud forests, and high grasslands (páramo). While many of these have been severely reduced by various anthropogenic impacts, they still maintain a bewildering array of endemic plants and animals, some of which are characteristic also of the eastern Andean slopes. So there are primates (Allouatta palliata, Cebus albifrons), peccaries (Pecari tajacu), ocelots (Leopardus pardalis), jaguars (Panthera onca) and Boa constrictors living in the tropical Pacific forest in the Tumbes region, as well as crocodiles (Cocodrylus acutus) in the mangrove environments (Reynel et al. 2013, 103–4), and most of them are also to be found in the dry forests of Piura. Wild cats like the jaguar, puma (Puma concolor), jaguarundi (Herpailurus yaguarondi), ocelot, oncilla (Leopardus tigrinus) and margay (Leopardus wiedii) are sympatric in this region and once lived from sea level to high altitudes (Sunquist and Sunquist 2002). In other woodlands, such as the humid cloud forests, similar animals are also to be found in the more easterly
Amazonian regions, including the mountain tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*), spectacled bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*), sloths (*Choloepus hoffmmani*) and primates (*Alouatta seniculus, Cebus albifrons*). Extraordinarily high numbers of bird species and vascular plants (Reynel et al. 2013; Barthlott et al. 2005) contribute to the extremely high ecological diversity of this region.

While there are many endemisms, this short list indicates that even the evidently impoverished modern fauna and flora here share elements with the eastern edge of the Andes and with Amazonia, over a distance of less than 250 km from coast to the Amazon lowlands. There is also the extraordinary phenomenon of coastal dry forests penetrating into the highlands as far as the Marañón basin, while at higher altitudes Amazonia-like forests reach the headwaters of the coastal rivers (see Figures 2.4.2 and 2.4.3). This situation differs markedly from central and southern Peru, from the Jequetepeque southwards, where the coast–highland connections are more restricted without known direct eastern counterparts, with the exception of the Huánuco basin in the central eastern Andes (for climate changes during the Pleistocene and early and middle Holocene, see Weng et al. 2006; Netherly 2011a; Lodeho 2012).

The archaeological evidence

As mentioned above, this northern region has not been the object of intensive archaeological research until recently. Aside from some sporadic early efforts, only since the 1970s has the region come into closer focus. In what follows, I consider an archaeological timeframe from the Final Pleistocene and Final Formative (late Holocene, c. 14,000 BP) up to 2200 BP.

Evidence dating to the Final Pleistocene is restricted to slightly more southerly coastal environments in the Chicama (Chauchat 1992; Briceño Rosario 2010), Zaña, and Jequetepeque valleys, where it is known as the ‘El Palto’ phase (13,800 to 9800 BP) (Dillehay 2011, 15), although sporadic finds are also known from coastal Piura (Chauchat and Zevallos Quiñones 1980), the Cajamarca highlands (Cárdich 1994; Narváez 2007; Lodeho 2012) and the eastern Andes (Manachauqui) (Church 1996; Lodeho 2012). The absence of any evidence in other areas, including the Amazonian lowlands in the Bagua region and in the inter-Andean valleys, should not be imputed to the absence of human occupation but, rather, to a lack of research.

The following early Holocene occupations on the coast and in the adjacent highlands are collectively known as ‘Paijánian’ (or Early and Late Paijan sub-phase) (13,000 to 9800 BP) (Dillehay 2011; Briceño Rosario 2010, 2011; Lodeho 2012; Maggard 2013). While broad-spectrum hunting and gathering is prevalent, there is some indication of semi-sedentism and possibly some incipient horticulture during the late Paiján, as evidenced by a cultigen (*Cucurbita moschata*) found from about 10,000 BP in dry grass and forest micro-environments (Maggard and Dillehay 2011).
Figure 2.4.2  Map with elevation bands set to contrast areas below and above 2,300 m, to reveal the Huancabamba Depression in northern Peru. © Paul Heggarty.
In the Zaña valley the following phase is of particular importance, as it relates to the earliest evidence of cultigens in the Central Andes. In the ‘Las Pircas’ phase (9800 to 7800 BP), clusters of small sites with hut structures, associated gardens and middens (with signs of possible anthropophagic practices) are found in what was, up until the nineteenth century, humid forest. Fauna typical of this habitat include tropical insects, boas and jaguarundi. Garden furrows contained quartz crystals, ammonite fossils, a jaguarundi bone and stingray spines, probably as garden magic. Manioc (*Manihot* sp.), peanuts (*Arachis hypogaea*), a quinoa-like
chenopod, beans (*Phaseolus* sp.) and the pacae fruit tree (*Inga* sp.) seem to have been cultivated here (Rossen 2011). Piperno (2011b) relates these plants with those from sites of similar age in Panama and the Colombian Amazon. While faunal evidence shows connections with the coast, these plants hint instead at long-distance contacts to the north-east (see Chapter 2.1). The Huancabamba corridor could have served as a convenient entry route, though contemporaneous sites are not known from the eastern part of that corridor or from further to the east. In Piperno's words: 'Our first farmers were *smaller-scale horticulturists* growing a variety of seed, root, and tree crops in small – often home garden-plots; they continued to hunt, gather and fish while living in small household clusters … Today in the tropical forest it is still easy to find examples of people who practise similar kinds of horticulture while hunting and fishing, and who derive many of their calories from cultivated and domesticated foodstuffs' (Piperno 2011b, 282).

The following ‘Tierra Blanca’ phase (7800 to 5000 BP) in the Zaña valley saw the appearance of new technologies, burial practices, increased food production, water management, and mound building (Stackelbeck and Dillehay 2011). Houses, previously circular, were now rectangular instead. Alongside the earlier cultigens, coca (*Erythroxylum coca novogratense*) was now grown, a plant which in wild form appears on the slopes of the eastern Andes, while cotton (*Gossypium barbadense*) was domesticated on the coast. The Cementerio de Nanchoc (CA-09-04), which dates from the late Las Pircas to the end of Tierra Blanca phase (Dillehay et al. 2011), consists of two low mounds, built in three stages, and a workshop. This is a very early example of public architecture used and maintained by local residents over extended time periods. Huaca Prieta in the Chicama valley also shows early mound building between about 7500 and 6540 BP. Here too this marks the starting point of successive building phases up to about 4000 BP (Dillehay et al. 2011). While Nanchoc lies in a dry forest environment, Huaca Prieta forms part of a complex of wetland, semi-arid lowlands and coastal estuarine and marine settings. Here the earliest grown plants are squash (*Cucurbita moschata*), lima bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) and avocado (*Persea americana*), to which were added, from 7000 to 6000 BP, chilli pepper, gourds, maize and a long lists of others, including those mentioned above for the Zaña valley sites.

In our region of interest, richer data are known from the Final Archaic (Late Preceramic). Between 4500 and 4000 BP several mounds with monumental architecture (ceremonial centres) are known from Cerro Ventarrón (Alva Meneses 2012), in the Lambayeque valley, Ingatambo in the Huancabamba valley (Yamamoto 2010, 2012), Pacopampa (Pandanche) (Kaulicke 1982), Santa Ana (La Florida) in the Ecuadorian upper Chinchipe area (Valdez 2008), and Montegrande in the city of Jaen (Olivera 2014) (see map in Yamamoto 2012, Figure 3). Three of these are of particular importance: Cerro Ventarrón, Santa Ana (La Florida) and Montegrande.

Cerro Ventarrón stands in the Reque river valley, to the south of modern Chiclayo and about 20 km north of the Zaña valley. The course of the Reque connects to the important ceremonial center of Pacopampa in the highland cloud forest,
which in turn is close to the Huancabamba valley and Ingatambo (about 40 km distant) (see map in Yamamoto 2012, Figure 2). The shore is also nearby, only 22 km away (see Alva 2012). Cerro Ventarrón thus occupies a central location, enhanced by impressive natural rock formations relevant to a ritualized landscape into which the architecture is incorporated, and which gave the site its name (Alva Meneses 2012, 16–17). It consists of a single complex of monumental architecture in the plain and on the nearby slopes of Cerro Ventarrón, with a series of contemporaneous compounds that together cover a total area of approximately 30 ha. The main section is a platform building integrated into an isolated rock formation, in an area originally covered by dry forest and wetlands. It measures about 150 by 60 m and was built in five main phases, with superimposed buildings characterized by platforms, stairways, enclosures on the top level, and aggregated smaller buildings in a south-west to north-east orientation. The enclosures are decorated with reliefs and/or paintings of zoomorphic motifs interpreted as opossum, fish (phase 1), a deer hunt (phase 2) and other, geometric designs. Offerings in the form of caches left in some of the enclosures give interesting hints at contacts with other regions. Thus a decorated pectoral in crescent shape in the central enclosure of building phase 2 is made of the pearl oyster *Pinctata mazatlanica*, found only in tropical waters. A shell trumpet (*Tricornis peruviana*) also from tropical Pacific waters was found in the same enclosure. Finally, as a closing ritual from the same context, a burial of macaw (*Ara arauana*) or guacamayo hints at contacts with the Amazonian lowlands. The bird was adorned with a necklace of green stone pendants. In phase 3 another burial of a monkey (*Cebus albifrons*) and an otter (*Lontra felina*) relate these offerings to both the tropical forest and ocean shore. Other deposits are probably evidence of feasting with large amounts of burnt fish bones of various species from both the ocean and river, ducks and other aquatic birds, deer and jaguarundi, as well as chilli pepper, squash, beans, avocado, lúcuma, and small amounts of maize (Alva Meneses 2012; see Vásquez and Rosales Tham 2014). This impressive architectural and contextual evidence suggest widespread connections and evident ritualized power at an early stage of cultural development. The presence of animals treated in such special ways not only hints at connections with the Amazonian east, but also that they may have been kept as pets (macaw, monkey, and perhaps jaguarundi). A burial of a macaw was also found at San Isidro, an early site in Jaen (Olivera 2014, Figure 119).

Santa Ana (La Florida) Palanda is a site of about 1 ha in the upper Chinchipe valley, at about 1050 m. It consists of a large sunken circular plaza and circular houses to the northeast and southwest (5 to 12 m in diameter). To the east of the plaza stands an 80 m² circular structure with containing walls forming a spiral. The presence of a structure on top, and of hearths and elite burial contexts, have led to this being identified as a temple. All the buildings were made of river cobbles topped with *bahareque* walls, and all date to c. 4500 BC. Several funerary contexts were found in the centre of the ‘temple’ structure, in the form of a chamber at a depth of 2.3 m which contained a *Strombus* conch-shell trumpet, a necklace of turquoise pendants and hundreds of small pearls of the same material, eight pottery
vessels, three polished and decorated stone bowls, a small lithic mortar, and hundreds of pearls of turquoise and pseudo-malachite at a deeper level. Guffroy (2008, 892) quotes for this tomb a $^{14}$C date of 3700 BP (uncalibrated), which would make it a younger intrusion. Four associated burial structures, with similar but unspecified objects, complete the funerary area (Valdez 2008, 2014; Valdez et al. 2005). Valdez (2008, 880) compares the designs on some of the stone bowls with textile motifs from Huaca Prieta and La Galgada in northern Peru.

A similar circular structure was excavated at Montegrande in the modern town of Jaén, though no $^{14}$C dates are yet available and most of the human burials are probably later (Olivera 2014), with ceramic sequences spanning the Early to Late Formative. A similar elite context is still missing, and the accompanying spectacular objects from Palanda were not found. Despite these limiting factors, both sites should be connected culturally and chronologically.

Other sites are less well known because they have been covered by later architecture, but they do often show a remarkable continuity of occupation: Ingatambo (4500 to 2550 BP) (Yamamoto 2010), Pacopampa (with Pandanche) (4400 to 2000 BP) (Kaulicke 1982; Seki et al. 2010). Further to the south, Kuntur Wasi (with Cerro Blanco 5000 to 2050 BP) (Onuki 1995; Inokuchi 2010) boasts a similar occupation span. The densities and complexities of these sites seem to differ through time and space, however. Early Formative sites in the region thus seem to be scarce and relatively small, although this might be a false impression due to the lack of systematic surveys and excavations. But ceramics similar to those from Pandanche are to be found at Ingatambo, in the Bagua region and in the Huallaga basin (Manachaqui near the Marañón basin, Church 1996; Church and von Hagen 2008) suggesting long-distance contacts, particularly within the eastern and north-eastern Andes.

Further south, meanwhile, from the Casma to the Jequetepeque valleys, the situation is much more involved, with the Casma valley characterized by complex and monumental architecture, and the Jequetepeque valley hosting another dense occupation including minor centres, that have been relatively well studied (for a synthesis see Kaulicke 2010b, 394–6).

The situation changes during the Middle and Late Formative (c. 3200 to 2500 BP), when monumental architecture and (ceremonial) centres appear across the whole area. In the Lambayeque valley several sites are known, such as Collud and Zarpán (Alva Meneses 2012), Huaca Lucía and La Merced (Shimada et al. 1983) in dry forest environments, as well as Morro Eten (Elera Arávalo 1980) and others near the shore, which take the form of large cemeteries. Meanwhile, earlier sites such as the abandoned Cerro Ventarrón were used intensively for funerary purposes (Alva Meneses 2012). The ground plans with central monumental staircases repeat a pattern known from the Cupisnique area to the south and east (Pacopampa). Collud has a monumental staircase and a well-preserved polychrome mural with Cupisnique-like motifs, and burial contexts with ceramics from the Middle and Late Formative, unfortunately not yet dated by $^{14}$C. Further
material from looted contexts between the Jequetepeque and Lambayeque rivers has been published by Alva (1986). This pottery is rather varied, but its distribution patterns have not been studied seriously. Little is known about the exchange of ceramics within the region of primary interest to the present volume, although there is some evidence of long-distance connections to the Bagua region during the Late Formative (Elera Arévalo 1980, Figures 44–7). Elite burials are known from Piura to Jequetepeque, but only those from Kuntur Wasi have been excavated scientifically (Kuntur Wasi phase, Late Formative). These are of great importance as they reveal long-distance contacts with modern Bolivia (El Sapo sodalite mine near La Paz), while silver ornaments and some of the ceramic vessels suggest contact with Chaullabamba (south highland Ecuador) (Tellenbach 1998, 119–20, Plates 177–9). Elite burials seem to have been looted in the Bagua region (also with gold sodalite pearls, Olivera 1998, 111, Figure 9; for gold objects, see Alva 1992, 62–4, Plates 32–4), and show stylistic parallels with the Jequetepeque valley. Apparently, many similar tombs were found in the Lambayeque valley (Lothrop 1941 [Chongoyape]; Alva Meneses 2012, Figure 34 [Zarpán]).

Further north a sharp difference is noted between the archaeological records of the lower and upper Piura Valley. For the lower reaches no monumental architecture is reported, and ceramics are distinct from those further up the valley, known as the Paita tradition (Lanning 1963), although pottery of this tradition was nonetheless widely distributed. It is found in Ũñañique (upper Piura, see below), Catamayo, the Loja province of highland Ecuador (Guffroy 1987, 2008), and probably in Bagua (Shady 1971, 1987, 1999). In the upper Piura Valley, several sites with monumental architecture date from the Middle to Late Formative (c. 3150 to 2450 BP; for site locations see Guffroy 1994, Figure 2.4). The best-known and probably most extensive of these is Cerro Ũñañique in the modern town of Chulucanas. A later component is La Encantada (c. 2400 to 2200 BP). Three superimposed platforms were built at the foot of the Ũñañique hill, with significant buildings on top in Late Formative times (Panecillo) (c. 7000 m²). The major structure (47 by 35 m) is a symmetrically arranged room complex with small staircases and columns with kincha walls. The architecture seems to be stimulated by southern models, for example at Santa Lucía in the Lambayeque valley, but is notably more modest. Also of importance are burnt human remains, often mixed with midden. Anthropophagy in ceremonial (feasting) contexts thus cannot be excluded. Ceramics are abundant and classified into a bewildering number of local and imported styles (Guffroy 1994, 251–412; Kaulicke 1998). These have a wide distribution from Jequetepeque to coastal and highland Ecuador and the Bagua-Jaén region (Kaulicke 1998, Figure 36; see Guffroy 2008). The imported styles are from Paita (Paita C–D); hollow figurines are similar to those from Pacopampa (Morales 1999, Figure 4). Polychrome styles are also found in Pacopampa and the Bagua-Jaén region. Numerous pieces show clear influence of the Cupisnique styles to the south.
An important contribution to the archaeological evidence known within the Huancabamba deflection region was made by Yamamoto, who defined a sequence at Ingatambo and localized another 60 sites of Middle and Late Formative age along the middle course of the Huancabamba river, distributed in clusters over some 50 km (Yamamoto 2010, 2012). He distinguished three phases (Huancabamba – see above, Pomahuaca and Ingatambo), and sub-phases within them. Particularly important is Ingatambo I (ca 2900 to 2700 BP), with imported and emulated Cupisnique ceramics and a distinctive (albeit Cupisnique-emulated) polychrome style. This style is apparently more popular in the Jaén and Bagua regions (Shady 1971, 1999; Shady and Rosas 1979; Olivera 2014), and looted specimens include spectacular stirrup-spout bottles (see Olivera 1998, Figures 10–13). The polychrome style is also present in highland Ecuador (Catamayo, Guffroy 1987) as well as in Pacopampa.

Other than the Montegrande site, the Jaén basin is known for a relatively large number of sites that are not very thoroughly documented or published. Huayurco has been known since the 1960s (Rojas 1969) and has recently been re-excavated (Clasby and Meneses Bartra 2012). It became famous for finds of many stone bowls and plates, probably a workshop, a shell trumpet, a necklace and a Cupisnique-style ceramic bottle that probably dates to the Middle Formative; the recent excavations, meanwhile, are mostly later (Final Formative). Stone bowls and other lithic objects were found at San Isidro, amid architecture similar to Final Formative Huayurco, although there are also polychrome vessels that hint at buried architecture of Middle to Late Formative age, the likely association for the stone objects (Olivera 2014, 116, Figure 95). In the Bagua region, Olivera excavated at several sites with monumental architecture (Tomependa, Casual, Las Juntas) which show polychrome murals (Olivera 1998, 2014) different from either coastal or highland patterns. The ceramics, however, share the distinctive polychrome style and other incised decorative techniques. This seems to show that long sequences, akin to those described from the coast and the highlands, are also present in the Jaén-Bagua region.

Discussion

This long but still incomplete and somewhat patchy list permits some speculative generalizations. First, much of the entire area was occupied ever since first human colonization, although better documentation is limited to the coast and adjacent western Andes. This holds true also for very early occupation of the Amazonian lowlands (see Neves 2008). In the early Holocene, early domestication and sedentism remain limited to the upper Zaña valley in forested environments. Sites there provide evidence of cultigens of exotic origin that hint at contacts with the Eastern Andes and Amazon lowlands, even if archaeological evidence from those
regions remains scarce and is of little help in understanding the nature of these putative contacts. At the heart of early social cohesion and growing social complexity may have been ceremonialism, as shown by the use of domesticated or wild plants and animals in the context of early mound building both on the coast and in humid or dry forest environments. At about 4500 BP, the formerly rather shadowy networks were reinforced and extended. Cerro Ventarrón and many other sites to the south boasted rather ostentatious ritualized architecture, feasting, and socially enhanced individuals adorned with exotic decorated objects. Some of the latter hint at contacts with the east; possible pets from those regions stand as further evidence. In this period, complex sites and mound-building are known from the Chinchipe and Jaén regions too. Although smaller here, and with different kinds of architecture, they do reveal surprisingly complex funerary customs with spectacular stone recipients and turquoise ornaments. These are similar to what much later become known from the Amazon lowlands as muriquitãs. These sites share with highland and coastal sites finds of shell trumpets and shell ornaments (necklaces or pectorals) from tropical seas. They also reveal stone recipients that in more or less contemporaneous coastal sites take the form of often highly decorated mortars (for example, San Juanito [Chapdelaine and Gagné 2015], Punkurí [Samaniego 2007]), also associated with ceremonial buildings and burials with greenstone appliqués such as at Santa Ana. All this hints at societies with shared values and the regular circulation of prestige commodities against a background of horticulture, fishing, hunting and gathering. The Jaén and Bagua region probably participated in this political-ritual economy network, although concrete evidence remains scarce.

The latter region’s flair for distinctiveness seems to have been maintained in its later monumental architecture and decoration, while pottery gives some clues as to distribution ranges. While certain forms (bottles and bowls) are similar across wide areas, decoration styles are more locally restricted. From the south to Piura, motifs are related to Cupisnique figurative canons, which are adapted or imported in the north and the north-east. Particularly important is a rather spectacular polychrome style that seems to have its centre in Jaén-Bagua, but is distributed over a wide area including Piura, the Ecuadorian highlands and the Cajamarca humid forest environment. Yamamoto maps this dense network during the Late Formative (Yamamoto 2012, Figure 5). The Jaén-Bagua region is relevant also for the production of stone bowls, widely distributed during the Middle and Late Formative, but again one needs to highlight the richly decorated stone bowls (some of the same form as at Jaén-Bagua) and beakers from Jequetepé to the Lambayeque over the same time-span (for example, the famous Limoncarro bowl, see Salazar-Burger and Burger 1996, Plate 11; Alva Meneses 2012 [Collud], Figure 30). In the Ofrendas gallery at Chavín de Huántar, stone objects from both traditions are present (compare Lumbreras 1993, Plates 85.671 and 85.672 with Olivera 2014, Figures 223–6).
Conclusions

If the Jaén-Bagua region was so closely bound into such wide-ranging networks, then, what does that entail for the question of connections with the nearby Amazonian lowlands? Lathrap (1970) postulated that the Central Amazon should be considered the origin of his tropical forest culture, although Neves (2008, 363) notes a hiatus of occupation of almost 5,000 years’ duration in precisely this area. He suggests that ‘human occupation surged only after current tropical climatic and ecological conditions were reached about 1000 BC’ (Neves 2008, 364). This time estimate corresponds quite closely to the flourishing of the Jaén-Bagua societies, even if much remains to be done to get a clearer picture. The proximity to the Amazonian lowlands would suggest that the western and north-western Amazon basin is a better candidate for early contacts with the Andes than is the Central Amazon, although probably not as a principal founder of Andean cultures as envisaged by Lathrap, but rather as an early part of a large interaction sphere which I refer to as the Cupisnique sphere (Kaulicke 2011). Last but not least, Amazonian fauna and flora must have been well known by Archaic and Formative coastal and highland societies. This is contrary to the generalized belief that these are only based on memories of a distant mythical Amazonian homeland that provided models for ‘Chavín’ art, as has become all but a truism among many Peruvianists ever since Tello (see Morales 2011).