

Chapter 2

Identification of the Camelid Woman and Feline Man Themes, Motifs, and Designs in Pucara Style Pottery

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INTRODUCTION

The materials upon which this study is based primarily consist of some 10,000 pottery specimens derived from the archaeological excavations conducted by Alfred Kidder II in 1939 at the site of Pucara (K. Chávez 1989a: 5–6). The excavations included ceremonial dumps or midden deposits along the river bank (Excavations I, II, and III), complex public architecture on the plain (Excavation IV), and two temples on terraces above (Excavations V and VI). In addition to these contexts, pottery was also found in offerings (Excavation I) and a burial (Excavation VI); what appeared to be a domestic structure in Excavation I was partially excavated, but clear pottery associations could not be determined (S. Chávez 1992: 51–83).

Although most of the collection was housed at the Peabody Museum at Harvard, Kidder left numerous specimens in the Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología in Lima, others went to Cambridge, England, and Vancouver, Canada. Thanks to Kidder's notes, sketches, drawings and photographs, Karen Mohr Chávez and I were able to identify and document most of the collection, including materials in Cuzco corresponding to the 1955 excavations at Pucara carried out by Kidder and Chávez Ballón to obtain samples for radiocarbon

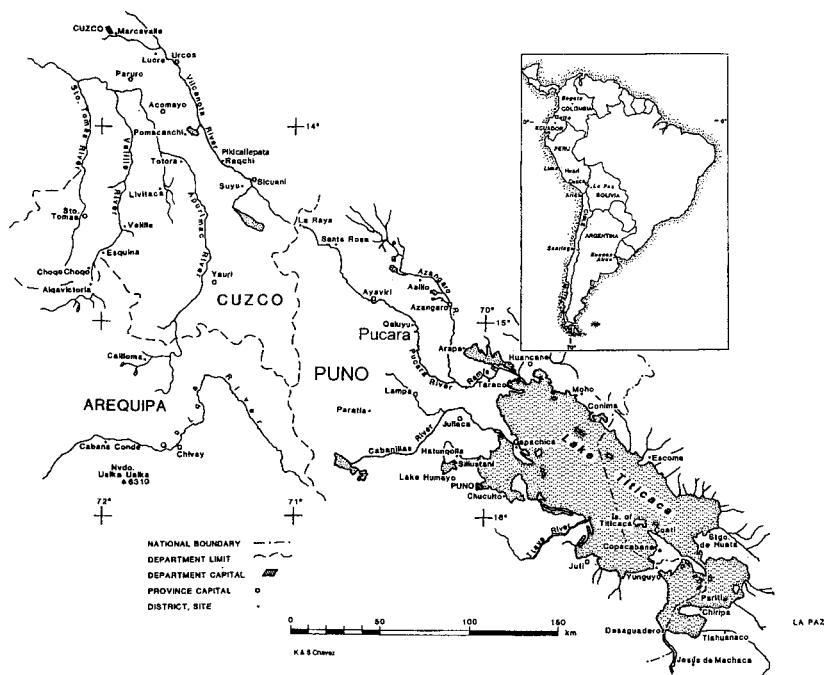


Figure 2.1. Map of the Lake Titicaca Basin showing the location of Pucara, and other sites mentioned in the text.

dating (K. Chávez in press, K. and S. Chávez n.d.a). Furthermore, additional comparative examples were also used in the present study derived from unpublished excavations and/or surface collections conducted by Julio C. Tello, Manuel Chávez Ballón, Karen Mohr Chávez, and myself in the northern Lake Titicaca Basin.

The site of Pucara is situated in the northwestern Lake Titicaca Basin at an altitude of 3900m asl (Figure 2.1) [Note 1]. The site's name was given to the Pucara style and archaeological culture. Pucara is characterized by multiple monumental sunken temples and other public structures in front of a gigantic natural cliff, as well as finely carved stone sculpture, and fancy ceremonial polychrome pottery. Pucara was partly contemporary with the late Yaya-Mama occupation in Copacabana on the basis of five radiocarbon dates obtained from recent excavations conducted at the temple site of Ch'isi on the Copacabana Peninsula (from inside the sunken temple ca. 220 BC and continuing to 10 BC, uncorrected). Because of the contemporaneity of these sites and others in the Basin they must be included within the Yaya-Mama Religious Tradition (K. Chávez 1997; K. Chávez and S. Chávez 1997).

The Yaya-Mama Religious Tradition was defined for the first time in 1988 by Karen Mohr Chávez (1989b; see also K. Chávez and S. Chávez 1997) and was

named after the identification of a circum-lacustrine style of stone sculpture (S. Chávez and K. Chávez 1976). Beginning in the Early Horizon at ca. 800 BC (or even earlier, see Dean and Kojan 1999: 39–41 and Whitehead 1999: 20) and lasting until AD 200–400, the Tradition consists of: a) temple/storage centers with central sunken courts such as at Chiripa (the first widespread public architecture in the region); b) a style of stone sculpture having supernatural images, associated with temples (called the Yaya-Mama style); c) ritual paraphernalia such as pottery trumpets and ceremonial burners; and d) supernatural iconography such as heads with rayed appendages and vertically-divided eyes.

This tradition, independent from the Chavín style of the northern Peruvian highlands, represents the first unification of diverse groups of people in the Basin despite the diversity of pottery styles associated with the Tradition (K. Chávez 1997, 2002; Burger, K. Chávez and S. Chávez 2000: 310–311). The Tradition had a strong and significant influence in the development of later polities in the Basin, including Pucara and Tiwanaku, as well as on Huari in the region of Ayacucho. Furthermore, many architectural elements also continued into Inca times. Although Pucara temples follow Yaya-Mama architectural models/forms (e.g., those at Ch'isi and Mallku Pucara on the Copacabana Peninsula, and Chiripa in the Taraco Peninsula) and have similar ritual paraphernalia (especially ceremonial burners and trumpets) associated with them, Pucara temples are monumental and multiple; its stone sculptures and iconography are more complex and explicit, and exhibit greater elaboration (S. Chávez 1976, 1982, 1989, 1992). In addition, burials in grave chambers situated in each wall of the sunken court of Enclosure 2/Excavation VI indicate social differentiation and a hierarchical structure of political and religious organizations (S. Chávez 1992: 78–83).

The Yaya-Mama Tradition was more than a religious phenomenon. Through a network of ceremonies it incorporated economic, political, and social activities and institutions above the household level into regional associations. In this kind of context the Pucara polity unified and centralized most of the northern Titicaca Basin, extending its presence and influence from at least Chumbivilcas in Cuzco (S. Chávez 1989, S. and K. Chávez, n.d.; Núñez del Prado 1972; Rowe 1958) to Tiwanaku in Bolivia (S. Chávez 1976). Pucara style materials have also been found in the Vilcanota drainage and Cuzco Basin (Burger, K. Chávez, and S. Chávez 2000: 315), as well as in the south and far south coast of Peru as indicated by a textile in Ica (Conklin 1985), and surface pottery in Moquegua (Feldman 1989).

The procurement and distribution of obsidian shows a complex network of exchange and contact during Yaya-Mama times, affecting regions as far away as Chavín de Huantar (Burger, K. Chávez and S. Chávez 2000: 310–323, 350). During these times both Chivay and Alca source obsidian types were introduced for the first time into the Titicaca Basin, and minor amounts of Alca source obsidian were also present at both high- and low-status areas at Chavín de Huantar in

Janabarriu contexts. Such increased interaction may have been stimulated by the Yaya-Mama Religious Tradition.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS, CLASSIFICATION, DOCUMENTATION, AND INTERPRETATION

In order to achieve the interpretive goals of this study, it was necessary to accomplish the descriptive aims first. The major goal was to lay out the nature of Pucara pottery shapes, techniques, themes, motifs, designs, and elements, and to discover the rules of the style. Hence, the major classes of attributes include vessel shape, paste, surface finish, decorative technique, and iconography. Associations among these attributes were also tabulated. The primarily qualitative analysis, then, also includes some quantitative considerations such as the frequencies of co-occurrence between and among attributes and the frequencies of occurrence of certain themes/motifs in excavated contexts.

After a long and painstaking process of fitting numerous pieces together, the descriptions and drawings for each of the diagnostic sherds were made on 5×7 -inch index cards, including those possessing iconography and/or were rims, bases, handles and lugs. Subsequently, a complete inventory of *vessel shapes* was established, followed by technical and iconographic attributes associated with each vessel shape. Of particular importance was the associated *surface finish* as it co-varied with certain shapes (S. Chávez 1992: 84–101). *Paste groups* were determined by examining every sherd using a stereoscopic microscope, generating 24 paste/temper groups. Petrographic analysis of rock and mineral constituents by a geologist for the most part confirmed the classification and, with further studies at and around Pucara, permitted the separation of local from non-local pastes (K. Chávez, Chyi, and S. Chávez 1988).

The study of the complex and elaborate *iconography* includes and/or combines geometric designs and several human and animal beings with supernatural indicators. All the representational iconography is religious in nature, and virtually all representational Pucara style pottery can be understood as relating to the two themes. The style conveys a clear, standardized, powerful supernatural imagery. The classification of representational iconography into specific classes and groups follows strict definitions of the terms themes, motifs, designs, and elements which I have developed and derived from Pucara iconography as follows.

A *motif* is defined as a main feature prominently displayed in whole or in part, which is clearly delimited and depicted in isolation, in a repetitive fashion, or in combination with only one other feature. Examples of motifs in Pucara include single felines or in pairs, severed human heads in a repetitive fashion, guanacos in association with birds, and isolated human heads with rayed appendages. Motifs can also be accompanied by a few but smaller additional

motifs (e.g., smaller human severed heads and feline-headed snakes as appendages associated with the feline motif), or with geometric designs (e.g., those associated with feline motifs).

An *element* refers to a basic and distinctive feature *derived from a motif elsewhere*, which is usually smaller and/or stylized and is part of some complex human or animal motif. Examples of elements in Pucara include the ring at the feline's neck, the stylized and small circular head and the three wavy elements on or off the face of some felines. Other more identifiable elements are referred to as paraphernalia worn by personages such as crowns, earrings, necklaces, and wrist/ankle bands; or as items held by personages such as staffs and axes.

A *design* refers to a purely *geometric* figure, which can be depicted in isolation, in a repetitive fashion and/or in combination with different geometric figures. Like elements, geometric designs can also be a part of some complex human or animal motif. Examples of geometric designs in Pucara include checkered crosses, lunates, stepped blocks, nested parallelograms, and divider symbols separating felines.

A *theme* refers to several motifs, designs, and elements directly associated with a central personage forming a *single main composition*. For example, one of the two themes identified in Pucara includes the camelid woman which is the main *personage* possessing two or three *motifs* (the alpaca, the flower/plant, and rayed head), several kinds of geometric *designs* (at the pedestal portion of the bowl, the pack carried by the alpaca, face markings, decorations on her dress and bag element she carries), and several *elements* and paraphernalia she carries or wears.

By beginning with themes, which are the most complex compositions, then sherds with parts of these themes could be classified with them. Variations of details in each occurrence of the theme permitted further identification of associated attributes and, hence, the associations could be extended. By comparing isolated motifs and elements to those found in a theme or its variations, then the isolated occurrences could be aligned with each respective theme. Sometimes the isolated motifs and elements were, in turn, associated with other attributes that then could be related to the themes.

The identification of the feline man as a *male* and the camelid woman as a *female* was achieved by looking at isolated cases in which attributes of sex/gender could be determined, and by comparing associated attributes to similar ones on each theme. Hence, the identification of sex and gender was achieved through an inductive process and not by imposing a preconceived notion. Furthermore, motifs or elements in the themes or in isolation that possessed additional attributes, showed that each theme could be related to either dry or wet season, wild or domestic animals, and life-taking or life-giving activities. Another result derived from the application of this method was that a number of geometric designs, which otherwise would have been classified as a group by themselves, could be

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