

# *Preface*

*Andean Archaeology III* represents a continuation in our effort to highlight the finest of current archaeological scholarship conducted in the Central Andean culture area. Each paper contributes in a significant way to understanding prehistoric processes in the Central Andean culture tradition, adding importantly to the rich base provided by *Andean Archaeology I* and *II*. As in those former volumes we do not seek a balanced presentation of the entirety of the Andean past, but instead showcase what is new, what is innovative, and what is controversial in thinking about and investigating the great sweep of Andean cultural development.

We wholeheartedly agree with Pauketat (2001:xiii) that it is “more satisfying to compare how cultural phenomena happened,” than for researchers to hasten to answer “why questions” that tend more to “reify their initial assumptions” than to inform us about prehistoric people and their embodied, cultural practices. We support the revitalized study of sociocultural evolution, especially that championed by Bruce Trigger (e.g., 1998, 2003), which has benefited by several decades of valuable critique.

On the other hand, explanations of the past not based on comparisons of historical processes carefully argued from well-studied archaeological records sacrifice the rigor that was such an important part of the first processual archaeology advocated by Lewis Binford (1962, 1964, 1972; Sabloff 1998; see also Yoffee 2005 *inter alia*). In some recent and current Andean archaeology we find explanatory conclusions, especially processual evolutionary transformations, and climate change-based rise or collapse accounts, to have been reached too hastily, constituting more of a reading of material remains in terms of theoretical expectations than a rigorous interrogation of the archaeological record.

Elucidation of historical process in Central Andean archaeology has been the primary criterion for selecting contributions for this volume. But we also have found that as we move toward a 21st-century approach and paradigm for the Andean past, there is significant need to re-examine the spatial and temporal range of the “Central Andean” cultural tradition. To be clear, this book is not a collection of papers commissioned to resolve that question. Rather, as we sought out the most exciting contributions for our volume we were struck by the fact that current authors are not questioning the “Central Andes” as the cultural unit they are investigating.

At the same time, much research appears to have surprising implications for the way we define, organize, and investigate that cultural unit. Consequently, we highlight this issue, providing something of the history of how the “Central Andes” has been defined. In our Introduction and Conclusion we also tease out some of our authors’ assumptions about, and implications for, the cultural tradition. An idea that emerges from our work is the suspicion that a northern Central Andean tradition can be defined as reasonably distinct from a southern Central Andean tradition. While we are not ready to redefine the Central Andes, or propose an alternative cultural/temporal unit, let us suggest from the beginning of the volume that it is time to confer a symposium to discuss these issues. We must at least make explicit the implications of contradictory trends in current thinking and practice, from alternative chronologies to independent evolutionary trajectories.

Our selection of papers draws from investigators of diverse nationalities and approaches. In deference to these authors, we are permitting certain inconsistencies in the volume. For instance, Peter Kaulicke, who lives and works in Peru, follows Peruvian canon by writing Mochica whereas Edward Swenson, a North American Peruvianist, writes Moche. In an attempt to standardize usages, we do not italicize Spanish and Quechua words as these are ubiquitous in the archaeological literature. We also do not italicize Spondylus.

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North and South

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