Archaeological Excavations in the Chavín Hinterland, Perú: Reparín and Canchas Uckro

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The grant from the Tinker Foundation was used to do research in two different archaeological sites in the Department of Ancash, Perú: Reparín and Canchas Uckro. Excavations represented the second stage on a long term project done by the Huari-Ancash Archaeological Project, which is directed at understanding the effects of incipient urbanism around the urban center of Chavín de Huántar. The project is based in the town of Huari in Ancash and is directed by Dr. Jason Nesbitt and Anthropology graduate student Bebel Ibarra, who facilitates the logistics for the project.

Chavín de Huántar was the dominant urban and ceremonial settlement in highland Perú during the Late Initial Period (1100-800 BC) and Early Horizon (800-200 BC). The archaeological site was one of the earliest centers in the region and comprises a monumental/ceremonial core that covers an area of approximately 10 ha\(^1\). Reparín and Canchas Uckro represent hinterland communities of Chavín de Huántar. Research is aimed at establishing the chronology of these sites and discerning the rural lifestyle of these communities\(^2\).

The research goals in both sites were accomplished in the stipulated time. Most of the excavations were focused in Reparín, which is a site consisting of an artificially terraced mound that measures approximately 2 ha in area. Research was focused in the upper part of the terrace and yielded at least two unrelated occupations: one related to Recuay culture (AD 100-800) and an earlier one related to Chavín dating to the Early Horizon period (800-300 BC). The uncovered architecture associated with the earliest phase is particularly interesting because it consists of a

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canal that is similar to the ones found in Chavín de Huántar. This implies a small ceremonial center and possible close connections between both sites.

Excavations in Canchas Uckro were smaller in scale, but were equally successful. Canchas Uckro is a small mound, similar to Reparín, and measures about 1 ha in area. Fragments of shell, bone, and carbonized refuse were recovered, which confirms that the site probably represents a small habitation settlement as suspected by Dr. Nesbitt. Carbon samples were obtained from both sites to refine the chronologies. Besides excavations we also did survey in an area known as Allpash. This location has potential for research because it holds a strategic location close to the Marañón River, which connects the Peruvian highlands to the Amazon River and may provide valuable information on interregional interactions. We documented rock art and human remains associated with possible rock shelters. My participation in the project also included laboratory work that consisted in classifying and drawing ceramic sherds. Dr. Nesbitt taught me how to draw and analyze them properly. The skills learned will be helpful when I have to analyze the materials for my dissertation project.

During my time in Perú I also visited several archaeological sites and museums in the cities of Lima, Huaraz, and Cusco. Visiting the Art Museum in Lima was particularly interesting because it had a special exhibit of artifacts recovered from Chavín de Huántar. In Huaraz it was remarkable to visit the local museum of archaeology, which has several Recuay sculptures. As mentioned before, at the site of Reparín we uncovered a Recuay occupation. Moreover, it helped me broaden my perspective on the archaeology of the region. In Cusco it was interesting to learn about Inka culture. Since it was one of two Pre-Hispanic empires in the New World, visiting museums and Inka sites was useful to gain better understanding of this kind of sociopolitical organization.

Finally, one of the main reasons I wanted to work in Perú was to be able to expand my ability to make interregional comparisons. So far, my professional career has been focused in Guatemala. Both Guatemala and Perú are core areas of development of complex societies in the New World and currently house large indigenous populations. This experience was useful for
gaining better understanding of South American archaeology and Andean culture for making interregional comparisons of sociopolitical complexity, which is my main research interest. Moreover, I will be able to apply the new skills and field techniques that I learned during this trip in my dissertation project. For these reasons I consider my experience in Perú successful and extremely useful for my professional career. I am thankful to the Stone Center and Tinker Foundation for allowing me to have this valuable experience.