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Declarations

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The Art of Parties: Identity in Face-Neck Jars During Inka State Formation (ca. AD 1000–1532)²

Colonial-era chronicles describe numerous non-Inka ethnic groups in the Cusco region of Peru before the formation of the Inka state, but their biased perspective portrays these groups as marginal actors in a process driven by Inka elites. Face-neck jars offer the first concrete evidence for independently evaluating ethnohistorical accounts of ethnicity and corroborating the existence of groups that distinguished themselves through various means, including face painting, which was represented by modeled and painted applications on pottery. Based on excavation contexts, face-neck jars were likely displayed and used during festive gatherings involving performance and consumption, which fueled competition among participants for prestige and social capital. By analyzing multi-scalar distribution patterns of face-neck jars ($n=327$) according to differences in surface decoration and clay composition, we reconstruct how various groups articulated identity within a pluralistic environment. This way, face-neck jars allow us to reconstruct (1) the formation of collective identity and (2) the signaling between groups during exhibition and consumption events. Contrary to paradigms that assumed the primacy of violence and centrifugal influence, we argue that an environment of intergroup interaction and political decentralization generated conditions conducive to state formation in Cusco.

Keywords. State formation, commensal hospitality, collective identity, representation, ceramics, Inka Empire

Introduction

One of anthropology's most enduring questions is how the conflicting forces of self-interest and cooperation are mitigated as disparate groups aggregate to form more complex configurations such as states and empires (e.g., Blanton & Fargher, 2008; Flannery, 1972; Stanish, 2017; Steward, 1949). Neo-evolutionary responses to this question have remained influential over recent decades, as exemplified by Carneiro (1970) who viewed territorial expansion as a consequence of overpopulation and competition for subsistence resources in situations of scarcity and circumscription. Based on a review of South American cases, Carneiro argued that survival in a hostile environment vested charismatic leaders from stronger groups with executive power. "States of exception" allowed for the suspension of constraints on aggrandizement and wealth accumulation that translated endemic violence into institutionalized political hierarchy (cf. Agamben, 2003). Within this model, defeated groups were forced to become tribute-paying subjects of the victors who grew more powerful as they continued to conquer new territory (Carneiro, 1970:736).

An emphasis on centrifugal dynamics and coercion persists in scholarly attention on environmental pressure in the rise of social complexity and the disintegration of polities, where agency is relatively inconsequential and humans are swept along in the tides of history. But as archaeological data accumulate, the expected material correlates of deterministic, unilinear scenarios are recurrently left unmet (e.g., Flannery & Marcus, 2014; Marsh et al., 2023; Sharratt, 2024). This

² The title is a reference to the first track on the 1981 album *Tin Drum* by Japan.

leads us to recognize how, from a conceptual standpoint, neo-evolutionary models cannot explain the motivation or impetus for population aggregation when agency is considered a significant factor and complexification is not treated as a unilinear process (Blanton & Fargher, 2016; Feinman, 2023; Furholt et al., 2020). What might have “entrapped” free and rational³ agents to continue down a path that eventually led to their disenfranchisement?

Critiques of the punctuationist conquest model have used ethnohistoric and archaeological evidence to demonstrate variations in the tempo and mode of state formation (see Spencer, 1990). Some cases of state formation involve rapid sociopolitical transformations (e.g., Flannery, 1999), while others do not (Claessen, 2002). Military power was salient in some cases of state formation, but religious ideology and economic networks have also been identified as amplifying and centralizing social power (Kirch, 2010; Stein, 1998). Some states were more predatory and expansionistic than others, and recent scholarship addresses the role of cooperation in defining the social expectations and institutional functions of the state (e.g., Carballo et al., 2014). Such variations underscore the importance of centripetal power – the capacity for individuals to attract kin, subjects, and allies and coordinate their labor and resources to achieve social goals – as a significant counterpart to centrifugal flows of hard power (Covey, 2015).

Contributing to a new model of state formation, we focus on late pre-hispanic Cusco, Peru (AD 1000–1532), where the largest Indigenous empire in the Americas originated. We use the distribution of 327 face-neck jars from 32 late pre-hispanic sites surrounding the Inka capital to demonstrate distinctive aesthetics that signal ethnic identities and indicate patterns of group interaction. We argue that face-paint designs were recognized by out-group members as signaling particular identities during events of conspicuous consumption and performance (Fig. 1, Table 1; Bowser, 2000; Dietler, 2001; Janusek, 2002). Competing groups cultivated centripetal power by drawing out-group members into central places for festive gatherings that provided opportunities for networking and performance, while the production of alcoholic beverage for such events created an impetus for agricultural intensification (cf. Braidwood et al., 1953). Attendance established reciprocal relationships that grew increasingly asymmetrical, wherein aggrandizers extracted access to labor, land, and productive resources. The opportunity to connect with diverse participants who signaled distinct identities through performance and material culture would have been a key component that made these events alluring (Cabello Balboa, 1586/1951, Ch. XI:274).

³ This term is meant to describe agents who are not assumed to be blinded by ideology to negate their essential needs, such as access to sustenance and freedom from extractive exploitation.

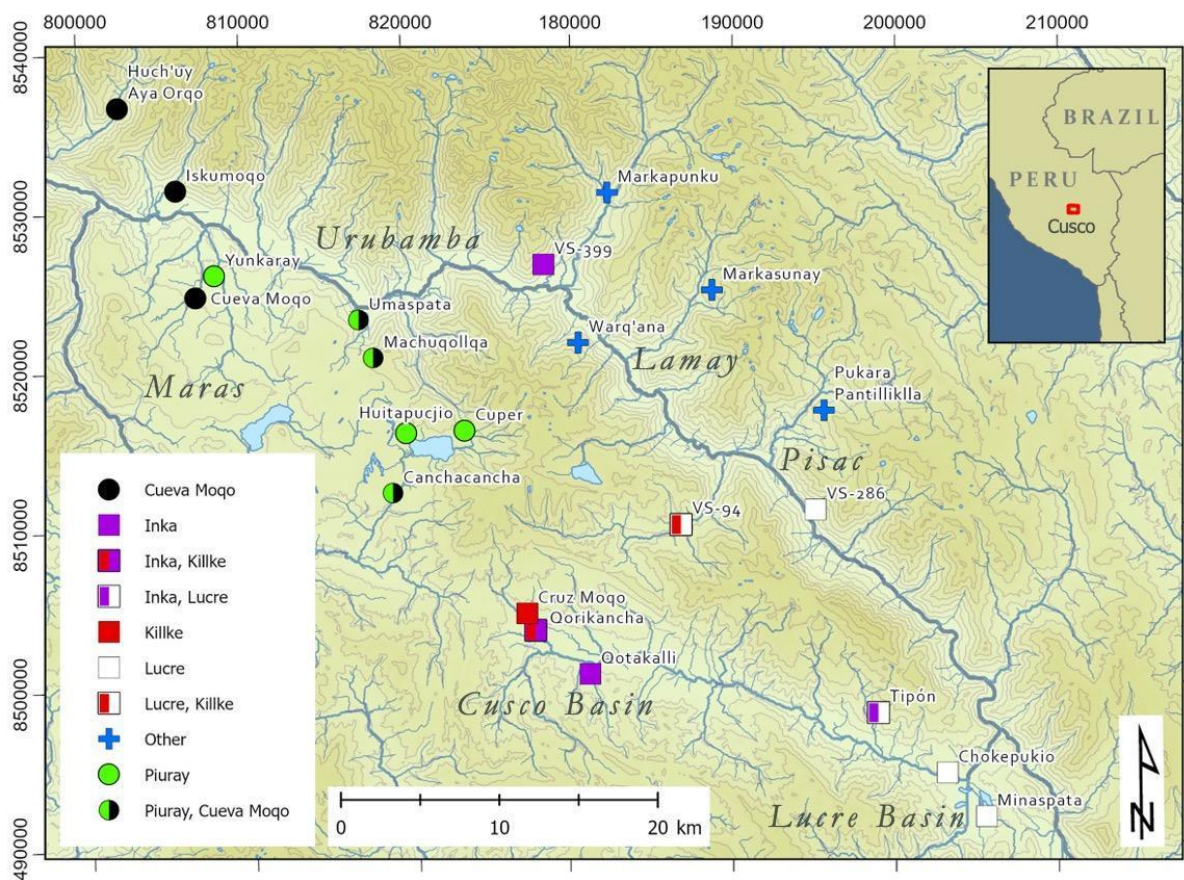


Fig. 1. Distribution of select sites included in this study. The symbology reflects the predominant styles of face-neck jars recovered at each site. Sites are labelled “Other” where decorations do not fit into existing categories and a larger sample size is needed. It appears there is greater diversity in face-neck jar decorations and modeling techniques at sites in this category. Sites coded “VS” were registered by Covey’s PAVS survey.

Source type	Source	Killke	Lucre	Piuray	Cueva Moqo	“Bat Face”	Inka	Other LIP	SUM
Research project	Arcopata (Delgado González, 2013)						2		2
	Canchacancha (Kendall)	1			1			2	4
	Canchacancha (Rivera Dorado, 1971)					4		4	8
	Chincho (Villca Claro)			7					7
	Chokepukio (Aparicio Chuyacama, 2018)		24						24

	Cruz Moqo (Quispe Serrano and Vranich)	14	1			1	1	4	21
	Cueva Moqo (Haquehua Huaman and Maque Azorsa, 1996)					4			4
	Cusco Valley survey (Bauer and Covey)							21	21
	Cusichaca-Patacancha (Kendall, 1985)				2	2		1	5
	Iskummoqo (Franco Chávez and Champi Ojeda, 2024)				6	4		14	24
	Machuqollqa (Delgado González, 2023)			3	3	1		4	11
	Minaspata (Aparicio Chuyacama, 2018)		14						14
	PAVS / Pukara Pantilliklla (Covey)		4				1	50	55
	Paruro (Bauer, 1999)	3							3
	Qorikancha (Gonzales Serna and Casafranca Ramírez, 2020)	4					1		5
	Qotakalli (Pérez Trujillo, 2025)						5		5
	Saqsaywaman (Quispe Serrano and Vranich, 2024)	58							
	SVRP (Earle, 2024)			1		1		23	25
	Tipón						2		2
	Torontoy (Gallegos Gutiérrez and Apaza Huamani, 2012)						1		1
	Warq'ana (Kendall)							2	2
Museum collection	Museo Machu Picchu (Casa Concha)						1		1
	Museo Casa Garcilaso de la Vega	1							1
	Colegio de Ciencias, Cusco			1			2		3
	Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago					1	3	2	6

	Museo Inka					1	5	1	7
	Museo Larco						1		1
	Other collections		3	2		2			7
	SUM	81	46	14	12	21	25	128	327

Table 1. LIP and LH face-neck jars and fragments included in this study, tabulated by source and style.

Interactive Dynamics in Late Intermediate Period Cusco

During the Middle Horizon (AD 600–1000), Wari colonists forged local alliances by hosting gatherings at monumental centers that attracted Cusco region populations, wherein attendees deployed material signals of their cultural affiliations (Bélisle & Zuayer, 2026; cf. McEwan, 2006). In the fallout of Wari and Tiwanaku state collapse by AD 1000, a wave of social upheaval reverberated across the Andean highlands, inducing migration and demographic shifts throughout the Late Intermediate Period (henceforth LIP, AD 1000–1400; Arkush et al., 2024). Myriad ethnic groups proliferated across the Cusco region during this period and came to play crucial roles as rivals and allies in narratives of Inka political ascendancy (Betanzos 1999/1550s, Pt. I, Ch. VI:23). Independent evidentiary sources are needed to reconstruct non-Inka experiences and offset the Inka-centric bias of colonial era chronicles (Silverblatt, 1991).

While hundreds of new settlements were established in varied ecological niches after AD 1000 (Covey, 2014, 2018), an apparent population increase throughout this period did not result in circumscription, resource scarcity, or intergroup conflict (Dwyer, 1971). The LIP Cusco region exhibits relatively few fortified sites and there is minimal bio-archaeological evidence for sustained warfare (cf. Arkush et al., 2024; Bauer et al., 2010). Andrushko and Torres' (2011) analysis of 454 human crania from 11 Cusco region sites shows that during the Middle Horizon and LIP, perimortem cranial trauma rates remained stable under 3% before a three-fold increase in the Late Horizon (henceforth LH, AD 1400–1532). This contrasts markedly with other parts of the central Andes like Nasca and Andahuaylas where lethal violence reached heightened levels during the LIP but did not result in political centralization (Kurin et al., 2016; McCool et al., 2022).

The neo-evolutionary model emphasized warfare as the primary mode of interaction between members of different groups in pre-state contexts. Military coalitions prompted by the threat of war tend to be unstable (Arkush et al., 2025), perhaps because they are contingent on external pressure and do not require a durable framework or incentive for conflict resolution and cooperation among parties after the threat has dissipated. Moreover, sustained warfare is high-cost and often low-reward, particularly in the Andes, where challenging environmental conditions have constrained population size (McCool et al., 2024). With little evidence for warfare in LIP Cusco, what alternative modes of interaction were possible?

Ceramics can offer insight into this issue. Unique decorative designs correlate with specific wares, local geology, and patterned distribution suggest that groups deployed unique motifs within a shared repertoire of design features and culinary practices (Dietler & Herbich, 1998). By the early LIP, villages throughout the Cusco region developed distinctive forms of public architecture, defined by structures' elaboration and large size in comparison with domestic buildings, suggesting their use for gatherings (Covey, 2015; Earle, 2024; McEwan et al., 2005). Synchronic variation in architecture and mortuary practices between and within villages is indicative of

cultural or ethnic heterogeneity rather than entrenched economic disparities (Earle, 2024; Kosiba, 2010).

While power strategies vary according to their cost-benefit ratio, attracting allies through centripetal events involving face-to-face interaction represents a low-cost, high-reward strategy to build mutual trust and buy-in for long-term cooperation (Blanton & Fargher, 2016). This reduces the impulse to force compliance or conformity through costly conflict; instead, differences are respected even as participants must abide by the same norms and conventions to be included and avoid ostracization (Dietler, 2001), thereby potentially normalizing legal frameworks (cf. Blanton & Feinman, 2024). Beyond inclusive cooperation, festive spaces fomented hierarchy by publicly humiliating rivals (Betanzos, 1557/2004, Pt. I, Ch. XVII, XIX:122–123, 132–133) and manipulating social conventions, such that physical violence on the scale of warfare was not necessarily the most important power strategy that led to the Inkas' regional dominance in Cusco.

Social Change and Ethnogenesis

Building on Mann's (1986) definition of societies as overlapping networks of interaction, we deploy the concept of social capital to describe the relationships wielded by an individual, which can afford power (i.e., access to productive resources like labor, knowledge, and land) through mechanisms including favors, reciprocity, or debt (cf. Bourdieu, 1986). The strength of such relationships may be heightened due to an individual's charisma and kin ties, as well as their ability to either elicit admiration through the demonstration of skill (e.g., in competition) or instill fear through the threat of violence. Social capital is not wielded exclusively by elites, but is theoretically available to all participating members of a network, though institutionalized hierarchies are established to restrict social mobility and power distribution. Large gatherings are platforms for agents to elevate social capital and access opportunities that could be leveraged to achieve specific objectives, depending on individual interests and ambitions.

Cross-culturally, power vacuums and political volatility can encourage the establishment or reconfiguration of social boundaries, where the formation of groups can provide benefits in managing access to resources and enhance cooperation in situations of uncertainty (Blanton, 2015; Velasco, 2018). To reconstruct processes of population aggregation (i.e., the unification of disparate groups into more complex configurations), we employ the concept of ethnicity as a meaningful approach to aesthetic practices that signaled identity to in-group and out-group members (Barth, 1998; Fulminante, 2012). Assessing ethnicity offers a window into how identity established a foundation for cooperation and collective action (Blanton, 2015; Blanton & Fargher, 2016; Feinman, 2023; Furholt et al., 2020; Janusek, 2004). Notwithstanding critiques of ethnicity as related to a normative view of culture (Hodder, 1977; Stovel, 2013), avoiding the issue of identity puts us at a greater risk of homogenizing past peoples and overlooking evidence for complexity that would be key to explaining social change.

There is a dialectical relationship between emic and etic recognition of social boundaries, since group membership can only be defined in relation to a perceived Other or out-group. Group members define themselves as unlike others due to a separate set of values and behaviors, which are often rooted in a belief of distinct origins. For example, many Andean groups have identified local landscape features such as lakes or caves as *paqarina*, places of origin from whence their ancestors first emerged (Duviols, 1967). The materiality of signaling practices means that identity

can be detected archaeologically (Tiesler & Lozado, 2018; Velasco, 2018). Physical appearance is a potent medium of the expression of social boundaries, and the Inkas developed an aesthetic repertoire that visually distinguished themselves, including short hair and large earspools for elite males (Garcilaso de la Vega, 1609/1985). Similarly, contemporary Cusco region populations actively mark identity and group membership using varied media, including distinctive textiles, song, and dance (Fig. 2; Akins, 2022; Earle et al., 2025; Heckman, 2005).

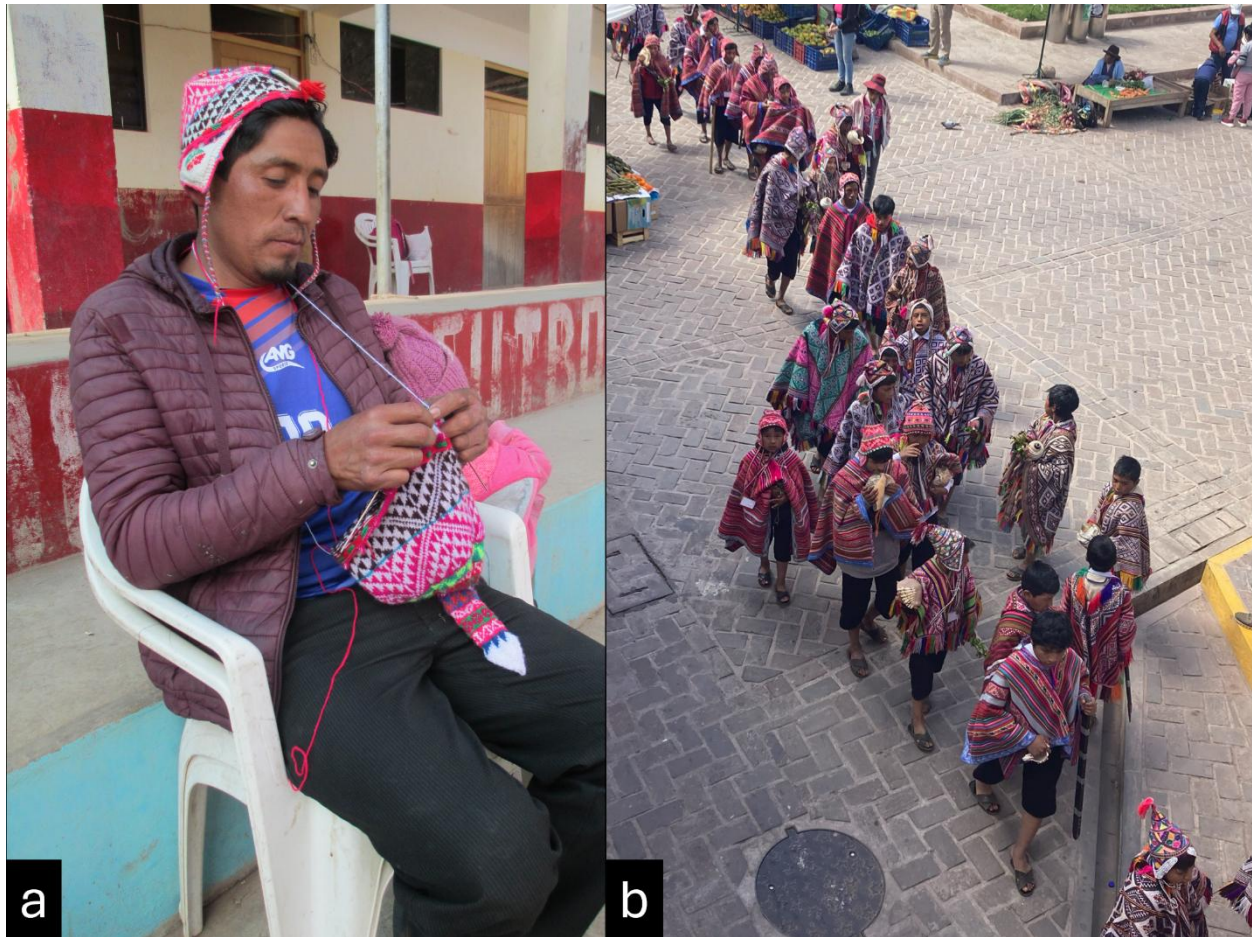


Fig. 2. (a) Julver Chui of Huama knits a *chullo* (cap). The distinctive design of Huama men’s *chullos* signals their identity as community members, differing from other communities’ “uniforms.” Overall, the designs are similar enough to be legible as such, though colors, motifs, and the arrangement of decorations may vary according to individual preference, as well as political status. Huama men and women traditionally make their own clothes, with no strict gender-based labor division for weaving and other activities. (b) Procession of young men and boys from communities near Pisac, exhibiting visual differences in clothing corresponding to their respective affiliations.

Materials and Methods

While establishing kinship and marriage alliances were important tools for building social power and creating a new “in-group” (Covey, 2006, 2015), state formation is equally about drawing in members of “out-groups” and defining levels of proximity to political authority through practices

of inclusion and exclusion. To reconstruct this process, we must define changes in group membership and participation in interaction spheres by identifying material indices thereof. Ceramics are useful for measuring interaction because they preserve well in comparison to more perishable items like textiles. Here, we advance a materialist approach that uses the principle of redundancy and high-visibility signaling to demonstrate based on regional distribution, paste, and decorative techniques that ethnic groups depicted specific face-paint designs that were understood as representations of collective identity by group members (Table 2).

Style	Common Face-Paint Design(s)	Documented Distribution Area
Cueva Moqo	Chain of diamonds or horizontal bands descending vertically along bridge of nose; vertical panels of chains between tear-duct and nose; perpendicular lines framing mouth and nose	Maras, Yanahuara, Ollantaytambo, Chinchero
Inka	Horizontal line or two parallel lines running from ear to ear, crossing the nose; three perpendicular vertical lines terminating in solid circle or ring under eye; black around eye and lips; cream or red slip, or self-slipped surface	Across the Cusco region
Killke	Solid dark red over nose and mouth; vertical bands of geometric designs (e.g., nested triangles or chains of diamonds) in varying arrangements under eyes	Cusco Basin, Paruro, Chinchero
Lucre	Black “X” framed by square on each cheek; solid red on cheeks and mouth	Lucre Basin, Vilcanota Valley
Piuray	Vertical red band covering bridge of nose and extending down cheeks from lower eyelid, bordered by parallel, alternating black and white lines	Chinchero, Huayllabamba, Maras

Table 2. Anthropomorphic face-neck motifs characteristic of late pre-hispanic styles based on the cases included in this study.

Our sample comprises 327 LIP and LH face-neck jars (fragments and complete vessels) recovered from over 32 sites across the Cusco region, and which form part of archaeological and museum collections. The results of Covey’s Proyecto Arqueológico del Valle Sagrado (PAVS, 2000) and Earle’s Sacred Valley Research Project (SVRP, 2019–2023) provide the basis for this study. PAVS directed a regional survey of the Sacred Valley, making purposive collections of surface ceramics to assess the chronology of site occupations; the project also included excavations at the local village site of Pukara Pantilliklla (Covey, 2006). At the sites for which LIP pottery was identified, 2,791 decorated ceramic fragments were analyzed macroscopically and classified by ware, vessel form, and decoration. SVRP built on the results of PAVS by generating high-resolution data on late pre-hispanic changes in the built environment at 51 sites throughout the Sacred Valley, which included site mapping, radiocarbon dating of grass inclusions in mortar, and analysis of ceramics from surface collection.

Ceramic Paste Characterization and Analysis

The present study draws on the results of ceramic analysis from PAVS and SVRP, which used distinct methods for the characterization of ceramic paste or ware (Table 3). PAVS described wares based on macroscopic analysis with a hand lens, which allowed for the initial observation of ware

diversity in the Sacred Valley (Covey, 2015). These ware types are referenced below in the discussion of face-neck jars at the site of Pukara Pantilliklla.

Characteristics		Paste		
		SV-1	SV-2	SV-5
Sample (<i>n</i>)		373	132	75
Documented distribution area		Maras, Urubamba	Chinchoero	Calca, Lamay, Coya
Related decorative style		Cueva Moqo	Piuray	Unknown
Matrix	Rate of complete oxidation	86%	85%	82%
	Porosity	Low	High	Low
	Color	Red	Red	Red
Inclusions	Type (preliminary identification)	Conglomerates, granite, biotite, felsic minerals	Quartz, feldspar, felsic and oxide minerals	Mica schist, felsic and mafic minerals
	Color	White, red, grey, black	White, dark grey	White, grey, black
	Diameter (mm)	0.2–2.1	0.2–0.7	0.3–1.5
	Sphericity	Subangular	Subangular	Subangular, laminar
	Distribution	Very uneven	Very even	Uneven
	Proportion	20–40%	>40%	>40%

Table 3. SVRP paste characteristics and sample. The identification of inclusion type is preliminary, based on visual characteristics and comparison with local geology prior to future petrography and geochemical analysis.

In 2023, Earle and Franco Chávez began compiling data on ceramic paste, decoration, and form as part of SVRP (*n*=649). Since then, they have collaborated with projects to analyze materials from Chinchoero (*n*=218), Saqsaywaman (*n*=494), and legacy collections from John Rowe and Ann Kendall's work that are currently held in the Museo Inka (*n*=272). The objective in compiling a regional database on patterns of ceramic variability is to trace materials' geographic and cultural origins for the reconstruction of exchange and interaction networks.

Earle and Franco Chávez have applied a consistent methodology for paste analysis, which involves carefully sanding and cleaning the edge of each sherd prior to the use of a Dino-Lite digital microscope for imaging. Some scholars have argued that sanding can distort interpretations by altering the visual characteristics of mineral inclusions and limiting data on features like matrix texture (Druc & Chávez, 2014). However, they found sanding to be ideal for our purposes to facilitate comparison and quantification through the use of Fiji ImageJ image analysis software, which is most compatible with a homogeneous (flat) surface.

Using image analysis software, Earle and Franco Chávez defined paste groups based on the characteristics of inclusions (color, granulometry, sphericity, distribution, proportion) and matrix (color, texture, porosity; Makowski et al., 2015). A comparative sample of geological materials from the study region was also collected and imaged to facilitate distinction between types of lithic and mineral inclusions in ceramic pastes, though the identification thereof remains preliminary pending future petrographic analysis. Since paste is the foundation of our typology, they visually compared microphotographs to sort fragments into paste groups before examining other variables. This approach has allowed for a more empirical classification of ceramics and the identification of corresponding patterns in surface decoration and form.

Data Presentation

A face-neck jar is a vessel depicting an anthropomorphic (or zoomorphic) face on one side of the neck and a globular body (Bauer & Stanish, 1990; Ortiz Luna & Earle, 2026). There are two main size classes, corresponding to small single-handled jugs (*jarras*, orifice diameter 7–9 cm) and large double-handled pitchers (*cantaros*, orifice diameter 14–16 cm). On small jugs, the face is on one side opposite a stirrup handle from the rim to the shoulder, whereas in large pitchers, the face is typically positioned between two small handles. First appearing in the Formative Period, by the LIP face-neck jars had become a ubiquitous item in ceramic repertoires across the Cusco region.⁴

Due to the small size of most sherds recovered in fieldwork, we found more fragments of eyes, noses, and mouths than larger fragments that included multiple facial features. To reconstruct face paint designs in fragments, we assumed that face paint designs were roughly symmetrical (based on complete or near complete examples). While larger samples are still needed to reconstruct some face-paint designs with greater confidence, we can describe several different designs and their variants by comparing complete vessels and large fragments with smaller fragments.

Following conventions for ceramic analysis developed for the Cusco region (Bauer, 1999), we invoke style to encompass a constellation of features including those related to aesthetic signaling and communities of practice (Lulewicz, 2019; Roddick & Stahl, 2015). Since material culture varies along a continuum, typologies are created to organize and manage variability for the purposes of analysis. Notwithstanding its limitations, style remains a powerful heuristic device as corresponding to recurrent patterns in human behavior that can be intentionally communicative (Bowser, 2000).

Face-Paint Designs as Identity Markers

Lucre

The Lucre Basin was inhabited by two distinct groups: the Muinas who occupied the site of Minaspata and the Pinawas, who lived on the northern side of the basin at Chokepukyo (Espinoza Soriano, 1974). The nature of the relationship between the Cusco Basin may have been uneasy, varying between hostility and cooperation given the existence of a buffer zone between Cusco and

⁴ See Ortiz Luna and Earle (2026) for a comprehensive review of face-neck jars' use and meaning from the Formative Period to the LH, as documented in archaeological excavations undertaken in the Cusco region.

278 Lucre. Minaspata presents the largest fortification for an LIP occupation (Bauer et al., 2022), yet
279 it was the Muinas who eventually became Inka allies, while the Pinawas are said to have resisted
280 the Inkas and were eventually exiled from their territory by the Inka Waskar as he sought to
281 appropriate new lands for his estate (Bauer et al., 2022; Espinoza Soriano, 1974; Garcilaso de la
282 Vega, 1989/1609, Pt. I, Bk. I, Ch. XXIII:51; Guaman Poma, 1980/1615, MS p. 150:110).

283 Lucre face-neck jars were made with andesite-tempered fabric, diagnostic of Lucre style pottery
284 (Ixer et al., 2014), and have been recovered primarily at the villages of Minaspata and Chokepukyo
285 (Cruz Muñoz & Trujillo Oquendo, 2023; Hardy, 2019). Though Chokepukyo and Minaspata were
286 inhabited by separate ethnic groups, they seem to have shared the same face paint designs, which
287 reflects their spatial proximity and close relationship based on chronicle accounts. The relative
288 standardization of the Lucre face-paint design is evident based on a well-preserved sample of
289 Lucre face-neck jar fragments: 14 from Minaspata and 24 from Chokepukyo (Aparicio
290 Chuyacama, 2018).

291 Lucre potters painted a large black “X” over a solid red square and outlined in black on each cheek,
292 with red paint often extending over the nose and mouth (Fig. 3). While slight variations exist, faces
293 were painted red with geometric designs executed in fine black lines in all cases. Above the face,
294 Lucre face-neck jars seem to depict a headdress including the distinctive Lucre “key” motif
295 oriented vertically over the forehead, often flanked by camelids (Fig. 3e). A diagnostic feature of
296 Lucre pottery that was not reproduced in other contemporaneous styles, this key motif was likely
297 a well-recognized symbol of Lucre identity (Cruz Muñoz & Trujillo Oquendo, 2023).

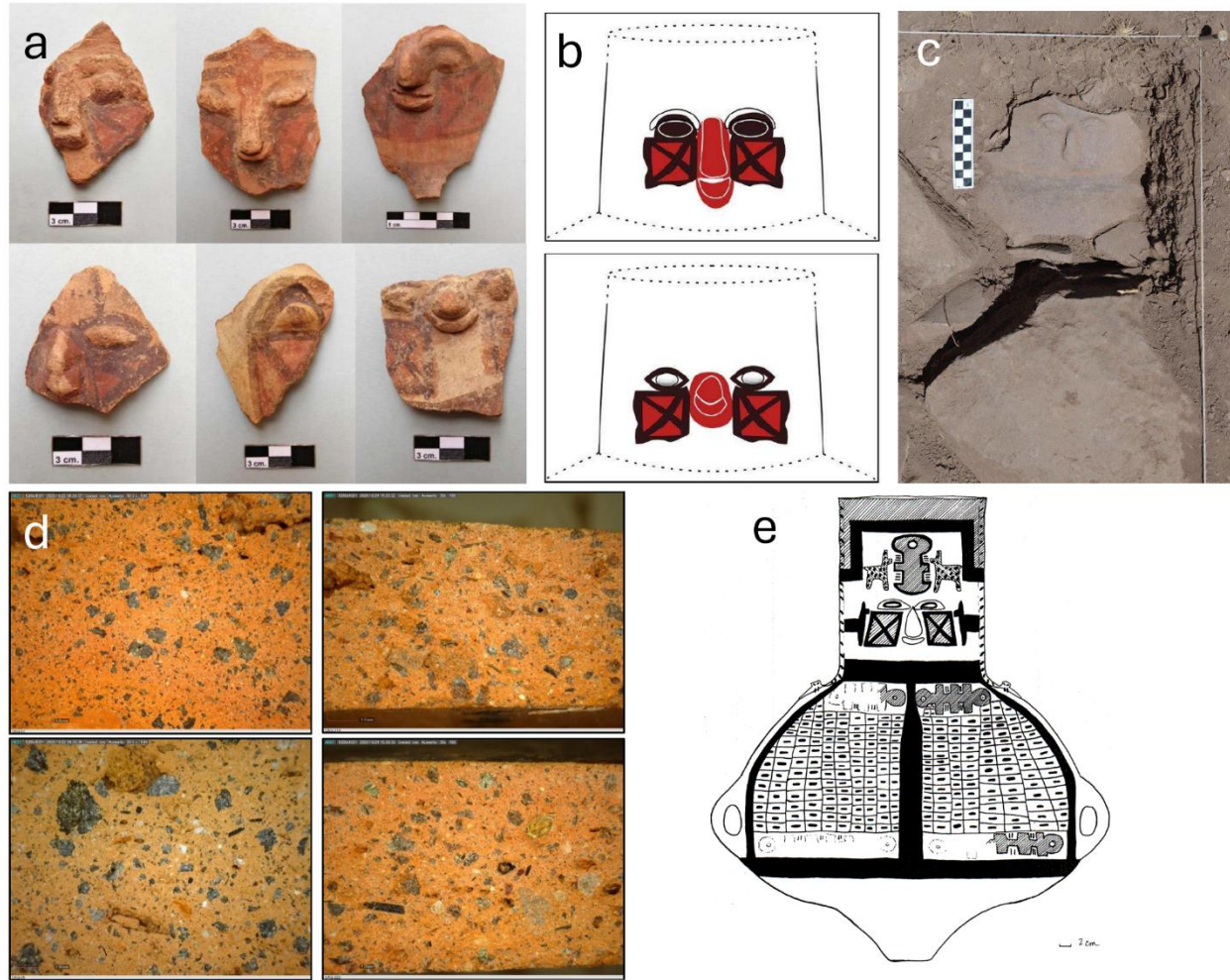


Fig. 3. (a) Lucre face-neck jar fragments excavated from Chokepukyo (Cruz Muñiz & Trujillo Oquendo, 2023). (b) Common Lucre face-neck jar designs, based on the Chokepukyo assemblage (Aparicio Chuyacama, 2018). (c) Intentionally broken and interred Lucre face-neck jar at Minaspata (Aparicio Chuyacama, 2018). (d) Pastes with andesite inclusions from Lucre pottery excavated from Saqsaywaman (40x magnification). (e) Drawing by Melissa Chatfield of a Lucre face-neck jar excavated from Chokepukyo.

Beyond Muina and Pinawa territory, Lucre face-neck jar fragments have been recovered in the southern Vilcanota River Valley, which intersects with the Lucre Basin. PAVS also recovered fragments of two face-neck jars from the Chit'apampa and San Salvador areas that resemble Lucre faces but differ in their design and rendering of features. These fragments are almost the reverse of the typical Lucre design, with red faces, an unpainted black square on each cheek, and black lips. Both have pointed, triangular noses, shallow incised eyes, and a smiling mouth. The similarities between Lucre style and this face-paint design may suggest an alliance or sense of common ancestry between the geographically distinct producers of these vessels.

Piuray

The Ayarmakas inhabited the Xaquixaguana Plain northwest of Cusco. Described as a coalition between disparate groups, material culture and settlement patterns suggest distinct economies and identities for the Maras-area Ayarmakas and their Chinchero counterparts (Covey, 2014; Rostworowski, 1970). The predominant ceramic style in Chinchero is denominated Piuray after the nearby lagoon of the same name and coincides with paste SV-2 in SVRP's classification (Earle, 2024). Piuray style face-neck fragments found in the Xaquixaguana Plain and Cusco Basin consistently represent a red nose bordered by thin black and white lines ($n=14$, Fig. 4). Below, two fragments from Umaspata and Machuqollqa are compared to illustrate the variations in this face-neck design.

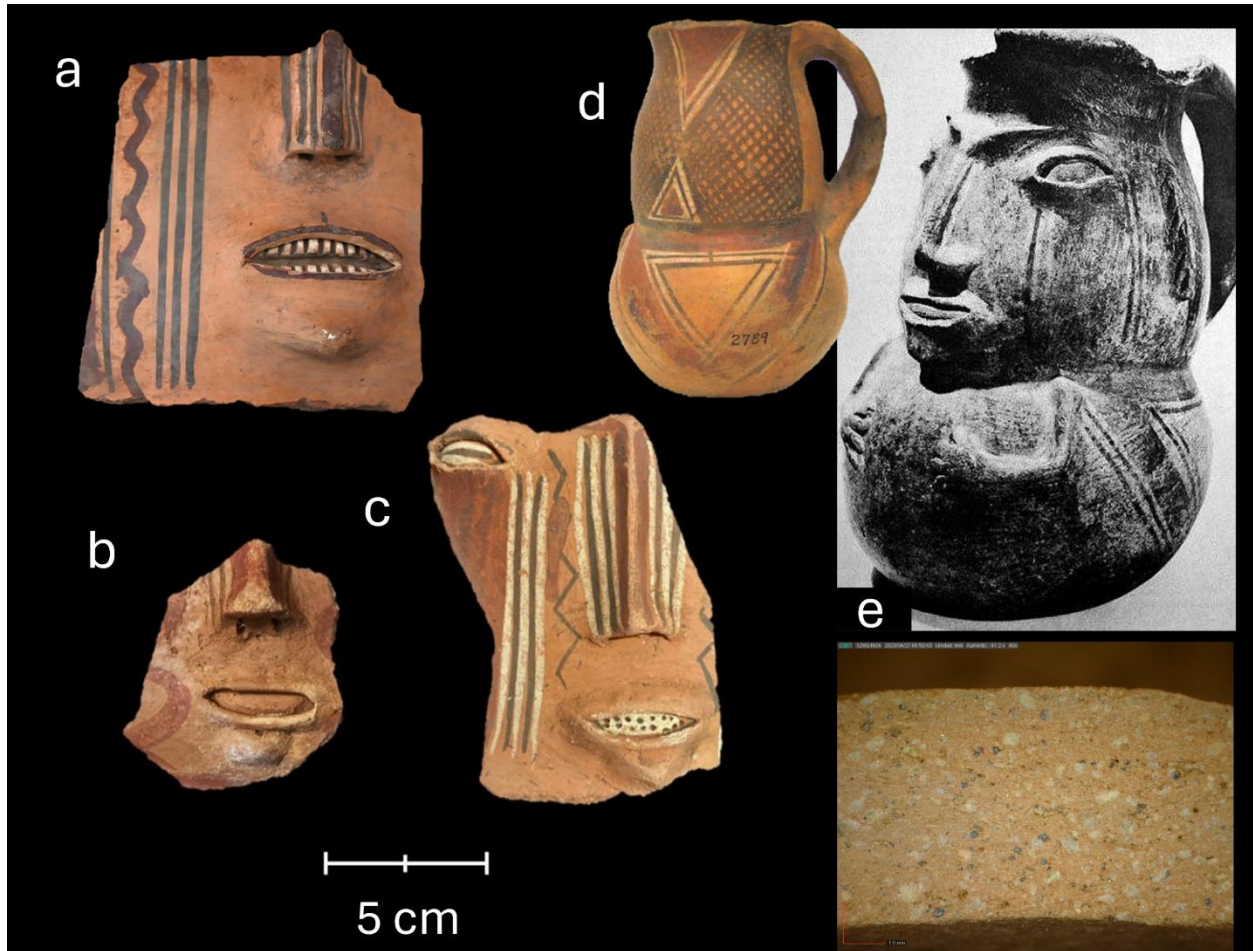


Fig. 4. Piuray-style ceramic vessels and fragments. (a) Ceramic fragment held in the Colegio de Ciencias, without provenience. (b) Fragment from Earle's surface collections at Umaspata near Huayllabamba. (c) Fragment from Carlos Delgado González's excavations at Machuqollqa near Huayllabamba. (d) Photo by Nicola Sharratt of Piuray-style jug at the Field Museum of Natural History, which shows the likely color palette for (e), vessel of unknown provenience, location, and source. The paste image in the right-hand corner is classified as SV-2 and corresponds to fragment (b).

The fragment from Umaspata depicts a face with a nose, mouth, and chin (Fig. 4b). The nose is painted red and has alternating thin black and white vertical lines running parallel and framing the

bridge of the nose on either side. The face also has what appear to be undulating red lines asymmetrically painted on each cheek. This fragment resembles others from Machuqollqa that depicts a long, thin nose painted red and a series of parallel lines along the sides in alternating black and white paint (Fig. 4c). Instead of undulating lines, the Machuqollqa fragment has a thin black zigzag running vertically from the tear duct to the upper lip parallel to the nose, differing from the Umaspata fragment. This face's cheeks are painted with a thick red band, bordered by a series of alternating thin black and white lines.

The Umaspata and Machuqollqa fragments differ in the execution of facial features. The Umaspata face has a triangular, upturned nose and pronounced chin. This face also presents a tiny indentation (possibly a piercing) just below the nostrils and just above the chin, corresponding to the uppermost and lowermost points of the mouth. The rendering of the face is more naturalistic than the Machuqollqa fragment, which is highly stylized with a long, thin nose, pointed chin, and wide-set eyes with horizontal slit pupils. Similar slit pupils were found in other fragments of Cueva Moqo style⁵ face-neck jars, perhaps mimicking the eyes of llamas or alpacas.

The Umaspata fragment depicts an individual with an open mouth and slightly protruding tongue. The Machuqollqa fragment differs by featuring two parallel rows of small circular indentations painted black on a white background between sculpted lips, appearing to represent teeth. Additional fragments recovered from surface collections and excavations at Machuqollqa resemble the more complete fragment. These show a long, thin nose with the same paint design, and a mouth with teeth represented as two rows of vertical dashes. The shared nose paint design combined with the divergent execution of the facial features and the variable cheek decoration suggest locally distinct identities within a broader regional affiliation.

Cueva Moqo

Cueva Moqo is the style associated with the Ayarmakas in Maras (cf. Quave & Covey, 2022). This style coincides with paste SV-1 and is predominant from Maras to Urubamba and extends west to Yanahuara and Ollantaytambo (Earle, 2024; Franco Chávez & Champi Ojeda, 2024). Given the wide distribution of this style, there appear to be several variations of anthropomorphic representation in Cueva Moqo style, such that not all faces share the same face-paint design ($n=12$, Fig. 5). Still, several distinctive patterns are evident. For example, pupils are often represented by a horizontal line, as in Piuray style. Recurrent features absent in other LIP styles include a cream nose with a vertical chain of diamonds in black paint descending along the bridge of the nose (Figs. 10d and 10g). Likewise, intersecting lines in red or black often intersect to divide the nose and mouth into rectangular panels (Figs. 10a, 10b, and 10d). Another unique design shows a red or unpainted nose with horizontal bands across the bridge, delineated by two vertical lines and bordered by a row of black dots or stripes (Figs. 10a, 10c).

⁵ Quave and Covey (2022) use this term to describe material excavated from the site of Yunkaray near Maras, following the work of Haquehua Huaman and Maque Azorsa (1996).

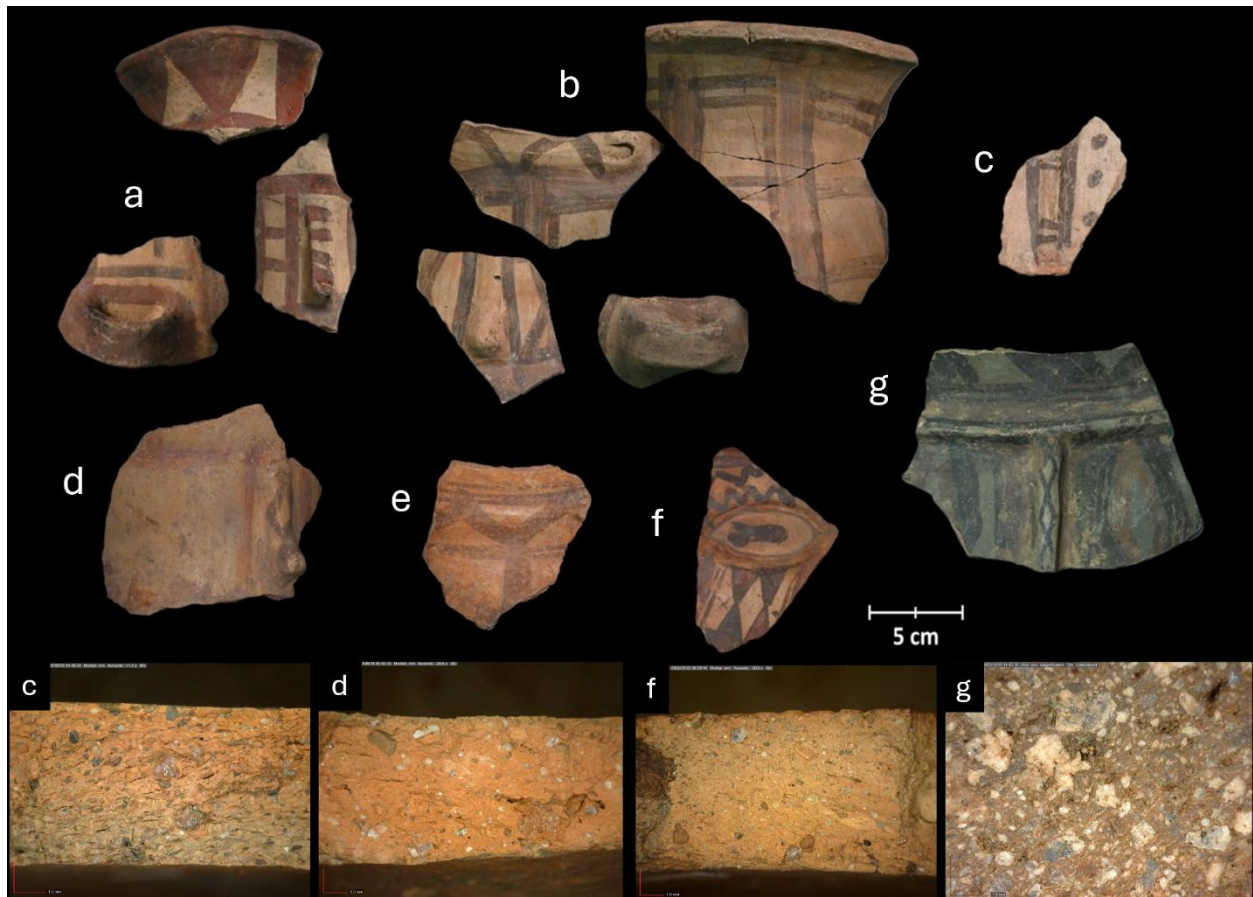


Fig. 5. Cueva Moqo-style face-neck jar fragments. (a) Nose, handle, and rim, and (b) nose, headband, handle, and rim from Huch'uy Aya Orqo. (c and d) Noses, (e) headband, and (f) eye from Iskumoqo. (g) Nose and headband from Canchacancha.

Another face-neck jar motif in Cueva Moqo style represents a possible human-animal hybrid ($n=21$, Fig. 6).⁶ It reflects a distinctive cultural practice that was broadly shared across much of the Xaquixaguana Plain and as far north as Yanahuara; an imitation of this motif in Killke style was identified in excavations at Saqsaywaman. These faces generally feature a flattened nose and small mouth positioned directly between or slightly above large, almond-shaped eyes. There are usually one or two small indentations beside the external corner of each eye, presumably representing ears. The unusual combination of features does not precisely match any known animal, though they present varying degrees of resemblance to animals such as bats, weasels, and felines. This “bat face” motif may be considered a variant of the face-neck jar tradition because it includes features such as headwear and face paint that is typical of anthropomorphic face neck

⁶ This motif was documented in Rivera Dorado's (Rivera Dorado, 1971:94, Fig. 7) excavations at Canchacancha near Chinchero; Haquehua Huaman and Maque Azorsa's (1996, Laminas Mascarón I–IV, Foto 13) excavations at Cueva Moqo near Maras; and Kendall's (1985:440, Plate 58) surface collections at Olleriyoc Trancapata near Cusichaca. A complete vessel with this motif is found at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, identified with the number FMNH 2805 (Bauer & Stanish, 1990:8, Fig. 5).

jars. Despite bat faces' departure from more common anthropomorphic representation in the LIP, this motif suggests continuity with older traditions of face-neck jars since the Formative Period by depicting wide-set eyes and perforations at opposite sides of the head.⁷

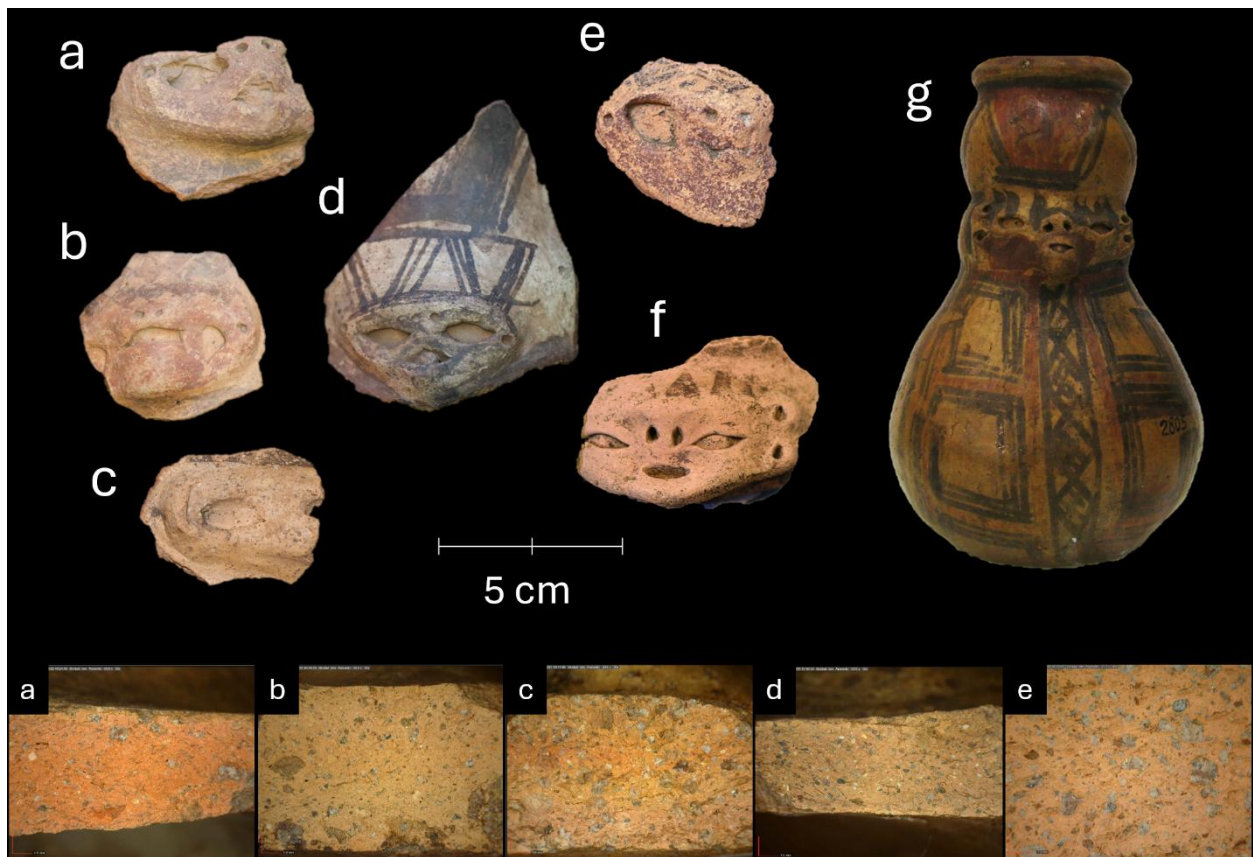


Fig. 6. The “bat face” motif, recurrent in Cueva Moqo style. (a to d) Fragments from Iskumoqo, Yanahuara. (e) Fragment from Umaspata that presents a unique, feline-like mouth. (f) Fragment from an unnamed site in Anta. (g) Vessel from the Field Museum of Natural History shows the placement of the face on the neck and arrangement of decorative motifs; photo by Nicola Sharratt.

Killke

Killke is the ceramic style produced in the Cusco Basin prior to Inka imperialism and the formulation of imperial material culture (Rowe, 1944). Killke face-neck jars ($n=81$) were made with the same paste (SAQ-5) containing greenish lithoclast inclusions, and are most abundant at sites in the Cusco Basin. The systematic definition of Killke pottery decoration and paste was conducted through recent excavations at Saqsaywaman. Contrary to prior studies based on analysis of surface decoration rather than paste (Bauer & Covey, 2002; Covey, 2006), Killke pottery is not as widely distributed as other LIP ceramic styles in the Cusco region like Piuray, and occurs only in small pockets within roughly 20 km of the Cusco Basin. This suggests that the Inkas deployed

⁷ A similar motif is found in north coast traditions like Moche and Vicús, but the significance of these perforations remains unclear.

distinct power strategies during this period that are not evidenced in the distribution of material culture.

Killke face-neck jars have almond-shaped eyes that may be painted black without pupils or appear to be squinting with incisions to resemble wrinkled eyelids (Fig. 7; Gonzales Serna & Casafranca Ramírez, 2020). Vertical red or black bands extend down from the lower eyelid, either solid or bisected by a vertical band of zigzag or chain patterns. There may also be vertical chains of small black diamonds over a cream background between the tear duct and nose (Bauer, 1999:44, Drawings 2-13 and 2-14). The nose and mouth are painted solid black or dark red with no additional decorations (ibid.:44, 47, Drawings 2-13, 2-14, and 2-17). One of the most distinctive features of Killke style face-neck jars (absent in other styles) is the position of eyes on opposite sides of the neck, with the nose and mouth on the front of the vessel opposite the stirrup handle (Fig. 7a; Bauer, 1999:19). While some cases are more naturalistic (Fig. 7c), most are rendered in this abstracted way where the face wraps around the cylindrical surface of the neck. The choice to position eyes on opposite sides of the neck may reflect potters' prioritization of motif legibility over anthropomorphic mimesis, thereby ensuring that face paint designs were recognizable despite challenges in translation to the vessel surface.

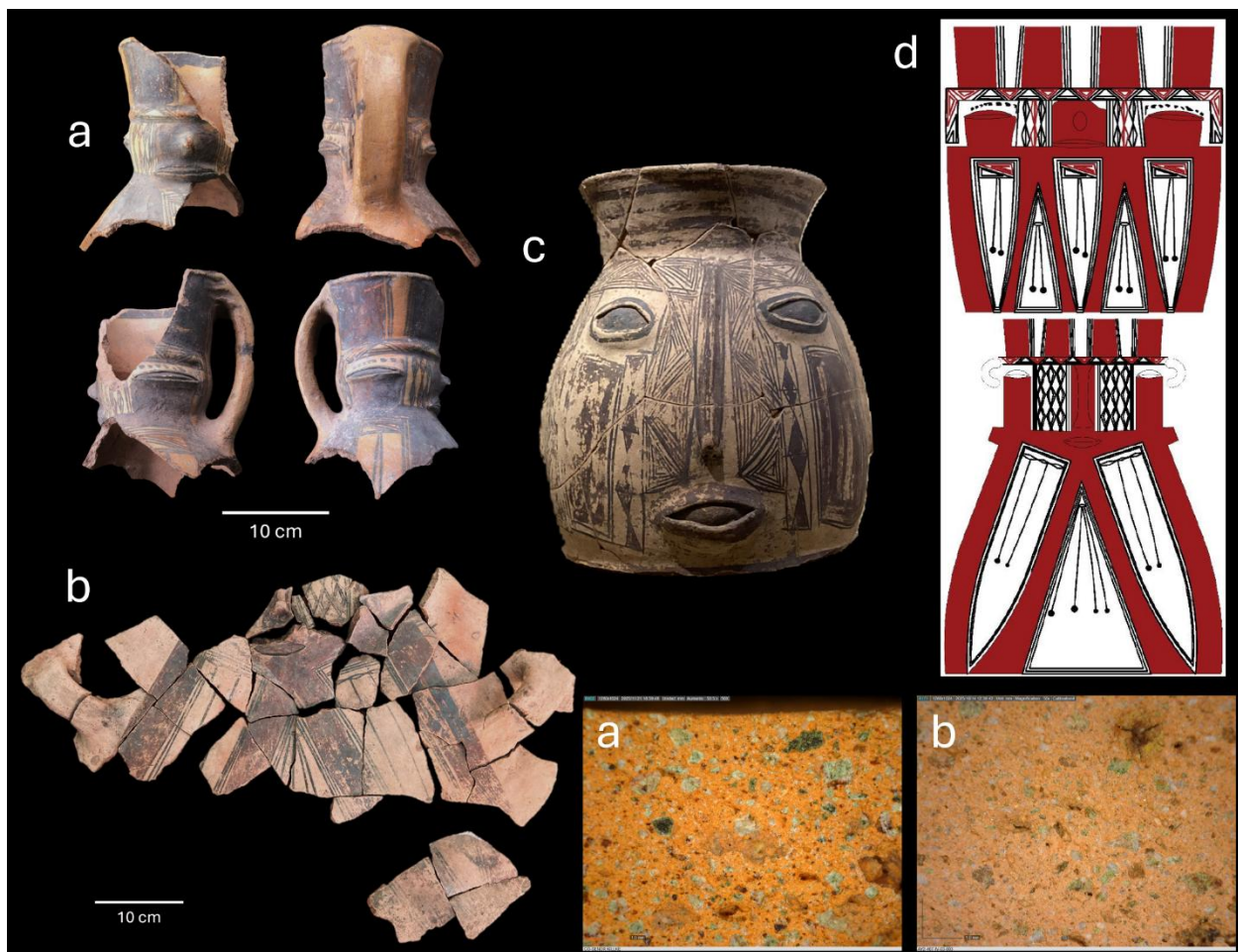


Fig. 7. (a) Small Killke face-neck jar recovered by Brian S. Bauer in Yaurisque (Paruro), showing the position of the eyes between the back and front of the vessel. (b) Large Killke face-neck jar

excavated from the site of Canchacancha (near Chinchero). (c) Large Killke face-neck jar at Casa Garcilaso de la Vega (Cusco); note the fractured edge at the bottom of the face indicating that the vessel body is missing. These vessels share the same decorative syntax and motifs on face and body, albeit rendered at different scales, and where the forming of facial features differs. Digital microscope images for (a) and (b) show the same paste (SAQ-5) containing angular green lithoclast inclusions with irregular distribution in an oxidized matrix. (d) Illustrations of Killke face-neck jar designs based on small and large variants.

Inka

In classic Inka face-neck jars, the face is usually white with parallel thin black lines painted horizontally under the eyes and across the bridge of the nose ($n=25$; Fig. 8). Variations of this design include white lines over a red face. Vertical pendant lines run perpendicular to the horizontal line over the cheeks, each terminating in a circle beside the corners of the mouth.⁸ The designs on Inka face-neck jars closely resemble chronicle descriptions (Delgado González, 2013:93). According to chroniclers, the Inkas used blood to paint “certain stripes” across the nose and from ear to ear on elite members of Inka society, both living and dead (Betanzos, 1996/1557, Pt. I, Ch. XI; Cobo, 1956/1653, Ch. XXI:201; Polo de Ondegardo, 1916/1571, Ch. II:9). This occurred during high profile ceremonies, including the inauguration of the Inkas’ paramount sun temple (Qorikancha) and at the funeral of Wayna Qhapaq, the twelfth Inka sovereign, which substantiates the inference that these vessels represent face-paint designs painted on in-group members.

⁸ Examples are found at the Museo Machu Picchu and Museo Inka in Cusco and Museo Larco in Lima (catalog number ML036037), while others have been recovered in excavations at the Qorikancha (Gonzales Serna & Casafranca Ramírez, 2020:137, Fig. 21) and Torontoy near Machu Picchu (Gallegos Gutiérrez and Apaza Huamani, 2012:342, Fig. 13).



Fig. 8. (a) Large Inka face-neck jar at the Colegio de Ciencias. (b) Small Inka face-neck jar at Museo Inka (scale unavailable).

Classic Inka face-neck jars are relatively rare in the Inka ceramic repertoire but are nevertheless widely distributed, especially in the imperial core. Bray suggests that the most common Inka form, a large jar for storing and serving chicha known as an *aribalo*, metaphorically represented the Inka sovereign's body in abstract form (Bray, 2000). Though face-neck jars take a less prominent position in the Inka ceramic repertoire than in LIP traditions (as the Inkas cultivated a more abstract, aniconic aesthetic), other face-paint designs were discontinued and replaced with a homogeneous representation of Inka elite identity. Thus, face-neck jars can be considered part of the exclusionary practices cultivated by the Inkas, towards elevating elite identity above their rivals.

Modeling Techniques

The techniques used to represent facial features in face-neck jars differ broadly between the Lucre Basin on one hand, and the Xaquixaguana Plain and the Sacred Valley on the other. Different from Lucre style face-neck jars, Piuray-style faces tend to have pronounced chins and larger, open mouths. Lucre mouths are usually closed and very small, even absent in some cases. Likewise, while Lucre faces lack nostrils, Piuray faces consistently feature prominent nostrils, sometimes as oblong incisions, positioned under the nose. The Cueva Moqo-style nose is more simplified as a

457 long, flattened cylinder, sometimes upturned at the tip; it also has two small, shallow indentations
458 for subtle nostrils.

459 In the Lucre Basin, facial features were formed by attaching small, round pieces of clay to the
460 vessel exterior or by pushing the interior vessel surface outward to form protruding features (Fig.
461 3c). To create mouths, Lucre potters made a single horizontal incision in the appliqué to part the
462 lips. In contrast, Xaquixaguana and Sacred Valley potters created eyes and mouths by layering a
463 thin slab of clay over the vessel exterior with an excision in the form of the orifice so that the
464 surface underneath shows through. The edges of excisions were manipulated to resemble lips and
465 eyelids, to varying degrees of realism.

466 Bat faces were formed from a single piece of clay adhered to the vessel surface, from which the
467 eyes and mouth were made through excisions, and the nostrils and ears are represented by shallow
468 indentations. Tiny balls of clay were sometimes inserted into the eye sockets as eyeballs or the
469 mouth to create a slightly protruding tongue. This technique is also used in some Killke face-neck
470 jars, while others have simple incisions to represent mouths and squinting eyes. Nevertheless,
471 some Sacred Valley communities (particularly to the east of Calca) used simple incisions to
472 represent eyes, possibly to imitate the layered technique. In sum, local communities of practice
473 produced face-neck jars by drawing on distinct yet overlapping technical and aesthetic repertoires
474 (Dorland, 2018; Roddick & Stahl, 2015).

475 *Ear Piercing as a Status Marker*

476 We have seen how groups varied in representing different anatomical features, from more
477 minimalistic depictions of eyes, nose, and mouth seen in Lucre face-neck jars, to Piuray potters'
478 inclusion of features like eyebrows, teeth, tongue, chin, and arms. Expanded ear lobes and large
479 earspools were principal markers of elite Inka status that was shown in representational forms like
480 metal figurines. But while some provincial Inka vessels depict individuals with piercings
481 (ML031644 in the Museo Larco), ears are absent in classic Inka face-neck jars and their Killke
482 precursors.

483 A remarkable exception is a fragment recovered outside an aboveground tomb at the village site
484 of Markasunay (community of Huama, Lamay District) that depicts a detailed ear with a perforated
485 and slightly expanded lobe (Fig. 9a). This fragment is made of paste SV-5, which is most common
486 in the area between Calca and Pisac, suggesting that this vessel was locally produced. This
487 representation differs from Piuray-style fragments (paste SV-2) excavated near Chinchero that
488 depict simple C-shaped ears without piercings (Fig. 9b). The naturalistic depiction of an ear on the
489 Markasunay fragment suggests that this was an important feature to which the potter wished to
490 draw attention. The size of the perforation and lobe coincides with chronicle descriptions of a
491 social class known as the Inkas-by-privilege.

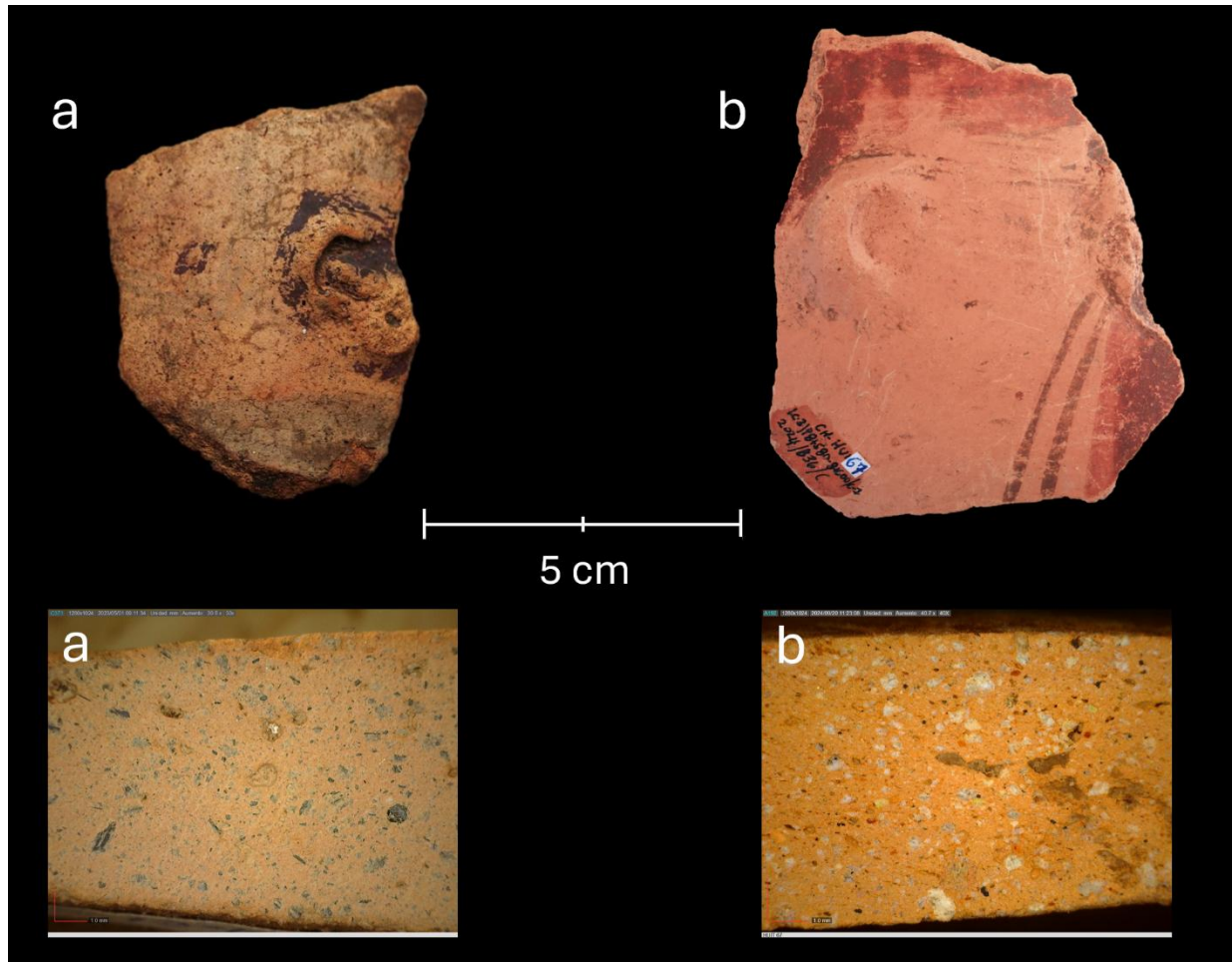


Fig. 9. (a) Ceramic fragment in paste SV-5 with an appliqué decoration in the form of a pierced ear from Markasunay near Lamay. (b) Piuray-style ceramic fragment in paste SV-2 depicting an un-pierced ear from Huitapujio near Chinchero. The surface of the fragment is raised at the edge of the fragment opposite the ear where the eye was located.

The term Inkas-by-privilege refers to those who gained their status by accepting subordination, as distinguished from Inkas by blood, that is, those who claimed to be part of a lineage descending from the first Inka Manqo Qhapaq (Bauer, 1992:141). As groups that had maintained a relationship with the Inkas since the early phases of state formation, they generally enjoyed higher status than those who were more recently incorporated. The former was therefore afforded certain privileges as an incentive for complicity in Inka statecraft but were nevertheless reminded of their social difference and prohibited from sharing equivalent status. This segmentation effectively limited the number of potential challengers that might seek to usurp or disrupt the ruling class as the Inkas' wealth and power grew, while still encouraging buy-in from long-time allies.

An individual's Inka-by-privilege status was visually signaled by their small piercings and slightly enlarged lobes compared with the Inkas' much larger earpools (Garcilaso de la Vega, 1985/1609 Bk. I, Ch. XXIII:51–53). A group known as Pok'is from the opposite side of the valley across from Markasunay was Inka-by-privilege and its members inserted small tufts of wool in their earlobes to signal their status as such (Garcilaso de la Vega, 1985/1609 Bk. I, Ch. XXIII:51; Guaman Poma,

511 1980 [1615, MS p. 85]:62). Chronicles' emphasis on stretched ear lobes as distinguishing Inkas
512 from non-Inkas implies this was not practiced among non-Inka groups, but rather was introduced
513 by the Inkas to set themselves apart from others. As suggested by the Markasunay fragment, some
514 local populations may have understood Inka-by-privilege status not as conflicting with local
515 identity but perhaps as enhancing political capital via extant cultural forms.

516 *Analogy and Experiment*

517 Archaeological and linguistic evidence shows that the practice of painting faces with substances
518 including blood, minerals, and fruit was widespread in the Andes. González Holguín's (1608) early
519 colonial Quechua dictionary lists several terms related to face painting. For example, *limppicuni*
520 is defined as "to paint one's face with vermilion as makeup" (González Holguín, 1608:15),
521 whereas *ychmacuni ychmahuan passicuni* is to paint one's face with *ychma* (annatto), a red or
522 yellow pigment from the fruit of the achiote tree (*Bixa orellana*; 237). Direct evidence that face
523 painting was practiced in the pre-hispanic period includes the *qhapaq hucha* child sacrifices
524 recovered at Llullullaico, whose faces were painted with red and yellow pigment (Bachraty, 2021).
525 Elsewhere in the Andes, diverse forms of material culture including pottery depict humans with
526 varied face paint designs (Knobloch, 2002; Wołoszyn, 2008). Conversely, *pirani* refers to a
527 ceremony wherein a lamb was sacrificed and stripes were painted on the face and body with fresh
528 blood (González Holguín, 1608:193–194).

529 We recreated four face-paint designs for which we have the best evidence, corresponding to the
530 following styles and associated groups: Inka, Killke, Lucre (Pinawa and Muina), and Piuray
531 (Ayarmaka). The results of this collaboration are shown in Fig. 10. In the spirit of experimental
532 archaeology, one objective of this activity was to understand how the patterns represented on face-
533 neck jars would translate to a human face, and thereby approximate the feasibility of such designs
534 as they are portrayed on pottery.



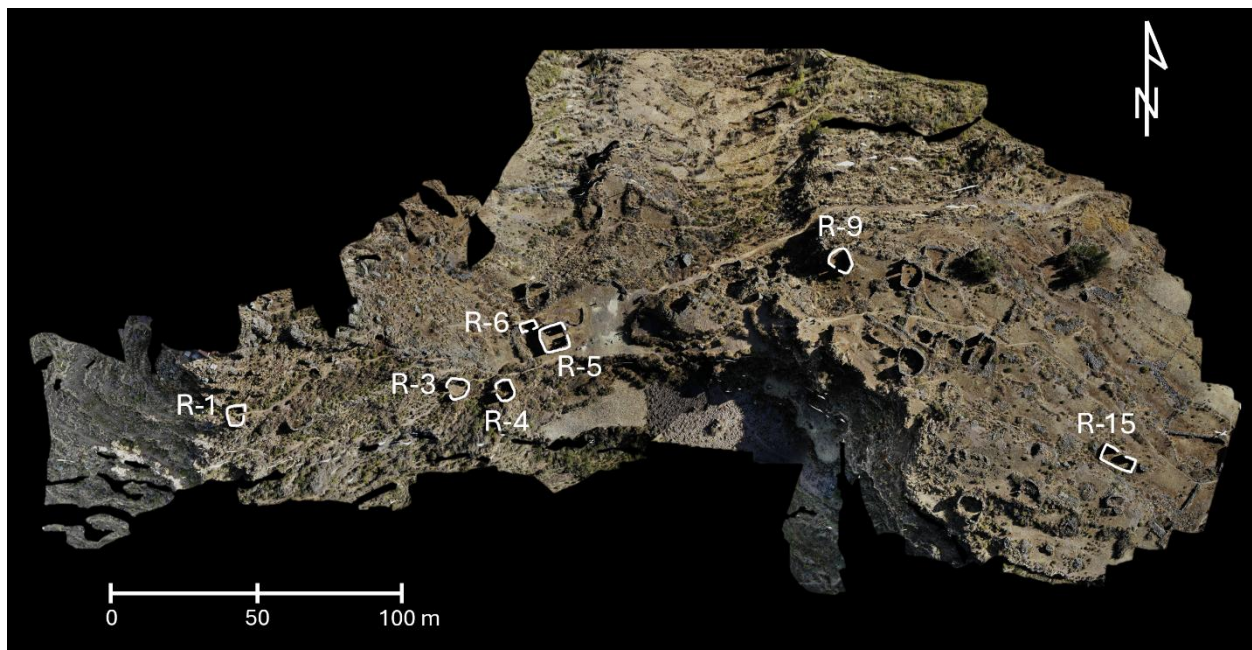
Fig. 10. Recreations of face-neck jar designs corresponding to distinct groups, styled by Peruvian designer and fashion historian Adrián Ilave of Kunpi Arqueomoda Andina. (a) Archaeology student Enmy Catunta Pocotay of Cusco, based on Inka face-neck jars. (b) Archaeologist Noely Inquiltupa Quispe of Chinchero, based on Killke face-neck jars. (c) Architecture student Zafnat,

540 based on Lucre face-neck jars. (d) Coauthor E. Williams Franco Chávez of Yanahuara, based on
541 Piuray face-neck jars.

542 *Contextual Evidence for Face-Neck Jar Use*

543 In excavations, face-neck jars have been recurrently recovered in association with abundant food
544 remains and public architecture. During 2013 excavations at Minaspata, two contexts were
545 identified containing intentionally broken face-neck jars associated with guinea pig and camelid
546 bones as well as ash and carbon (Aparicio Chuyacama, 2018). Similarly, excavations outside one
547 of the monumental enclosures at Chokepukyo uncovered a cache of Lucre face-neck jars that had
548 been broken *in situ* (McEwan et al., 2005:273). This association continued into the LH, as
549 excavations in the city of Cusco recovered Inka face-neck jars that were smashed and interred with
550 abundant food remains indicative of large-scale gatherings (Delgado González, 2013). The
551 association between smashed face-neck jars and food remains demonstrates their primary use in
552 contexts of consumption and spectacle. Indeed, their use lives were coterminous with the duration
553 of such parties as they were conspicuously “killed” at the culmination thereof.

554 Excavations at Pukara Pantilliklla provide further insight into the contexts of face-neck jar use and
555 deposition. Located five km northeast of Pisac, the village of Pukara Pantilliklla was inhabited by
556 the Kuyus, an autochthonous group that is said to have been violently punished by the ninth Inka
557 Pachakutiq (Cabello Balboa, 1951/1586, Pt. III, Ch. XIV:300; Cobo, 1956/1653, Bk. XII, Ch.
558 VIII:71–72). At Pukara Pantilliklla, face-neck jar fragments were found in excavations of houses
559 and associated middens, especially those located close to a LIP public building and small plaza
560 space (Fig. 11). Radiocarbon dates from two proveniences associated with structure R-3 indicate
561 that face-neck decorations were used in the 1200s and 1300s during a period of settlement
562 expansion (Fig. 12, Table 4).



563
564 **Fig. 11.** Pukara Pantilliklla’s urban core with excavated buildings indicated in white, redrawn by
565 Earle after Covey (2006:160, Fig. 7.10).

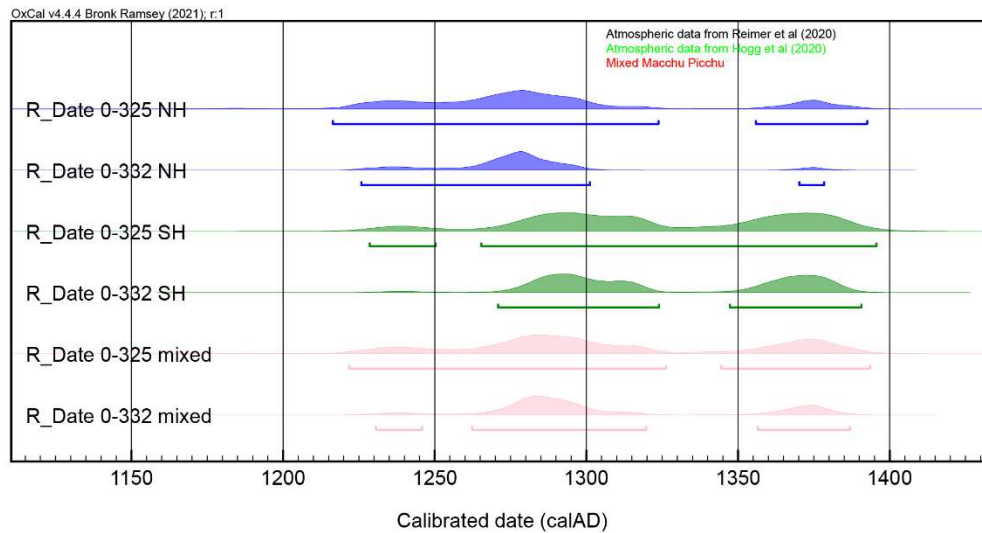


Fig. 12. Multiplot of radiocarbon dates associated with face-neck jars excavated in structure R-3 at Pukara Pantilliklla, calibrated in OxCal by Maksymilian Jędrzejowski (Silesian University of Technology).

Sample	NH	SH	mixed
0-325	1216 – 1323 (80.6%)	1228 – 1250 (5.6%)	1221 – 1326 (67.4%)
	1355 – 1392 (14.8%)	1265 – 1395 (89.9%)	1344 – 1393 (28.0%)
0-332	1225 – 1301 (91.9%)	1270 – 1324 (54.5%)	1230 – 1245 (3.7%)
	1370 – 1378 (3.6%)	1347 – 1390 (41.0%)	1262 – 1319 (68.9%)
			1356 – 1386 (22.8%)

Table 4. Radiocarbon dates associated with face-neck jars excavated in structure R-3 at Pukara Pantilliklla, calibrated in OxCal by Maksymilian Jędrzejowski (Silesian University of Technology).

The variety of eye shapes found in houses – including almond, round, oval shapes – and of pastes used to produce them speaks to the interaction between local communities of practice. There is also significant diversity in the wares used to make the face-neck jars found at Pukara Pantilliklla (Table 5). Notably, an apparent public building for hosting gatherings (R-5) contained eight face-neck jar fragments in five wares, including wares of non-local origin (see Covey, 2015:189, Fig. 5). This suggests that face-neck jars were not restricted to exclusive use by their producers but instead circulated between villages, ostensibly brought as gifts or offerings by allied group members for shared use during gatherings.

Structure	Face-Neck Jar Motifs	Wares
R-3	Modeled almond-shaped eye ($n=3$)	Ware 5 ($n=1$)
	Modeled round eye with round pupil ($n=2$)	Ware 6 ($n=2$)
	Modeled round eye with round pupil, eyebrow ($n=1$)	Ware 7 ($n=2$)
	Modeled large round eye with empty socket ($n=1$)	Ware 8 ($n=1$)

	Painted face with ovular black eyes and pupils, black mouth, and simple modeled nose ($n=1$)	Ware 9 ($n=2$)
R-4	Modeled round eye with round pupil ($n=1$)	Ware 1 ($n=1$)
	Modeled large round eye with empty socket ($n=1$)	Ware 3 ($n=1$)
	Modeled pointy nose with long oval nostrils ($n=1$)	Ware 9 ($n=1$)
R-9	Modeled almond-shaped eye ($n=1$)	Ware 9 ($n=1$)
R-15	Modeled round eye with round pupil ($n=1$)	Ware 9 ($n=1$)

Table 5. Frequency of motifs and wares in face-neck jar fragments from four structures excavated by Covey at Pukara Pantilliklla. Face-paint designs were not recorded in motif descriptions.

Discussion

Above, we have shown how face-neck jars differ in how potters formed and decorated faces to convey group identity and status (Bauer, 1992:92, 1999:31). The overlapping distribution of face-neck jar designs (particularly in the SV and XP) suggests these vessels were not used exclusively by the group that produced them, but were also brought from neighboring villages, perhaps during festivities in which multiple groups came together to affirm or renegotiate social ties. Conversely, the Cusco and Lucre Basins present relative uniformity in face-neck designs and associated pastes, suggesting greater social exclusivity. By combining motifs and design elements, groups manifested distinct local identities nested within broader regional affiliations. We also see potential changes introduced into face-neck jar conventions concurrent with the Inkas' growing influence, including the depiction of pierced ears at Markasunay and the merging of Lucre and Inka face paint designs (Aparicio Chuyacama, 2018:68), as groups jockeyed within a rapidly changing political landscape.

The use of the same medium in similar contexts signaled shared values and practices of hospitality, while intragroup identity signaling allowed members to demonstrate that they were “playing the same game” (Barth, 1998; Wobst, 1977). Difference was overtly expressed in a way that related to groups' desire to participate in a broader social sphere that offered novel experiences beyond the quotidian, including spectacles and opportunities to meet potential affines. Difference was not reason for hostility, but instead fueled festive gatherings' alluring novelty. This unity in diversity may accord with Andean philosophical concepts like *tinkuy*, the generative union of complementary opposites, and the name of the Inka empire that was called Tawantinsuyu (“the four parts together”).

The Inkas regularly orchestrated *raymi* ([Sp.] *fiesta*) throughout the year, involving the performance of music and dance alongside the consumption of food and drink to the point of drunkenness (Cieza de León, 1880[1550, Pt. II, Ch. XXX]). This is substantiated by the recurrence of plazas and large halls that would have facilitated such events throughout the empire, as well as large bottles used for serving chicha (Acuto, 2005; Bray, 2020). These events also provided venues for markets ([Sp.] *feria*, [Que.] *qhatu*) and dramatic, emotionally charged spectacles of sacrifice and ceremony (Cieza de León, 1880[1550, Pt. II, Ch. XXX]). In the LIP as in the LH, such gatherings cultivated a sense of novelty in accessing something “larger” than quotidian life, which was primarily centered around kin and in-group members. Decisions regarding who to invite and whether to attend were inherently political, in which both host and attendee wielded power by affirming or negotiating ties (cf. Dietler, 2001).

The convergence of culturally diverse populations and inebriation of attendees provided unstructured opportunities for collective effervescence and *communitas* (Durkheim, 1915; Turner, 1995). Similar events are described during the reign of the second Inka as opportunities to expand social networks through alliance and kinship, as well as recruiting labor for land improvement and construction projects (Cieza de León, 1880/1550, Pt. II, Ch. XXXI, XXXII). Liminality and the playful transgression or subversion of social norms during such gatherings (e.g., Betanzos, 1557/2004, Pt. I, Ch. XIX:132–133) would have offered a springboard for implementing novel forms of social organization. While early LIP Cusco appears to have been characterized by relative heterarchy, power dynamics drifted toward asymmetry toward the end of this period, cloaked in an idiom of reciprocity and inclusion as gatherings became venues for increasing exclusivity and discipline.

Conclusions

Our analysis of face-neck jars provides evidence of emic social boundaries through self-representation in ceramic vessels that were conspicuously presented and used during festive gatherings. The ethnicities mentioned in the chronicles are reflected in the regional distribution of recognizable face-paint designs on face-neck jars, which would have been legible to groups within the same interaction sphere. The genesis of new cultural and political identities would have served to enhance intra-group cooperation in an unstable political context, as in the power vacuum caused by the Wari Empire's withdrawal from Cusco (Blanton, 2015). Concurrent with state formation, the Inkas cultivated an exclusionary rhetoric and manipulated traditions of hospitality to mask an inherent contradiction between social hierarchy and the equalizing, horizontal relationships of reciprocity (*ayni*) to encourage cooperation and compliance. With the establishment of Inka hegemony, an individual or group's absence from festive gatherings could result in their stigmatization as *waqcha* (poor, miserable) or *purun* (wild, untamed; Covey, 2011, 2017).

Physical violence (as expressed in the colonial Quechua term *puxamuni gui*, “to attract by force”; Santo Tomás, 1560) was a tool in the repertoire of power strategies that groups deployed at various points throughout this process (Covey, 2026). However, coercion may not have played such a significant role in state formation as previously thought, considering that the Cusco region was not overpopulated, circumscribed, or wracked by war in the period leading up to state formation (Andrushko & Torres, 2011; Bauer & Smit, 2015; Covey, 2014). The gap between the neo-evolutionary model's expected correlates of state formation and the material record spurs a reevaluation of the processes and dynamics that have led to transformative political change throughout human history (Feinman, 2023). This way, the “certain enabling conditions” for Inka state formation appear to have been provided by festive gatherings, including the cycle of production and consumption that fueled agricultural intensification and aesthetic innovation (cf. Bauer & Covey, 2002).

Face-neck jars were among the suite of practices deployed to signal group membership and social position within emotionally charged and competitive settings involving performance, consumption, and encounter between diverse collectives. This process of networking and aggrandizing was not unique to the Inkas; rather, similar dynamics played out among other groups as aspiring leaders vied for prestige, power, and affluence. Without prescient knowledge of their cumulative actions' outcome over the long-term, social obligation or even “fear of missing out” would have drawn people to participate in social events. Over time, it would have become more

659 difficult for individuals and groups to disentangle themselves from increasingly complex networks
660 of interdependency. In this sense, face-neck jars are the “art of parties,” as creative expressions of
661 identity that were mobilized in the context of large gatherings, while also structuring an emergent
662 political culture that would set the stage for imperialism.

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