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# Understanding Andean Violence

Every society experiences violence that generally results from tensions between individuals or political, economic, or social groups. These conflicts are part of the human legacy, and studying the patterns of violence in past populations greatly informs our understanding of the political, economic, and social forces that shape societies today.

From the well-known mass sacrifices of the Moche culture (see, for example, Bourget 2016; Klaus and Toyne 2016; Verano 1998, 2008a, 2014a, and 2014b) to the most recent crimes against humanity that occurred during the internal conflict between terrorists and government forces (1980–2000), Peru offers an excellent research environment to test hypotheses about the cultural context of violence, its patterning, and its effects on people. The research herein will focus on the Peruvian central coast, one of the less studied regions in the country but an area with a complex socio-political development and a challenging geographic environment, to reconstruct a 3000+ year "history of interpersonal and intergroup violence" for the area.

Archaeologically, the Peruvian central coast includes the valleys surrounding the city of Lima, the Peruvian capital city (Chillón, Rímac, and Lurín). It also refers to a larger area extending from Chanchay to Chilca (Lanning 1967:32) (Figure 1.1), depending on the level of integration with the core area that those peripheral valleys exhibited in a specific time.

**Figure 1.1. Map of Peru and the Central Coast (in Box). Based on Google Maps (accessed November 1, 2015). Reproduced courtesy of Sergio Barraza.**

Investigations focused on human remains from the central coast are relatively limited and have mainly focused on paleopathology/paleoepidemiology (e.g., Aguayo 2008; Chan 2011; Kolp-Godoy et al. 2014; Pechenkina and Delgado 2006; Vega 2015; Vradenburg 2009), morphology and metrics (Drusini et al. 2009; Montoya 1994; Vivar 1996, 1998, 1999), diet (Baraybar 1999; Falk et al. 2004; Marsteller et al. 2016; Williams 2005), the consequences of Inca or Wari expansion (Boza 2010; Murphy 2004; Salter-Pedersen 2011; Watson 2019), and ritual violence (Barreto 2012; Eeckhout 1999a; Eeckhout and Owens 2008). Research focused exclusively on intergroup and interpersonal violence has only been conducted for the Middle Horizon (e.g., Barreto 2022; Vega 2014) and the early contact period (e.g., Gaither and Murphy 2012; Lund 2009; Murphy et al. 2010).

There are relatively few bioarchaeological studies of the Peruvian central coast that are focused on violence, and none of them covers a broad stretch of the pre-Hispanic sequence of the area. Moreover, although there are some available data about trauma, they are primarily found in unpublished theses or reports that concentrate on one specific site, employing inconsistent methodologies and mentioning violence only tangentially (if at all). This research compiles all this disparate information to provide an overall synthesis of non-ritual violence (i.e., intergroup and interpersonal violence) in the central coast.

This study's long-term and social complexity perspective not only contributes to the knowledge of non-ritual violence in the pre-Hispanic Peruvian central coast but will enrich the anthropological debate around violence, providing a better understanding of how violence unfolds in different cultures and different situations within cultures.

## 1.1. The Phenomenon of Violence

For many decades, the study of violence has attracted scholars from the social and biological sciences and humanities, all applying their own perspective and methodology for the understanding of this phenomenon.

Some researchers associate human violence and aggression to basic instincts of predatory or defensive behaviour (mainly while defending a territory or community), the promotion of intergroup dominance, and even male aggression of females, comparable to those exhibited by animals, especially non-human primates (e.g., Ardrey 1967; Crofoot and Wrangham 2010; Honess and Marin 2006; Lorenz 1966; Smuts and Smuts 1993). However, according to some psychologists, psychoanalysts, and ethonologists, humans show specific kinds of aggression (Muchembled 2012:10). Other academics emphasize, in varying degrees, the role of the socio-cultural and ecological context in shaping violence (e.g., Carman 1997; Fry 2013; James 2011; Malinowski 1941; Martin and Harrod 2015; Muchembled 2012; Parker Pearson 2005; Riches 1986; Schmidt and Schröder 2001; Thorpe 2005; Walker 2001; Whitehead 2004a).

Although it is not uncommon to relate violence solely to the direct use of physical aggression, it can refer to physical and non-physical actions. Some researchers have argued that violence has a dialectical nature, being both imagined and performed (e.g., Schröder and Schmidt 2001); while others have stressed the importance of the concept of social inequality in understanding it. For example, Gil (1986:124) stated that "violence [...] is rooted in socially evolved and institutionalized inequalities of status, rights and power among individuals, sexes, ages, classes, races, and peoples".

Violence can also be impulsive (an emotion-driven response) or instrumental (a deliberate strategy to obtain something) (James 2011), essential to the experience of social interaction (Riches 1986). In this way, violence has also been described as a "power relationship aimed at subjecting or constraining another person" (Muchembled 2012:7) and as "an instrumentally rational strategy of bargaining for power … [and] a form of symbolic action that conveys cultural meanings, most importantly ideas of legitimacy" (Schröder and Schmidt 2001:8).

In short, violence can be defined as an unapproved or illegitimate behaviour that harms someone (Eller 2010; Riches 1986), often implying intentionality, motivation, and culturally defined meaning (Martin and Harrod 2015:116). However, even this simple definition is problematic, as there is no single answer to what qualifies as violence. For instance, a "violent" event may be judged differently by the victim, the performer, the witnesses, and even other societies (Eller 2006; Riches 1986, 1991; Walker 2001). As Whitehead (2004b) stated, the definition of "violence" is probably not as important as the definition of "violent acts" since the presumption that those acts share some typological characteristics is part of what has hindered attempts to reach a consensual definition of violence.

Some studies showed that the origins of violence could be traced back to very ancient times (e.g., Frayer 1997; Mirazón Lahr et al. 2016) and that it "is adaptive in many situations" (Martin et al. 2013:68). Other researchers suggest that coalitional or collective violence (the origin of forms of violence such as raiding, ambush, and warfare) is the result of the selective advantage for males inside one group to cooperate to attack males from other groups (see, for example, Choi and Bowles 2007; Durrant 2011; and LeBlanc 1999).

Other academics state that in small-scale societies, cooperation prevails over violence in problem resolution and that warfare appears only in sedentary agriculture-based societies with political centralization and a territory with resources (Ferguson 1997, 2011; Fuentes 2004, 2013; Mead 1937). Nonetheless, studies by Lambert (1997, 2002), Guilaine and Zammit (2005), Clastres (2010), Kelly (2013), Molto (2015), and Mirazón Lahr and colleagues (2016) show that warfare could be present in uncentralized nomadic and forager groups. Also, ethnographical records suggest that warfare was more frequent and lethal in pre-state populations than in modern-day societies and that murder and pillaging still occur in societies traditionally considered to be peaceful (Guilaine and Zammit 2005; Keeley 1996).[1]

According to Martin and Harrod (2015:124), violence in small-scale societies appears as highly ritualized fighting, raiding for resources and women, and feuds between rival groups. Warfare has been temporary and restricted to some areas (Roksandic 2004), judging by the high prevalence of cranial trauma (including perimortem fractures) that has been detected in some Mesolithic and Neolithic sites (e.g., Beyneix 2007; Jiménez-Brobeil et al. 2009; Mirazón Lahr et al. 2016; Pechenkina et al. 2007; Roksandic 2004; Teschler-Nicola et al. 1999). Even before the invention of formal weaponry, men (and possibly women) were potential warriors who fought if needed, using tools created for other purposes as weapons (Schulting 2013:31–32).[2]

Contrasting with modern wars (which present professional and hierarchized armies and highly effective weapons), prehistoric warfare involves fewer and often non-specialized combatants and unfolds without an elaborate strategic plan, organization, or authority figure. However, both types of warfare share features such as the involvement of adult men as the usual active participants (Guilaine and Zammit 2005:21–22). Young males are usually involved in more (and in more lethal) violent events than females, both as perpetrators and victims (e.g., Fry 1998; Walker 1997, 2001). However, it should be noted that females also face violence but differently (e.g., Jurmain and Kilgore 1998; Tung 2012a, 2014a).

[1] Keeley (1996) presented mortality rates between ~15 and ~30% in conflicts among different pre-state groups (e.g., Jivaro, Yanomami-Shamatari, Dugum Dani, and Mae Enga), while the rates in modern European warfare (Western European wars on the 17th century and French military encounters of the 19th century) were only 2-3%.

[2] The use of tools as weapons has also been recorded in the central Andes. For example, Lund and colleagues (2013) reported a farming tool embedded in the last cervical vertebrae of an adult male.

Nevertheless, it seems that violence in societies that were adopting agriculture was generally low and not lethal (with cranial fractures usually affecting less than 10% of the adults) (e.g., Blau 2007; Cunha et al. 2007; Domett and Tayles 2007; Doran 2007; Douglas and Pietrusewsky 2007; Papathanasiou 2011; Smith 2014; Smith and Horwitz 2007), representing sporadic episodes of interpersonal conflict (Roksandic 2006).

### 1.2. Violence in the Andes

The presence of interpersonal and intergroup violence in the Andean region has been recorded through different sources, such as archaeology, ethnohistory, and ethnography. Besides common interpersonal tensions, *ch'axwa* or limit feuds between *ayllus* (or on a larger scale), ritual battles, and partner abuse are the major contexts in which violence takes place in the Andes (Harris 1994:45).

#### *1.2.1. Andean Warfare ("Real" and Ritual War)*

Tristan Platt (1987:84) differentiated between *ch'axwa* or "cruel war" and *tinku*, defined as a *pujllay* or "game" (also named "real war" and "ritual war" by Arkush and Stanish 2005). The former is performed in the inter-ethnic limits, in the land that is in dispute.

"Real" war in the Andes has usually been studied through the presence of defensive sites. Some investigators (e.g., Hyslop 1990; Morris 1998; Topic and Topic 1987) follow conservative criteria for considering a site defensive (e.g., the presence of particular architecture associated with weaponry). However, Arkush and Stanish (2005) proposed that, given the fact that even "true war" includes ritual components, ceremonial and defensive kinds of architecture are not "mutually exclusive," as was demonstrated by Iván Ghezzi (2006) at the Formative site of Chankillo (Casma Valley). In the same way, Arkush and Stanish (2005:16) suggested that if the war parties are small, "fortifications need not be mighty and impregnable or even continuous to be effective."

The earliest evidence of warfare in the Andes is the fortified sites of the Early Horizon on the north-central coast (e.g., Brown Vega 2008; Ikehara 2015, 2016; Pozorski 1987; Pozorski and Pozorski 1987; Proulx 1985; Wilson 1987, 1988). However, warfare has been most convincingly identified among the Moche and Recuay of the Early Intermediate Period (north coast and north highlands, respectively) based on multiple lines of evidence (i.e., settlement patterns, defensive architecture, weaponry, iconography, and perimortem trauma) (e.g., Castillo 2014; Lau 2011, 2014; Topic and Topic 2009; Verano 2014a, 2014b). In addition, bioarchaeological research by Tung (e.g., 2007, 2012b, 2014b) has identified evidence of warfare on some Wari and Wari-affiliated sites of the southern highlands. However, only a few fortified sites have been reported for the south and central highlands in the Wari period (Arkush and Tung 2013).

The Late Intermediate Period seemed to be a violent epoch in which different Andean societies waged war (or were threatened by it) (e.g., Arkush 2009, 2014; Brown Vega 2008; Juengst et al. 2015; Kurin 2014, 2016; Nielsen 2009; Topic and Topic 2009; Torres-Rouff et al. 2005). According to Arkush (2014:199), the settlement patterns during this period strongly suggest that violent conflicts were common and not limited to the frontiers between *señoríos* (described by Arkush as non-state segmentary organizations).

The Inca used warfare to conquer new territories and suppress rebellions (e.g., D'Altroy 1992, 2002; Ogburn 2014), as demonstrated by the shift in the prevalence of perimortem trauma relative to the two previous periods in the Cuzco region (Andrushko and Torres 2011). Based on the information in Spanish chronicles, Hyslop (1990:147) concluded that "young Inka males learned from experienced officers, initiation rites, and by participating in ritual battles."

The presence of females on the battlefield, both as warriors and companions, was documented in the chronicles of Agustín de Zárate and Pedro Pizarro, compiled by Penny Dransart (1987), providing an overview of the role that women could have had in war during Inca times. Women took active roles in violent encounters against the Spaniards in the Tiquina massacre (Thomson 2007) and using slings in the battle of Liribamba (Dransat 1987). However, as Dransart (1987:65) noted, it is not known if the presence of females as warriors was common in the Andes. Slings are also a useful tool in herding (an activity performed by both males and females), making females skillful slingers, although generally practicing in non-battle contexts. According to Dransart (1987), it is more likely that the female role during war was to participate in the rituals that took place during the battles, sometimes taken as prisoners by the winners in the aftermaths of the battles. According to Cobo (1990 [1653]), women were captured during wars and divided among captains and important men.

Ritual warfare in the region has been documented both ethnographically and ethnohistorically for the Inca period (see, for example, Alecastre and Dumézil 1953; Gorbak et al. 1962; Hartmann 1971–1972; Hastorf 1993; Hopkins 1982; Platt 1987). In modern days, these kinds of battles are known by different names such as *tinku* (Bolivia), the game of the *pucara* (Ecuador), and *chiaraque* or *tocto* (named after the communities of the southern Peruvian Andes in which the practice was documented). Human blood is spilled to ensure the fertility of the land, domestic animals, and people. There is also an emphasis on separating into social groups, interchange, and land limits (e.g., Hopkins 1982). The fact that these battles are still performed today confirms these events' deep roots in the Andean region.

Diane Hopkins (1982) presented the description of a ritual battle that took place in 1772 in the southern Peruvian highlands and complemented this information

with the data she gathered from Spanish chroniclers such as Cobo, de Molina, Gutiérrez, and Guaman Poma. She concluded that this kind of battle usually took place between December and March between two halves of the same community (*hanan*, or upper part; and *hurin*, the lower part), who fought each other to establish social and land limits. However, according to Hastorf (1993:54), the confronting groups could be two communities, two barrios (neighbourhoods) of the same village, two groups of the same ayllu, herders vs. agriculturists, or even males against females. Hartmann (1971–1972:133) found similarities between the ritual fights still in practice throughout the Andes, concluding that they are organized between neighbouring groups or villages to produce injuries and kills to obtain better crops. They usually occur on fixed dates and places (related to a particular festival). *Tinkus* not only provided access to resources and political power but were also a strategy for social maintenance within groups that did not have a centralized political authority (Hastorf 1993:54).

The preferred weapon in ritual battles was the sling and stones (or sometimes hard fruits such as prickly pears) (Gorbak et al. 1962; Harris 1994; Hopkins 1982). However, one-on-one fights involving knives, sticks, punches, and kicks (sometimes with gloves or shoes with attached stones or nails) have also been recorded (Cereceda 1978; Gorbak et al. 1962; Hartmann 1971–1972; Hopkins 1982). Even when fruits were used as projectiles, some people were severely hurt or even died from their injuries. In some cases, the dying combatants were buried on the battlefield (see Roca et al. 1966). Although young males are usually the active participants (and therefore, the injured or killed), some young females are also present during the battle. Hopkins (1982:168) reported that a young woman died because of the battle of 1772. Young females are sometimes taken as captives to serve as concubines by the winning group (Alecastre and Dumézil 1953; Gorbak et al. 1962; Hastorf 1993).

However, the difference between a "real war" and a "ritual war" in the Andes is not a rigid separation since both types of war are highly ritualized. Ethnographic and ethnohistoric investigations on Andean violence suggest that ceremonial rites surrounded warfare in the Andes before and during the battles (Arkush and Stanish 2005; Platt 1987; Topic and Topic 1997, 2009). Moreover, it seems that the modern meaning of "*ch'axwa*" of "cruel war" was not used during the 16th century, and that the word "*tinku*" did not appear in early colonial vocabularies. Thus, it is possible that the dichotomy of "real war" and "ritual war" was created during the post-contact period (Hastorf 1993; Topic and Topic 1997, 2009).

#### *1.2.2. Domestic Violence*

Modern physical violence against women has been reported in different parts of Peru (e.g., Bardales 2012; Güezmes et al. 2002; Parra 2012). Different ethnographic studies have reported the presence of violence against women perpetrated by husbands and mothers-in-law. Except in cases of extreme violence, this behaviour is commonly accepted, even by the victims (e.g., Harris 1994; Parra 2012).

A recent epidemiological study on mental health in Lima and Callao showed that 87.3% of the women married or living in common law had suffered physical aggression by their partners, mainly by pushes (73.8%), slaps (62.7%), punches (46.9%), and kicks (33.3%) (Saavedra et al. 2013:Tables 80C and 81C ). Of all the cases of domestic abuse reported to the authorities in Lima, 87.2% were declared simple blunt force injuries, which only required a few days of medical rest (Santa Cruz 2010).

The presence of intimate partner violence in the Andes could have pre-Hispanic roots, judging from the testimonies of some Spanish chroniclers, as is inferred from this quote:

"If a man had a wife who had been given to him by the Inca or his governors, or if he had won her in a war, or gotten her by other means considered legitimate among them, there was no way for her to break away from the authority of her husband, unless he died. Moreover, the women did not dare complain about any injury they may have received, except to their husbands." [Cobo 1979 [1653]:204, translation by Hamilton]

Child abuse is also present in the Andes but has not been extensively recorded by ethnography. For example, in the Northern Potosí, ethnographic work by Olivia Harris (1994:45) reported occasional cases of physical punishment of children. However, this was not seen as an acceptable method of punishment. Nonetheless, Parra's (2012) ethnographic work in the central Peruvian Andes suggests that physical violence from father to children is common.

### 1.3. Evaluating the Link between Violence and Crisis in the Past

When assessing social violence in a past population, while information may come from various sources, the most direct method is to look for evidence of trauma on human remains. Archaeology is the only discipline with a scale of inquiry that spans the entire human past. As such it provides us with the opportunity to test research questions like how environmental and socio-political crises affect people and cultures across space and time. Is the growth or collapse of an empire reflected in a rise in violence? Is environmental stress a cause of conflicts? Are socio-political and environmental crises related to the increase in domestic abuse? Are people from a lower status exposed to more violence than high-status persons? These questions are addressed using the comprehensive archaeological record of Peru.

This research includes the analysis of 699 individuals from 13 different samples: La Capitana (Archaic); Asia, Asia

Baja, León Dormido 3, and León Dormido 17 (Formative); Tablada de Lurín (Early Intermediate, white-on-red tradition); Cerro Culebra (Early Intermediate, Middle Lima); Huaca 20 and Copacabana (Middle Horizon 1, Late Lima); Ancón (Middle Horizon 3-4); Armatambo-22 de Octubre (Late Intermediate); and Pueblo Viejo-Pucará and Puruchuco 57AS03 (Late Horizon). The skeletal material was studied following classic bioarchaeological and forensic methods, as outlined by Buikstra and Ubelaker (1994) and Wedel and Galloway (2014), complemented with other variables such as cohort, lethality, minimum number of events, and social status. All these variables were statistically tested. An analysis of the environmental, cultural, and archaeological contexts and comparisons with published and non-published data are also included.

### 1.4. Organization of the Chapters

Chapter 2 discusses how bioarchaeologists study violence and summarizes the theories that link violence to environmental and socio-political crises. This review is followed by Chapter 3, which describes the ecological, historical, and archaeological setting of the Peruvian central coast, and the diverse evidence of violence in the area. Chapter 4 describes the sites from which the human remains under investigation were recovered and the methodology used in this research. Chapter 5 shows the analysis results of the main corpus of the study. Chapter 6 presents a meta-analysis of violence on the central coast and other Andean regions. Chapter 7 discusses the implications of these findings. Finally, Chapter 8 synthesizes all the information and presents the investigation's conclusions.