

Archaeological Site Museums in Latin America

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The Tourist Circuit Project at Pukara, Peru

Perspectives from a Local Site Museum

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Introduction

The Museo Lítico Pukara is the site museum for the archaeological ruins of Pukara,¹ a prehistoric regional population center dated to the Late Formative period (200 B.C.–A.D. 200) in the northwestern Lake Titicaca basin of Peru. The museum and site are in the modern town of Pucará (again, see note 1), located along the Puno-Cusco highway in the province of Lampa, department of Puno, at an elevation of 3,860 meters above sea level (Figure 6.1). The contemporary town is known throughout the Peruvian Andes as the home of the *toritos de Pucará*, the clay bull figurines (signs of prosperity and fertility) adorning rooftops from the rural highlands to the suburbs of Lima.² In general, the town exhibits an interesting and complicated mesh of pre-Hispanic and colonial influences on every corner.

The Museo Lítico Pukara is administered by the Puno regional office of the Instituto Nacional de Cultura (INC, or National Institute of Culture). The museum is located on the edge of the Plaza de Armas, just south of Santa Isabel, an impressive colonial church dating to the seventeenth century. Because of Inca and colonial population relocation policies, the central area of the archaeological site of Pukara is southwest of the Plaza de Armas, peripheral to the daily workings of the town, and accessed by a one-kilometer-long road past the site museum.

At the site, the monumental stone-lined terraces and sunken courts of the Qalasaya architectural complex sit at the base of the Peñon, an impressive pinkish sandstone outcrop visible across the region (Figure 6.2). This rock formation clearly influenced the location of the prehistoric center of Pukara, and its influence continues to this day, as it is a local pilgrimage destination during Fiesta de las Cruces (Festival of the Crosses) on May 3 of every year. Well above the Qalasaya platforms, there is a series of crosses that line the summit of the Peñon,

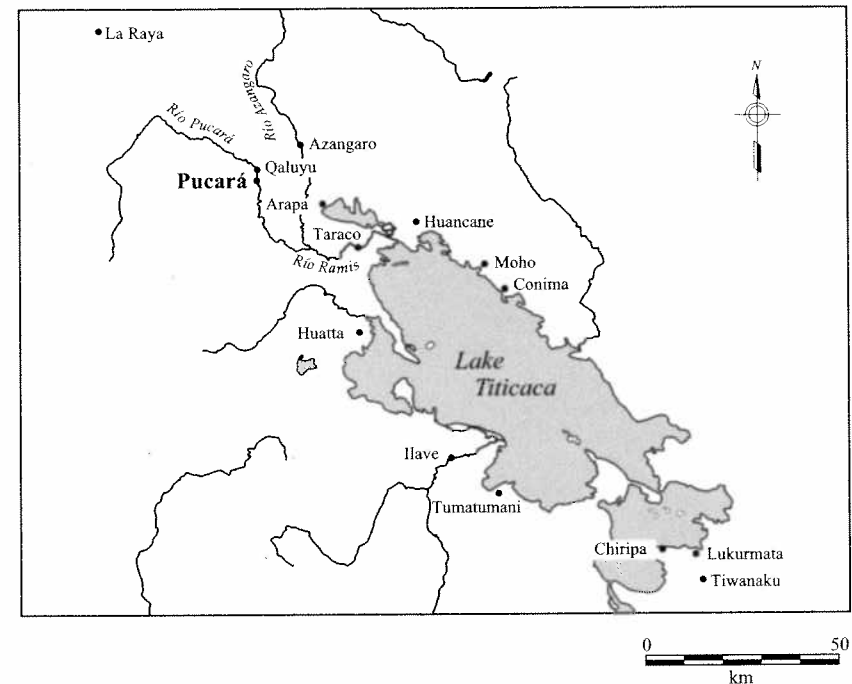


Figure 6.1. Location of the town of Pucará and the archaeological site of Pukara. Adapted from Stanish 2003. Map by Steven J. Holland.

while on the adjoining hill of Puca Orqo, a Late Formative period monolith continues to be the location of burned offerings. Given that the prehistoric site covers at least one square kilometer, it is impossible to walk through the town of Pucará or along the nearby riverbank without encountering evidence of three thousand years of dense occupation.

The first major excavation project at the archaeological site of Pukara was conducted in 1939; it was directed by Alfred Kidder Jr. of Harvard University's Peabody Museum (Kidder 1940). This project established the monumental nature of the terraced architectural complex and fully exposed the famous central sunken court and surrounding structures. None of the excavated materials remained in Pucará. Rather, the materials were sent to the Peabody Museum and to museums in Lima. There then ensued a hiatus in research at the site of more than thirty years. In spite of this break in active field projects, the collections from the Kidder excavations have been analyzed and published in a number of articles and theses (see Carlevato 1988; Chávez 1992; Franquemont 1986).

Beginning in 1975, a series of "Methods and Techniques in Andean Archaeology" courses were conducted in the central ceremonial complex of Pukara with



Figure 6.2. The Peñon and the upper platforms of the Qalasaya architectural complex at Pukara. Photograph courtesy of Nathan Craig and Nico Tripcevic.

the participation of archaeologists from across the Andes. This fieldwork-and-classroom project was sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the INC. Plan COPESCO (the Special Commission for the Coordination and Supervision of the Tourist and Cultural Plan of Peru-UNESCO) intervened for over four years at Pukara, with its efforts including both the archaeological investigation and restoration of the monumental stone architecture.³ In addition to clarifying the Classic Pukara architectural elements, the project encountered a pre-Pukara occupation and also excavated areas of late pre-Hispanic Collao and Inca influence at the site (Wheeler and Mujica 1981).

Today, visitors can easily access the reconstructed platforms and restored central sunken court of the site's monumental architecture. Unfortunately, as will be discussed further below, major areas of the Qalasaya complex were damaged through removal and breakage of the cut-stone blocks and other areas of architecture exposed during the restoration project.

Due to the presence of Sendero Luminoso (the Shining Path terrorist movement) in the northern Lake Titicaca basin in the early 1980s, the COPESCO project was hastily concluded before many of its goals could be met. During the restoration project, the space presently housing the site museum was built as laboratories and storage rooms (architect Freddy Escobar of INC-Puno, personal communication, 2004). At the time, it was assumed that a formal site museum would be constructed at the conclusion of the field project. Years passed, and owing to a lack of funds and other limitations this was never accomplished; many of the collections were left uncatalogued, uncurated, and in a general state of disarray. This included a large collection of monoliths (many acquired from throughout the region before Plan COPESCO) and thousands of bags of ceramics, bones, and other excavated materials.

In 1999, the INC-Puno, with the support of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of California at Santa Barbara (UCSB), began a multiyear project to refurbish the museum facilities and initiate new archaeological research at the site. This has been an extremely fruitful collaboration, but one not without its challenges at a variety of levels. In this chapter the goals, challenges, and progress of the project are outlined in the context of four major themes: facility improvements, community involvement, cultural resource management, and development for tourism.

Facility Development: Continuing Research and Museum Improvements

In 1999, after a twenty-year hiatus, the buildings and grounds of the museum were reopened. They were in a state of complete disrepair—the ceilings leaked, the floors were rotting, there was no plumbing, and every window was broken or missing. The task seemed daunting, but a multiyear, cooperative project was initiated between the INC-Puno, under the directorship of archaeologist Rolando Paredes, and Dr. Charles Stanish of UCLA. The project involved a number of graduate students who were planning on conducting research projects in the northern Lake Titicaca basin. A *convenio* (memorandum of agreement) was outlined in which all research projects using the facilities of the museum would contribute to infrastructure development. Since the beginning of this *convenio*, two exhibition rooms, two temporary exhibition spaces, an artifact display area, several storage areas, laboratory and work space, a patio area, and a residence for visiting scholars have been completed and are in regular use. The museum complex has housed two major excavation projects, a geological project, and a number of smaller-scale regional surveys and visiting researchers. Peruvian students from the Universidad Nacional del Altiplano (National University of the Altiplano in Puno or UNAP), Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (San

Marcos University or UNMSM), and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (the Catholic University, or PUCP) in Lima and the Universidad Católica Santa María (Catholic University in Arequipa, or UCSM), as well as a number of students from the United States, Canada, and Britain, have participated in projects housed in the research facilities. The recently recovered collections are stored in these facilities and will be incorporated into the exhibition spaces in the near future.

Collections storage is a constant struggle for space, resources, and conservation materials. A major goal of this aspect of the project, directed by Graciela Fattorini, is to complete the inventory, organization, and cleaning of materials stored in the facilities by Plan COPESCO. The reorganization of the artifact storage rooms began in August 1999 and has continued steadily in periods of two and three months. The project has various phases: emergency conservation, preventative conservation, and then selection, ordering, and organization of archaeological materials. Since participating in a course entitled "Preventative Conservation in Museums" sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in 2002, Ms. Fattorini has been applying techniques to monitor humidity, light, and insects in the museum. Presently, she is focusing on the conservation of the monoliths displayed in the open-air patio of the museum. To promote collaboration with researchers working throughout the south-central Andes, Ms. Fattorini has participated in a number of workshops and conferences in the fields of conservation and museum studies in both Lima and Arequipa.

In May 2000, the main exhibition room of the museum that features a number of monoliths and textual guides was inaugurated with the support of the INC-Lima. The patio of the museum was also remodeled to serve as a public space for visitors and community events and for the display of Pukara monoliths. The layout features a *chakana* (Andean cross) in the center of the patio with two circular areas of monoliths on each side. In the center of the patio, an altiplano *queñua* seedling was planted at the reopening of the museum.⁴ Overall, the facilities are quite adequate for housing research projects; the exhibition spaces provide basic information and display materials for visitors; and in the near future, the complex will include spaces for local artisans. The goal is to have a combination of a workshop-exhibition space in which a rotation of potters from the community will demonstrate the process of pottery production and have a facility in which to sell their wares and meet with other craftspeople.

Community Involvement: From Site Museum to Local Museum

Challenges at the community level are varied and can be difficult to navigate for any newcomer, whether from as close as the nearby city of Juliaca or as far away as California. There are issues of local politics and also resource control—who "owns" the past, and who decides how it is represented? How can the popular conception of a space be transformed from one seen as catering to tourists to one utilized by the community? Integrating the museum into community life is challenging. Members of the community have commented that it is a place for tourists and removed from their daily lives. Many children and adults had never entered the museum even though it is located in the center of their town, nor did they have a sense of what "Cultura Pukara" was, beyond the monumental architecture, pieces of carved stone encountered during construction, and pottery fragments scattered throughout the adobe of their homes. A major goal of the museum has been to make it a more dynamic, educational, and accessible space. This effort is in its initial stages and has been approached through a process of experimentation and a constant dialogue between researchers and the townspeople.

In the town of Pucará, the museum is in a unique position to serve as a bridge between the local residents and the prehistoric Pukara culture through a very tangible material practice—the production of ceramics. The *toros* of Pucará are the most recognized of local wares: they are present throughout Peru and are also exported. Also, the community is known regionally for its reliable ollas (ceramic cooking pots), decorative wares, and clay stoves (Litto 1976; Sillar 2000; Spurling 1992). The modern relevance of ancient Pukara culture is materialized through this three-thousand-year-old tradition. While major elements of ceramic production have, of course, changed through time—for example, the incorporation of the potter's wheel, lead-based glazes, and, most recently, the electric kiln—many of the fundamental elements remain the same. The clay is still mined from the nearby riverbanks, then processed in household patios using similar technologies, and ultimately the finished products serve many of the same economic and social functions as they did in prehistory, such as facilitating interregional interaction (Karen Chávez 1992; Sillar 2000).

Craft-related activities are so central to daily life in Pucará that it is impossible to talk about the sexual division of labor, seasonal rounds, and local economics without considering the organization of ceramic production and exchange. In 2001, this connection was further developed through the participation of community members in a six-month field research project directed by Elizabeth Klarich. Through a work rotation, a number of families from the community participated as members of the excavation team and contributed to the interpretation of prehistoric activity areas, including a ceramic workshop area.



Figure 6.3. Examples of prehistoric and modern Pukara pottery: top, prehistoric *incensario* from Museo Pukara collections; bottom, modern vessel produced in Pucará in 1999. Photograph courtesy of Cecilia Chávez Justo.

As the field season progressed, several potters invited the research team to their homes to view production areas, observe the process of production and division of tasks within families, learn about local systems of exchange, and discuss the differences between prehistoric remains from the field project and those encountered in modern household workshop areas. As in all small towns, word spread quickly, and numerous potters expressed interest in participating in future ethnoarchaeological research on local pottery production. The ultimate goal is to create a museum exhibition space that illustrates the entire process of ceramic production—presented in Spanish, Quechua, and English—that simultaneously emphasizes the antiquity and the dynamic nature of this tradition (Figure 6.3).⁵

Local authorities, including the district mayor of Pucará, the president of the Tourism Bureau of Puno, and many members of the community, have given their support and provided suggestions about strategies for increasing community participation. For the past three years, there have been events at the museum in May for the International Day of Museums and in August for the anniversary of the Pukara museum directed at different groups of participants. In May 2003, the INC-Puno and local authorities sponsored a drawing and painting competition for students ages seven to fourteen on the theme of the museum, archaeological complex, and monoliths (Figure 6.4). There were a number of student participants, the mayor donated and presented the prizes, and the work of the finalists was displayed at the INC-Puno gallery. In August 2003, a competition of Pucareño artisans was sponsored, in which local potters were judged on their productions of clay replicas of the Pukara monoliths on display in the museum patio. Also during the anniversary, a temporary photography exhibition was opened: “Life and Textile Arts of Taquile: Weaving Life.” Two weavers from the island of Taquile in Lake Titicaca attended the anniversary event to demonstrate weaving techniques and to promote cooperative projects among artisans throughout the region.

Cultural Resource Management

The issues of community involvement, public education about cultural resources, and site protection are inextricably linked. The Pukara archaeological site has been extensively damaged and defaced by graffiti over the years, in addition to the mining of pottery-tempering materials from the worked stone blocks of the sunken court. While the monumental architecture is technically a protected area, in daily practice the platforms of the Qalasaya are used for grazing livestock, growing crops, and gathering building materials from collapsing prehistoric walls.

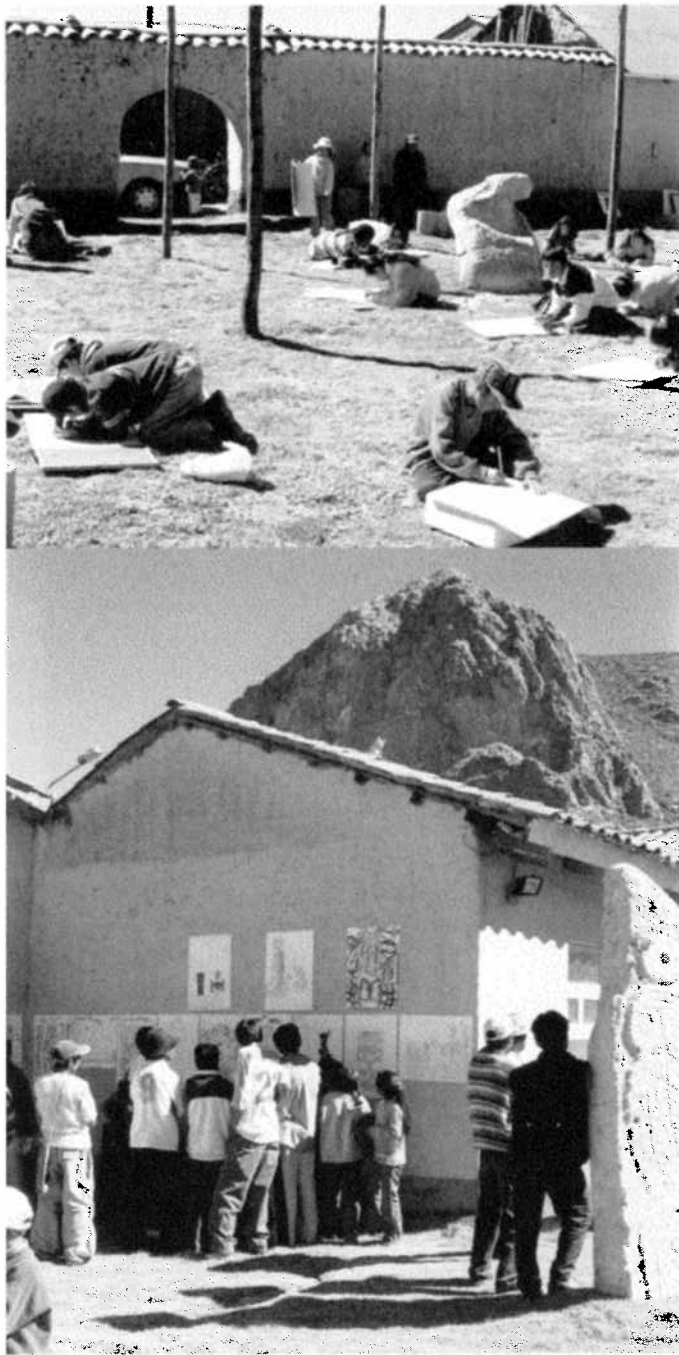


Figure 6.4. Drawing and painting competition for Pucará students, ages 7–14, held in May 2003 at the site museum. Photographs courtesy of Graciela Fattorini.



Figure 6.5. Festival of the Decapitator held in 2000 on the terraces of the Qalasaya complex. Photograph by Elizabeth Klarich.

The first step in attempting to reduce this damage was to develop and implement programs that would take place at the archaeological site. Over the past few years, the central sunken court area, representing the earliest large-scale public architecture constructed in the Lake Titicaca basin, has been the location of a number of festivals and smaller-scale local events, such as Catholic masses. The Fiesta del Hatun Ñaqaq (Festival of the Decapitator), based on modern interpretations of a common theme in Pukara iconography, has been sponsored by the INC and local authorities on the platforms and courts of the Qalasaya. Hundreds of school children participate in dramatic reenactments using locally produced Classic Pukara period ceramic replicas (Figure 6.5). Dance groups from across the northern Lake Titicaca basin perform at the festival, and it has also included a cooking contest of local dishes. Overall, these events have been quite successful; there has been high attendance, and responses by the participants and attendees are generally positive. However, there also have been some critical comments about the focus on violence in the staging of the festival. Why does it focus on the Decapitator versus other images from Pukara iconography (see Sergio Chávez 1992 for a detailed discussion of Pukara ceramic iconography)? This is an issue that needs to be further explored and considered by the organizers when modifying the script for subsequent festivals.

In relationship to site preservation, the most critical elements of the event are the setting and intended audience. If the archaeological site is to be viewed as relevant, as a resource to be used and an area to be protected, events such as these seem to be a productive first step in that direction. The audience at the Fiesta de Hatun Ñaqaq is almost completely comprised of local residents from the town and surrounding region. This contrasts markedly with the audiences of foreign tourists that predominate larger festivals such as *Inti Raymi* in Cusco and the solstice celebration at Tiwanaku in Bolivia.⁶ Whether or not the audience changes and/or expands will be influenced by a number of factors, including the outside role of tourism companies in Puno and Cusco and, ideally, the desires and goals of community members.

School-age children in Pucará and surrounding communities comprise a major audience for educational programs targeting site preservation. The local grade school is located at the eastern edge of the archaeological site, and this facilitated guided visits by students during the 2001 fieldwork season. The INC, in conjunction with local teachers, is in the process of developing a formal unit in the curriculum about *Cultura Pukara*, to be incorporated into the study of Peruvian history. Many children also have independently visited the site to ask questions and see the excavations on their walk home from school. These interactions, however informal, are an integral element of building stronger, long-term relationships between the INC, researchers, and local community members.

Tourism

The town of Pucará, located on the asphalted route of Cusco-Puno-La Paz, seems like the ideal stopping point for tourists en route. For several years tourist buses have stopped in Pucará, but only long enough to buy the famous *toritos* from the few families that monopolize the ceramics trade on the highway. In spite of the museum, the monumentality of the Pukara site, and the presence of an impressive colonial church in Pucará, attracting attention from local tourist companies has been a struggle. Visiting researchers and museum staff have utilized a number of techniques, including talking to the tour companies stopped on the highway, visiting tour-company offices in Puno, and giving guided tours to groups that visit the site during field projects. Over the last few years, the number of visitors has increased substantially through the support of a few tourist companies in Puno, but because it is a six-hour trip from Cusco to Puno, the groups are often rushed and do not visit both the museum and the archaeological site.

The most productive method we have found for increasing site visits is to work directly with the tourism students and guides from companies in nearby Puno. For example, after completion of excavations in 2001, Elizabeth Klarich had the opportunity to give a public lecture to several hundred students and tour operators at the university in Puno through the sponsorship of the local tourism bureau. The talk was followed up by visiting the site with interested tourism students, one of whom was developing a thesis project for a tourist circuit incorporating Pucará, Lampa, and the church of Tintiri in the northern Lake Titicaca basin. Another positive result of coordinating with various authorities, specifically the vice president of the Region of Puno, has been the proposal of a regional by-law that requires regional tourist companies to promote the museum and site within the tourist circuit of Lampa-Pukara-Ayaviri. Developing interest in the archaeological site, museum, and town is a slow process, but significant progress has been made toward putting Pucará/Pukara on the tourist map along with Sillustani, Raqchi, and other nearby archaeological sites over the past few years.

Discussion

Many years of work remain to be conducted in the town of Pucará and at the Pukara Archaeological Complex. Future plans include continued excavations at the site, museum development, and sponsorship of activities that promote community participation. Funding for museum development is being pursued from outside sources, both public and private. One of the goals is to sponsor interdisciplinary internships and cultural exchanges at the facilities. It is the vision of the INC-Puno to treat the Pukara museum as a pilot project for how to develop local and site museums throughout the region. By moving beyond the national borders of Peru and the geographical boundaries of the high Andes, important insights have been shared by a range of parties, and new ideas have been sparked for paths to pursue in Pucará. We look forward to continued dialogue with the community of Pucará, fellow researchers in the Andes, and museum specialists confronting similar issues across Latin America.

Acknowledgments

We thank Helaine Silverman for organizing the SAA symposium and recognizing both the relevance and the challenges of developing local and site museums. The feedback we received from other participants and the discussants at that symposium gave us a number of ideas for future directions to explore at

the museum and in the town. We also thank Charles Stanish of UCLA, graduate students Amanda Cohen and Elizabeth Arkush of UCLA, Dr. Luis Repetto Málaga (International Council of Museums), the INC-Peru, Elizabeth Cornu, Puno tourism bureau, Edwin Castillo from the Pukara museum, regional and local authorities, a number of students, and the community members who have shared their time, advice, and support of this monumental project. Mil gracias!

Notes

1. As preferred by local people, the name of the modern town is Pucará (with a *c* and the accent on the final *a*), while the name of the archaeological site and ancient culture is Pukara (with a *k* and no accent on the final *a*), meaning “fortress” in Quechua and Aymara. Both spellings for both the ancient and the modern settlement appear throughout the literature; we are attempting to standardize usage.

2. There is some debate about the actual origins of the famous *toros de Pucará*. It has been argued that beliefs surrounding the *toritos* represent the transfer of Inca ritual practices involving llamas to the Spanish bull (Litto 1976). General consensus is that the *toritos* were originally produced in the village of Checca Pupuja, about five kilometers from Pucará, but the location of the latter on the Cusco-Puno train line and near the main highway led to the spread of the misconception that the bulls were actually produced in Pucará (Litto 1976: 32).

3. Results of the archaeological excavations are published in two *licenciatura* theses (Rolando Paredes and Ernesto Nakandakari) and a report to the National Science Foundation of the United States (Wheeler and Mujica 1981).

4. The hills behind Pukara are one of the few areas in the Lake Titicaca basin with stands of native trees. Their preservation is a goal of environmentalists working in the region, but it is a struggle because of a lack of fuel for firing pottery and other daily household tasks.

5. In Nazca, located on the south coast of Peru, community potters are an integral element of the local tourist industry through the production of archaeological replicas.

6. Helaine Silverman (2002) provides a detailed and thoughtful discussion of historical reenactments in the cities of Cusco and Nazca, in addition to plans for future events in other regions.