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Proyecto Arqueologico Pukaras De Colca  
In Cooperation with Vanderbilt University  
Tuti, Peru  
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I recently completed an internship with the Proyecto Arqueologico Pukaras de Colca (Colca Pukaras Archaeological Project), a project that took place in the Colca Valley of Peru and was sponsored by Vanderbilt University. The project was part of a PhD dissertation conducted by Lauren Kohut, the director of the project, and was ultimately under the supervision of Dr. Steve Wernke.

This summer, the project focused on the mapping and excavation of a single fortified settlement called Auquimarka in the upper part of the Colca valley in between the modern towns of Chivay and Tuti. This particular settlement was occupied during the Late Intermediate Period (c. 1000-1450 CE), prior to and during Inka expansion in the area. During the conquest and expansion of the Inka empire, the local ethnic group and inhabitants of the site entered a period of increased conflict and began to heavily fortify the settlements through the construction of thick defensive walls and lookout structures on the tops of hills. The purpose of this project was to analyze how the changed settlement patterns affected transportation throughout and between the settlements in order to better understand how increased conflict changed relationships on the micro-level. This was accomplished by using a variety of mapping techniques, excavation, and pottery analysis.

My main responsibility the first few weeks on the project was to assist in making detailed maps of the site, because I arrived at the very beginning of the project. To map the site, we used tools such as the Total Station, a device that uses a laser and a prism to find exact XYZ coordinates of points on the site. Using the Total Station, we mapped

the walls of the settlements, the interior and exterior of all of the structures, and the coordinates where the surface collections took place. In addition to operating the Total Station, I worked with two Peruvian archaeologists to conduct surface collections within radiuses of over 200 random points throughout the site. In surface collections, we found ceramic sherds, small lithics, and occasionally a tool made of animal bone.

During the latter weeks of my internship, I got the chance to excavate at a singular unit that was inside a collapsed structure. First, we had to clear any vegetation growing over the unit and the rocks that were a part of the collapse. Then, we set up our unit, which was a perfect square with 2 meter sides. When digging, we had to use a XYZ grid system to record the nature of the collapse, the exact provenience of any artifacts we found, and any changes in the soil color and texture. In my unit, we found two prepared floor surfaces that were built on top of one another, a practice typical of settlements that are occupied for long periods of time. In addition to the floors, we found many carbon deposits and ceramic sherds that gave us clues to how this particular structure was used over time. Through analysis of the data we collected, we concluded that the small, round, stone structure, only about 3 meters in radius, was a domestic structure used for sleeping and cooking.

In addition to mapping and excavating, I was responsible for the documenting, labeling, and conducting light analysis on ceramic sherds and adding this information to a database of over 2000 ceramic sherds found in the area. On the last day of the internship, I got the chance to assist with a test run of an aerial mapping technique that used a kite and a camera as a way to get close-scale aerial photography of the site, making it much easier to map the larger sectors of the site.

This experience was an incredible learning opportunity on many levels. First and foremost, living and working in a foreign, non-English speaking country presented challenges in day-to-day life that forced my already intermediate Spanish to reach a more advanced level, especially since most of the members of the project only spoke Spanish. Second, long days in the field were an unexpected obstacle. Our workdays were 9 hours long in the high altitude Peruvian winter, with windy mornings and intense sun in the afternoons. Last, the fact that this was my first experience working at an archaeological field site in a group of very experienced archaeologists forced my personal learning curve to increase rapidly. Learning to overcome physical discomfort, language barriers, and lack of experience in archaeology was an incredible experience that led me to develop in all of these areas at a much faster rate. I learned to thrive in stressful situations while still enjoying myself and exploring a new country.

This internship posed archaeology as a potential academic and career field for me to pursue seriously; I am planning on taking more related classes at Sewanee and looking into other opportunities to work on sites both abroad and on the Domain. In addition into my increased interest in archaeology, I learned that working in any sort of career that involves fieldwork, international travel, and working with a small, dedicated team would be a great career for me as well. This summer spent working on the project was an excellent way to kickstart my career in archaeology if I choose to do so, while still allowing me to develop useful skills that can be applied to almost any situation.