

## Review Commentary

**Comments on Alvaro Higuera's "Archaeological Research in Peru: Its Contribution to National Identity and to the Peruvian Public," (*Journal of the Steward Anthropological Society*, 23(1/2):391-407 [1995])**

By

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Higuera discusses three themes in his article that mirror those of recent publications by his colleagues in other Latin American countries: the need for archaeology to play a fundamental role in creating the identity of a past that the people of the nation can take justified pride in; the conflicts between national metropolitan archaeologists vs. national provincial archaeologists; and the conflicts between national archaeological agendas and foreign archaeological programs. Indeed these same three arguments dressed in slightly different verbiage, are the basis of the informative Point-Counterpoint argument by Ernesto Salazar and his colleagues in a recent *Society for American Archaeology [SAA] Bulletin* (Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 3, 14-15, 1996).

From comments my colleagues make, I think that many younger North American archaeologists have difficulty in empathizing with these issues, as such topics either don't occur in the United States, or are of a historical past no longer within the memory of many practitioners in the United States today. For example, the arrogance of the metropolitan archaeologists over their rural counterparts was in fact much an issue in the U. S in earlier generations. The various recent histories of Bureau of American Ethnology and Smithsonian Institution archaeologists make it clear that at the turn of the century, that the field was primarily controlled by a self-proclaimed elite of Washington archaeologists, supported by a Philadelphia-New York-Boston axis, with archaeologists elsewhere clearly relegated to second class status. Half a century later, my professors in Montana, when I first started out in archaeology, keenly felt the discrimination between the big urban universities and the small land-grant institutions, with the perception that for their big city colleagues, that urban = first-rate, and rural = second rate, and remarked bitterly upon it. Today, however, I am not aware of such a ranking. When I broached the idea to a group from mixed institutions at the last Society for American Archaeology meetings in New Orleans, they seemed to feel it was an artifact of the past, and no longer exists. (As an aside, however, I might note that our group included no archaeologists from Junior or Community Colleges; I suspect they might disagree with our evaluation.) But in Peru, as Higuera tells us, it is still a very real consideration.

The conflict between the agendas of foreign archaeologists and national archaeologists is one that, in the United States, scholars basically never experience; as a rule, foreign archaeologists don't conduct excavations here. Higuera points out that in Peru, the local archaeologists are becoming increasingly sensitive to the fact that foreign archaeologists often elect research projects not with the benefit to Peruvian prehistory in mind, but rather with an eye to the necessary publication record for tenure and advancement in the tenure system. One result of this is the local feeling of being victims of "intellectual imperialism". Higuera points out that this is aggravated by the fact that although the norm now is to have "bilateral" projects, with nominal Peruvian as well as foreign co-directors, that few of these projects are actually truly bilateral. Rather the foreigner expects the local co-directors to serve as liaison for bureaucratic matters, to take care of permits,

and local logistics, while the foreign archaeological director retains complete control of the archaeological component of the project. The different agendas of foreign as contrasted to national archaeologists clearly impacts the pattern of development of archaeology in the country.

Perhaps most unfamiliar to United States scholars is the strong feeling that archaeology has to play a critical part in creating an identity for the national psyche. In Canada and the United States, the bulk of the current scholars are not First Americans. Hence, while scholars associated with museums and universities feel it is part of their mission to inform the local populations of the prehistory of their areas, for the most part this prehistory is not envisioned as playing any kind of significant role in the definition of what it means to be a Yankee or a Canadian. We define our national identities mainly on events occurring after the immigrants displaced the indigenous First Americans. In countries like Mexico, with the Maya and Aztec, or Peru, with the Inca, prehistory becomes an integral part of the national identity, and the researches of archaeologists thus take on a political agenda unfamiliar to most of us in northern North America.

The archaeology of Peru is seen as being shaped by an important early twentieth century turf battle between two giants of Peruvian archaeology: Julio C. Tello and Larco Hoyle. Hoyle was a rich landowner from the north coast, while Tello was a mestizo from the central highlands. Thus the apparent academic archaeological argument about whether Cupisnique on the coast, or Chavin de Huantar in the sierra, was the loci of early political complexity, in fact pitted class against class, in one sense a working-class sierra individual with native roots again a landed coastal elite intruder. In this early mid-century conflict, Tello won, and Higuera sees the resulting archaeology as one designed for primarily political purposes. Rather than acknowledging the plethora of different Peruvian states and kingdoms, Tello's chronology emphasized a linear, monolithic Andean heritage, dominated sequentially by three highland polities, one which seemed most fitted to helping to identify a national sense of "Peruvian" culture. Higuera sees this political agenda as retarding our appreciation of the diversity and variation of Peruvian cultures, that national and foreign archaeologists alike have for many years had their archaeological thinking and research guided by a model cobbled together to maximize an identity of a unified "Peruvian" past, rather than one directed at truly seeking to define what Higuera perceives as the "balkanization" that might be more apt as a characterization of several periods of Peruvian prehistory. In Higuera's reconstruction, it has only been in the very recent past that we have finally escaped from the domination of Tello's model, and begun to come to a more dispassionate understanding of the wealth of variations of the Peruvian archaeological record.

## **Bandelier: Behind and Beyond the Journals**

by

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*Bandelier: The Life and Adventures of Adolph Bandelier*, by Charles H. Lange and Carroll L. Riley, 1996, University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City, \$34.95, xii + 263 pages, 3 maps, 28 figures, appendix, index.

A surge in publication has accompanied the recent, renewed interest in the history of American anthropology, and the *Bulletin* is one manifestation of this. Another notable aspect is the publication of biographies and collections of biographical essays of late-19th through mid-20th century archaeologists and other anthropologists.