

# **Andean Dogs and Their Depictions in Art**

by

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Other reports about the pre-Hispanic Peruvian dogs are the ones by Málaga (1977), showing that the mummies and the current aboriginal dogs of the sierra and coast of Peru seem to be equivalent, so that they can be sorted in three types: a) the “helping dog” (from Spanish, “perro de ayuda”) of Guaman Poma de Ayala, with medium size; b) the “pet” (from Spanish, “perro de compañía”), with long body and short limbs; and c) the “miniature dog” (from Spanish, “perro miniatura”), with graceful proportions, which therefore would be similar to the Chihuahua.

There is a surviving breed, the Peruvian hairless dog, that has received Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) recognition and is still a popular breed in the area. However, similarly to other dog breeds described in Leathlobhair et al. (2018), the Peruvian hairless dog has minimal to no pre-contact dog DNA despite its physical similarity to its indigenous forebears.

### Pre-Contact Andean Dog Evidence

Dog representations in Peruvian art date back to the Early Horizon period and can be seen in geoglyphs, textiles, and pottery. In the Jequetepeque Valley, close to the community of Tembladera, the effigy jar depicting a curled-up spotted dog dating from between 700 to 400 B.C. is among the first ceramic images of a domestic dog in Peru (Wylde 2017). Various different societies in the Andean regions all had their own artistic traditions and relationship to



dogs with varying levels of surviving evidence. Some of these will be explored below with relevant examples included.

One society in particular has plentiful examples of dog depictions in Andean art: the Moche (100 CE to 700 CE). Moche art depicts many breeds including the indigenous forebear to the modern Peruvian hairless dogs (left). However, there seems to be the most remaining evidence of the Moche Spotted Dog,

a breed with both short and *slightly* longer hair morphotypes (Vásquez Sánchez et al. 2009). Notably, this dog breed is never anthropomorphized in art, while others



were. Importantly, the only dog breeds depicted in the ceramic art of the

Moche, Chimu, and Chancay are the short-haired and hairless varieties (Vásquez Sánchez et al. 2009). These iconic images of the Moche have been identified and deciphered using information from a particular Moche

vessel. Two naked, cross-legged soldiers are depicted lower right on the roll-out of the vessel; people standing next to them are chopping off their throats while their hands are bound behind their backs. A bird-faced deity and a figure designated as the Warrior Priestess present a goblet to the warrior priest figure, which is positioned upper right in the artwork. Usually, a spotted dog accompanies him. The spotted dog is also seen in scenes depicting hunts as well (Vásquez Sánchez et al. 2009). Another ceramic example shows a group of anthropomorphized dog warriors.



A prominent example from Nazca culture (100 BCE to 800 CE) is of course the enormous dog in the famous Nazca lines.

Another example described in Wylde (2017) is that of a pottery tableaux depicting a procession, he speculates them to be a family, nicely dressed and carrying five dogs and two parrots.

One would be remiss not to mention the excellent mummies found from the Chiribaya (700 CE to ~1500s CE) at Chiribaya Alta. As seen previously these mummifications excellently preserved these dogs. These dogs were buried in large numbers with great care, some even with fine weavings. Wylde (2017) suggests however, this may simply indicate the status of their human owners, rich enough to feed a reasonably large dog.

Another notable site of dog burials is at Pachacamac where the remains of more than one-hundred Andean dogs have been found (Wylde 2017). Particularly interesting are those found at the Cemetery of the Sacrificed Women of the Inca culture. According to Wylde, since the Cemetery of the Sacrificed Women serves a mortuary purpose rather than a domestic one, the collection contains only a small number of faunal specimens (2017). These include two mummified dogs and one mummified parrot, all intentionally buried with the individuals (Wylde 2017).

The Huanca, a significant ethnic group from the Mantaro valley in the central Andean highlands during the Late Horizon, had distinctive cultural practices before falling under Inca rule. According to Wylde (2017), prior to their subjugation by the Inca, the Huanca revered a canine deity, and their fondness for dog meat was so profound that they would go to great lengths to obtain it. During their festivals and dances, they even shaped their skulls into a horn-like form. The Inca, however, quelled the worship of the dog, as they prohibited the veneration of animal idols. These Huanca customs, as documented in the Huarochiri Manuscript, recount a verdict passed by Paria Caca on Huallallo. Huallallo was condemned to eat dogs because of his previous consumption of human flesh, and the Huanca people were instructed to worship him by offering dogs. Consequently, as their

god fed on dogs, the Huanca also incorporated dog meat into their diet, leading to the enduring moniker "dog-eating Huanca" (Wylde 2017).

Contact: Europeans, New, and Old World Dogs

While documentation of the early colonization of the Andes does make mentions of dogs, unfortunately a breed is oftentimes not specified. Neither is their status as a European or Andean dog. This limits the analysis to just attitudes towards dogs more generally for much of the discussion of the colonial period. Guaman Poma de Ayala's 'Nueva crónica y buen gobierno' has several inclusions of Andean dogs. One example was outlined above. Another is a drawing of an Inca herder and with a dog, lending some credence to the notion of the Chiribaya Shepherd Dog actually serving pastoral purposes. Another depicts Guaman Poma on his way to Lima accompanied by two dogs and a horse (de Ayala 1615). This being a post-contact document however, these dogs could easily be new world dogs, the art does not appear detailed enough to tell the breed.



Throughout the Spanish colonies English mastiffs and greyhounds were frequently used to terrorize natives, becoming a fearsome symbol of the conquest (Mastromarino 1984). As per the writings of the Spanish Jesuit Bernabé Cobo in the early-17th century, the dogs utilized in warfare by the Spaniards in the initial stages of the conquest had developed a ferocity comparable to tigers (Cobo 1964). This struck such fear into the Native people that merely the prospect of facing these dogs caused them to faint. However, Cobo observed that over time, Indigenous individuals adapted to the presence of these unfamiliar dogs. By his era, it had become commonplace for every Native household in Peru to have Old World dogs, which were greatly valued. Domenici (2023) speculates that “the adoption of the ever-increasing population of European dogs by Native groups would have eventually led to the diminution” of the indigenous Andean breeds.

It must be noticed however, by the time of Cobo, there were definitive negative qualities associated with dogs. For example Cobo says the howling of a dog was believed to be “an evil omen which foretold their own death or that of their children or neighbors. The omen was especially directed to the owner of the house or place where the hooting or howling was heard. And they made offerings of coca or other things to the birds or dogs, asking these animals to harm their enemies, not them” (Cobo 1964). Cobo also details a plant used “to kill wolves and dogs, giving them to eat meat

that has been in a marinade made from this herb, and when the dog eats it, it starts running without stopping, until, exhausted from running and jumping, it dies”, though he does not detail why this plant would be given to a dog in the first place. While these practices may have been part of Inca attitudes before the arrival and conquest of Europeans, these could also conceivably be impacted by the abuse indigenous people faced from European dogs (Cobo 1964).

Cobo’s writings lack any detailed interaction with an indigenous dog breed, however elsewhere in the Spanish empire, other chroniclers' interactions show an affinity for the indigenous dog breeds of the Americas. Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, while describing the various kinds of dogs found in Central Mexico circa 1570, wrote “...there are other dogs called *tlalchichi*, small and chubby. They are very good to eat...”, implying some assimilation to local customs surrounding dogs (Sagahún 1998). It is unclear whether or not this was also the case in the Andes.

### Reflection and Conclusion

In some ways, I am glad I waited until now to explore this topic in depth. Pre-Contact dogs of the Andean region had a far more complex role in Andean societies than my seventeen year old self would have appreciated. The information in this course and an understanding of different Andean societies were also necessary to understand how dogs fit into this landscape. I saw many connections to class throughout the course of my research, such as the concept of *tinku* where two join together to make something new in the numerous moche vessels that had the two spouts joining into one, or this continuing theme of enormity we can see in the enormous dog in the nazca lines (Stone-Miller 2018). Much of the evidence seen throughout these various different cultures, point to an obvious bond between Andean people and their dogs and a variety of uses for dogs. The use of dogs as hunters, shepherds, and company parallel many western uses of dogs, dogs were obviously more than a simple pet in the Andes. Their depiction alongside warrior priests, hunting, and as anthropomorphized warriors in Moche ceramics implies a spiritual significance and some understanding of these dogs as strong or as warriors. Their intentional mummification and burial (with textiles which we know are a very valuable form of art) in multiple societies also points to their being highly cherished in life and after death.

The colonial period created dramatic shifts in all aspects of the Andean landscape (reminiscent of the term *pachakutic*), including dogs. The introduction and adoption of Old World dogs and their terrorizing of indigenous people, are the much more well known parts of dog history. However, as we discussed previously in class, art can serve as a form of documentation. In the Nazca lines, Moche ceramics, Guaman Poma’s drawings, scenes, and various mummies, Andean Pre-Contact dogs live on in our memory, as long as we find them.

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