

PART III
THE ART OF CHAVÍN



6.

THE ORIGINAL CONTEXT OF THE YAUYA STELA

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The Yauya stela is one of the largest and most impressive Chavín-style stone sculptures known to archaeologists. Discovered by Julio C. Tello in 1919, it has played a central role in discussions of Chavín style, culture, and cosmology for almost a century. Despite its renown, it remains uncertain at which archaeological site this sculpture was originally erected and what cultural processes led to its creation. This article presents an account of my efforts to resolve this question. It draws upon my trips to Yauya in 1974 and 2001, as well as the findings of other investigators who have grappled with this problem. One of the by-products of my 2001 efforts was the rediscovery of an additional fragment of the Yauya stela, a description of which is provided here. Perhaps more important than the documentation of this sculpture fragment, the 2001 research led to the formulation of a plausible explanation of the original cultural context of the Yauya stela and its subsequent history.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The town of Yauya is the capital of a district of the same name in the province of Carlos Fermín Fitzcarrald, department of Ancash (figure 6.1). Situated at 3258 m above sea level (masl) on steep mountain slopes, Yauya is located high

above the deeply incised Maribamba River, located over 1100 meters below (figure 6.2). The Maribamba River is an affluent of the Yanamayo River, which is a tributary of the Marañon River. The lands around Yauya are devoted to typical highland crops such as potatoes, olluco, broad beans, and barley; the lands surrounding the Maribamba are much lower and protected from frosts and consequently well-suited for maize, tropical fruit, and other cultigens adapted to warmer, more sheltered environments. It is a relatively short journey from Yauya to areas of coca cultivation, and some residents of Yauya worked seasonally in these areas during the coca boom. While the immediate environment of Yauya is alien to the animals and plants of the Amazon, the village is only 18 km from the tropical habitats bordering the Marañon where many of these animals flourish. In terms of special natural resources, the Yauya area has silver deposits that were actively mined until the beginning of the twentieth century.

There are no large or well-known archaeological sites at Yauya, but the Inca road that runs across the lower edge of the *puna* lands above the modern town has attracted a fair amount of attention (Ravines 1996:31). Chavín de Huántar, a site with which Yauya is often linked, is located 50 km to the south.



Figure 6.1. The town of Yauya, Department of Ancash

Figure 6.2. View of the deeply incised Maribamba River draining into the Yanamayo River, taken from the District of Yauya



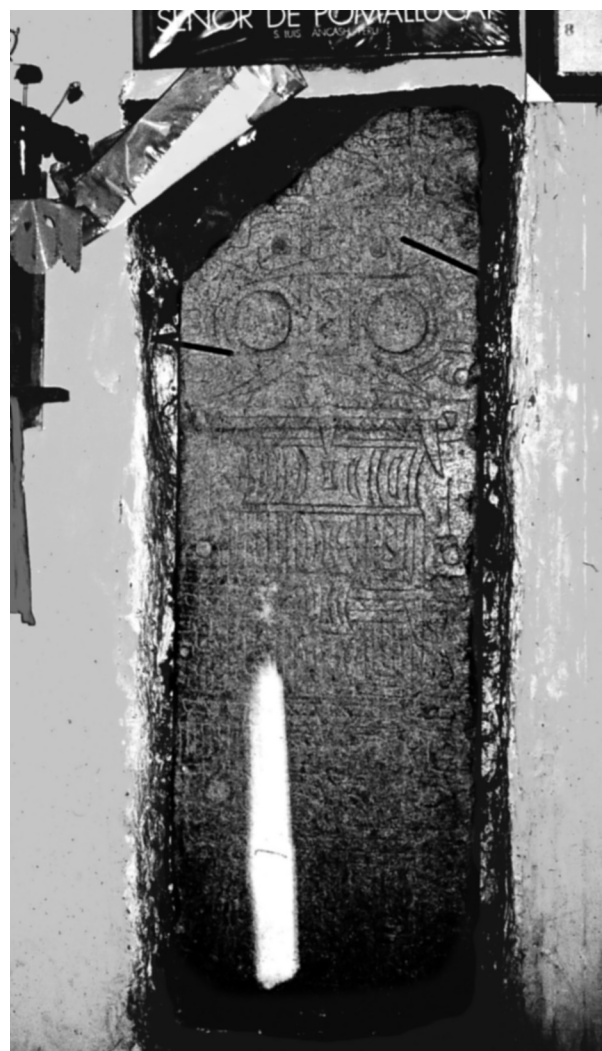
Historical Background

The Yauya stela was encountered by archaeologists during Julio C. Tello's 1919 *Expedición Arqueológica de la Universidad Mayor de San Marcos al Departamento de Ancash*. This investigation of the Marañon drainage focused on many of the early sites in highland Ancash for the first time, including Chavín de Huántar. The Yauya stela, however, was not found at an archaeological site. It had been incorporated by local residents as a threshold or lintel (*umbral*) in the church of the small town of Yauya. Tello's team made a rubbing and cast of the huge sculpture (Tello 1923:290–294; 1960:196), and a replica of it was placed on exhibition at the San Marcos University Archaeological Museum (Tello 1943:156). Tello reported on the Yauya stela for the first time in his article “Wira-Kocha” (1923:290–294). Additional descriptions of it appear in his 1960 volume on

Chavín, in which Tello claims that the sculpture originally came from *Ichik Yauya*, a site supposedly located on the outskirts of Yauya. Unfortunately, he provided no information on how this provenience was established. Moreover, Tello does not offer any description of Ichik Yauya, nor does he include it on his map of the zone's archaeological sites. Judging from my inquiries in 1974 and 2001, the term Ichik Yauya is unknown to modern inhabitants of Yauya. Alexander Herrera (1998:235) reached the same conclusion during his work in the 1990s.

The fragment of the stela encountered in Yauya's church in 1919 measured 165 cm in length, 57 cm in width, and 15 cm in thickness (Tello 1923). Low-relief designs occurred on the block of cut and polished white granite that had been shaped into a parallelepiped form (figure 6.3). The face of the block and its two narrow lateral sides

Figure 6.3. The fragment of the Yauya stela discovered by Julio C. Tello in its 2001 location in a local elementary school in Yauya.



were well polished and served as the base for the incised grooves that delineate zoomorphic figures in classic Chavín style (figure 6.4). The Yauya stela was of special interest to Tello because of its similarity to the carvings of Chavín de Huántar. In Tello's opinion, the image depicted on the stone was an idealized ichthyic or fish-related divinity that symbolized the moon (Tello 1943:156; 1960:196). He considered the Yauya stela to be the best Chavín representation of this divinity, and he related it to other more conventionalized representations of the same supernatural being on the north-central coast of Peru at Punkurí in Nepeña and Cerro Sechín in Casma (Tello 1960:199). Despite the lack of any reliable archaeological provenience, the Yauya stela has played an important role in the definition of the Chavín style. Alfred Kroeber (1944:87), for example, discusses it in his attempt to evaluate Tello's general concept of Chavín. Kroeber, in agreement with Tello, concludes: "The piece is certainly close to Chavín art generally in its concepts and style, and specially close to the Raimondi [Stone]."

Tello's protégé, Rebeca Carrión Cachot (1948: Pls. XIX5, XXXVI), believed along with her mentor that the sculpture represented a fish divinity symbolizing the moon (1948:52), and she included Yauya in her irradiation model for the spread of Chavín civilization based on this single isolated sculpture. Similarly, Gordon Willey (1951:125), in his critical analysis of the Chavín concept, accepted the Yauya stela as one of the 17 sites or areas where "indisputable Chavín stylistic affiliation was manifested." In fact, for Willey, the Yauya stela is the only case of a highland stone sculpture in the Chavín style, besides the carvings at Kuntur Wasi, outside of Chavín de Huántar (Willey 1951:123). Willey (1951:113) writes: "This site [Yauya] in the Marañon drainage north of Chavín de Huántar is represented solely by a carved stela or column, no longer in situ. It is a standing figure of a monster, perhaps a fish or a fish with feline attributes. . . . This solitary find seems to me to be justifiably incorporated within the Chavín style."

It is difficult to disagree with Willey's judgment on this, except to emphasize that there was no known "site" that could be linked to the sculp-

ture that could be placed in the Marañon drainage. It is the main purpose of this article to resolve this lacuna.

John Rowe, using a drawing based on a rubbing of the stela by Fred D. Ayres (figure 6.4), featured the Yauya stela prominently in his classic description of the Chavín style (Rowe 1962, 1967a: Fig.18). Like Kroeber and Willey, Rowe had never visited Yauya and consequently had never seen the stela in person. Rowe, unlike Tello and Kroeber, identified the image on the Yauya stela as a cayman and linked it with cayman represen-

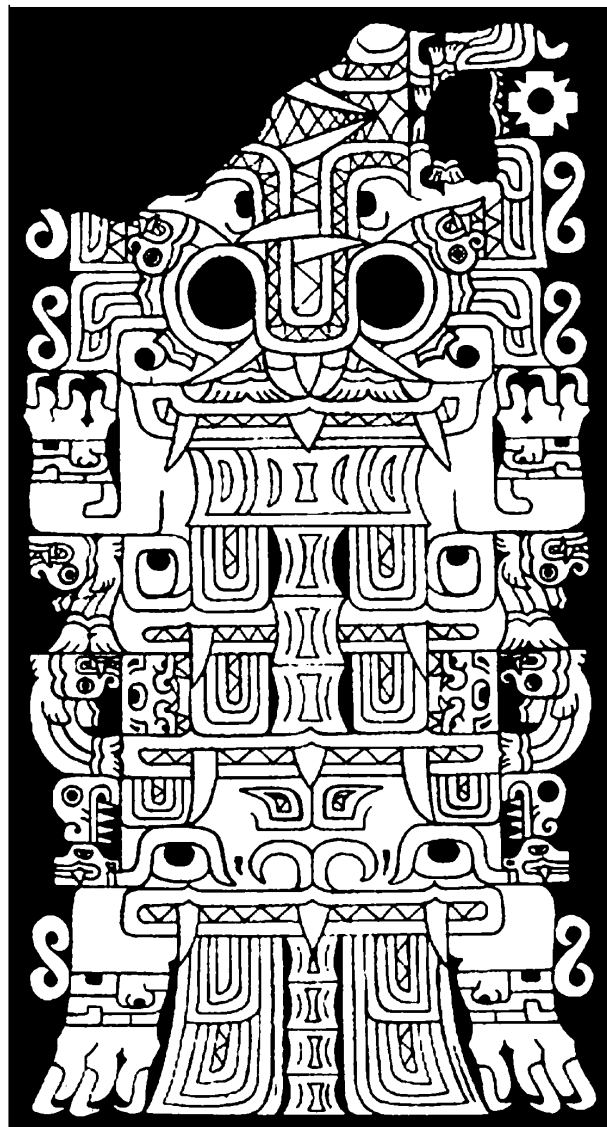


Figure 6.4. Rubbing of the Yauya stela made by Fred D. Ayres. *Courtesy of the AMNH.*

tations on the Tello obelisk and the granite frieze found at the foot of the Monumental Stairway at Chavín (Rowe 1967a:83). Rowe considered the cayman to be the only animal figure in Chavín art that could be considered a deity or important mythological figure because of the way in which it was featured on major Chavín sculptures. Rowe also notes that the tail on Chavín representations of the cayman does not resemble an actual cayman tail. He explains this inconsistency as follows: “[T]his mythical detail may be no more than a misunderstanding on the part of the artists who were not personally familiar with their subjects, caymans occurring only at a much lower altitude” (Rowe 1967a:83).

Perhaps because the village of Yauya was so far off the beaten track, the problem of the undetermined archaeological source for the stela fragment was largely ignored by Kroeber, Willey, Rowe, and others. The sculpture was well known, but discussions of it were inevitably decontextualized and based solely on its iconography, which was in itself derived from rubbings, drawings, and casts.

In 1964 Julio Espejo, another follower of Tello, published a short note on the Yauya stela in which he reported the existence of a second fragment of the sculpture. In this note he wrote: “The stela alluded to is found in the threshold of the church of the town. Its exact provenience is unknown, although its Chavín origin and lineage are undeniable. But in the area there exists no evidence of Chavín [cultural features], nor have the archaeological sites in the vicinity provided additional data on the original piece. Moreover, the distance between Chavín and Yauya is considerable, resulting even now in a true road problem” (Espejo 1964:2).

In this short publication Espejo reported that his informant, Gerardo Vidal, had indicated that he had seen the second stela fragment several years before in the house of Sr. Mancisidor. It was “similar to the one in the church with drawings on one side.” Vidal visited the house and confirmed that it was found there. The sculpture fragment was serving as the pedestal supporting a wooden post that supported the eave of the roof. It measured 57 × 43 cm. Vidal tried to engage it with the large fragment reported by Tello, but it did not fit. However, the kind of the stone, the

type of incisions, and the style of the figures represented matched the other fragment in every detail. Based on the report and a rubbing provided by a Sr. Palacios, Espejo was able to produce a hypothetical reconstruction of the original sculpture that integrated both fragments. A line drawing by Pablo Carrera M. incorporated the new fragment and showed that the Yauya stela features “a dual representation of mythological personages placed face-to-face” (Roe 1974:47); in other words, it showed two matching supernatural beings arranged head to head. There is no indication that Espejo or any other archaeologist viewed the sculpture fragment said to be in the Mancisidor household.

In 1974 I visited the village of Yauya to learn more about the original context of the Yauya stela and explore the possibility of doctoral research in the zone. I had read accounts of the stela by Tello and others and was impressed by its large size and the high quality of the carving, as well as by Tello’s broader argument about the importance of the Marañon drainage in the origins of Chavín. I reasoned that there might be a major Chavín ceremonial center in the area from which the sculpture had been extracted for inclusion in church construction. At the time of my first visit, Yauya was still beyond the national road system, so it was necessary to reach the village on foot from Uchusquillo. The absence of restaurants or lodgings for outsiders created logistical difficulties. Even more problematic was the mood of hostility and civil unrest in Yauya; this was the product of a massacre two years before. According to the stories related to me, Peruvian police had suppressed a peasant uprising against local landowners in 1972. This poorly documented incident occurred in the context of the agrarian reform initiated by the government of General Juan Velasco. Uneducated farmers from the slopes surrounding the town were incensed by rumors of *pishtacos*, light-skinned, fair-haired anthropomorphic beings that kidnap and kill innocent farmers to extract their fat for sale to the industrial world to make the wheels of industry turn (Weismantel 2001). The insurgents also had heard rumors of immense quantities of hoarded food and other provisions in the houses of the Yauya elite. They reacted by storming the town where the more

educated landowners lived, taking several prisoners and decapitating a schoolteacher who was suspected of being a *pishtaco*. Eventually, government troops intervened to liberate the town and the captives from the occupying farmers; in the process, between 5 and 20 insurgents were killed and several of the leaders were imprisoned. A by-product of this event was the abandonment of Yauya by most of the town's elite families, many of whom migrated to Huaraz or Lima.

Not surprisingly, I found less cooperation in Yauya than I had anticipated in 1974, and my plans for future investigations seemed increasingly unrealistic. Nonetheless, I persisted in searching for the source of the Yauya stela for almost a week. With the assistance of Don Domingo Peña and others, I visited several sites, including Tambo Real de Huancabamba, the site from which most local people believed the Yauya stela had been brought. On his visit to Yauya, Federico Kauffmann Doig was likewise told that the stela had been brought from Tambo to Yauya (Kauffmann Doig 1978:261). During my visits to Tambo and other sites near Yauya, I found no Early Horizon cultural materials, nor did I encounter architecture with Chavín-related features. I was able to view the fragment of the Yauya stela, originally published by Tello, which was displayed leaning against the wall of the local school.

In 1998 Alexander Herrera reported on the discovery of another large fragment of the Yauya stela (figures 6.5, 6.6). He encountered it at the Colegio San Diego in the village of Chincho, a town located 4 km northwest of Yauya. Herrera states that he was told that this fragment came from the Montengayoc sector of Ingaragá Mountain. The fragment measures 105 cm in length, 56 cm in width, and 15 cm in thickness (Herrera 1998: 231–233). Like the original fragment of the Yauya stela, the Chincho fragment is a white granite block carved on the front and two lateral faces (figure 6.6). Based on the dimensions, stone, and carving style, there is no question that this piece constitutes the other extreme of the Yauya stela. It does not, however, articulate with the original fragment because of fragments still missing from the central portion of the sculpture. Herrera believed that the diagonal break in the Chincho frag-



Figure 6.5. Photograph of the Chincho fragment of the Yauya stela, with the school guardian in 2001. This fragment is oriented upside down relative to the drawing of it in figure 6.6.

ment could match the break in the piece reported by Espejo, but this could not be confirmed because he was unable to locate the fragment discussed by Espejo (Herrera 1998:234) or other small fragments of the stela mentioned by Tello (1923:Fig. 2). The Chincho piece confirmed the bilaterally symmetric reconstruction proposed by Espejo (1964; compare Roe 1974: Fig. 11), and it was also proof of the large size of the Yauya stela, even when compared with the best-known low-relief carvings from Chavín de Huántar (table 6.1).

Herrera was interested in establishing the source for the Yauya stela, which he refers to as the Yauya-Chincho stela. Toward that end he made inquiries during his investigations. Herrera was told by Donato Dominguez that the stela fragment documented by Tello had been brought to Yauya by the landowner Ponce León Melgarejo from the ruins known as Tambo Real de Huancabamba. According to this account, the

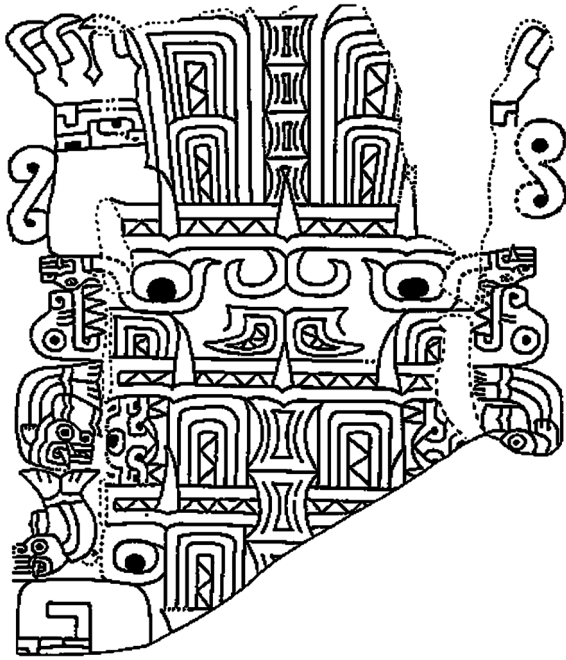


Figure 6.6. Drawing of the Chincho fragment of the Yauya stela by Alexander Herrera

sculpture was apparently found in a field 200 m southeast of the remains of a *tambo* in the community of Jatun Oco, which is located roughly 4 km from the Montengayoc sector. Herrera confirmed that the pottery and architecture at Tambo Real de Huancabamba was late, and that the site included finely finished Inca blocks. He also visited private collections in the town of Yauya that included Early Intermediate Period materials recovered from the Montengayoc sector (Herrera 1998:235, 239, Figs. 5, 6).

Thus Herrera concluded that the extant fragments of the Yauya stela were both recovered in modern times from two different archaeological sites located far from each other. Neither site shows evidence of Early Horizon occupation, and this led Herrera to speculate that perhaps the sculpture was originally brought from Chavín de Huántar to Yauya where it was reutilized, just as a fragment of the Thunderbolt stone in the Pucara style was carried across Lake Titicaca from Arapa to Tiahuanaco (Herrera 1998:238; compare Chávez 1975).

In my opinion, the hypothesis presented by Herrera to resolve the enigma of the origin of the Yauya stela is not a satisfying one. First of all, it does not explain why a one-ton granite statue would be carried over difficult terrain for 50 km (as the condor flies) from Chavín de Huántar to Yauya. Given its weight, it would have to be carried by human bearers, since it exceeds the load that can be borne by llamas and, unlike the case discussed by Sergio Chávez, water transport would not have been an option. Moreover, there was no need to bring fine building material to Yauya since outcrops of granite and other fine-grained volcanic stone exist in the area (Herrera 1998). In fact, a large number of finely carved ash-lars were carved at Yauya for the construction of the Inca *tambo* there. In addition, over three dozen cut and polished blocks of fine-grained volcanic rock from Tambo have been transported to the town of Yauya and have been incorporated into the market, the old hacienda, and the church. This suggests that there was no practical necessity to transport granite ash-lars from distant Chavín de Huántar for “reutilization,” as Herrera suggests, since high-quality stone was locally

Table 6.1. Comparison of Chavin Stela Dimensions

	Length (cm)	Width (cm)	Thickness (cm)
Yauya Stela	300	56	15
Tello Obelisk	252	32	26
Raimondi Stone	195	76	17

available and exploited by late prehistoric peoples.

Moreover, when considered in more detail, the analogy drawn with the case of the Arapa-Thunderbolt stela does not work well for the situation in Yauya. In the case documented by Chávez, a fragment of a large granite stela from Arapa, an important Pucara site on the north shore of Lake Titicaca, was transported mainly by boat to Tiahuanaco, which is located near the south shore of the lake. According to Chávez, the stela fragment from Arapa was a war trophy brought to the emergent political and ceremonial capital at Tiahuanaco and displayed for its symbolic message of dominance (Chávez 1975). In the case of the Yauya stela, it is unclear what the motive would be to carry a one-ton sculpture from the Early Horizon ceremonial center at Chavín de Huántar to a small Inca tambo in Yauya, a zone of little political importance in Late Horizon times. In addition, the Herrera hypothesis does not explain why the two large fragments of the stela were found at widely separated archaeological sites.

Finally, although the Yauya stela is similar to carvings from Chavín de Huántar, it differs in important ways from the 200-odd sculptures from that site. First of all, it was carved on the block's polished face and two lateral sides. At Chavín de Huántar, sculpture is carved on a single face, such as the Raimondi stone; on two faces, such as the cornices that hung from the upper outer walls of the New Temple; or on four sides, such as the Tello obelisk (Tello 1960:Figs. 33, 63, 31, respectively). The Yauya stela is unique in being carved on three surfaces. The back of the sculpture and the narrow sides on the top and the bottom were left blank. Given the large size of the Chavín de Huántar sample, it is reasonable to interpret the difference between the Yauya stela and the sculpture from Chavín de Huántar as an indicator that the stela was carved locally in the Yauya area by someone knowledgeable about and skilled in Chavín stone carving.

The Discovery of the Yauya Stela Fragments

In 2001 I returned to Yauya after an absence of 27 years in the hope of resolving the impasse con-

cerning the origin of the Yauya stela. Accompanied by my friend Urfe Mancisidor, a Yauya-born educator, I was given access to information from a wide range of sources that had previously been unavailable. My initial efforts were devoted to visiting archaeological sites that I had missed during my first visit. I hoped that the detailed knowledge that I had developed over two decades concerning the location of major Initial Period and Early Horizon sites (Burger 1992a) might allow me to locate sites in comparable locations that might be plausible sources of the Yauya stela, despite the lack of early surface material. These efforts proved unsuccessful. The main sites in the area date to the Early Intermediate Period or later (Herrera 2003) and do not resemble Initial Period or Early Horizon sites documented in valleys, such as the Callejón de Huaylas or the Mosna. The setting of the town of Yauya on steeply inclined slopes differs from that of Chavín de Huántar, which is set on a level floodplain, or sites such as Kuntur Wasi or Pacopampa which are set on natural eminences that rise above surrounding areas of level land. The most conspicuous site in the immediate Yauya area is Ushpacoto, a Recuay residential site on a rocky spur overlooking the deeply entrenched Maribamba. Nearby there are small horizontal shaft tombs built into steep rocky cliffs made accessible only because of a recently constructed road that cuts into the rock face.

The slopes separating Yauya from the Maribamba River are too steep for major archaeological sites, although some of them do display evidence of agricultural terracing, probably dating to late pre-hispanic times, and the floodplain surrounding the Maribamba River is likewise too narrow for the construction of a major Chavín site. Private collections in Yauya, such as those of Domingo Ortega and Domingo Peña, feature stone sculpture and pottery from Recuay and later cultures, but no "formative" material. My findings in this regard parallel those described by Herrera (1998, 2003).

Fortunately, interviews with local residents proved more productive than the field reconnaissance. During a visit to Tambo (Tambo Real de Huancabamba) at 3553 masl, I had the opportunity to speak with Máximo Benites, owner of the land



Figure 6.7. Inca building with cut stone blocks at Tambo Real de Huancabamba, District of Yauya

where the original fragment of the Yauya stela was discovered. He confirmed that his ancestor had found the stela in a field while farming and that it had been moved to the church in Yauya at the request of the local *hacendado*. He showed me the spot where it had been found according to his family. Near this piece of land are rectangular stone buildings that incorporate cut stone blocks (figure 6.7); additional loose stone blocks could be seen eroding into a stream that cuts through the site. These blocks appear to be identical in material and masonry technique to the dozens of ashlar in the town of Yauya (figure 6.8), confirming the statements of residents that these blocks had been brought to town from Tambo. The oral tradition, reflected in the site name Tambo Real de Huancabamba, that the stone structures are the remnants of an Inca tambo seems reasonable, particularly in light of the Inca road that crosses this area. It is also supported

by the Inca pottery, lithics (*illas, porras, bolas*, and the like), and metal artifacts that Benites has collected at the site and now keeps in his private collection.

A second and even more informative interview took place with farmer Jesus Morales Solis (August 15, 2001). He claimed to have been the discoverer of the “Chincho” fragment of the stela, an assertion confirmed by other residents of Yauya. According to Morales, he discovered the stela in July of 1991 in his *chacra* (agricultural field) while he was planting potatoes (figure 6.9). The top of the stela was encountered only 15 cm below the surface, but he had to dig down 1.5 m in order to extract the carving. He showed me the site of the discovery; it is located in an area known as Quellcayrumi, the Quechua term for “writing on stone.” This archaeological site is situated at 3828 masl on a narrow ridge near a natural prominence from which the entire Maribamba drainage would



Figure 6.8. Large ashlar block from Tambo Real de Huancabamba currently in the town of Yauya



Figure 6.9. Jesus Morales Solis at Quellcayrumi, indicating the location of the “Chincho” fragment discovered in 1991



Figure 6.10. The archaeological site of Quellcayrumi, the hypothetical original context of the Yauya stela



Figure 6.11. The Early Intermediate Period site of Montengayoc near Quellcayrumi

be visible on a clear day (figure 6.10). Kaolin sherds of the Recuay culture were visible on the surface near the spot where the stela was said to have been found. According to Morales, the teachers from Chincho removed the sculpture with the assistance of their students, without his permission, and carried it to their school. It should be noted that this account differs in some small but crucial details from that published by Herrera. He reports that the stela fragment was found in 1993 in the Montengayoc sector of Cerro Ingaragá (Herrera 1998:231). Montengayoc is a large Recuay site located at 3861 masl about 1 km to the south of Quellcayrumi (figure 6.11). It is characterized by large rectangular and circular stone structures. Another group of ruins known locally as Ingaragá is located half a kilometer farther to the south at 3895 masl. It features rectangular stone buildings. All three sites are located along the same ridge and all show evidence of Recuay or later occupation, with the finest visible masonry present at Montengayoc. The differences between the above account and the information provided by Herrera may be because he obtained it from the teachers in Chincho rather than from the farmer who discovered the stone.

An important implication of the information obtained from Morales is that the Quellcayrumi or Chincho fragment was found 3 km northwest of Yauya, while the Tambo or original Yauya fragment was found almost 4 km southeast of Yauya (figure 6.12). Thus a linear distance of about 7 km separates where the two pieces of the stela were encountered by modern farmers. According to residents, because of the rugged terrain the trip from one location to the other represents a trip of 3 to 4 hours on foot, and much more if a half-ton sculpture fragment were being carried. Thus neither fragment of the so-called Yauya stela was originally discovered in the town of Yauya, although both do come from the district of Yauya.

Rediscovering the Missing Yauya Stela Fragment

As already mentioned, in 1964 Espejo published an account of a small fragment of the stela that had been reutilized in the Mancisidor household



Figure 6.12. Map of the Yauya area showing the location of the places discussed in this chapter. *Courtesy of Archaeology Magazine.*

in the town of Yauya. Unfortunately, Kauffmann and Herrera had been unable to locate it during their visits to Yauya in the subsequent decades. It had never been examined by Espejo and had never been adequately documented or published. During our 2001 visit, Urfe Mancisidor searched in vain for the sculpture fragment in his family home in Yauya and was told that it had probably been removed when the roof was replaced many years before.

Fortunately, Mancisidor was able to draw upon his family's social network to make inquiries about where the carving might be, and on August 14, 2001, Jorge Melgarejo Palacios volunteered that a stone sculpture existed in the unoccupied home of his father, Victor Melgarejo; unfortunately, the room in which the carving was kept had become infested with bees. Despite this obstacle, we were able to extract the piece from the room and, by candlelight in the courtyard of the house, confirm that it was indeed another fragment of



Figure 6.13. The rediscovered fragment of the Yauya stela seen by candlelight in the house of Jorge Malgarejo Palacios

the Yauya stela and that it corresponded to the piece referred to in the 1964 Espejo publication (figures 6.13, 6.14). We documented the fragment by photography and a rubbing was made, before it was returned to the care of Melgarejo.

As noted, his fragment had never been examined by an archaeologist, and Espejo had based his account on a report by Gerardo Vidal. A new description of the piece is provided here along with photographs and a drawing based on our rubbing of the fragment (figure 6.15). The carving was on an irregular pentagonal white granite block. It had been broken from a larger sculpture, but none of the breaks were fresh. Closer inspection revealed that the fragment comes from the central section of the Yauya stela, and only one of the lateral sides is intact. The polished face of the block and lateral side are decorated with incisions

and other features. According to our measurements, the stela fragment is 16 cm thick; the intact lateral edge is 37 cm long, and in its widest section about 50 cm remain of the carved face. If the irregular sculpture fragment is measured without regard to its original orientation, its dimensions are 59 × 44 cm, fairly close to measurements of 57 × 43 cm reported by Espejo. More importantly, the carving on the Melgarejo fragment matches the section of the stela illustrated in Espejo's 1964 publication.

The upper 16 cm of the carved stela face is in fairly good condition, but the lower 26 cm is worn down as though it had been used as a grinding surface (figure 6.13). The face of the fragment shows one of the circular eyes, part of the mouth, and the broad upper fish-like drum-shaped vertebrae of the monstrous creature. Along the pre-



Figure 6.14. The decorated lateral edge of the rediscovered fragment of the Yauya stela, shown (rotated clockwise) on the right edge of figure 6.15

served lateral edge of the piece is a complete S-shaped volute that, like the eye, features recessed circular zones to highlight the motif (figure 6.14). Unfortunately, part of the lateral edge is badly damaged. Basically, the newly documented fragment depicts part of the upper body and head of the supernatural creature carved on the Quellcayrumi (or “Chincho”) fragment (figure 6.15). These two fragments together display the same image as found on the stela fragment illustrated by Tello. Thus the Chavín sculpture from Yauya represents two identical symmetrically arrayed monstrous supernatural creatures. Between the three sculpture fragments now extant, some 90% of the Yauya stela has been recovered and documented (plate 6.1).

There is no information about how the fragment first published by Espejo moved from the Mancisidor house on the town plaza to the Melgarejo house several blocks away or, more importantly, about the original source of the newly documented fragment. However, it seems likely that it represents one of the fragments mentioned but not illustrated by Tello. According to him, these pieces were broken off the original Yauya stela fragment after the sculpture was brought to

the town; the breakage occurred in order to accommodate the block as a threshold or lintel for the church. Tello (1960:196) wrote: “It [the Yauya stela] is a rectangular granite slab that has been intentionally fractured to adopt it to the dimensions of the church doorway. To do this several pieces were separated off or broken, some of which were found at a short distance [from the main sculpture] during the university expedition of 1919, but which could not be reconstructed nor used to determine the dimensions that the original stela had, and even less to understand the secondary figures that would have adorned the head of the idol.”

Since the Mancisidor house was already in existence at the time of Tello’s 1919 visit, one of the loose fragments referred to by Tello could have been brought there as a curiosity or, alternatively, for practical purposes such as reuse in domestic construction.

If this is the case, the proximate source of the third fragment was the same as that of the Yauya stela fragment, which is to say it would have been extracted from Tambo Real de Huancabamba as part of the original sculptural block encountered in their field by the Benites family. It should be

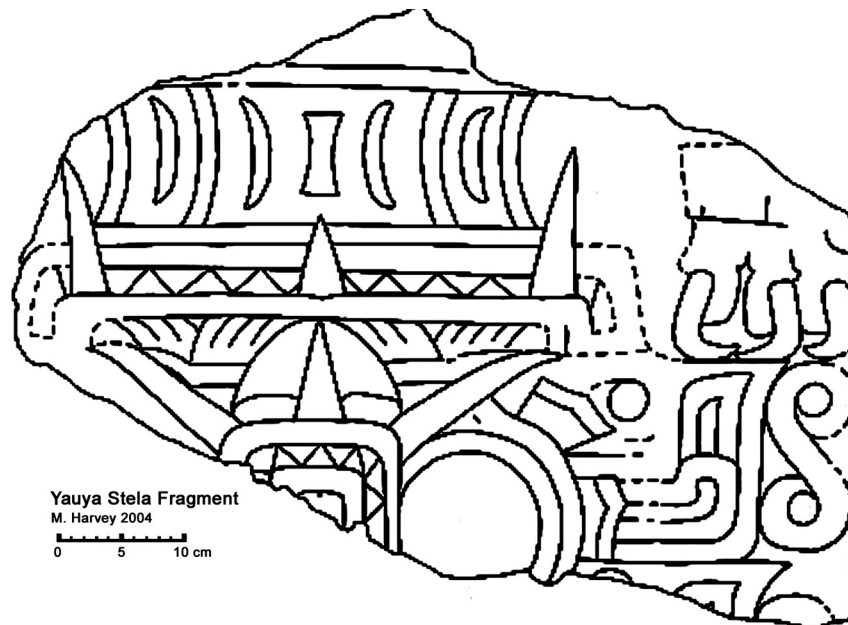


Figure 6.15. Drawing of the rediscovered fragment housed in the home.
Drawing by Heather Hurst.

noted that Tello refers to several small fragments of the stela in the town, besides the large one incorporated into the church and the one illustrated here. These pieces must be found if the stela is to be fully reconstructed and restored. Where these additional small pieces might be remains unknown, but there is a rumor that at least one was removed from Yauya by a schoolteacher when he was transferred. Even without the missing fragments, it is now possible to reconstruct the image on the Yauya stela with confidence. This reconstruction does not differ significantly from the artistic volumetric rendering proposed by Espejo (1964) or the line drawing based on it attributed to Pablo Carrera (Roe 1974:Fig.11).

A New Hypothesis for the Origin of the Yauya Stela

How can we account for the creation of the Yauya stela and the recovery of large fragments of it in two different and distant locations? The hypothesis proposed here is that the Yauya stela was carved in the Yauya area by someone intimately familiar with the sculpture style at Chavín de Huántar, in order to create a unique cult object

for purposes of worship at the high altitude site of Quellcayrumi. Larger than the Tello obelisk or the Raimondi stone (table 6.1), the Yauya stela would have been one of the most impressive carvings of its time. The collapse of Chavín's civilization around 200 B.C. produced a cultural backlash in highland Ancash during the late Early Horizon (Burger 1992a). An alien ceramic style, known as Huaras or White-on-Red, was adopted, and sacred sites were transformed into nucleated villages. At Chavín de Huántar religious sculpture was reused in these secular buildings, regardless of its religious carving. I hypothesize that the shrine at Quellcayrumi was likewise abandoned, and that the Yauya stela was split into two pieces for use in the post-Chavín settlement that developed there. By the end of the Early Intermediate Period or somewhat later, the site was probably abandoned. By the time of the Inca conquest, the Yauya stela had been forgotten and buried for over 1200 years. However, sometime in the Late Horizon, someone digging at Quellcayrumi, perhaps a farmer, encountered one of the sculpted granite blocks buried beneath the surface. Based on our understanding of Inca

statecraft, it is reasonable to posit that if a large cut and polished block was found at Quellcayrumi, it could have been transported by mita workers from this spot 7 or 8 km away for incorporation into the state building complex associated with the Inca highway system at Tambo Real de Huancabamba. The labor required to move the block would not have been a problem for the labor-rich Inca authorities, and the time and effort involved in moving the block would have been considerably less than carving an ashlar of this size from scratch.

If this hypothesis is correct, the Yauya stela was carved during the middle Early Horizon (Rowe's phase D or Burger's Janabarriu phase) for placement above Yauya in a high-altitude shrine at Quellcayrumi. This hypothesis is amenable to archaeological testing through excavations at Quellcayrumi to determine whether or not a Chavín shrine exists at the site beneath the remains of the post-Chavín village. There is precedent in the Chavín de Huántar area for the presence of Chavín sculpture at high-altitude sites, most notably at Pojoc (3850 masl) and Waman Wain (3500 masl). Both sites are located near the upper limits of agriculture overlooking the Mosna Valley (Burger 1982). Like Quellcayrumi, both sites are located on narrow ridges just below the upper limit of Andean agriculture and both offer panoramic views of the valley below.

Chavín sculpture, some carved in white granite, was found at both Pojoc and Waman Wain. Its quality varied from rustic (Burger 1982:Fig. 56) to refined (Burger 1982:Fig. 64), but it reiterated almost all the major themes in the Chavín sculptural corpus. The presence of an incomplete carving suggests that some of it was carved on the spot (Burger 1982:Fig. 68a). There was little ceramic evidence of an Early Horizon occupation on the surface of either of these sites due to the depth and intensity of the later occupation, but fragments of Chavín sculpture did appear, presumably due to their reutilization in later constructions. Deep excavations at Pojoc revealed an Early Horizon component 2 m below the surface, and one unit exposed a Chavín platform of large cut-stone blocks associated with Pacific seashells. Based on the abundant presence of Chavín sculpture and the impressive stone platform at Pojoc,

it can be suggested that small-scale religious architecture featuring stone sculptures was built for worship at high-altitude locations in the Chavín de Huántar area during the Early Horizon. Quellcayrumi resembles these sites and may reflect this same cultural pattern.

If the hypothesis proposed here is correct, the Yauya stela would have been a major cult object at a high-altitude shrine at Quellcayrumi. Because this sculpture is carved on its lateral sides, it can be inferred that it was not designed to be set into a wall as architectural ornamentation. On the contrary, it may constitute a cult object along the lines of the Lanzón or the Tello obelisk. The identification of it as a possible cult object is reinforced by the presence of two cosmograms at the sculpture's central axis. In Chavín art, the cosmogram is represented by a circle within a notched square. This distinctive motif also appears along the axis of the Lanzón and the Tello obelisk. According to Lathrap, the notched square represents the horizontal extent of this world with its four cardinal directions, while the circle sunken in its center represents an orifice in the membrane between the upper and lower halves of the universe through which the flux of supernatural power flows (Lathrap 1985:251).

The central theme of the Yauya stela remains a matter of debate, although some scholars, such as Federico Kauffmann Doig (1978:260–261; 1988:34) and Ralph Cané (1983, 1986), are convinced that the stela represents the Flying Feline (*Felino Volador*) described in the modern myth of Qoa. The dominant view, initially proposed by Rowe (1967a), interprets the image on the stone as a pair of supernatural cayman figures each represented using a split-open pelt-like convention (see Roe 1974:22–23 for criteria distinguishing cayman from feline depictions). According to Rowe (1962:18), of all the animal representations in Chavín art, the carvings of the cayman were the only ones representing a major deity.

The supernatural qualities of the crocodilian figures on the Yauya stela are reflected in the composite or monstrous features that were incorporated, most notably the feline features of the face, the fish-like or ichthyian character of the spine, and the substitution of avian tail feathers of the hawk or crested eagle for the tapering ophid-

ian tail of the cayman. Thus, if the main figure on the Yauya stela is a supernatural cayman, it is a flying felinized cayman with a fish-like vertebral column. The shape of the mouth and the overlapping upper row of canines are strongly suggestive of cayman inspiration, as are the position and form of body, legs, and hands.

Lathrap (1985:246–248) suggests that this representation was based on the *Melanosuchus niger*, or black cayman. The black cayman, in Lathrap's opinion, was selected as a model of the cosmos because it is the dominant aquatic predator wherever it occurs and, more importantly, because it is the ultimate symbol of ecological and social stability on account of its role in distributing nutrients through the lowland river systems of the Amazon and Orinoco. Lathrap specifically identifies the representation on the Yauya stela as the Master of the Fishes (Lathrap 1985:246), an identification that draws plausibility from the eight naturalistic fish that swim alongside the two monstrous crocodilian images on the stela. One of the distinctive qualities of the black cayman, which grows to 18 to 20 feet in length, is that it moves easily between the water and land, often at frightening speed; with the addition of avian tail feathers to the image, the supernatural Great Cayman is shown to have access to all three realms that were recognized in traditional Andean cosmology.

Worship of the Great Cayman spread widely through Peru during the Chavín horizon. It reached the desert along the coast of Peru, far from its natural habitat, and was propagated by

way of painted cotton textiles, such as those found at the shoreline site of Carhua (Roe 1974:Fig. 12; Burger 1993a:58, Fig. 7b) on the Paracas Peninsula). At Quellcayrumi on the edge of the puna, high above Yauya, at 3828 masl, the Master of the Fishes was far from home. Nonetheless, perhaps the worship of the Great Cayman at Quellcayrumi should not surprise us, given its wondrous view of the Marañon drainage on a clear day.

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