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New evidence for ritual and other activities at Chiripa

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Chiripa is located on the south-eastern shores of Lake Titicaca, on the Taraco Peninsula. (slide) It is about 10 km west of the Tiwanaku site of Lukurmata, and about 15 km up and over the peninsula ridge from Tiwanaku itself. The site, as defined by surface evidence today, is about 2 ha in size. It is located on a hill sloping down towards the lake shore (slide), and has been cut into by the Hacienda and its small church (slide). Chiripa was important in Formative and later Tiwanaku development. In 1992 the Taraco Archaeological Project, spent several months testing outside the mound to see if we could encounter evidence of use of the site through time.

There has been a long tradition of archaeological work completed at the site, beginning with Bennett in 1934 (1936), Portugal Zamora in 1940 (Portugal Ortiz 1992), Kidder in 1955 (1956), and Browman 1975-76 (1978). These projects focused their work on the central mound (slide) exposing a series of Chiripa phase rooms surrounding a courtyard (upper house level, Mamani) below a Tiwanaku III stone lined sunken courtyard, with more double walled structures below it, which Kidder called the lower house level or Browman Llusco. Below his lower house level was fill that he called the sub-lower house levels, or Condori (Kidder 1965). Our initial purpose in excavating at the site was not to work on the central mound however, although more information is certainly required from that area to understand both the Chiripa-Formative as well as the regional Tiwanaku phases, but we wanted to pursue areas outside of the mound, in order to learn about what, if any residences, houses, or living areas were present at the site and what these entailed. We knew that both Tiwanaku and Chiripa phase material were at the site, and based on what could be seen on the surface, we chose two excavation areas, one up the hill from the mound (south) and the second, below the mound towards the lake, or north of the

mound. (*slide* of our map). These two areas turned out to be very different and informative.

The most southerly excavation unit is named Llusco, named after the landowner, located up the hill, and the following three units are below the mound, called Santiago I, II, and III, also named after that landowner. In addition we excavated a small 1 by 1 m test pit off the northwest side of the Santiago III unit to get a sense of the natural slope of the hill, as well as the depth of the cultural deposit. In a few places we reached sterile in our two month field season, digging down in 2 by 2 m squares in our areas. From the excavations we believe we have deposits dating from Early Chiripa through Tiwanaku V.

This slide presents the general chronology of the region, with the various names that have been assigned to the phases. Based on the ceramic work of Karen Mohr Chavez (1966, 1988) and the dissertation of Lee Steadman at Camata, Peru (1995), we will be using the central column nomenclature seen in this slide, Early, Middle and Late Chiripa, followed by the Tiwanaku phases; I, III, IV and V, although absolute dates from our excavations are due to be run this summer. These phases for the Chiripa sequence at this point are based on Browman and Kidder's work, recalibrated by Lee Steadman, in addition to Mohr-Chavez's late Chiripa dates. The Tiwanaku sequence is based primarily on Kolata and Kidder at Tiwanaku, Bermann at Lukurmata, and Steadman at Camata. It is important to note that we think that Tiwanaku I ceramics are partially contemporaneous with Late Chiripa from 200 years from 300-100 B.C..

From our excavations and analyses thus far, I think we can see that people lived at or very near Chiripa throughout what we call the Chiripa phases. They made artifacts of local material and design, while they also imported certain materials from a long distance. What also seems clear is that some local artifactual traits continued during the Tiwanaku times in the region. During the later Tiwanaku times, the site itself has some Tiwanaku traits such as the sunken temple and new artifact styles, yet it also displays a noticeable amount of local continuity and individual style. While the people who utilized Chiripa surely were incorporated into the Tiwanaku stylistic and probably political sphere at some level, with evidence of Tiwanaku I-V on the site, they seemed to maintain some local autonomy, which is what we hope to study in future seasons at the site.

The 1992 excavations were completed by excavating in individual loci, each with an assigned cultural context. All loci were associated with each other by their relational deposition to the surrounding loci. Harris matrices were then constructed for each of the 4 excavation areas. Thus far in our analysis, we have concentrated in the two areas where we have the most intact proveniences, and thus today I will concentrate on the Llusco and Santiago I areas. Areas Santiago II and III are much more disturbed than the upper two areas by more agriculture as well as historic hacienda activities. Santiago II seems to be primarily an area for ritual burials of more modest types than found in the mound, given that none of the burials had any grave goods. Santiago III begins with a Middle Chiripa midden with much of the deposit being formed and reformed in the Tiwanaku phases, including the Tiwa I and III phases, these two Tiwanaku phases have the same plain wares. There are also Tiw IV and V burial pits in this area. Santiago I (slide) has three main floor zones, 7, 5, and 3, with fill in between, dating from the Middle Chiripa through the Tiwanaku phases. There are a series of small stone foundation walls and burial pits. Llusco also has a floor and walls, dating to only one phase, the Late Chiripa phase.

I would like to track some new results we have gained from our excavations about the Chiripa phases as well as the effects of Tiwanaku on the site through our results.

The Early Chiripa phase was only identified in the lowest levels of Santiago II, uncovered in a very small area. (slide 9) This assemblage includes slightly inclined neckless ollas with rims thickened on the interior, similar to those ceramics uncovered and described by Browman. The ceramics are fiber tempered, but with a larger proportion of mica than in the upper Chiripa levels. Red slips are rare and no decorated wares were found in our small sample. This small evidence however does suggest that people were doing things across a larger area and not just in the mound area at this time.

We found more evidence for The Middle Chiripa phase 900-600 B.C. in our excavations, including a plaster floor in Santiago I, with burials within (slide of matrix, then slide of the floor ). Much of the evidence looks quite domestic, as if many daily activities were taking place in the area. On this patchy plaster floor there is evidence of burning and ash. One Middle Chiripa burial was covered in tortora reeds, (Locus 871), and had 40 finely made lapislazuli (azulite or sodalite)

beads, the stone originally being from Northern Chile. The beads obviously suggest that exchange in long-distance goods existed. Of note too is that Lapis continues to be worked into beads throughout the sequence at Chiripa, suggesting a continuing interest in this particular specialized good. This Middle Chiripa floor is interestingly associated with a stone lined terrace cut into sterile, stepping west towards the local seasonal stream. (Slide) There is some Middle Chiripa midden on top of the lower surface, covered then with Late Chiripa material (slide of matrix).

(Bot slide) The domestic plant remains are dominated by *Chenopodium*, with no evidence of maize. The ceramic assemblage includes fiber-tempered wares, with some large quartz temper and some continuation of mica temper but less than previously. (Slide 8) Both red slips and burnishing exist, and decorated specimens are rare. Vessel shapes are comparable to the later Late Chiripa wares, and include both direct and thickened rim ollas.

The Chiripa projectile point industry is characterized by convex-sided, concave base bifaces, which were manufactured almost exclusively from small cobbles of alluvial chert present on and around the site. (slide) There is a wide variability in the assemblage, suggesting that the sequence might further be refined. At present, the mixed nature of the Tiwanaku levels does not allow us to say that concave bases were no longer manufactured in Tiwanaku times. There are some Chiripa projectile points (slide) made out of obsidian, demonstrating that while obsidian was scant, it was brought onto the site early on. Reduction patterns indicate that the raw material was obtained in small nodules and reduced on site. Some very small obsidian flake tools were produced, probably employing bipolar percussion, but the majority of obsidian artifacts are projectile points. Larger points almost always have substantial remnant flake surfaces on one side or the other, indicating that they were produced from very small flakes (indicate slide). The few obsidian cores in the assemblage (slide) are quite small, retain a considerable amount of cortex, and have only a few flakes removed. The nature of obsidian exchange in the Titicaca Basin is very poorly understood, and should be a focus of further research.

The Late Chiripa phase 600-100 B.C. was identified in all 4 excavation units. The ceramic assemblages, however, were distinct in the area to the south of the mound, (Llusco), in comparison with the north. The vast majority of the Late Chiripa decorated wares were found in the Llusco area. Ceramics in the Late Chiripa levels

in the Santiago area were similar in paste and finish to the Llusco area wares, but there was a larger proportion of ollas, jars, and sooted utilitarian wares (slide 6), again suggesting domestic activities were taking place in that area of the site. There was two small patchy sections of plaster floor in Santiago I that associates with this phase. ( red in slide of matrix, zone 5). Two complete Late Chiripa unpainted but burnished ollas, both showing evidence of use over the fire (slide), were found in a large pit with plastered walls. associated with this floor. The botanical remains from this area (slide) suggest daily activities with that food being deposited as well as fuel regularly present.

Large mirrors made of polished volcanic stone (slide) has only been found in this phase. None of these have been discovered sufficiently intact to allow a determination of their circumference. The mirrors are of an imported olivine basalt and are ground to a high polish. The majority of them were found in the Llusco area, although several fragments were uncovered between the Santiago I's Middle and Late Chiripa floors, and a few fragments in Santiago III's lower levels.

What is of particular note in this Late Chiripa phase is the Llusco area itself and what it seems to be. The first striking aspect of this area is its rectangular dark soil shape along a north-south axis, within a redder soil agricultural field (slide). Secondly, we now know that the ceramics from this area, down to sterile, are all from this one cultural phase. In that area, an area of approximately 4 by 4 m was excavated, and within it a very substantial stone wall was uncovered running N-S along the eastern side of this darkened area (slide). To the north, abutting it is a less substantial stone wall, running E-W, right angles to the large wall (slide). Within this corner, there is a well made white plaster floor, with inclusions of burnt earth and orange plaster (slide). From the floor evidence, the structure seems as if it was quite formally used, no hearths or even ashy areas (slide of matrix). Further, the eastern walls were built within a cut made into sterile soil. The west of the dark area also shows sterile soil close to the surface, suggesting that the whole rectangular area was cut into sterile, in other words, was semi-subterranean. Thus we tentatively think that this area might be a ritual sunken temple, much like that recently excavated by Sergio and Karen Chavez near Copacabana.

In addition, the ceramic material above and below the floor of this temple is directly comparable to that described and illustrated by Bennett (1936) Mohr Chavez (1966)

and Browman (1980, 1981) from the Late Chiripa phase, Mamani, Upper House levels, those associated with the ceremonial sunken courtyard and houses within the mound. (slide 3) Decorated ceramics consist mostly of the classic Chiripa cream on red painted ware, found mostly on large, straight walled, flat-bottomed bowls with the characteristic Chiripa thickened rims (slide 4) a lesser number of black and cream on red painted wares were also found. (slide 5) Other specimens, both bowls with direct rims and trumpets, have rectilinear incisions on an unslipped black or red slipped surface, while others have zoomorphic modeled decoration. Other vessel shapes found in this sector include ollas and jars with direct or thickened rims, and bowls with low ring bases. All specimens have fiber-temper, characteristically with large angular quartz inclusions and burnished surfaces. Besides the very common decorated ceramics, there are a lot of the labor-intensive polished mirrors made from exotic material which would seem to provide further evidence of its ritual importance. (slide of bots) Further, when looking at the bots between this area and the Santiago I Chiripa phase data, we see that virtually no fuel was used as compared with Santiago, while food was deposited in this area. Thus, it seems more and more clear that this southern area, well off the mound was a very special ritual area.

The Tiwanaku I phase is primarily defined by ceramics, occurring in mixed fill but also in the Santiago III and test pit areas. Within the collections there are few decorated ceramics. Decoration at Chiripa consists primarily of a band of red slip on the exterior rim of convex bowls, often with horizontal handles at the rim. Whole vessels from burials include a small straight-walled bowl (slide 2) and an unusual jar form. Tiwa I ceramics are predominantly manufactured in a light brown past containing both fiber and a high quantity of mica, with an incomplete burnish or smoothed finish on the exterior. A problem still is that the plain wares of Tiwa I and III are identical and only decorated ceramics can distinguish these two phases.

Tiwa III-Qeya also is found primarily in Santiago III, and in mixed fill. Several burials had 1 to 3 whole ceramic vessels, mostly of brown or gray unslipped plainwares, including jars and straight-walled bowls, with a fairly high percentage of fiber-tempered specimens. Most of the decorated ceramics from this phase consist of scallop-edged open bowls, often with incision on the scallops (slide 1). Qeya polychrome wares are rare here when compared with Lukurmata (Bermann 1994).



Tiwanaku IV and V phases must be viewed together because the Tiwanaku ceramics at Chiripa are noticeably different than those at the center, and have not been able to be divided up temporally as yet. We do have a white plastered floor in Santiago I with several fragment of walls (slide, slide photo). Throughout this floor and the fill below, as well as in Santiago III we found a series of burial pits, some with Tiwanaku V ceramics, suggesting that this area was utilized more intensively for a burial area, though there were several Chiripa burials in Santiago I and II. The burials tended to be in two forms, complete, flexed bodies in stone lined pits (slide) and partial-cranium and long bone secondary burials with ceramics, wrapped in tortora reed mats. In addition, there were animal burials also in these upper layers. There were few ceramics from the site of Tiwanaku found in our excavations approximately 30% of the Tiwanaku assemblage, most decorated ceramics are what Sonia Alconini is calling Tiwanaku regional. This new type has three characteristics, it has the same morphological shape as utilitarian wares from Tiwanaku, including keros and bowls with inverted walls, with thicker, cruder walls (SLIDE 1). It has heavier paste with lots of mica and white quartz reflecting a continuation of the local Chiripa ceramic tradition. And thirdly, the decoration is distinct from Tiwanaku ceramics in where the designs are placed and the motifs employed. The motifs have undulating lines (slide 3), sometimes alternating with right angled lines, forming a cross (slide 2) or in the form of an N (slide 4). The most distinct trait of this local type is that the designs are on the interior of the bowls, rather than the outside as found at Tiwanaku. Such a different design position suggests a more small scale interaction with the ceramics, people looking at the bowls directly in front of them, rather than for show from farther away. This interior trait is not found in other local types either, such as at Lukurmata or in trade wares onto Tiwanaku.

Other new traits that enter the record with these two Tiwanaku phases are the triangular barbed projectile points that also occur at Tiwanaku. Another characteristic Tiwanaku artifact which does not occur earlier are the “trompos” (slide). These are small conical objects made of soft stone found throughout the altiplano and in the western valleys. Other curious artifacts are small bowls sculpted of lumps of soft kaolinite, available at local outcrops and seems to be the same material that the plaster floors were made out of. (slide) These bowls are generally broken and mixed in fill. Larger and more complete varieties of these have been found in the Tiwanaku excavations. In general, the lapidary industry and



raw material usage does not change through time, but there is an increase in the presence of shell. Agricultural implements and expedient flake tools were manufactured from the local alluvial quartzite cobbles, throughout all deposits that we excavated. The only tool material that was imported was the rare obsidian. Thus the evidence suggests that people inhabiting Chiripa are continuing to make and use the same stone tools in the same manner through time, especially ground stone. The botanical analysis for these later times is still incomplete (slide) but there continues to be evidence for food preparation, much like in the earlier phases in the Santiago I area.

Thus, while there is evidence for Tiwanaku influence on the residents of Chiripa, there is also clear evidence for local activities and traditions continuing. We think that the circumlaucustrine peoples managed to maintain their identities through objects such as ceramic production and use and agricultural activities, while they incorporated new items within their material culture as well as new burial rituals.