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Languages of the Americas 3

The Languages of Peru: their past, present and future survival

An edited transcript of a talk given to the Anglo Peruvian Society, London
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I INTRODUCTION

I am very grateful to the Anglo Peruvian Society (London) for the invitation to give this talk.¹ I am going to use the opportunity to provide an overview of the many indigenous² or regional languages spoken in Peru and to focus on some of the more recent work on the Quechua and Shipibo languages.³ By going online it is hoped that something is added here to the general debate⁴ regarding regional and often endangered languages and that these texts will be of use to an emerging education network supported by diasporic (Latin American) cultural associations⁵ in Europe. This talk has been designed to follow on from one given in Paris by César Itier.⁶

The Quechua-speaking areas on this map are clustered into three broad groups: Ancash (north-central highland) Quechua (31, 39, 60, 77, 79 on the map); the Quechua spoken in some of the Amazonian areas (25, 36, 56, 61, 71, 80); and some mixed dialects (17, 47) in the north-western part of Peru. So Quechua somehow seems to have got itself in very different varieties into very different locations and it is a challenge to the linguist to explain how that came to happen.

Along the Ecuadorian border you will find a grouping of languages which is called Jivaroan¹⁰ (1, 2, 19, 38). Panoan (22, 51, 68, 76, 85)—perhaps the most accessible of the eastern groups—is found along the Brazilian border and the Ucayali river. Other notable language families referred to in this northern map include Tupi (30, 63), Peba-Yaguan (84) and Arawakan (13).¹¹ This latter family dominates the southern lowland map, which will be dealt with after putting Peru into an international comparative context. The next section poses the question: is Peru unusual in having so many languages?

2. Peru language diversity compared worldwide

Countries with the greatest number of languages



Image ii). Source: Courrier International (March 2003, Paris). Review of 6700 languages worldwide. XXX The number of languages spoken in the country. A dialect 'becomes a separate language' when immediate inter-communication is impossible.

Even the strict “lumpers,” the linguists who prefer to lump or combine similar languages or language-dialects into one category will agree that there are over sixty languages spoken in Peru. This chart claims ninety-six for Peru. And that makes Peru—for its size—one of the most diverse countries, linguistically, in the world. There are countries in the list, which really are almost sub-continent or continent in themselves like Australia or simply large countries: Mexico and Indonesia for example. Papua-New Guinea has the exceptional number of 817 or thereabouts. Either way Peru comes into, as it were, the big league of linguistically diverse countries. This table comes from a review, written in Paris for *Courrier International* (March 2003), of 6700 languages. And it is “language” that is meant, in the sense that a speaker of one “language” cannot understand someone speaking the “other language.” This is perhaps similar to the situation, say, of a French-speaker and a Spanish-speaker. Of course, if they really struggle, they can probably communicate after a week or so. But there is not immediate inter-comprehension between the two parties. And that is really what a linguist means by a separate language. It could be noted, of course, that even very “modern” countries such as the United States have not altogether “rid themselves of their native languages” —176 still there a century after Wounded Knee. On the other hand a Ken Loach film using “native” Glaswegian needed sub-titles in English when shown in the US.

We are particularly aware as English speakers of the worldwide variety of accents and dialects in the language, which—unless you find yourself in the backstreets of Kingston, Jamaica or the backwoods of Tennessee or Texas—are still mutually comprehensible and not in many instances so extreme that they have become separate languages. Some linguists suggest that this differentiation may well happen; to the extent that—as in the case of “educated” Arabic—“English” speakers may in the future be learning “international” or even “classical” English. We are also aware of course that English has much in common with other languages, for example French, German and Spanish, less so with Persian and Sanskrit. But they share, to a greater or lesser extent, some of the common characteristics of their language-family, which in this case is

Indo-European. It was, in fact, the observation¹³ that Sanskrit had some likenesses to English that triggered, in the eighteenth century, the debate about language families in which we are still *embrouillé*.¹⁴ The arguments over dialect and language continue to plague the definitions in these maps and charts. And for the inhabitants of Peru the issue is much more than academic. The demarcation on a map may well be used as evidence of territory to which an ethno-linguistic group has rights.

3. Southern map of Peru's languages



Image iii). As with the map of northern Peru, the original may be consulted at the www.ethnologue.com site. There is broad agreement between this and the other maps mentioned above. Variations in spelling and in the names that anthropologists and linguists use for particular ethno-linguistic groups are also dealt with at the ethnologue website (see references to specific languages http://www.ethnologue.com/site_search.asp). For general maps of Peru consult the *Cartografía Nacional* <http://www.inei.gob.pe>.

In the south of Peru Quechua type II comprises the *runasimi*¹⁵ of Cuzco (33), Puno (69), Apurimac (6), Ayacucho (14), Arequipa-La Unión (8). Yauyos Quechua and Jaqaru could perhaps be seen as a missing link between the Quechua of the north-central highlands of Peru (Quechua I) and the

Quechua II which stretches right down to the Aymara region in the South and beyond in Bolivia and Argentina.¹⁶ Jaqaru is related to central (24) and southern (78) Aymara.¹⁷

The Arawakan group of languages (3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 21, 35, 48, 50, 58, 86, 88) was first encountered on the northern map. The family or the individual language is sometimes loosely referred to as *campa* in the Lima press. This term perhaps is now politically incorrect in a country of multiple diglossias.¹⁸ In the London lecture it was questioned as to whether all these varieties of the Arawakan family were indeed separate languages. Kaufman (World Atlas of Languages, Routledge) for example would take a slightly more aggregative—lumping—view. Nevertheless people from the groups do find inter-comprehension difficult and a local bi-lingualism often develops as contact occurs.

In Southern Peru members of the Pano language family can be found in: the tri-state area, north of the Madre de Dios river, where Peru, Bolivia and Brazil meet (75, 85); the area where the Purus river flows out of Peru into Brazil and later on into the Amazon (23, 75); and in the Ucayali basin (76 and northern map). This latter language (Shipibo-Konibo¹⁹ - 76) will be dealt with below and will be the subject of another meeting²⁰ of the *Centre Cultural Peruvien (CECUPE)* in Paris.

4. The languages of Peru around the globe

Across the world, to widen the theme just slightly, Peru has been exporting its languages quite vigorously in the last few decades. Of course wherever there are Peruvians in the world there are Peruvian languages, not just Spanish and, statistically, Quechua, but also representatives of many—if an intensive search were made—of the major languages of the *selva*²¹ region of Peru.

You could add to that map—there is not a circle for it—Japan: more recently in the last decade or so there has been quite a vigorous Peruvian community in Japan. Also before the recent crisis a large number of Peruvians, who were finding it difficult perhaps to gain entry to the United States or Europe, had opted instead for Chile, Argentina and neighbouring countries. That is not marked on the map, either.

PERUVIAN LANGUAGES WORLDWIDE



Image iv)

5. Language survival

Language shift is occasioned, in part, by the process of urban and international migration. A contemporary threat to the survival of lesser-used languages in Peru is the spreading acquisition of English. Both at the secondary and university level the study of English is generally preferred²² to the gaining of literacy in a regional parental language. An experimental workshop held in Cuzco in 2002 developed an English language course which also prioritised the reinforcement of local parental language, in this case Quechua. The workshop created learning materials focusing on a story (*Historia de Luisa*). The Quechua version is by Janet Vengoa and read by Claudio Oroz. The next section recounts that story, so that Quechua may be listened to (within this document) and the orthography²³ viewed in the subtitling.²⁴ If the conclusions of the workshop can be generalised, there are profound implications regarding the way English as a Foreign Language should be taught²⁵ in countries or areas with regional or indigenous languages. In particular the methods and texts used by the North American cultural institutes (and language schools supported by the British

Council) in Latin America and the language media sold by multi-national publishing companies would need to be revamped.

III LISTENING TO QUECHUA

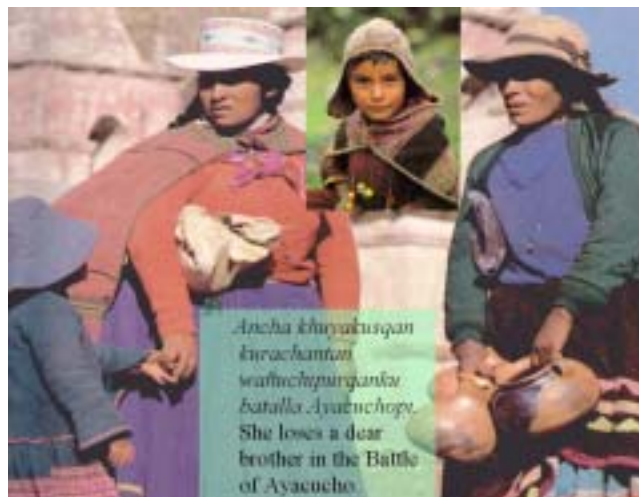
The sound of Quechua: a story of migration, *Historia de Luisa*. The text is in the Cuzco-Qollao dialect of Quechua.

I think it is time for us to listen to Quechua. The recording is of a short story, which we were using to develop a new approach to education for Quechua speakers or for speakers of any language which is not the national language, in this case Spanish. The idea is to get Quechua-speaking students to be able to jump straight from Quechua to English or for that matter to other subjects, for example *informática*. We have been talking about migration and this story happens to be on the theme, in part, of emigration from Peru. It is the fictional story of a girl and her sister who were born in Cuzco just at the end of the viceroyalty (colonial period), and who travelled to England and France and met on the way Flora Tristan and Emily Bronte. The story is based around historical characters and the socio-economic background is also built on historical evidence. It is set in the post-independence period when the economic output of the Cuzco and adjacent highlands came to be purchased by new European merchants. Two mills in Bradford took the bulk of the alpaca wool. One, the Titus Salt Mill at Saltaire grew into the largest operation of its kind in the world in the nineteenth century. Today the mill, now the Hockney art museum, still carries stone alpaca on its roofline.

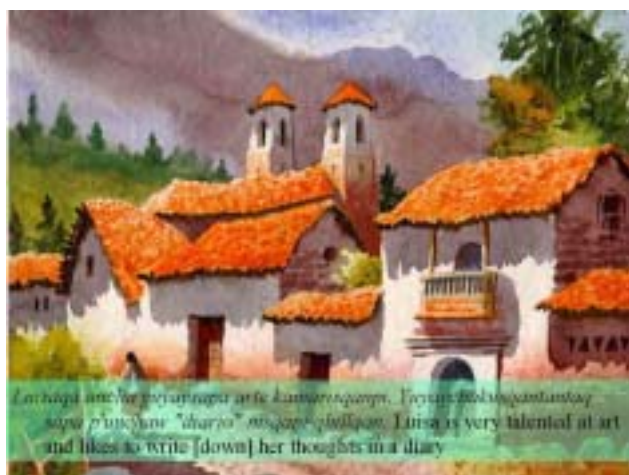
Lusian Qosqo Ilaqtapi paqarirqan waranqa pusaqpachaq chunka pisqayoc watapi. Marques Valle Umbrosoq wasimpi. Luisa is born in Qosqo in 1815 in the house of the Marquis of Valle Umbroso.



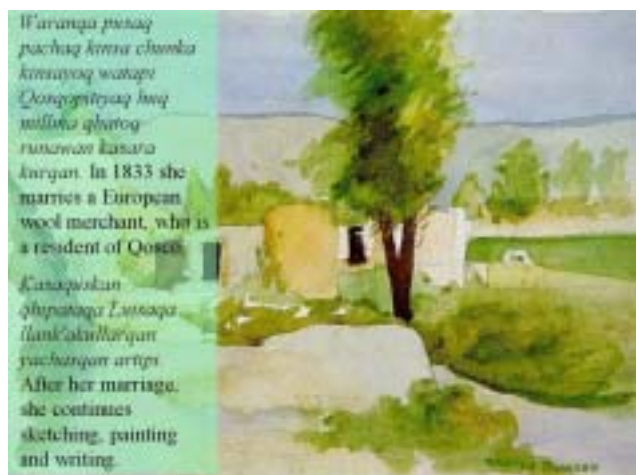
Ancha khuyakusqan turachantan wañuchipurqan nku batalla Ayacuchopi. She loses a dear brother in the Battle of Ayacucho.



Luisaqa ancha yuyaysapa arte kamarisqanpi. Yuyaychakusqantantaq sapa p'unchaw "diario" nisqapi qhillqan. Luisa is very talented at art and likes to write [down²⁶] her thoughts in a diary.



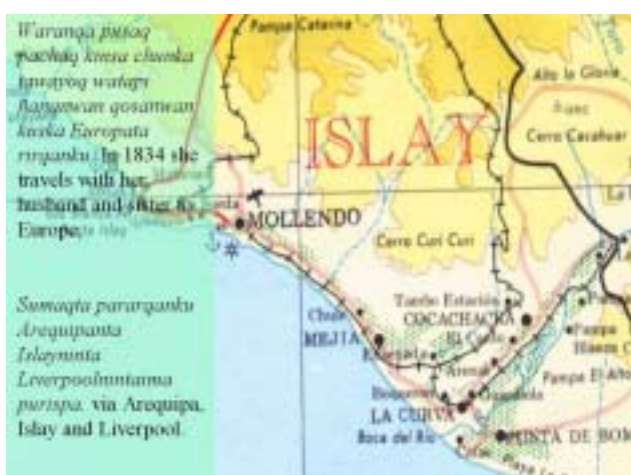
Waranqa pusaq pachaq kinsa chunka kinsayoc watapi Qosqopitiyaq huq millma qhatoq runawan kasara kurqan. In 1833 she marries a European wool merchant, who is a resident of Cuzco. Kasaquskan qhipataqa Luisaqa llank'akullarqan yachasqan artipi. After her marriage, she continues sketching, painting and writing.



Waranqa pusaq pachaq kinsa chunka tawayoq watapi ñananwan qosanwan kуска Europata rirqanku. In 1834 she travelled with her husband and sister to Europe. Sumaqta pararqanku Arequipanta Islayninta Liverpoolnintaima purispa. Via Arequipa, Islay and Liverpool.

Payqa anchata munarqanpayhina artista escritor masinkunawan tupayta. She is always eager to meet other artists and writers.

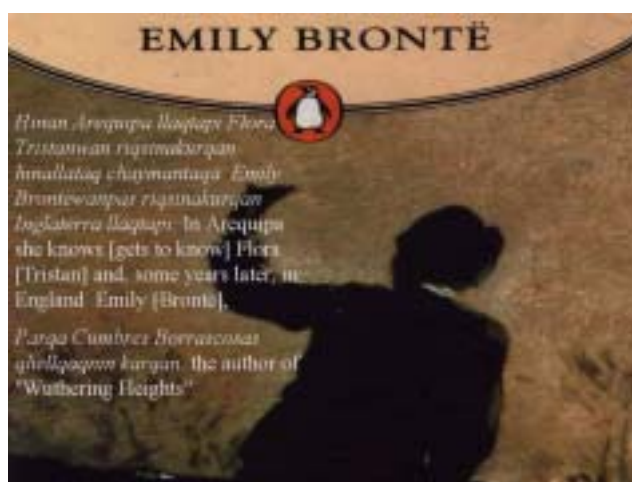
Hinan Arequipa llaqtapi Flora Tristanwan riqsinakurqan In Arequipa she knows [gets to know] Flora Tristan



. . . hinallataq chaymantaga Emily Brontewanpas riqsinakurqan Inglaterra llaqtapi. Parqa Cumbres

Borrascosas qhellqaqin karqan.

. . . and some years later in England, she gets to know Emily Brontë, the author of "Wuthering Heights".



The next section goes on to deal with the estimates of the numbers speaking the various regional languages and with their historical evolution.

IV SPREAD OF VARIOUS LANGUAGES

6. The numbers of speakers

3. The "suffix" languages	Language or language family	Speakers
This section deals with languages or language families that are constructed by adding on (agglutinative) suffixes. For example "from the town of Cusco" in Quechua is "Qosco-Ilaqta-manta (Cusco-town-from)". The native-American languages share this feature in common with Japanese and some other Asian languages. Quechua itself is perhaps better described as a language family comprising as many as 29 members in Peru alone. Many however are intelligible* one to another except for the Quechua (I) of Northern Peru which differs significantly from the Quechua (II) of Ecuador, Southern Peru, Bolivia and Northern Argentina.	Quechua (29)	4178700
	Aimara (2)	420000
	Ashaninca (Arawak-M)	65235
	Aguaruna (Jivaro-K.)	35000
	Shipibo-Conibo (Pano)	30000
	Ticuna (Juri-Tikuna)	24000
	Chayahuita (Jivaro-K.)	10000
	Amuesha (Arawak-M)	9000
	Huambisa (Jivaro-K.)	6000
	Machiguenga (Arawak)	6000
	5000-1000 (14)	37500
	1000-100 (14)	4105
	Less than 100 (12)	120
		4825660
Japonés & others	250000	
	5075660	

Image v).

The table shows the language-family in brackets. An example, nearer to hand, of a language family or grouping is the Romance family of languages (Spanish, Italian, French, Romanian, etc.). Quechua really is such a grouping or family of languages. Most linguists would say there are over 25, perhaps 29, different "varieties" of Quechua (see later table for detail) and some would even say they are different languages. But certainly all would agree there are at least two different languages: Quechua I and Quechua II. Aymara also has varieties, just two or perhaps three, but is, in the main, regarded as one language. It can be seen that between them, Quechua and Aymara

count for the bulk of the five-odd million regional language speakers that we have altogether. There may be as many as 11 million speakers of Quechua, if the 4 million, just in Peru, is added to the numbers in Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina and Colombia. There are 420,000 speakers of Aymara (in Peru). And then we come to the lowland, Amazonian languages. The Shipibo-Conibo group has about 30,000 speakers. These are not listed by family but by language (on the other hand Quechua and Aymara are families) so the numbers are not strictly comparable. Ashaninca is perhaps the nearest eastern lowland language to Lima, and is part of the Arawakan grouping of languages. Shipibo-Conibo, belonging to the Pano family is perhaps the best-known lowland language to the outsider, perhaps because Pucallpa, which is at their centre, is the most accessible point on the Amazon side of Peru. There are a good number of languages, which have been lumped together at the bottom of the table. Incidentally because I was looking at agglutinative languages, which are those that really form their structure and their grammar by adding on suffixes, I have included Japanese (a language of Peru if not a Peruvian language) and varieties of Chinese. There are 120,000 Japanese speakers in Peru according to the figures available and 100,000 speakers of the Chinese languages. “A few for luck” have been added (other agglutinative language-speakers not listed) to round up the figures to 250,000. As an example of agglutination, in Quechua “From the town of Cuzco” is *Cuzco(Qosqo)llaqtamanta*: you add *llaqta* (town) to Cuzco; then you add *manta* (from) to *Cuzco(Qosqo)llaqta*; you construct it with *manta* as a suffix. To clarify a point sometimes raised, a Latin or German declension is not of the same order as the agglutinating suffixes of Quechua (or Japanese for that matter). The “pure suffix” languages enjoy suffixes that do not change or mutate, no matter the form of the word stem or how far they are located from that stem, or to what extent they are surrounded by other suffixes. And Quechua is pretty pure in that sense. Of course to the learner of Quechua, because the accentuation is almost invariably on the penultimate syllable, the sound of the word changes (to the extent it can seem a different word): *Arequipa* > *Arequi-pápi* (to Arequipa) > *Arequipallaq-tápi* (to the town/city of Arequipa).

7. Linking the spread of languages to archaeological horizons and empires.

How can we get a mental handle on all these languages and where they came from? Let us just think for the moment how languages “happen to arrive at our doorstep,” as it were. I think we are only too well aware with the expansion of English, even within our own lifetime, or with Spanish or the Latin of the Romans and that it may have something to do with empires: cultural empires, trading empires, even religious empires. Just take the theme of empire or hegemony alone and look down the left column of this table.

Hegemony	Language /family	Main dissemination	Comment
Chavin - Pachacamac - Chincha - Inca - Spanish	Quechua	500 B.C. - 1940's A.D. (today)	9 lives! 9 golden periods!
Pukara to 1780	Pukina	600 B.C. - 100 A.D. (c.1750)	Seminal to Tiwanaku and Wari Also in Jesuit /Franciscan missions (See Churajon)
Nazca - Wari	Aymara	400 - 900 A.D. (today)	In some ways now stronger than Quechua, not in numbers but sense of unity, circuits of capital etc.
Moche	Mochica	0 - 600 A.D.	Last speaker 1940's
Tiwanaku	Uruquilla	400 - 600 A.D (today)	Still spoken in Chipaya, Bolivia
Shipibo- Conibo	(Pano)	N.A.	Up and downstream from Pucallpa

Image vi)

And let us just examine Quechua for a moment. There are arguments for tracing Quechua back to the Chavin “expansion”—it wasn’t quite an empire but a cultural expansion. And we can do that through perhaps Pachacamac, through Chincha and the Inca Empire, and not least through to the Spanish, who in fact significantly expanded the Quechua linguistic map of Peru. And so we

have that amazing story of the evolution and spread of a language going right back perhaps to 1000 B.C., to the early stages of the Chavin.²⁷ More recently high rural birth rates have more than compensated for the loss of speakers as they migrate to cities and abroad. Quechua, it is thought, has reached its peak—in terms of numbers of speakers—round about today. And in that sense we can talk of the history of Quechua having had nine lives, or at least several golden periods and of survival against the odds.

Pukina

Pukina perhaps is not a language known to everybody. After all it is supposed to have died out²⁸ in the 1780s (another dating is the 1910s), although there is some evidence of one group of Pukina-speakers in Bolivia. Although we are uncertain about the origin of Puquina today, both Cerrón Palomino and Alfredo Torero—internationally recognised linguists—link Pukina to the vehicular or imperial language of the Pukara ‘empire.’ It was a very important language in the whole of that area²⁹ up from Arequipa to Pukara itself. Pukina was used by the Jesuit mission in Churajon, which is only now being excavated by the Católica University in Arequipa. It is also probable that Pukara was a seminal influence on Tiawanaku and Wari as well. The longstanding confusion between Puquina and Uru is clarified by Pieter Muysken.³⁰

In some colonial sources mention is made of the Puquina living along the shores of Lake Titicaca. The Puquina language is now extinct, but it was once important enough to receive the status of *lengua general* (general language), along with Quechua and Aymara, in the early years of the Spanish occupation. Puquina has been tentatively classified as Arawakan. Since they were spoken in roughly the same area, Uru and Puquina have been subsequently confused as being the same language. This mistaken assumption was reinforced by Créqui-Montford and Rivet (1925–27), and since then many publications and museum displays link Uru to Puquina and the Arawakan language family. However, linguistically, this link is unmotivated. The grammar of the Uru languages does not resemble that of Arawakan. There is no trace of this in the Uru languages. Furthermore, what we know of the Puquina lexicon is completely unlike that of the Uru languages.

Aymara

The two great specialists, Torero and Cerrón, agree that Aymara³¹ was probably (perhaps almost certainly) spread by the Wari empire and was the imperial language, the *lingua franca*, of Wari

(Huari), and that the Wari themselves obtained or adopted this early form of Aymara from Nasca itself. This theory could always be invalidated if new archaeological finds are made, especially if they indicate the existence, however unlikely, of another horizon or another empire. Little is certain in linguistics when looking at these early periods. But that seems to be the current opinion.³²

Mochica

A language which we know quite a lot about although it today is extinct—the last speaker died about 1920 (perhaps 1940)—is Mochica.³³ It is tempting to link the “focus of expansion” of the Mochica language with that great period of cultural and economic development³⁴ on the north coast also termed Mochica (after a name used locally at the time of contact) or Moche³⁵ (after the place-name just outside Trujillo on the north Pacific coast).

Uruquilla

The great culture of Tiawanaku, on the southern shore of Lake Titicaca, probably spoke or used as a *lingua franca* or vehicular language Uruquilla or Uru,³⁶ at least it did initially. With some probability there was a shift to Aymara, following Wari influence, thus consolidating Aymara linguistic dominance in the South of Peru. At the time of contact (with the Europeans) in the sixteenth century the Aymara-speaking area was far more extensive than today.³⁷

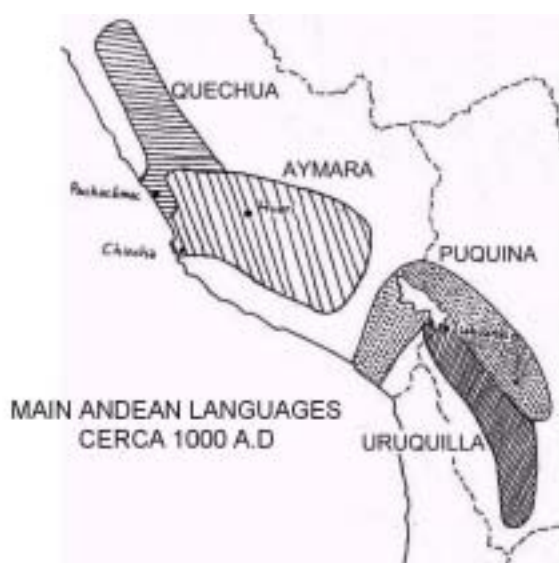


Image vii)

The table thus relies on reasonable hypotheses that explain the spread of languages in terms of whether they are or were *lingua francas*, adopted or native imperial languages, the vehicles of dominant cultures or the language of the evangelising cults of their day. Put simply, great empires or hegemonic cultures “need or breed” great languages: Latin, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, French, English. The table lists the principal regional empires (hegemonies) of the time and suggests the language which most, but not all, linguists associate with them. Aymara, for example, is associated with the Wari Empire. The Chavin culture, coastal traders in Chíncha and the Spanish viceroyalty, as well as the Incas, played their part in the spread of Quechua. Thus the main expansion of Chavin, Pukara, Wari, and Tiwanaku cultures, in their turn produced, or at least resulted in, a language map which by 1000 A.D., with some probability, looked like that above (Map of Quechua, Aymara, Puquina and Uruquilla 1000 A.D. Image: map1000AD.jpg. See Itier, César op.cit.) The Quechua shown on the map, that is in the north, is—it is claimed—the ancestor of Quechua I spoken today. Further, the areas where Quechua is spoken now in the south of Peru and in Bolivia were not, at the end of the first millennium, populated by Quechua speakers, but by Aymara, Pukina and Uruquilla speakers.

V THE EASTERN, LOWLAND, AMAZON LANGUAGES: Shipibo-Konibo

The territory which extends down the eastern side of the Andes, through the cloud-forest zone and into the tropical rainforests is traditionally regarded as another world “remote and with no communication to the West.” However, recent research has attempted to show that several major ethno-linguistic groupings may well have had a greater degree of trade and intercommunication (with the Andean and coastal cultures) than previously thought.³⁸ However, the language families appear quite distinct. In the case of the Pano language-family and its Shipibo-Konibo language, Quechua or highland Andean words appear to be relatively recent introductions. The Shipibo-Konibo nevertheless are distinguished in the literature and provide valuable precedents to others in some notable areas: (1) resistance to assimilation—survival of language; (2) how human societies perceive nature and in ethnobiological classification; (3) language structure and history; (4) identity and language³⁹ amongst others. For example the vocabulary for categorising persons reflects the way in which “the other” is thought about. *Caibo* designates a person of the same Shipibo-Konibo group, a speaker of the same language or who is of the same place. Note that *bo* is a pluralising suffix comparable to *-kuna* in Quechua.

8. The Amazon, Ucayali and Purus



Image viii) map_ucayali.jpg

Many talks on Peruvian language seem to concentrate on Aymara and Quechua. Justice is seldom done to the eastern languages spoken in the Amazonian area, which is five times the size of the coastal belt, and three times the size of the *sierra*. The area warrants greater study, not least from the point of view of the inhabitants whose languages are endangered. It is also an important strategic area, and for this reason various presidents have from time to time given emphasis to Amazonian development.⁴⁰

The following map, covering much the same area as the geo-political map above, indicates the location of the principal ethno-linguistic groups of the area. These names have been superimposed on the background tracing, which is taken from the Kaufman⁴¹ map. The Pano family of languages is represented in blue, Quechua in brown and Arawak in red.



Image ix) map_kaufman.jpg

Shipibo-Konibo (Spanish: *Shipibo-Conibo*), a member of the Pano “family,” is one of the most significant and well documented of the groups. These languages and ethnolinguistic groups are linguistically and culturally the great “defence” of Peru to the east.⁴² President Belaunde (1960s and 1980-85) envisaged a highway, which would have passed near or right through these areas. Probably fortunately for the Shipibo people, that highway “La Carreterra Marginal” was only partially constructed. However, there is still a road due to be constructed connecting Pucallpa and Cruzeiro do Sul in Brazil, and it seems many fear for the well-being of the Shipibo if that project goes ahead.

9. Shipibo resist assimilation

In spite of several hundred years of contact with the European the Shipibo have resisted assimilation and retain—to a degree—identity and culture and maintain the language.⁴³ It could even be suggested that their (socio-economic) situation, though by no means ideal, is an improvement on that, say, of several decades ago and certainly on that of one century ago when a whole group of Shipibo were taken⁴⁴—really in conditions of slavery—and shifted to Madre de

Dios where Shipibo is still spoken. So the Shipibo have had centuries of dealing with Europeans and managed to survive somehow the exposure and servitude of the period of the rubber boom. They have developed an additional economic means of subsistence through the production of handicrafts which are now traded not just by themselves but also through various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and commercial entities. Shipibo ceramics are particularly well known, because the Shipibo do travel to the coast, to Lima, and to the tourist hotel in Paracas and so on, to sell community output at a better price.



Image x) shipibo1.jpg

The education system is starting to consider inter-cultural education and produce some texts in Shipibo to replace the previous assimilationist approaches, but the process is far from complete. Another reason given for the survival of Shipibo culture is that the communities have been able to play off one group of outsiders against another: people from various ministries, the non-governmental organisations, the Summer Institute, academics, commercial enterprises. In addition they often live cheek by jowl with the mestizo population. There is also a degree of legal protection

now, thanks to community laws, some of which were introduced by the Velasco Government⁴⁵ (1969-74). So there are protected or reserved areas. There are a variety of factors.

To summarise: linguistically and perhaps miraculously the Shipibo, in spite of having major contact for several centuries—theirs was an early mission area of the Jesuits and of the Franciscans—have maintained spoken Shipibo. Despite “transitional” bilingual programmes which are designed to prepare a Shipibo speaker to speak Spanish, the Shipibo have acquired some biliteracy and also resisted linguistic assimilation. The Shipibo are perhaps the only group living alongside a major waterway in Peru to have done so.

10. Ecology and language



Image xi) ucayali1.jpg

Language is a mirror of lifestyle and environment. To an extent not perhaps appreciated in London and Paris⁴⁶ lifestyle is ultimately dependent on the ecological system. The value of *La Merma Mágica*⁴⁷—which provides the most authoritative treatment yet of the rich vocabulary and categorisations in Shipibo with respect to human ecology and the natural (or ethnobiological) world—is the understanding it gives of the nature of these links.

In academic literature the theory of ecological niches—of bio-economic levels—emphasises height or altitude and the interrelationship between the levels as the prime determinants not just of economic activity but also socio-cultural life in the Andes. In the case of the Amazon basin, the ecological niches are created by the rise and fall of the river. It is the vertical movement and resultant horizontal displacements of the waterways to which *merma* refers.



Image xii) ucayali3.jpg and image xiii).ucayali2.jpg

VI QUECHUA

This section returns to the Quechua family of languages. In the London talk this part was based on the article (op.cit.) by César Itier which, at that date, was not available in translation or online. As it is now accessible in this journal and in order to avoid repetition, only a slimmed-down version, but with some additional material, will be provided here.

The Quechua-speaking areas cover enormous territory, thousands of kilometres from the borders of Colombia, through Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia down to Santiago del Estero and now—through recent migration—Buenos Aires in Argentina. It is Quechua II C (*meridional*[sp.], *méridional*[fr.], *southern*[eng]) which is called on some maps “Imperial Quechua.”⁴⁸

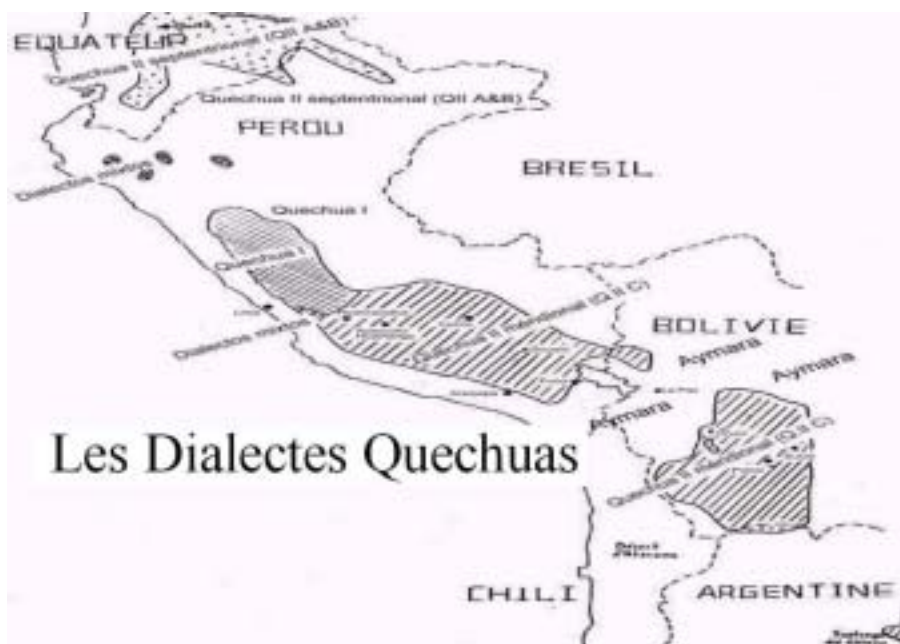


Image xiv).Current map of Quechua I and II, quechua1.jpg

11. Quechua a family of languages

So Quechua is the most extensive language family of South America in the sense that it has the largest numbers of speakers. It is followed by Tupi-Guaraní and by Aymara and could be compared to Arabic⁴⁹ in its range and variation but not its relative importance in terms of being a state or socially prestigious language. The differences between the regional variations of Quechua could also be compared to the differences between French, Spanish and Italian in some instances and, for example, Spanish and Portuguese in others.⁵⁰

Either way there are certainly the two great varieties of Quechua I and II, the mixed dialects lying between Quechua I and Quechua II (North) and the central “missing link” between Quechua I and Quechua II (South).

The number of Quechua speakers is comparable to Swedish or Hungarian or Greek in terms of total numbers—normally quite viable numbers if you are talking about the maintenance of the language.



Image xv) Variations of Quechua in Southern Peru. Image: [quechua4.jpg](#)

However against this, some linguists will claim the regional variants of Quechua are separate languages as inter-communication is difficult. In terms of numbers of speakers those areas with 200,000 speakers and over are:

QUECHUA, CUZCO 1500000
 QUECHUA, AYACUCHO 1000000
 QUECHUA, ANCASH, HUAYLAS 300000
 QUECHUA, WANCA, HUAYLLA 300000
 QUECHUA, ANCASH, CONCHUCOS, SOUTHERN 250000
 QUECHUA, ANCASH, CONCHUCOS, NORTHERN 200000

Those areas with less than 200,000 are:

The other Quechuas

QUECHUA, MARGOS-YAROWILCA-LAURICOCHA 120000
 QUECHUA, SAN RAFAEL-HUARIACA 80000
 QUECHUA, HUANUCO, HUAMALIES-NORTHERN DOS DE MAYO 60000
 QUECHUA, NORTH JUNIN 60000
 QUECHUA, HUANUCO, HUALLAGA 40000
 QUECHUA, SAN MARTIN 40000
 QUECHUA, CAJAMARCA 35000
 QUECHUA, ANCASH, CHICLIAN 25000
 QUECHUA, PASCO-YANAHUANCA 20500
 QUECHUA, LAMBAYEQUE 20000
 QUECHUA, YALUYOS 18850
 QUECHUA, AREQUIPA-LA UNION 18000
 QUECHUA, HUANUCO, PANAO 17500
 QUECHUA, NORTH LIMA, CAJATAMBO 16500
 QUECHUA, WANCA, JAJAJA 14500
 QUECHUA, ANCASH, SIHUAS 10300
 QUECHUA, PASCO, SANTA ANA DE TUSI 10000
 QUECHUA, ANCASH, CORONGO 8500
 QUECHUA, CHACHAPOYAS 3000
 QUECHUA, PASTAZA, SOUTHERN 1000
 QUECHUA, PACAROSAS 200
 QUECHUA, APURIMAC N.A.
 QUECHUA, PUNO N.A.

4178700

Estimated number of speakers - source Ethnologue database 2003. The total of 4,178,700 includes Quechua-speakers from all regions in Peru - image vii) [quechua3.jpg](#).

Many Quechuistas traditionally would prefer Quechua to be thought of as one language. Cuzco Quechua was decreed an official language of Peru in 1968. A newspaper appeared in Quechua, but the educational infrastructure was not adequate to the task of implementing the new decree, which—inadvertently, it is supposed—was also discriminatory against other regional languages. Ironically the agrarian reform of the same regime eliminated the *hacendado* class and with it an elite that still spoke Quechua, at least in the south-central *sierra*.

Returning to the debate about where Quechua “came from”⁵¹ we know that in no way could it have been Cuzco, in spite of the fact that Cuzco Quechua has the largest number of speakers. Together with Ayacucho Quechua and the Type I Quechua of Ancash they account for a majority of Peruvian Quechua speakers.

There is an early chronicle which suggests that (by then, the fifteenth century) the Quechua-speaking Incas, when they arrived in Ecuador, found Quechua already being spoken. There are also remnants of Aymara in the Yauyos area, and we know that at the time of contact—the Routledge maps contain reconstructions for that period—a grand area in the South was Aymara-speaking when the Spanish first arrived.

12. Alphabets, syllabaries, writing and literature

Prior to the European invasion, 1492-1532, the system for storing information and communicating it over (considerable) distances was based on the use of the *kipu* (*quipu* Sp.). Some current research⁵² points to binary mathematics as the science underlying the structure of knots, colours and branching strings which make up the *kipu*. Teams of *kipu* specialists were trained to “write” or fabricate the *kipu* and “read” or interpret it.

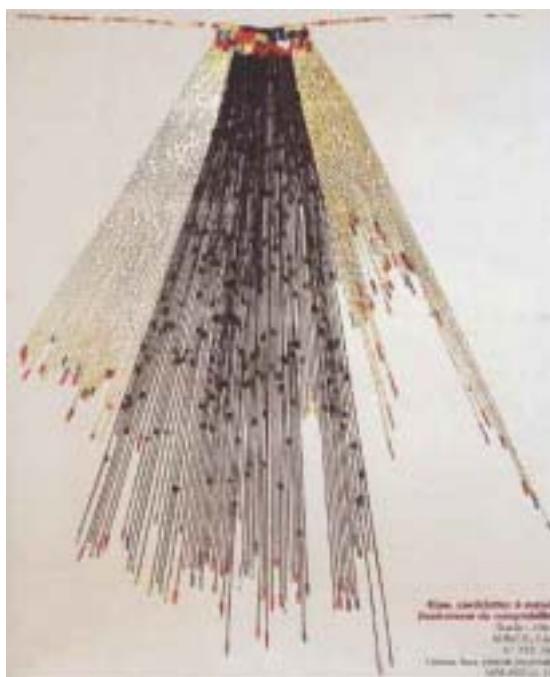


Image xvi) [quipu.jpg](#)

For five hundred years⁵³ an orthography using Latin letters has been used in the Andes. It was adapted from the Spanish alphabet and included a *ch*, *ll* and *ñ* and the five Spanish vowels. However agglutinative languages are not ideally fitted to alphabets and vice versa. Countries which have had the political and cultural independence to do so, have developed other systems. It is no coincidence that Japanese, for example, uses two syllabaries (and the Chinese-derived *kanji*) where symbols represent the sounds of the syllables, not those of the consonants and vowels. Quechua-speakers pay a high price for the imposition of an “inappropriate” writing system.

It is no surprise that for several decades now the issue of the alphabet has seriously divided Quechuistas. The five-vowel alphabet imposed originally by Spanish evangelists vies with the three-vowel (a,i,u) system. The issue brings out a bitterness which has roots in perhaps still more fundamental issues.

13. Language, knowledge and learning in the Andes

Andean peoples “create,⁵⁴ transmit, maintain and transform their knowledge in culturally significant ways” and “processes of teaching and learning relate to these.” Researching, learning

and teaching are sensitive areas, none more so than in the field of language. There has been a transformation in some of the ways of working, within the last three decades or so, in anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and linguistics, including cross-disciplinary approaches applied to the Andes. One result has been a greater realism in the attitude to endangered languages.

As we have seen, the original focus of expansion—the point from which a language breaks out from being a localised language—of Quechua is likely to have been the North of Peru, whereas Aymara, once thought to have been the language of Tiawanaku, is more likely to have been spread from the Nazca area by the Wari expansion.



Image xvii) So Quechua did not come from the Incas . . .
But it was spread by them!

Quechua and Aymara do have structural similarities and Cuzco Quechua has vocabulary in common with Aymara, but in spite of this, linguists say they are not reducible to a common origin.

VII POSTSCRIPT

Handing on the baton

This sequence of talks was, as noted previously, hosted by two Latin American cultural associations, one in Paris and the other London. It is hoped that some of the other (hundreds) of associations and societies in Europe will be able to follow the theme, which in this case is

“Languages of the Americas,” by inviting the next speakers and supporting the work⁵⁵ of dissemination.

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¹See file <languages_peru_intro.htm> and <[perulanguages.htm](#)> (version in Macromedia Flash) for a copy of the introduction in the original talk given at Canning House, London SW1. This article is an edited version.

²In this article the term regional is used in preference to indigenous or autochthonous. The total number of regional languages—proposed by those who use a narrow definition of language (the language “splitters”) —is something like 113. Those who group many dialects together into the same language can still count over sixty distinct languages. However we can simplify this by dealing with language “families.” Paul Rivet, one of the founders of the Musée de l’Homme (Museum of Mankind or Anthropology) in Paris gave us one of the earlier such classifications into family groups.

³For example: César Itier (Quechua) “Quechua, Aymara and other Andean languages” (this journal, above); Jacques Tournon (See “La Merma Mágica,” to be reviewed at a meeting of Cecupe, Paris) and Pilar Valenzuela (Shipibo - various documents on line). <http://email.eva.mpg.de/~valenz/Shipibo-Konibo.html> for summary of material on Shipibo and http://email.eva.mpg.de/~valenz/English_CV.html#PUBLICATIONS for list of publications.

⁴That is, not just amongst americanists. See postscript.

⁵See prior article in this journal, P. Goulder, "Diasporas and shared knowledge," for a discussion of how associations of the Latin American diaspora can and do have a significant educational role.

⁶ See article by César Itier, "Quechua, Aymara and other Andean languages" published (above) in this journal. Note that "César Itier (2002), op.cit" refers to that article.

⁷ See also Stephen A. Wurm, *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing* (UNESCO, rev. ed., May 2001).

⁸ The *lingua franca* or *lengua general* of both the Inca and Spanish empires in the Andes.

⁹ Seventy per cent of Peruvians spoke Quechua in 1900.

¹⁰ As before there are different "languages" within Jivaro such as Aguaruna (2). These ethnolinguistic groupings really came to the fore during the border conflicts with Ecuador in the 1940s to 1990s.

¹¹ It is said that it was a member of this family of languages that was one of the first to be heard by Europeans in the Caribbean in 1492, so language families—like their human counterparts—can be quite dispersed. Or not: unlike Indo-European or Arawakan, Japanese, for example, had few "relatives" outside the country, although today there are over 100,000 speakers on the Peruvian map.

¹² Presented without apologies in the original French, perhaps to convey a feeling of a new awareness amongst the readership of *Courrier International*, the French chattering classes and even *les gens branchés* that language survival matters.

¹³ Made by a British judge in Calcutta in the eighteenth century.

¹⁴ Embroiled, involved, literally "en-mingled," to make the point that English has not got so far away from French, in spite of the efforts of schools texts to see it differently.

¹⁵ The name preferred to Quechua by some Andean writers. *Runasimi* means language of the people.

¹⁶ Quechua II is also spoken well to the north of the Quechua I area, in Ecuador and Colombia.

¹⁷ Aymara speakers are also to be found in Northern Chile—outside the scope of this article.

¹⁸ There is on the coast (as in many neo-colonial situations) a social and linguistic pecking-order (stratification). Spanish plus another European language (to indicate ancestry or foreign education)/Spanish/ highland indigenous/ eastern lowland language. The Quechua speaker will often use the word indigenous to refer only to the people from the eastern, tropical, Amazonian lowlands.

¹⁹ Conibo is the most commonly found spelling in Spanish, Konibo in English. Similarly Quechua / Kechua.

²⁰ This information is added to link to the "iterative relays" discussed previously.

²¹ *Selva*: the tropical forested, lowland area of the—in this case—Peruvian Amazon basin. Does not strictly include the misty, rain-drenched eastern slopes of the Andes, which are termed the *seja de selva* (eyebrow of the forest) /cloud-forest. However, popularly, and in school textbooks, Peru is divided into *selva*, *sierra* and *costa*.

²² Both by the educational authorities and by parents, it seems.

²³ For those who do not know Quechua, it is possible in this way perhaps to get a taste—the sound and feel—of this agglutinative language.

²⁴ The story may also be viewed as an on-screen "slide-show." Click on file <secuencia1024.htm>. To recapitulate: the story is fictional but based around historical characters. It is set in the post-independence period when the economic output of the Cuzco and adjacent highlands came to be purchased by new European merchants. Two mills in Bradford took the bulk of the alpaca wool. One, the Titus Salt Mill at Saltaire grew into the largest operation of its kind in the world in the nineteenth century. Today the mill, now the Hockney art museum, still carries the stone alpaca on its roofline.

²⁵ The workshop trialed materials at appropriate levels of English (in this case levels I and II) where English and Quechua grammatical points were developed in parallel and Quechua writing was encouraged by story-telling. Nearly all the students were Quechua-Spanish bilingual.

²⁶ In the original 'write' is used in place of 'write down.' The students were using these materials to learn English and had not quite reached the level where phrasal verbs could be used.

²⁷ Estimates regarding language evolution going so far back in cultures which did not utilise writing (as we know it or as it is possible to decode it) should be treated with caution. There is competition between the claims of the coast and the north-central highlands as the original focus of expansion. Cuzco, in the popular imagination and in some guide books, maintains its claim to the original and pure form of Quechua, which it seems cannot be sustained. The Cuzco aristocracy however did, for a period, deepen the use of Quechua. See Itier (2002) op.cit.

²⁸ Consult the project on "The Andean Uru-Chipaya Languages" by Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz, Denise Arnold and Juan de Dios Yapita to clarify the confusion in the use of the term Puquina (Volkswagen Foundation project series on the Documentation of Endangered Languages - DOBES: <http://www.mpi.nl/DOBES>).

²⁹ See footnote to article "The Andean Uru-Chipaya Languages" on the ILCA website <http://www.ilcanet.com/>: "The Puquina language, which is now dead, was spoken in parts of the Altiplano; the only document to examine this language is a Christian text written by Oré in 1607, which was analysed in linguistic terms by Torero (1965). In a 1586 document ("Relación de los pacajes" 1965: 336), for example, it is said that the Uru spoke Puquina. Wachtel (1990: 605-607, following Torero), however, based on archival evidence, argues that some of those communities who had spoken Uruquilla, became Puquinised and later Aymarised. It is also clear from a 16th century document discussed by Wachtel (1990: 605) that Puquina and Uruquilla are not the same language. The document ("*Copia de los curatos*") is

from the Archivo General de Indias, Indiferente General 532, and was first presented by Bouysse-Cassagne (1975). In spite of this 'external' fact, Uru speakers themselves call(ed) their language Puquina (cf. footnote 4)."

³⁰ Pieter Muysken, Uchumataqu: Research in Progress on the Bolivian Altiplano (*International Journal on Multicultural Societies* 4.2, ISSN 1564-4901 © UNESCO, 2002, available on-line).

³¹ See also indispensable sources at <http://www.ilcanet.com/>

³² Current information can be inspected at the www.aymara.org website and by following the 'aymaralist' (click on item in left column of that website) emails.

³³ See F. de Carrera: *Arte de la lengua yunga* (1644) and work of E.Hovdhaugen at

<http://www.hf.uio.no/kri/ospromil/participantes/hovdhaugen/index.html>

and the Linguist list [http://saussure.linguistlist.org/cfdocs/new-website/LL-](http://saussure.linguistlist.org/cfdocs/new-website/LL-WorkingDirs/forms/langs/LLDescription.cfm?code=XMOC&RequestTimeout=200)

[WorkingDirs/forms/langs/LLDescription.cfm?code=XMOC&RequestTimeout=200](http://saussure.linguistlist.org/cfdocs/new-website/LL-WorkingDirs/forms/langs/LLDescription.cfm?code=XMOC&RequestTimeout=200)

³⁴ For a visual record of everyday activity (anything from making war to making love) during the height of the Moche period visit, virtually, the Larco Herrera Museum in Lima. <http://museolarco.perucultural.org.pe/english/mochica.htm>

³⁵ Almost universally used by archaeologists.

³⁶ See "The Andean Uru-Chipaya Languages," op.cit. (Click on link on the ILCA website <http://www.ilcanet.com/>.)

³⁷ See maps in César Itier (2002), op.cit. and the Kaufmann maps (Routledge).

³⁸ See for example literature on Chavin period.

³⁹ These themes could provide coherence and continuity as 'threads' which resurface in other talks or papers—documents in general—within the context of 'iterative relays' or procedures for the sharing of knowledge, and which also could be followed up in subsequent talks on other languages.

⁴⁰ For an analysis of the tension between indigenous interests and geo-political strategy see Paul Goulder, "The Amazon Basin: conservation or utilisation" (BOLSA Review, September 1979).

⁴¹ Note that "Kaufman" is used to indicate the South American section of the Atlas of World Languages, published by Routledge. Note also that in 1994, shortly after publication, a debate ensued over errors in the delineation of linguistic territories. See SSILA website.

⁴² They occupy the area comparatively near the frontier with Brazil, and particularly near to the area where Portuguese Latin America had departed in the extreme from the original treaty lines: the lines—in former colonial times—between Portugal and Spain. There exists the Brazilian 'bulge' that reaches almost to Pucallpa. The Pano family of languages, or the ethnolinguistic groups which are to be found in that area of: the 'true' Amazon which comes down the Ucayali rather than the Marañón, and of the other natural corridors or waterways for 'getting into / out of Peru' from the east (particularly the Purus and the Madre de Dios basins—the latter to the south, just off the map). In these areas will be found the dispersed presence of Pano speakers, so they are immensely important to the equitable development and security of Peru. It is not always seen that way. The Panoan groups should have been recognised in the formation of the concept of national identity in Peru, or the beginnings of that, a hundred or so years ago.

⁴³ Although there has been some 'fusion' of neighboring languages into Shipibo.

⁴⁴ By the 'rubber-robber baron', Rodriguez. At the time (1900) there were the two brothers: one to an extent a benefactor—and the other an enslaver—of the Shipibo. Slavery in the Amazonian rubber trade was exposed, *inter alia* and in the English language, by Roger Casement.

⁴⁵ See P. Goulder (1979), op.cit.

⁴⁶ Until this month, August 2003, when, apparently unknown to their relatives, between 5000 and 10000 more than the expected number of elderly French people died from a heatwave.

⁴⁷ See J. Tourmon, "La Merma Mágica: vida e historia de los Shipibo-Conibo del Ucayali" (*Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica (CAAAP)*, Lima, 2002).

⁴⁸ See previous note regarding languages used by the empire of the Incas.

⁴⁹ See César Itier (2002), op.cit. See also references in Itier to original sources: particularly Torero and Cerrón Palomino.

⁵⁰ Whether for example this is less or more of a 'linguistic difference' than that between, say, Cuzco and Ayacucho Quechua. For linguists this whole argument as to whether the marginal cases are dialects or another language is 'endlessly' debateable (see also problem of discriminant analysis in the social sciences), and you can spend a lot of time in bars arguing, quite pleasurably, with linguists about this particular point.

⁵¹ I picked up the last Footprint Guide to Peru just to see what they were saying about the origin of Quechua. They do talk about "the Quechua" (Quechua is a language or family of languages and not an ethno-linguistic grouping). And particularly they go back to the origin of Quechua as being Cuzco, which I think many people still believe, or even the area of Lake Titicaca, but we know that in no way could it have been, and it is quite probable that the Incas several centuries before contact with Europeans were in fact speaking, as their *lingua franca*, Aymara. They were, after all, born in an Aymara-speaking area and their own mother-tongue was a *pueblo* or village language which has probably long since been lost. (Probably!)

⁵² See, for example, *Revista Andina* 2002 published by the Centro Bartolomé de las Casas, Cuzco.

⁵³ The first dictionaries and grammars were quite early. See Diego Holguín, "El vocabulario de la lengua general de todo el Peru llamada Lengua Qquichua o del Inca" (Lima, 1608, reprinted 1952 and 1989).

⁵⁴ See Henry Stobart and Rosaleen Howard, eds., "Knowledge and Learning in the Andes: Ethnographic Perspectives" (Liverpool Latin American Studies, 2002), based upon papers delivered at a conference held at Darwin College, Cambridge University, in 1996.

⁵⁵ Transcription if necessary, translation, media creation, sub-editing and indexing, online publication, registering with a central catalogue and finally 'handing on the baton.'