



<https://publications.dainst.org>

iDAI.publications

DIGITALE PUBLIKATIONEN DES
DEUTSCHEN ARCHÄOLOGISCHEN INSTITUTS

Das ist eine digitale Ausgabe von / This is a digital edition of

Gorbahn, Hermann

Pernil Alto: an agricultural village of the Middle Archaic Period in Southern Peru

der Reihe / of the series

Forschungen zur Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen; Bd. 17

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34780/faak.v17i0.1000>

Herausgebende Institution / Publisher:
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut

Copyright (Digital Edition) © 2022 Deutsches Archäologisches Institut
Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Zentrale, Podbielskiallee 69–71, 14195 Berlin, Tel: +49 30 187711-0
Email: info@dainst.de | Web: <https://www.dainst.org>

Nutzungsbedingungen: Mit dem Herunterladen erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen (<https://publications.dainst.org/terms-of-use>) von iDAI.publications an. Sofern in dem Dokument nichts anderes ausdrücklich vermerkt ist, gelten folgende Nutzungsbedingungen: Die Nutzung der Inhalte ist ausschließlich privaten Nutzerinnen / Nutzern für den eigenen wissenschaftlichen und sonstigen privaten Gebrauch gestattet. Sämtliche Texte, Bilder und sonstige Inhalte in diesem Dokument unterliegen dem Schutz des Urheberrechts gemäß dem Urheberrechtsgesetz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Die Inhalte können von Ihnen nur dann genutzt und vervielfältigt werden, wenn Ihnen dies im Einzelfall durch den Rechteinhaber oder die Schrankenregelungen des Urheberrechts gestattet ist. Jede Art der Nutzung zu gewerblichen Zwecken ist untersagt. Zu den Möglichkeiten einer Lizenzierung von Nutzungsrechten wenden Sie sich bitte direkt an die verantwortlichen Herausgeberinnen/Herausgeber der entsprechenden Publikationsorgane oder an die Online-Redaktion des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts (info@dainst.de). Etwaige davon abweichende Lizenzbedingungen sind im Abbildungsnachweis vermerkt.

Terms of use: By downloading you accept the terms of use (<https://publications.dainst.org/terms-of-use>) of iDAI.publications. Unless otherwise stated in the document, the following terms of use are applicable: All materials including texts, articles, images and other content contained in this document are subject to the German copyright. The contents are for personal use only and may only be reproduced or made accessible to third parties if you have gained permission from the copyright owner. Any form of commercial use is expressly prohibited. When seeking the granting of licenses of use or permission to reproduce any kind of material please contact the responsible editors of the publications or contact the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (info@dainst.de). Any deviating terms of use are indicated in the credits.

23 Brief summary

This study is concerned with the Middle Archaic remains of the archaeological site of Pernil Alto. The site is located on the foothills of the Andes in the middle section of the Río Grande in the region of Ica in Southern Peru. The Middle Archaic occupation (5800–5000 BP) dates to the end of the preceramic Middle Archaic Period (8000–5000 BP) during which agriculture and sedentariness emerged in the Central Andes. The following Late Archaic Period (5000–3800/3500 BP) is characterized by the first complex societies on the north-central Peruvian coast. Thus far, little is known about the emergence of agriculture in the Central Andes. Remains of the Archaic Period in the Río Grande basin have only rarely been studied so far. The aim of this study was to present the remains of the Archaic occupation at Pernil Alto in detail, and to investigate the remains in regard to the economy and mobility as well as the social structure. This investigation provides important information about the Archaic Period in Southern Peru and helps to better understand the processes which eventually led to agriculture in the Central Andes.

The settlement consisted of 18 small, circular pit-dwellings. Furthermore, 33 burials were deposited. Every-day activities took place on the free spaces. A bigger, free area formed a central space. Pernil Alto was a structured village. Six consecutive occupation phases (0–5) could be identified. The burials, which include individuals of all age classes and both sex, were mostly simple inhumations. The burial practices were not strict and were not subject to diachronic changes. The artifacts could be studied and presented in detail, which resulted in important reference material about the Archaic Period in Southern Peru. Based on the artifacts it becomes clear that activities connected with plant use continuously increased, whereas hunting activities lost importance. Simultaneously, the amount of activities connected with sedentariness, increased. Furthermore, the spatial distribution of activities shows that they were most probably communal activities.

The investigation of the economy was done by applying a multi-proxy based approach which enabled the comprehension of quantifiable, diachronic developments. The result distinctly shows that subsistence at Pernil Alto was characterized by plant cultivation, whereas foraging was of higher importance only at the beginning. Domesticated plants were cultivated in the context of a low-level food production already at the beginning of the settlement, but their importance exceeded that of wild plants from the second occupation phase onwards (from about 5300 BP). The economy of Pernil Alto was therefore agricultural from that phase on, because food production formed the basis of the economy. Foraging was only of secondary importance.

It was possible to demonstrate based on archaeological criteria that Pernil Alto was a permanently settled village. Relations to the Pacific coast and to the highlands existed.

Therefore, Pernil Alto shows a diachronic development from a camp of a possibly semi-sedentary, foraging group to an agricultural village. This is the thus far oldest known agricultural village of the Central Andes. Furthermore, the hitherto oldest known finding of a macro-remain of sweet potato was recovered on the site.

Pernil Alto was situated in a relatively favorable environment which was characterized by higher precipitation during the time of this transition. Therefore, deteriorating climatic conditions were not a triggering factor for this development.

The results show that agriculture and sedentariness emerged around 5300 BP in Southern Peru and had emerged from a foraging subsistence economy. This result is important for the understanding of the development of later complex societies on the north-central Peruvian coast, whose economic basis was the connection between a marine and an agricultural subsystem. The agricultural subsystem had developed before on the Andean foothills—which was so far only indicated through research of a further area in Northern Peru—and was initially connected with the marine subsystem during the beginning of the Late Archaic Period.