With regard to the 2004 Annual Report on Heritage at Risk, we must report that the greatest threat to the cultural heritage of Peru arises mainly from the deficiencies of a national cultural policy. It gives no attention to the preservation of the nation’s cultural property, either by suitable legislation and provisions or by budget allocations to allow for the appropriate direction and management of cultural heritage.

Statute 24047 requires that sites and monuments are declared to be such by the government in order for it to be able to protect them, which is almost impossible in a country such as Peru where there is not even a complete and up-to-date inventory of cultural property. Furthermore, the National Institute of Culture is very much a second-ranking organisation; it has neither the power nor the fund to attend to the defence of the national cultural heritage.

To demonstrate the constant threats to our cultural heritage, we attach some reports to show how an important archaeological site at Trujillo has been destroyed, despite having been previously declared a Protected Zone by the National Institute of Culture. It is in the north of the country and only 5 km from the site of Huaca de la Luna y el Sol, an internationally renowned monument.

Those directly responsible are the Chavimochic Project and the local municipal construction engineers, who have levelled the site and subdivided it with no regard for the important remains dating from 5000 BC to 600 that they were destroying.

We suggest to call the attention of Peruvian government authorities to the need to strengthen the National Institute of Culture by providing the budgets, legislation and standards necessary to ensure the protection, defence and preservation of the cultural heritage of Peru.

ICOMOS Peru

The following reports by Melissa Massat have appeared on an international website, TRACCE Online Rock Art Bulletin: http://rupestre.net/tracce/ with another appearing in the local newspaper near the site.

Save Santo Domingo
by Melissa Massat

In the far north of Peru, about 20 km east of the city of Trujillo is a highly endangered archaeological site located in the Quebrada de Santo Domingo, a very historical and scenic 32 km² dry river valley, just west of Alto de la Guatarrá, opening onto the Moche River Valley and cradled by the colourful Cerro Colorado mountain range, it is strategically located between the archaeological complexes of Cerro Ocreja (Galinao Period) and Cerro Arena (Salinar Period), and faces north across an impressive series of Saharan style sand dunes towards the Caballo Muerto/Galindo Complex. Located about 5 km from the well-known Moche Huaca de la Luna and just south of the Chavimochic irrigation canal, the area was designated intangible by the Peruvian Institute of Culture.

The archaeological evidence in this valley indicates human ritual activity from the Lithic Period to Intermedio Tardio Period (10,000 BC - 1400) and includes shelters, platforms, canals, ceremonial paths (one very long one of 10 m width), as well as many stone point and tool workshops.

Most impressive and most endangered is a dense distribution of geoglyphs dating from 5000 BC to 600 depicting zoomorphs, anthropomorphs, hunting scenes and complex spirals.

The archaeological structures, as well as the varied flora and fauna, were up until now very well preserved because of their inaccessibility. However, in the past two years the local Chavimochic Irrigation Canal authorities have clandestinely organised the quarrying, bulldozing, and distribution – even sale – of lots of land in this so-called intangible zone.

Strangely enough the inventory, photos or articles relating to this vast archaeological zone have never been published and the INC has turned a blind eye to the illegal exploitation by the Chavimochic and municipal engineers, for lack of funds or political power to protect it. Obviously, once the entire zone is bulldozed, there will be no need to protect it.

A local guide, Victor Corcuera, is leading an active campaign with limited resources to alert authorities and the press – but the Trujillo area is already dominated by the Huaca de La Luna (research funded by private donations and foreign scientific organisations) and Chan Chan, an endangered World Heritage monument managed by the INC. The local archaeologists are reticent to protest too loudly the destruction of the zone, because the INC controls their activity and careers, and every archaeologist has...
many 'tales of woe' to lament. The local public is so accustomed
to living on old tombs and finding pre-Hispanic pottery on their
land that one more archaeological site in their back yard is hardly
a surprise.

I do believe that anyone who has the slightest interest in early
human settlements and Rock Art will agree that this particular site
is worth saving. Its strategic and well defined geographical posi-
tion at the crossroads of a large span of pre-Hispanic and colonial
settlements so precariously close to uncontrolled urban and agri-
cultural development; its precious treasures of geoglyphs, lithic
structures, stone workshops; its wildlife and breathtakingly beauti-
ful scenery which have survived centuries of El Nino's, winds and
pillage make it a most valuable natural and prehistoric landscape
and thus an important research base for archaeologists, ecolog-
ists, geologists, and anthropologists concerned with urban devel-
opment and the environment.

Peru is a signatory to the UNESCO Convention Concerning the
Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and should
be bound to preserve all its archaeological sites. My request for
help presumes that international pressure may lead the local peo-
ple and authorities to realize the treasure they are destroying and
includes organizing a petition to send to Peruvian authorities,
writing heads-up to international press, mobilising the interna-
tional community of archaeological professionals and amateurs to
learn about and research this spectacular site, and seeking aid
and development organisations' help to solve the urban-growth
problem which so menaces the historical and natural environment.

While Ulf Bertilsson, President of the ICOMOS International
Rock Art Committee, has pointed out 'the crucial issue' of the risk
destruction of Rock Art by tourism, it is imperative to honour
the UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Preservation of
Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private Works which
considers "...that cultural property is the product and witness of the
different traditions and of the spiritual achievements of the
past and thus is an essential element in the personality of the peo-
bles of the world...

6 December 2003

Quebrada de Santo Domingo – Save Geoglyphs
in Northern Peru

by Melissa Massat

Response is dismay, but also amazement and admiration for the
rich archaeological heritage of Peru.

From UNESCO Lima, I have received word that my concerns
have been transmitted to the World Heritage Centre in Paris.
Another Internet Site has joined the campaign to Save the Quebra-
da de Santo Domingo: About.com /thanks to Kris Hirst http:
//archaeology.about.com/b/a/065997.htm

But the printed press remains silent.

In a meeting yesterday with the regional director of the Insti-
tuto Nacional de Cultura, Victor Corcuera was told that Lima is
'buzzing about the Quebrada de Santo Domingo' and that she
offers 'carte blanche' or an open invitation to any archaeologist or
institution which can come to investigate the site. You probably
know that Peru has hardly any funds for research. The local INC
doesn't even have the funds to block the entrance or pay a

Scientific and Academic Institutions have the means and influ-
ce to generate investigation of this site and possibilities of col-
laboration with the University there would be so motivating for the
Peruvian students and local public. Therefore, developing a pro-
gram to investigate and protect the Quebrada de Santo Domingo
needs to be urgently promoted.

Recommendations appreciated. It seems incredible to have to
mention or hear so many times 'lack of funds' when it comes to
saving priceless heritage.

Quebrada de Santo Domingo, destruction of archaeological zone
As Ulf Bertillon, President of ICOMOS Rock Art committee, has said „Such events should be prevented and can be prevented“. I remember Bamian.

21 February 2004

Destruction of archaeological zone at Quebrada de Santo Domingo

INC staff and Tourism Administration have confirmed this week that heavy machinery from the Chavimochic project had entered the protected zone at Quebrada de Santo Domingo, Laredo, endangering the area while extracting soil for construction work.

On the morning of Wednesday, 3rd of March, the official tourist guide, Víctor Corcuera, went by bicycle to Quebrada de Santo Domingo to look for conclusive proof of the destruction of national heritage by dump trucks and power shovels.

INC is concerned – Barriers have been erected

The director of Conservation and Cultural Heritage at the National Institute of Culture, Cesar Galvez Mora, noted that this institution has not neglected to provide protection for the Quebrada de Santo Domingo area (near Ochiputur Hill at Laredo), and confirmed that heavy machinery had been seen there at the time of the most recent inspection.

He maintained that various ‘problems’ had arisen during the last week, and that the head of the INC Department of Archaeological Monuments, Jesus Briceno, had gone to the area after receiving a telephone call to report these events.

Local, Trujillo, 6 March 2004

Destruyen zona arqueológica en Quebrada de Santo Domingo

El personal del INC y la Policía de Turismo verificó, esta semana, que maquinaria pesada, del proyecto Chavimochic, ingresó a la zona intangible de la Quebrada de Santo Domingo, Laredo, poniendo en peligro el área al extraer la tierra como material de construcción.

En la mañana del miércoles 3 de marzo, el guía oficial de Turismo, Víctor Corcuera Cueva, se desplazaba en su bicicleta hasta la Quebrada de Santo Domingo, buscando una prueba contundente de la destrucción del patrimonio cultural con volquetes y palas mecánicas.
**INC no es indiferente – Se colocarán barreras**

El director de Conservación y Patrimonio Cultural del Instituto Nacional de Cultura, César Gálvez Mora, anotó que su institución no se ha cruzado de brazos en la protección del área de la Quebrada Santo Domingo (en las cercanías del cerro Ochiputar de Laredo) y confirmó que en la última inspección se verificó la presencia de vehículos pesados en la zona.

Sostuvo que durante la última semana se constataron algunos “problemas” y el jefe del departamento de Monumentos Arqueológicos del INC, Jesús Briceño, acudió a la zona en respuesta a una llamada telefónica que denunciaba el hecho.

Local, Trujillo 6 de Marzo del 2004
Quebrada de Santo Domingo, destruction of archaeological zone

What will be the outcome of this destruction?

THE END ??