

#ARCHAEOLOGY

Pañamarca

Unearthing the Vibrant Legacy of a Moche Civilization Site



Nestled in Peru's Ancash Region, along the lower Nepeña Valley, lies Pañamarca, an archaeological treasure that continues to captivate researchers and historians. This ancient site, part of the expansive Moche culture, offers invaluable insight into the artistry, power structures, and spiritual life of a civilization that flourished over a millennium ago.

Location and Historical Context

Pañamarca is located on a granite outcrop near the right bank of the Nepeña River, within the Santa Province of Peru's Ancash Region. As the southernmost monumental site of the Moche civilization (circa 350-850 CE), Pañamarca occupies a strategic position that reveals the geographic reach and cultural influence of this northern Peruvian society.

The Moche are renowned for their sophisticated adobe architecture, elaborate ceramics, and intricate metalwork. Pañamarca distinguishes itself through its impressive scale and the richness of its surviving mural art.

The Murals: A Window into Moche Myth and Power

Among Pañamarca's most extraordinary features are the vibrant wall paintings that adorn its temples and halls. These murals depict a variety of scenes rich with symbolism, from warriors and priests in procession to mythological creatures and ritual performances.

Remarkably, some murals reveal hybrid figures combining human and animal traits, including two-faced deities and serpents with human legs, motifs that suggest complex spiritual beliefs unique to this site.

The vivid pigments, preserved, thanks to the dry coastal climate and meticulous excavation efforts, provide scholars with a rare glimpse into the ceremonial life and artistic innovation of the Moche.

A Throne Room for a Woman Leader

Recent excavations at Pañamarca have uncovered a remarkable 'throne room,' revealing evidence that challenges previous assumptions about gender and power in Moche society.

In this hall, archaeologists found murals portraying a woman seated on a throne, surrounded by symbols associated with weaving, the moon, and marine life, elements linked to feminine



power and ritual authority. Artifacts such as greenstone beads, textiles, and hair fragments support the interpretation that this space belonged to a female leader or priestess, suggesting that women may have held significant roles in Moche political and religious hierarchies.

Broader Implications and Cultural Significance

The discoveries at Pañamarca have profound implications for our understanding of the Moche civilization. They suggest a more nuanced view of leadership that includes influential women, and they highlight the site as a center of artistic creativity distinct from other Moche settlements. As the southernmost known monumental Moche site, Pañamarca also sheds light on regional variations within the culture and the mechanisms of cultural exchange and adaptation.

Preservation and Future Directions

Despite its importance, Pañamarca faces preservation challenges. Exposure to the elements and previous inadequate conservation efforts have damaged some murals.

In response, collaborative projects between local authorities and international teams have undertaken careful excavation, stabilization, and digital documentation of the site. These efforts aim not only to protect Pañamarca's fragile heritage but also to make it accessible to the public through educational programs and virtual experiences.

Pañamarca stands as a vivid testament to the complexity and richness of the Moche civilization. Its colorful murals and architectural remains invite us to rethink narratives of ancient Andean societies, illuminating stories of power, gender, and spirituality long hidden beneath layers of adobe and time.

As ongoing research continues to reveal its secrets, Pañamarca promises to remain a cornerstone in the study of pre-Columbian Peru and a beacon for cultural preservation.



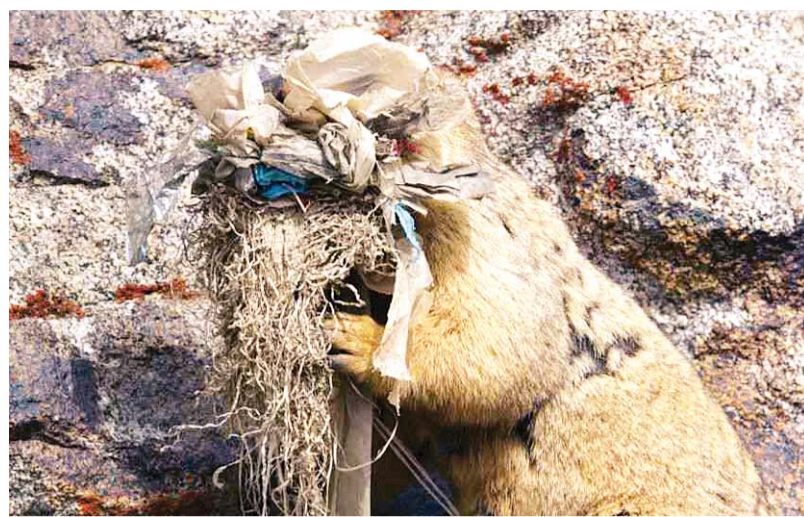
Tiger Cubs chewing on plastic, Credit: Bapat Daksha.



Mouse House, Credit: Omkar Dharwadkar.



Lone Wolf, Credit: Rishikesh Lande.



Marmot Task, Credit: Prajwal KM.



Poisoned Waters, Credit: Vaidehi Gunjal.



Asian Elephants, Credit: Arijit Mahata.

• Verna Mohon

In a small island on River Ganga in the Malda district of West Bengal, a golden jackal licks the remains off a styrofoam plate casually discarded by picnickers. In the absence of efficient waste management systems, India is grappling with a mammoth garbage problem. Thousands of tonnes of untreated and unsegregated waste pollute the country's land, water and air, while serving as toxic foraging grounds for a plethora of wild animals.

To highlight this travesty, I and my colleague at the Sanctuary Nature Foundation, Prachi Galange, conceptualised an Instagram project titled #InOurFilth. The project invites photographers from across India to submit images that illustrate the impact of garbage on nation's wild species. We then curate the submissions and post an image each week on the Instagram handle of Sanctuary Nature Foundation.

The project was born in the photo library of the Foundation.



Garbage Ghats, Credit: Tharini JE.

Galange, who works as the photo editor and naturalist at the

Foundation, and I noticed an alarming number of images that showcase wild animals in heavily polluted surroundings. It was then that we thought of #InOurFilth as a public awareness campaign to draw the link between our everyday consumption and the condition of wild animals that are forced to share space with us.

Here are some images of wildlife #InOurFilth

Royal Mess: In the buffer zone of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, a tiger cub picks up a plastic gunny bag. With several tiger reserves in India boasting healthy tiger populations, the question that arises is: where will all of them go? Many tigers have begun foraging into human-dominated landscapes or degraded and insufficiently protected forests, where they must con-

Filth Foraging Wildlife

We adore our elephant god, but through sheer neglect, poison our elephants. In Siliguri, West Bengal, a wild elephant scavenges for food at an unauthorised rubbish heap. She prepares to stuff a plastic bag filled with vegetable peels into her mouth. Once ingested, the plastic can wreak havoc on its body and potentially lead to death. According to Elephant Family, a UK-based NGO, nine of the 13 countries that are home to Asian elephants are amongst the world's worst managers of plastic waste.



#NO MORE WILD



Golden Jackal, Credit: Soumen Bakshi.



Pecking Order, Credit: Anirban Roy Chowdhury.

tend with the pressures of sharing space with human communities. This can lead to all manner of conflicts, and, as in this case, Plastic (P) lover: The beautiful, black-masked eye of a Little Ringed Plover is pictured in contrast to a plastic water bottle littered on the Ajay riverbed. By some estimates, a million plastic beverage bottles are sold globally every minute. The majority of these are never recycled and will long outlive the person who purchased them.

Single-use Sims: In Valparai, Tamil Nadu, a lion-tailed macaque rips into a single-use packet filled with curry. This incredible, distinctive species is endemic to small pockets of the Western Ghats. It dwells in the rainforest and primarily eats, or should eat, fruit. But with forests getting degraded and fragmented, and with garbage piling up, it is being forced to change its habits. Researchers say that these macaques are spending more time

on the ground and having negative interactions with humans, including raiding homes and foraging for human food.

Marmot Task: In remote Ladakh, the face of a Himalayan marmot is obscured as it gathers nesting material that includes discarded plastic bags. A dream destination for most travel enthusiasts, Ladakh has suffered gravely because of unregulated tourism. Just a kilometre from Leh city lies India's highest landfill, where an estimated 30,000 plastic bottles get dumped in summer months alone.

Poison Parcel: We adore our elephant god, but through sheer neglect, poison our elephants. In Siliguri, West Bengal, a wild elephant scavenges for food at an unauthorised rubbish heap. She prepares to stuff a plastic bag filled with vegetable peels into her mouth. Once ingested, the plastic can wreak havoc on its body and potentially lead to

death. According to Elephant Family, a UK-based NGO, nine of the 13 countries that are home to Asian elephants are amongst the world's worst managers of plastic waste.

Mouse House: In Kavrem, Goa, an adorable long-tailed tree mouse roosts inside a discarded polythene packet that has been caught on a bush. While this plastic palace may momentarily shield the mouse from the elements, it is a dangerous home. It could suffocate or poison its resident and eventually go on to pollute land or water.

Garbage Ghats: This gorgeous portrait of the elusive brown palm civet or Jerdon's palm civet is marred by its awful surroundings. It was found foraging through rubbish at an informal garbage dump in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu. This handsome animal is endemic to the forested tracts of the Western Ghats and is listed as Vulnerable on the Red List of the International Union for

Conservation of Nature. Known to be nocturnal and arboreal, it is associated with rainforest canopies and the dark of the night. To see one going through garbage in the daytime is tragic.

Lone Wolf: "Now this is the law of the jungle, as old and as true as the sky/And the wolf that shall keep it may prosper, but the wolf that shall break it must die... The jackal may follow the tiger, but, when thy whiskers are grown/Remember the wolf is a hunter - go forth and get food of thine own," recites the wolf pack in Rudyard Kipling's classic 'The Jungle Book.' But in a grassland in Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, the law of the jungle lies shattered. This handsome male wolf was photographed as it nosed through the garbage at a dumping ground, tearing open plastic bags and gingerly stepping over the rotting, leaking refuse.

Falcon Footwear: In the vast expanse of the Little Rann of



Tiger Cub, Credit: Santosh Nimbalkar.



Macaques, Credit: Mohan G.

Kutch, a Eurasian Hobby perches upon a lone slipper. While the Little Rann still teems with wildlife, it is increasingly threatened by unnatural changes in upstream hydrology, pressure from the salt industry and the effects of tourism.

Trashing Tigers: In Maharashtra's Tipeswar Wildlife Sanctuary, a tiger cub picks up a carelessly thrown plastic bottle. Unregulated and uninformed tourism has placed an enormous strain on natural resources. Tourists visiting India's national parks and sanctuaries don't realise that they can lighten their footprint just by refusing packaged snacks and beverages, and booking their stay in legitimately eco-conscious homestays and resorts.

Pecking Order: In the rushed and dusty city of Gurugram, two forlorn yellow-wattled lapwings forage in a pile of rubbish. These birds

forced into by human overconsumption and neglect.

Daily Diner: For small omnivorous mammals, such as the Indian Tree Shrew, a garbage dump can serve as an all-you-can-eat buffet. They feed on food scraps, including bits of fruits, vegetables and cooked items, as well as on the plethora of insects that are attracted to the site. The availability of food in the dump caused this otherwise timid creature to leave the safety of its natural habitat and even tolerate the presence of other individuals. Proximity to humans can be dangerous for wildlife: they can be attacked by stray dogs or cats, and the garbage often contains unsuitable or contaminated foods, not to mention plastic, as evident from the picture.

Poisoned Waters: A checkered keelback catches a meal in a filthy waterbody in Dharwad, Karnataka. That unmissable plastic bottle is just the tip of the iceberg. According to Niti Aayog, the government's policy think tank, 70% of India's water is contaminated, with 600 million people facing high to extreme water stress.

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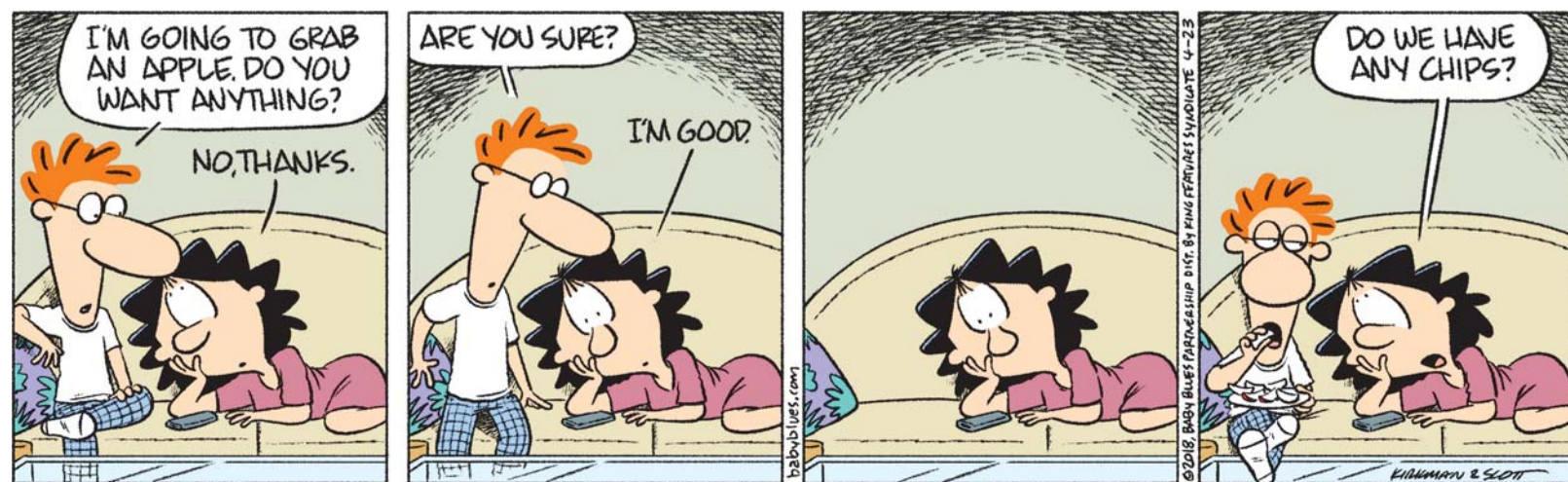
Falcon Footwear, Credit: Suketukumar Purohit.



THE WALL

"AGE IS OF NO IMPORTANCE UNLESS YOU'RE A CHEESE."
- BILLIE BURKE

BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman