

such as dengue fever, Ebola, Hanta, Lassa — the really nasties — are presented in this context. But this is neither an emotional nor a hysterical book. Henig does, however, emphasize that we, globally, are at the mercy of at least two major events, one at present totally outside our control, the other hopefully not. The first of these, which plays havoc with vaccine design and other therapies, is viral mutation. Viruses, particularly those with an RNA genome, can undergo fairly rapid change (mutation) in response to host or environmental alterations. It may turn out that these mutations are not random and will therefore be within our control, but so far we don't know the rules.

The second event is that created by abrupt changes in the environment — deforestation at the behest of industrial development, virus-carrying agents transported rapidly from one part of the world to another, and so on. Such events bring

rodents and arthropods, both excellent carriers of viruses, into contact with humans in a way that might disseminate disease. Henig discusses, among other examples, the case of the tiger mosquito that was imported into Texas as late as 1985, in a Japanese shipment of used automobile tyres, and has since spread to other states. This mosquito can act as a vector for dengue haemorrhagic fever or yellow fever. Viruses that might not naturally cross species barriers easily may do so if introduced by the bite of a rodent or mosquito. Again, we don't know the rules.

This is a vital and stimulating book. Once picked up, it is difficult to put down — for my money, more gripping than *Jurassic Park*. □

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Art, society and archaeology

Marc Bermann

Chavín and the Origins of Andean Civilization. By Richard Burger. *Thames and Hudson: 1992. Pp. 248. £38, \$49.95.*

THE period 900–200 BC was one of dramatic change among civilizations of the central Andes. New technologies and political forms were accompanied by the spread of the Chavín style of architecture and sculpture, named after Chavín de Huántar, the extraordinary archaeological site in the northern highlands of Peru where it received its highest degree of elaboration. This distinctive art style wove together stylized jaguars, eagles, serpents, plants and anthropomorphic deities such as the Staff God. Richard Burger now provides an authoritative treatment of the development and significance of this art style.

Burger places Chavín in a broad context. He gives an overview of Andean prehistory from 1800 to 200 BC, describing the larger monuments at other sites and their associated art styles, and reviewing what is known about the societies that built them. His tracing of these antecedents is generally comprehensive, although his view that Chavín civilization represents a cultural transformation occasionally leads to overly broad characterizations. And some archaeologists would disagree with his belief that pre-Chavín populations lacked complex sociopolitical organization or powerful élites. In fact, there has so far been little investigation into the sociopolitical organization of societies during the Preceramic and Initial periods (that is, from 2500–900 BC).

Burger's discussions of the develop-

ment of Chavín de Huántar and of the relationships between the Chavín art style, cosmology and ritual are excellent. Among the highlights are his analysis of previous hypotheses about the coastal or tropical rainforest sources of Chavín iconography, his suggestion that a series



Headstone — one stage of a shaman's drug-induced transformation.

of carved stone heads at the site depicts a shaman's drug-induced transformation from human to animal spirit, and the summary of his own research into residential areas at the site. His argument that the Janabarriu occupation in 400–200 BC marked the beginnings of a class system is very interesting, but it rests on small numbers of archaeological samples.

There has been much debate about the spread of the Chavín art style. Burger argues that the style is the “symbolic

expression of a religious ideology”, which buttresses the claim that its spread reflects religious rather than political processes. He links the growth of the Chavín cult to changes in the interregional exchange system, the collapse of the pre-Chavín coastal societies of Peru, the growth of economic prosperity in the highlands and the development of political complexity as local élites used the cult to justify their privileges. But some might object to his conclusion that Chavín was the forerunner of later attempts to “forge a single Andean civilization” or that the appearance of the art style marked the emergence of complex societies in the Andes.

Nevertheless, this is a challenging and generally persuasive study. Burger's argument, that religious ideology is not merely an epiphenomenon but may have an important role in shaping society and culture, is one that few archaeologists have addressed with such insight and documentation. Although the volume is remarkably free of jargon, a glossary of terms such as ‘complex society’ and ‘stratified society’, would have been useful for the nonspecialist. Burger occasionally uses these terms in a loose, confusing way that fails to indicate the relationships between inequalitarian social organization and differences in wealth and access to resources in state and pre-state societies.

Burger's definition of ‘civilization’ as “a society with a high level of cultural achievement in the arts and sciences as made visible in the form of material objects” underlines the art-historical orientation of the volume. Yet despite the focus on elaborate iconography and public architecture, Burger successfully discusses Chavín civilization in relation to many broader issues, including the development of social inequality, camelid domestication, metallurgy and shifts in settlement and adaptation.

His use of the term ‘civilization’ implies a unity that may not have existed. In truth, we cannot really talk about a ‘Chavín society’ or ‘Chavín people’ extending much beyond Chavín de Huántar itself. As the book itself demonstrates, one of the more interesting aspects of the Chavín phenomena is the extent to which many different peoples or societies adopted Chavín-style iconography and materials.

The impressive scholarship and interpretive sweep of this volume will ensure its position as the definitive study of Chavín and the evolution of complex societies in the pre-Hispanic Andes. It will also serve as a valuable textbook. Moreover, its appealing writing style, logical organization and excellent illustrations make it an outstanding introduction to early Andean prehistory for the general reader. □

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