

Can first phalanx multivariate morphometrics help document past taxonomic diversity in South American camelids?

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- 2 South American camelids?
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- 28 Abstract:
- 29

30 South American Camelids (SAC) were of great economic and cultural importance for pre-Hispanic societies in the Andes and still are important for rural Andean communities. However, 31 32 understanding their specific role and function over time is hampered by the lack of reliable 33 taxonomic identification of their archaeological remains. Although this problem has been 34 acknowledged since the 1970s, the identification of SAC from archaeological contexts still mostly relies on the first phalanx multivariate morphometrics developed by Kent in 1982. The 35 36 goal of this study is to further explore the taxonomic potential of this method using a machine learning approach including new measurements of phalanges from modern Peruvian, Bolivian 37 and Argentine SAC with additional measurements taken from the literature. Results have shown 38 that fore phalanges reliably distinguish the wild guanaco and vicuña, but the distinction between 39 the domestic forms and their wild relatives still remains tentative despite the new statistics. This 40

41 is largely due to limited domestic SAC comparative material, especially for the alpaca, but also 42 underlines the presence of an intermediate size morphogroup among the domestic SAC. 43 Morphometric variations recorded for the pre-Hispanic SAC are greater than those of current 44 SAC, preventing reliable identification of the archaeological specimens. These results 45 emphasize the need to improve the current SAC measurments data base and develop new 46 multiproxy approaches in the study of pre-Hispanic camelid diversity directly from the 47 archaeological material.

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Introduction

51 South American Camelids (SAC) were of great economic and cultural importance for pre-52 Hispanic societies in the Andes, providing everyday commodities (meat, fiber, leather, raw 53 materials for tool making, dung for fuel etc.) and playing an important role in the religion 54 (Bonavia, 2008; Flores Ochoa et al., 1994). SAC domestication eventually led to the appearance 55 of pack animals, permitting the emergence of complex pre-Hispanic American societies 56 (Bonavia, 2008; Capriles and Tripcevich, 2016). Extant SAC include two domestic species, the 57 alpaca (Vicugna pacos Linnaeus, 1758) and the llama (Lama glama Linnaeus, 1758), respectively descended from the two wild species, vicuña (Vicugna vicugna Molina, 1782) and 58 guanaco (Lama guanicoe Müller, 1776) (Kadwell et al., 2001; Fan et al., 2020). According to 59 60 genetic studies, the wild SAC presently include two subspecies of guanaco, Lama guanicoe cacsilensis in the north (8°-20°S) and Lama guanicoe guanicoe in the south (21°- 55°50'S) 61 (Gonzalez et al., 2006; Marín et al., 2006; Wheeler, 2012), and two of vicuña, Vicugna vicugna 62 mensalis in the north (9°30'-18°S) and Vicugna vicugna vicugna in the south (18-29°S) 63 64 (Kadwell et al., 2001; Marin et al., 2006; Wheeler, 2012).

According to archaeozoological data, the current consensus considers several independent domestication events for llama and alpaca. One in the Central Peruvian highlands around 6000 and 5500 BP (Wheeler, 1985) and two others one in the South-Central Andes including the Salar de Atacama and Argentine *Puna* and a second in the vicinity of Lake Titicaca at 4400-2000 BP (Mengoni Goñalons and Yacobaccio, 2006; Moore, 2016).

A recent genetic study analyzed samples from the entire geographic range of both wild species, and samples of Chilean llamas and alpacas (Fan *et al.*, 2020), concluded that llama and alpaca are domesticated from the Northern subspecies of guanaco (*L. g. cacsilensis*) and vicuña (*V. v. mensalis*) respectively, and have undergone extensive hybridization since the European conquest. In 2021, paleogenetics and classic morphometry of current and archaeological SAC from Northern Chile (Diaz-Maroto *et al.*, 2021) point to llama domestication from an extinct ancient guanaco population confirming both the existence of multiple centers of domestication and, together with evidence of extensive hybridization between the domestic forms (Fan *et al.* 2020), raises serious questions concerning the reliability of using morphometrics from living animals to identify SAC species from archaeological deposits.

80 Both descriptive and quantitative approaches have been used for taxonomic identification of SAC from South American archaeological sites. Descriptive studies relied on 81 discrete dental (Altamirano, 1987; Wheeler, 1982) and appendicular bone characters (Adaro 82 83 and Benavente, 1990). Quantitative studies have been performed on the skull (Balcarcel et al., 84 2021; Otte and Venero, 1979; Puig, 1988) and on fibers (Reigadas, 2001; Wheeler et al., 1995; 85 Wheeler, 1996). In 1972, the first comparative morphometric study of the SAC in which she 86 concluded that guanacos and llamas grouped together as large camelids, in contrast to a second 87 group containing the small vicuña and alpaca (Wing, 1972). Since these two groups included both the wild ancestor and its domestic form, it was clearly impossible to distinguish which 88 89 species was represented. Subsequently, because species identification was not possible, Andean 90 archaeozoologists followed the large/small classification (Miller, 1979; Miller and Burger, 91 1995; Moore, 1989). In 1982, Kent showed that phalanges provided the greatest resolution for 92 identifying the four species of camelids using a multivariate morphometric approach with predictive statitics (Kent, 1982). First phalange morphometrics were then applied throughout 93 94 the Andes, mainly in regions where all four species may not have been present (Cartajena et al., 2007; Costa and Izeta, 2016; Elkin, 1996; Gasco et al., 2014; Gasco and Marsh, 2015; Grant, 95 2010; Hesse, 1982; Izeta, 2004; Izeta et al., 2009; Kaufmann and L'Heureux, 2009; L'Heureux, 96 97 2010, 2007, 2008; López 2003; Menegaz et al., 1988; Mondini and Muñoz, 2017; Yacobaccio 98 et al., 1998; Yacobaccio, 2010).

99 Since the 1980's, a new statistical theory of shape was developed (Adams et al., 2004) 100 also named geometric morphometrics (Bookstein, 1978), which is now routinely applied in zooarchaeology (Cucchi et al., 2015) and has proven highly reliable for distinguishing the 101 102 diversity of wild and domestic forms of suines (Cucchi et al., 2011, 2016; Evin et al., 2015) 103 equines (Cucchi et al., 2017), bovines (Cucchi et al., 2019) and caprines (Jeanjean et al., 2022). 104 Geometric morphometrics have been applied to SAC first and second phalanges as well as 105 scapulae (L'Heureux and Hernández, 2017; 2019; Hernández et al., 2021) but only to 106 distinguish llama from guanaco. Subsequently, other studies have explored the impact of 107 domestication on the skulls of the four-modern species (Balcarcel et al., 2021; Wilson et al., 108 2021) but these results have not yet been applied in archaeozoological studies. To date, no

studies have been conducted which attempt to identify archaeological remains from contextswhere all four SAC species may have been present.

111 Here we explore whether the multivariate morphometric approach to first phalange 112 measurements proposed by Kent can be accurate enough to document SAC taxonomic diversity 113 in archaeological contexts where all wild and domestic forms may be present. This approach 114 has the advantage of (1) being accessible to all zooarchaeologists, including those who do not have expertise in Geometric morphometrics, and (2) relies on a large dataset of samples 115 recorded beginning in the 1970's. For this study we have collated published measurements with 116 117 data that we have collected from different institutions. Since first phalanges are often found 118 isolated in archaeological deposits, we first assessed the accuracy of these measurements in 119 discriminating hind and fore first phalanges. We then tested the interspecific taxonomic 120 resolution of first phalanges, taking into account their anatomical position (hind or fore). 121 Finally, we compared current and pre-Hispanic archaeological phalanges from Peru, Bolivia and Argentina to assess the reliability of contemporary SAC comparative materials for 122 123 identifying SAC species in the pre-Hispanic period. Unfortunately Chilean populations are not 124 represented in our samples, as analysis using the five Kent measurements have not been 125 published for sites in this area. Hopefully this information will be available for future analyses.

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Material and methods

128 *Modern samples*

129 The modern dataset includes measurements we collected and measurements taken at the 130 comparative anatomy collection of the Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (MNHN), France, the Museo de Historia Natural de San Rafael, Argentina, the collections of the Cátedra de 131 132 Anatomía Comparada, Universidad Nacional de Salta, Argentina (Mengoni Goñalons and Elkin 133 2021) and the Instituto de Arqueología, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina 134 (supplementary data 1). We measured first fore and hind phalanges from 19 modern adult camelids of all four species from the Central and Southern-Central Andes as well as the MNHN 135 136 zoological garden (captive specimens) France (tab. 1). We also measured 2 fore and 2 hind first 137 phalanges from one Lama guanicoe cacsilensis specimen; one fore phalange from one captive 138 alpaca specimen and 35 fore and hind phalanges of 32 Lama glama from 4 different herds 139 (Cieneguillas, Angela, Rio Salado and Demetria) in the Argentine puna (supplementary data 140 1). The "Cieneguillas 1" and "Cieneguillas 3" llamas were used for transporting goods and fiber production, respectively, while, "Cieneguillas_2" was used for both purposes. 141 142 Additionally, 72 fore and 64 hind phalange measurements from 38 individuals, including all

four species from the Central and South-Central Andes, have been taken from the literature (Izeta *et al.* 2009; Gasco and Marsh, 2015, Mondini and Muñoz, 2017; Costa and Barri, 2018) (tab. 1). Finally, because the skeletal collection is no longer available for study, we used the mean of first phalange measurements of modern Peruvian domestic SAC published by Kent (1982) which included 8 *Lama glama* and 26 *Vicugna pacos*. Additional modern Peruvian skeleton specimens are very rare or non-existent. The raw data and details are available in

supplementary data 1 and 2.

				_	Origen
	Argentina	Bolivia	Patagonia	Peru	unknown
Guanaco (Lama guanicoe)					
Fore	5	-	3	1	5
northern form (L.g. cacsilensis)	2	-	-	1	-
southern form (L.g. guanicoe)	11	-	3	-	-
subspecies unknown	2	-	-	-	5
Hind	5	-	3	1	6
northern form (<i>L</i> . <i>g</i> .					
cacsilensis)	2	-	-	1	-
southern form (L.g. guanicoe)	1	-	3	-	-
subspecies unknown	2	-	-	-	6
Fore or Hind	-	-	-	1	-
northern form (L.g. cacsilensis)	-	-	-	1	-
Llama (Lama glama)					
Fore	17	6	-	-	3
Hind	17	4	-	-	5
Fore or Hind	7	-	-	-	-
Vicuña (Vicugna vicugna)					
Fore	3	1	-	5	2
northern form (V.v. mensalis)	1	1	-	5	-
southern form (V.v. vicugna)	1	-	-	-	-
subspecies unknown	1	-	-	-	2
Hind	2	1	-	4	2
northern form (V.v. mensalis)	-	1	-	4	-
southern form (V.v. vicugna)	1	-	-	-	-
subspecies unknown	1	-	-	-	2
Alpaca (Vicugna pacos)					
Fore	2	-	-	-	4
Hind	2	-	-	-	3

- tab. 1: Modern samples by origin and anatomical element. Individuals from Kent (1982) (n=8
- 152 Lama glama and n= 26 Vicugna pacos) are not included in this table because the raw
- 153 measurements for each phalanx are no longer available.
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- 155 Selection and origin of archeological specimens

In this study, we took phalanx measurements and also collated published data from eight 156 157 archaeological sites located across regions where different domestication events occurred 158 (fig.1). For Peruvian archaeological contexts, the measurements come from one cave site 159 located in the *puna* of Junín at 4250 masl, three Moche culture sites (AD 100-800) and one 160 Lambayeque-Sicán culture site (AD 800-1350) located on the northern coast (fig.1). Four 161 phalanges from the high elevation cave site of Pachamachay date to phase 5 (1500 BC) (Kent, 1982), while phalanges from the Moche culture come from domestic and funerary contexts at 162 the Huacas de Moche complex (n = 37; Vásquez and Tham, 2009; Vásquez et al., 2020), Cerro 163 164 Chepén (n = 22; Vásquez and Tham 2009) and El Brujo complex graves (n = 6 fore; Goepfert, 165 2011). The Lambayeque-Sicán culture phalanges come from the Huaca Amarilla (n = 5 fore) 166 in the Sechura Desert (Goepfert et al., 2018). The Bolivian archaeological camelids come from 167 domestic contexts dated AD 300 to 450 at Khonkho Wankane (n = 3), a ceremonial center 168 located on southern shore of Lake Titicaca at 3835 masl (Gasco and Marsh, 2015). Other 169 samples (n = 2) come from phase 4 of the Formative Period Chiripa complex also located on 170 the southern shore of Lake Titicaca (Browman 1980) and dated to 100 BC (Kent, 1982). Finally, the Argentinian camelids come from at Alero Deodoro Roca (n = 23), a rockshelter located 171 172 1000 masl in the mountainous region of the Sierras Pampeanas Australes of the Gran Chaco 173 dated between 4500-1900 BP (Costa and Izeta, 2016). The raw data and archaeological details

are available in supplementary data 1 and 2.



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Figure 1. Localization of archaeological sites associated with the number of phalange
measurements used in the present study. One phalange equal to one individual (map modified
from Dufour and Goepfert 2020).

181 *Linear measurements*

Five linear measurements (Variables 1 to 5) on both fore and hind first phalanges (fig.2; see supplementary data 2 for measurement details and Gasco *et al.*, 2014) were taken following Duerst (1926), Kent (1982) and Von den Driesch (1976). Measurements were collected to the nearest 0.01 mm with a Mitutoyo Absolute (IP 67) digital caliper. Each linear measurement was taken three times on three different days to obtain a mean value reducing measurement error. In case of a complete skeleton or limbs, an average value was calculated for the four fore or

- 188 hind phalanges. To make comparison possible, we considered published data obtained in similar
- 189 conditions (or reproduced them when all the raw data were available).
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Figure 2: Illustration of the five linear measurements from both fore and hind first phalanges ofa *Lama glama*.

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- 195 Statistical analysis

196 Kent (1982) used size and discrete criteria to separate fore from hind phalanges in 197 archaeological collections. Here, we used the five variables measured on the modern specimens 198 to test differences between hind and fore phalanges, while taking into account the differences 199 among the four taxa of SAC using a factorial Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). 200 We then assessed the accuracy of the anatomic and taxonomic classifications of phalanges using 201 the five variables using a machine learning approach based on the k-Nearest Neighbors 202 algorithm (k-NN; Ripley, 1996). This approach allowed us to classify an individual within a group based on its similarity to the group using k nearest data points. We used k = 1 for the 203 204 anatomical position and k = 3 for the taxonomic status because of the exploration of four 205 different species. For 11 archaeological specimens, the anatomical position was known because 206 the skeletons were found articulated during excavation and their anatomical position was tested 207 (See supplementary data 2). Afterwards, depending on the classification rate results, the k-NN 208 method was applied to archaeological phalanges in order to predict their anatomic and 209 taxonomic status.

The univariate size of the phalange was computed as the geometric mean of the five variables per specimen following L'Heureux (2008) and L'Heureux and Fernández (2015). The size variation among modern and archaeological samples was displayed with a box plot and their differences assessed with an analysis of variance (ANOVA). The sample size of the Huacas
de Moche and Alero Deodoro Roca sites (n>10 individuals) allowed a clustering approach using
finite Gaussian mixture models to explore the structure of phalange size variation and to identify
the occurrence of several size groups within the archaeological samples.

To visualize and synthetize the patterns of differentiation among the modern and archaeological samples we used a Principal component analysis (PCA) and a dendrogram computed with the neighbor-joining algorithm performed on euclidean distances. Both PCA and the neighbor joining tree were performed on a mean of the 5 variables for each modern and archaeological sample.

All analyses were performed with R software version 1.2.5033 (R Core Team (2019)) and the statistical packages R Core Team (2019), class (Venables and Ripley, 2002), MASS (Venables and Ripley, 2002), mclust (Scrucca *et al.*, 2016) and ape (Paradis and Schliep, 2019) with the graphical display ggplot2 (Wickham, 2016).

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Results

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1. Anatomic and taxonomic resolution in first phalange morphometrics

We found significant differences between modern fore and hind phalanges (p < 0.0001) and SAC taxa (p < 0.0001), but no interaction between anatomic (hind and fore) and taxonomic groups (species) in the data set (p = 0.17), suggesting that anatomical differentiation between hind and fore is shared among the four species of SAC and does not interfere with their taxonomic differentiation. The k-NN results on modern fore and hind phalanges find a correct anatomical attribution with 59,64 % accuracy (Fig. 3 and see supplementary data 2 for anatomical test predictions on the 11 archaeological phalanges).

238 When both fore and hind phalanges are analyzed together using the k-NN algorithm, correct 239 species classification of the four taxa is 60.52%, when using just the hind phalanges it is 58.92% and when using the fore phalanges, it is 60.34% (Fig. 3). These results suggest that fore 240 phalanges yield better taxonomic resolution. When fore phalanges are used we obtain more 241 242 robust percentages of correct classification and especially for the classification when only both wild taxa are analyzed (96.15%) (Fig. 3). Nonetheless, the taxonomic signal for accurate 243 244 identification of isolated SAC phalanges is weak and could lead to a high probability of 245 misidentification when the four species are analyzed together.



Figure 3: Percentage of correct k-NN classifications assessing the discrimination accuracy of modern SAC first phalanges between fore and hind first phalanges and between different taxonomic units: (1) all four taxa, (2) wild taxa only, (3) *Lama* genus only, (4) *Vicugna* genus only and (5) domestic taxa only.

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255 2. Morphometric variation in modern and archaeological SAC fore phalanges

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We found non-overlapping size differences in wild taxa, i.e. between the small vicuña and the large guanaco, but a size continuum for the domestic taxa (Fig. 4). This continuum can be divided into: a small size group comprised of alpacas of unknown origin, an intermediate sized group which includes alpacas from Argentina and llamas from Bolivia and Argentina and a large size group which includes llamas from Argentina (Fig.4).



Figure 4: Box plot displaying size variation in modern (color gradient (see Fig.2) and archaeological (grey gradient) fore phalanges of South American camelids using the geometric mean of five linear measurements.

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Eigenvector output from PCA performed on the five measurements shows that, on PC1 268 representing 96.00% of the total variance, the great length of the first phalanx (V1) explains 269 half of the variation (50.57%), while the four other measurements contribute between 15.34% 270 271 and 10.23%. When looking at the pattern of similarity and dissimilarity in modern SAC with 272 the NJ algorithm (Fig. 5) the guanaco and vicuña are at two extremes of the variation range while the domestic taxa vary along these two extremes and split in three morphogroups: (1) the 273 274 vicuña/alpaca group which includes the alpacas from Peru and the MNHN zoological garden, (2) the intermediate group which includes both llamas from Bolivia and Argentina and a single 275

alpaca from Argentina, and (3) the guanaco/llama group which includes llamas from Argentinaand Peru.

A north-south cline of size can be observed among the wild SAC (Fig. 4 and 5) with the 278 279 largest subspecies (Lama guanicoe guanicoe and Vicugna vicugna) in the South and 280 the smallest (L. guanicoe cacsilencis and V. vicugna mensalis) in the North. Fore phalanges of 281 archaeological SAC spread across this gradient in three morphogroups: a small, an intermediate 282 and a large (Fig. 4 and 5). The finite Gaussian mixture model identifies only the large 283 guanaco/llama size group at Alero Deodoro Roca (Fig.4) but identifies two groups at Huaca de 284 Moche even if all three size groups are present, including small vicuña/alpaca size, intermediate alpaca and llama size and large guanaco/llama size animals (Fig.4). At Cerro Chépen and 285 Pachamachay the fore phalanges fall within the small vicuña/alpaca morphogroupe, except for 286 287 one from Cerro Chépen which falls within the intermediate size morphogroup. The El Brujo, 288 Huaca Amarilla and Chiripa fore phalanges fall within the intermediate llama/alpaca size group, 289 while the Khonkho and Alero Deodoro Roca specimens are within the large guanaco/llama 290 group (Fig. 4).

291 We find significant size differences among modern and archaeological SAC fore 292 phalanges (ANOVA: mean square = 36.90, F = 10.4, p = 2e-16; Fig.4). When looking at the similarity and dissimilarity relationships among modern and archaeological means (Fig 5), we 293 294 observe that the Huaca de Moche small size group, Cerro Chépen and Pachamachay fore 295 phalanges are distantly related to the Northern form of vicuña. Among the more intermediate 296 archaeological fore phalanx morphotypes, those from Huaca Amarilla are more closely related 297 to the Alpaca/Vicuña morphogroup while the Huacas de Moche large group, Chiripa and El 298 Brujo are closer to the Argentinian alpaca and small llama morphogroup. Finally, Khonkho and 299 Alero Deodoro Roca are more closely related to the large Southern guanaco and Argentinian 300 and Peruvian llama morphogroup with Alero Deodoro Roca being closer to large llama and 301 captive guanaco while Khonkho is more closely related to the large Southern Guanaco.



- 304 Figure 5: Dendrogram displaying the relationship of morphometric similarities and
- 305 dissimilarities in fore first phalanges among modern and archaeological SAC using a neighbor
- 306 joining algorithm on Euclidian distance between mean group measurements.

Discussion

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309 Current SAC diversity

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311 k-NN classifications found greater taxonomic resolution in fore phalanges indicating that 312 when possible, fore phalanges should be preferred for the investigation of past SAC diversity 313 (Izeta et al., 2009). The approach supports significant differences between wild SAC already 314 observed by Wing (1972) and as well as previous obsrevations of a north-south cline size gradient between subspecies of the same genus (Wheeler, 1995; Yacobaccio, 2006; Izeta et al., 315 316 2009 Yacobaccio et al., 1998; Mengoni Goñalons and Yacobaccio, 2006; Izeta, 2004; Mengoni 317 Goñalons, 2008; Gasco, 2014). This geographical size range can be linked to Bergmann's rule 318 (Bergmann, 1848) as currently suggested for modern guanacos, where individuals from colder 319 environments in the South are larger (González et al., 2006; L'Heureux, 2008). Nevertheless, 320 we have to be cautious since only one specimen of each wild taxon from the northwestern 321 Argentine is found in our samples. Moreover, regarding domestic taxa, we observed a great size 322 variation between llama populations which overlap with the intermediate and large size groups. 323 We observed that non-native specimens in Argentina are taller than other Argentinian llama 324 populations from Cieneguillas and Demetria, and those from Bolivia. It is the same for alpaca 325 populations where Argentinian alpacas are taller than captive specimens. We also found large 326 intra-population variation among the captive guanaco, vicuña and alpaca populations. These 327 results support the importance of developing standard osteometric approaches at the regional 328 scale for taxonomic discrimination (Mengoni Goñalons and Elkin, 2021) and raise the question 329 of the interaction between the native origin and size for wild and domestic captive specimens 330 as well.

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332 Besides the straightforward discrimination of wild SAC, our study confirms that the distinction between wild and domestic forms of the same genus and between alpacas and llamas 333 334 is far more challenging for archaeological sites and time periods where the four taxa may be 335 present. Despite improved data sets and new statistical approaches it still not possible to reliably 336 separate phalanges of the four SAC species. One of the main reasons is the limited sample size, 337 especially for alpacas and *L.g. cacsilensis*, preventing full documentation of their morphometric 338 variation (Kent, 1982). Combining Kent and the present dataset would greatly improve the 339 overall description of modern SAC diversity in general and the representation of llamas and alpacas from Peru in particular. However, only mean measurement data produced by Kent 340

(1982) are available while the raw data are lost for future osteological studies. But regardless
of the size of the modern dataset, SAC diversity has drastically decreased since the Spanish
conquest, as evidenced by the present study and by pre-conquest alpaca and llama varieties at
the site of El Yaral (Wheeler *et al.*, 1995). This loss of diversity has been driven by a genetic
bottleneck (Fan *et al.*, 2020) produced by the massive extermination of domestic herds during
the Spanish conquest, estimated to be as much as 90% (Wheeler *et al.*, 1995; Flores Ochoa,
1982).

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Comparison of modern and archaeological SAC diversity

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351 Pre-Hispanic events might have also contributed to the loss of diversity in SAC. A study 352 conducted on the mitochondrial genomes of the four modern SAC and archaeological camelids 353 from Northern Chile (sites of Tulán 54 and 58, 3500-2400 BP) reveals reduced vicuña genetic 354 variation during the Early Formative Period and suggests a domestication model based on an 355 ancient guanaco population which is currently extinct (Díaz-Maroto et al., 2020). Moreover, cross-species hybridization and its consequences before and after the Spanish conquest add 356 357 complexity to the species identification. The existence of hybrid specimens between the 358 domestic species and possibly between wild and domestic SAC could explain the occurrence 359 of the intermediate morphogroup of llama/alpaca size. Crossbreeding between domestic and 360 wild species produces fertile offspring and recently captive rearing of "pacovicuña", a hybrid 361 between the vicuña and the alpaca has been undertaken, supposedly to improve alpaca fiber 362 quality (Wheeler, 2012). Crossbreeding between wild and domestic species are also mentioned 363 in written sources from 1555 (see Murra 1978), describing the annual release and return to the 364 wild of llamas as offerings to the gods. Such crossbreeding occurring in the wild happened more 365 recently. In 1940, a population of guanacos and llama hybrids is described as living in the wild 366 in the Province of Córdoba in Argentina (Wheeler, 2012). Mitochondrial and nuclear DNA reveal extensive post Spanish conquest hybridization for 40% of current llamas and for 80% of 367 368 current alpacas (Kadwell et al., 2001) and may exceed 90% in alpacas, threatening the 369 conservation the original alpaca genome (Wheeler, 2012). More recent phylogenomic studies 370 have found admixture in 36% in alpacas and 5% for llamas (Fan et al., 2020).

The loss of diversity and the homogenization of phenotypes due to hybridization since the conquest that induced the phenotypic gap between modern and archaeological SAC strongly suggest that distinguishing the later using current SAC collections is probably vain.

However, a range of morphological diversity in pre-Hispanic SAC has been observed here, 374 375 including smaller Northern archaeological specimens (Peru) compared to larger Southern ones 376 (Argentina) or the occurrence of vicuña-sized camelids on the Peruvian coast (1). Domestic 377 SAC have been reported from the Early Horizon on at sites on the north coast of Peru (Szpak 378 et al. 2016), but are now totally absent from the region, suggesting that current geographic 379 distribution cannot be used directly to predict their presence or absence in Andean ecozones 380 during the past. Consequently, we can consider that the vicuña size morphogroup is either now 381 extinct or has not been covered by our modern comparative material, as reported in several 382 studies from different periods and locations in the Andes (Wheeler et al., 1995; Casey et al., 383 2018; Fan et al., 2020; Díaz-Maroto et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the presence of vicuñas on the 384 Northern Peruvian coast is questionable since their habitat is currently restricted to the higher 385 altitudes of the Andes (Franklin, 1983) and it is virtually impossible that it could find suitable 386 habitats on the coast. It is also unlikely that large numbers of complete hunted vicuña corpses 387 were brought to the lowlands. If vicuña meat was consumed, charqui (dry meat) might have 388 been the preferred way to bring it from the highlands. The only previous evidence of a vicuña-389 like species at lower altitude corresponds to the extinct Lama vicugna gracilis found in late 390 Pleistocene and early Holocene deposits in the Patagonia and Eastern Pampean region of 391 Argentina and Uruguay, Argentine and Chilean Patagonia and even on the Northern coast of 392 Chile in Calama (Cajal et al., 2010). The latest genetic studies with aDNA (Mitochondrial 393 DNA) assign this species to vicuña (Vicuna vicuna) (Weinstock et al. 2009), but another aDNA 394 study (Metcalf et al. 2016) assigned it to a species distinct from the vicuña. While these two 395 studies used older archaeological material and correspond to different geographical areas, they 396 also highlight the loss of a vicuña like taxon living at lower latitudes. The two size groups 397 identified at Huacas de Moche suggest that both llamas and alpacas were present. This is 398 congruent with isotopic studies indicating that some of the individuals for which phalanges 399 have been measured were raised in the lowlands (Vásquez et al., 2020)., as was previously 400 suggested by (Dufour et al., 2014) and at El Brujo (Santana-Sagredo, 2020), although the SAC 401 remains were not assigned to a specific species. The permanent domestic herds in the lowlands, 402 therefore, were likely composed of both domestic species, despite previous reluctance to accept 403 the presence of alpacas outside the highlands (Topic et al., 1987). The most likely hypothesis 404 would be the presence of a vicuña size domestic taxon. The specific functions of each domestic 405 species need to be further explored taking into account the diversity of political, domestic, 406 ceremonial and funeral contexts that could have driven the choices of the Mochica and the 407 Lambayeque-Sicán.

Furthermore, the occurrence of intermediate sized SAC (2) in Huacas de Moche, El Brujo, 408 409 Huaca Amarilla, Chiripa, Khonhko and Alero Deodoro de Roca falling in the range of 410 intermediate modern llama/alpaca size could suggest the occurrence of hybrids. Evidence of 411 crossbreeding practices predating the Spanish conquest have recently been reported for three 412 Early Formative specimens from Tulán, Chile (3400-2300 BP) (Díaz-Maroto et al., 2021). The 413 occurrence of intermediate size animals is very important especially for the north coast of Peru where no local comparative anatomical material is available because no SAC are found in the 414 415 area today. The identification of Mochica SAC from the Huacas de Moche site specimens is 416 very challenging. Alpaca and llama phalanges were identified in previous reports (Vásquez and 417 Tham, 2009; Vásquez et al., 2020). But according to our results it is impossible to determine 418 the taxa of the Huacas de Moche intermediate group to species level, because it totally overlaps 419 the two modern domestic species morphometrics. Consequently, as previously stated, the 420 question of hybridization should be investigated as a possible cause for the intermediate size 421 archaeological specimens from various origins and predating the Spanish conquest.

422 Finally, the large guanaco/llama group (3) includes both guanacos and llamas from 423 Argentina and llamas from Peru, as well as llamas from the archaeological sites of Khonkho in 424 Bolivia and Alero Deodoro de Roca in Argentina. The largest phalanges in our sample came 425 from llamas at the sites of Khonkho and Alero Deodoro de Roca, surpassing the large Argentine 426 guanacos from Córdoba in size. The phalanges from Khonkho were previously identified as 427 castrated male llamas (Gasco and Marsh, 2015). Early castration produces exceptionally large 428 animals, and these taller, stronger and more docile camelids are often selected for caravan use 429 above individuals breed for meat or wool (Browman, 1990; Tomka 1992; Nielsen, 2000; Gasco 430 and Marsh, 2015). In our sample, the larger modern llama from Cieneguillas, (Cieneguillas 1) 431 was used for the transport of goods. The presence of camelids from Huacas de Moche and El 432 Brujo in the large guanaco/llama group should be further investigated because they are larger 433 than the mean values of modern Peruvian llamas included in our sample. Previous analysis of the Alero Deodora Roca materials showed the presence of three different size groups of 434 435 guanacos (Costa and Izeta ,2016), while our results show that the Alero Deodora Roca samples 436 overlap in size with the large Southern guanaco subspecies (including the Córdoba guanacos) 437 and the large Argentine llamas, but we detected the presence of only one taxa with the finite 438 Gaussian mixture model. These results raise the possibility that llamas may also have been 439 present with the introduction of llamas in the region during the late Holocene (3000-3600 BP). 440 Although llamas are not found in the region today (Diaz et al., 1987; Rosacher, 1992, 2004; 441 Geisa, 2012) ethnohistorical descriptions, rock art and pottery representations (Costa and Izeta

442 2016) support their previous existence. The possible presence of castrated males requires
443 further research, especially for Argentine archaeological sites because of the very large size of
444 the wild modern guanaco population of Córdoba (Costa and Barri, 2018). The effect of
445 castration on body size of camelids should also be further analyzed in the future.

446

447 Conclusion

The analysis of first phalanx linear measurements using machine learning algorithm 448 449 provides very accurate identification of wild SAC taxa, but has proven inefficient for accurately 450 separating wild from domestic forms. For this reason, it may therefore be prudent to keep 451 species specific distinction at the level of large versus small forms (Lama vs. Vicugna) when all 452 four SAC species are potentially present in an archaeological deposit. Nonetheless, the 453 approach does provide taxa specific identification for samples from sites or levels dated prior 454 to the beginning of domestication and from sites or levels dated after domestication where only 455 one wild ancestor was present. Moreover, in comparison to the classical gradients previously 456 defined by Kent (1982) and Gasco and Marsh (2015), our approach includes an additional taxa 457 gradient classification. Here we have defined three morphogroups of SAC size (small, 458 intermediate and large) using modern and archaeological SAC data from across their present 459 and past distributions. At this scale, we think that a general gradient definition is more 460 appropriate to identify SAC archaeological remains.

Although our study remains a work in progress requiring the addition of new data from contemporary SAC reference collections, it remains an inexpensive method available to all zooarchaeologists for documenting past SAC diversity. It is important to continue to improve this kind of classical zooarchaeology analysis, conducting studies with available open access data and reference tools for determination of present and past SAC diversities.

466 Nevertheless, it should be noted that our comparative approach has limitations since we 467 could not always obtain data on the native origin and life history of the modern specimens. 468 There is an urgent need to improve SAC reference collections to include specimens of known 469 origin and with life history data from across their entire range. This would be particularly 470 important to permit the study of camelid diversity in regions such, as those in Chile, which are 471 particularly lacking in this study. Since we have shown that only the identification of the wild 472 taxa is reliable, we also recommend using 3D geometric morphometrics to the highest 473 organismal resolution possible, in association with paleogenomic and isotopic proxies, to 474 examine the domestication process across the several millennia of intensification between SAC 475 and human societies (Vigne et al., 2005).

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486 Declaration of Competing Interest

487 The authors declare no financial or conflict of interests.

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490

489 Appendix A Supplementary material

491 Supplementary Component 1. Modern and archaeological camelids raw measurements.

492 Supplementary Component 2. Modern and archaeological camelids complementary493 information.

494

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