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Object Image and Description

**Caption:** <sup>1</sup>Feline Mortar and Pestle, 700–1 BCE. Peru, North Highlands, Pacopampa(?), Chavín style (900-200 BCE). Stone, pigment; overall: 5.8 x 11 cm (2 5/16 x 4 5/16 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, In memory of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Humphreys, gift of their daughter Helen 1957.494

**Description:** This object is titled “Feline Mortar and Pestle”, and is from the Chavín Culture, which is a <sup>2</sup>pre-Inca civilization. The artist is unknown, but it is suggested to be from Pacopampa, 900-250BCE. The collection number is 1957.494 and the object is located in 232 Andean in the Cleveland Museum of Art.

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<sup>1</sup> Cleveland Museum of Art, 232 Andean

“Feline Mortar and Pestle.” *Cleveland Museum of Art*, 700–1 BCE, <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1957.494>. Accessed 3 Nov. 2024.

<sup>2</sup> “Chavin Civilization” *World History Encyclopedia*, Mark Cartwright 07 April 2015, [https://www.worldhistory.org/Chavin\\_Civilization/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Chavin_Civilization/)

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## Formal Analysis

This object comes from a pre-Incan civilization called the Chavín Civilization. It is thought to have originated from Pacopampa, which is where the elites of the society would meet to worship Chavín deities with locals. This is a complete and intricate work, as seen by the intricate engravings on the mortar and pestle. It is likely that more than one of these objects were crafted, as they date back through the range of 900 to 250BCE. Also, the religious use of this object and the fact that it is crafted from stone suggests that making it was a learned and passed down craft for rituals. While similar mortar and pestles could be used for grinding up larger objects, the size of this object (5.8 x 11 cm) suggests that it was used for more ritualistic purposes such as grinding pigments or hallucinogens. This important distinction explains the main use of this object, which was for the spread and worship of the deities associated with Chavín culture. I believe that this object would strictly be used for those actions to preserve its sacredness and significance in rituals in Chavín culture. The CMA comments that this object and other small objects from the Chavín <sup>3</sup>“illustrates[s] the appeal and the spread of Chavín religion.”

The context this object is used in is, I believe, limited to religious practices and rituals in Chavín society. This is because it is proposed that it was used by elites in society to connect with Chavín and local deities alike. As I mentioned above, I believe that many iterations of this object were created. This is because it is made up of stone, and is finely engraved, so repairs would be next to impossible. The wide range of years this could've been used is supportive of this belief, as it is reasonable to think that multiple objects would have to be used over 600 years. While it is possible that this single object was preserved and passed down through generations, I believe that to be very unlikely.

This object creates embodied experiences through what it used for, as a mortar and pestle is not inherently religious. Unlike a bible or religious symbol, a mortar and pestle is only religious in the context that it is being used in. For this object, I believe it creates embodied experiences in a couple of different ways. Firstly, it connects the social aspect of Chavín society to its practiced religion by facilitating the creation of pigments and hallucinogens. Pigments and hallucinogens have long been used in many different societies in religious ceremonies and rituals. They are usually interacted with in group scenarios, allowing those practicing to experience them and the ritual as a collective being. This creates deeply rooted and meaningful experiences. Secondly, assuming that this object is passed down and is recreated, this serves as a way to allow members to connect over the shared experience of making and engraving the mortar and pestle. Overall, the use cases of this object as well as the creation of it help to create social and religious embodied experiences.

The only questions I have about this object are how many different variations of it are there today, and what the specific meaning of all the engraving are. Also, I'm wondering why the mortar is meant to depict a feline?

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<sup>3</sup> Cleveland Museum of Art, 232 Andean

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