



Peru Surfing History

Long before the Inca empire, along the Peruvian coast existed many amazing cultures whose lives were surrounded by the powerful oceans. Their people were merchandisers and fishermen who struggled to survive in harmony with nature. For years however, their fishing was limited to the lakes around the coast despite the ocean's proximity and the goods these could bear, for as of then, they had not yet discovered a way of dominating its tempestuous nature.

In order to achieve this, it was indispensable to create some kind of craft that would allow them to reach behind the waves. With this idea leading their minds, they returned to their lakes to fish the tiny fishes that hid in between the totora's canes. It was hence here, amongst the Totorá reed where a fisherman first conceived the idea of using the ditch reeds of the totora plant to build their first craft; the TUP the little Totorá horse as we today know it. Let's imagine then that magical moment in which this fisherman dared to go into the sea aboard of his primitive craft, after fighting with the waves, he manages to move away from the shore and throw his nets and fishhooks into the ocean, achieving copious fishing. But on his way back however, he is hit by the waves and loses all of the day's caught prey.

Consequently, he is forced to study the waves and improve his craft until creating the first real little horse of totora, crowned with a firm and proud prow that tolerates the dashing of the waves, hence changing their lives forever. This unbeatable craft is still used as an unequal ship by today's fishermen.

These ancient fishermen however must have gone through a period of training to get familiar with the waves in order to surpass them and arrive safe and sound to the beach with the day's fishing outcome intact. Everything seems to suggest that it was at this point when the ancient Peruvians started surfing for pleasure. Think about it. These fishermen were entering the sea throughout a whole period of time with the only purpose of getting to know the waves. The first thing they had to learn was to confront them in order to arrive to the fishing area usually located behind the breaking of the waves, thus consequently, and here comes the beauty of the story, they had to learn how to fight the rush of the waves so, when returning to the coast, their fragile crafts wouldn't be overturned. Day after day, they paddled to reach the breaking of the waves, so that once there, they could practice the act of returning to the beach taking advantage of the wave's motive power.

Don't you think these fishermen, after beating the endless rush of waves from a beach such as Huanchaco, didn't experience an indescribable pleasure when, finally, they pointed the prow of their little TOTORA horses towards the coast and allowed themselves to be carried ashore by a wave at an extraordinary speed, can you imagine the expression in their faces, the sensation of pride and virility that they must of felt when verifying that each time they were more dexterous at each stage of their apprenticeship? Don't you think they must of thought of entering the sea for the pure pleasure of just surfing some good waves? Can a man, of any time or culture, desist from surfing once he has experienced the enormous pleasure that this practice brings?

Traditionally, the roots of the art of surfing are attributed directly to the ancient members of the Hawaiian royalty. However, advances in the field of pre-Columbian archaeology have revolutionized these theories due to evidence suggesting that the ancient inhabitants of the Peruvian coast surfed amazing waves three thousands



years ago.

Remains of both the Chimu and Mochica cultures have revealed that these were greatly influenced by the sea in a manner much superior to that of any other ancient civilization. In their iconography, as we can observe from the relics found in the Huacas del Brujo, del Sol and of La Luna in the Moche valley, there is an abundance of images showing endless sequences of waves that represent the movement, the force and power of the sea as a source of life.

Generally, the developmentS of a society are measured by their advances in agriculture, but in the case of Mochica and Chimú however, their development was linked directly to fishing: they transformed the pacific Ocean into one of the biggest fisheries in the world. Everywhere around the artistic creation of these cultures, waves appear as a symbol of power: the infinite and incomparable power that controlled their universe. In several pieces of art representling Gods or supernatural circumstances, a frame of waves appears around each drawing. We just have to imagine the infinite series of waves of the Chicama beach and remember that this wave, one of the longest in the world, is only twenty kilometers away from the Lambayeque excavations- where the richest tomb of America, that of the Mochican Master of Sipán, was recently discovered.

Nowhere else in America has there been proof of a social development so connected to the sea like the one of the peoples from Chan Chan city. Practically in no other culture did there exist a population so numerous that cohabited so intimately with an ocean so powerful, which moreover, is almost always at swell all year round. bearing this in mind, this is another of the reasons why many of the remaining walls of Chan Chan are covered with drawings and friezes in high relief representing fishing scenes, including not only series of waves, but sea birds, sea deities and spirits.

The Chan Chan Festival of the Sea in Huanchaco, a beach located 560 kilometer to the north of Lima, is a unique event in the surfing world, an opportunity to discover an ancient tradition of surfing still alive today. Huanchaco is the biggest coastal town where you can still see the fishermen entering the sea aboard of the legendary little Totoras. To the date, they continue to practice with success these same fishing and raft construction techniques as those employed by their ancestors. As put by archeologists this tradition can be traced back to 1000BC for it this is all eventually depicted an archeological ceremonila vessel of the Viru Culture, an antiquity of 3000 years, where you can clearly see a man being presented aboard of a little totora craft.

If 3000 years ago, the little Totoras boats were an indispensable element in the lives of the Ancient peruvian fishermen, surfing must of been too, a part of the habitual tasks of these people who discovered and enjoyed this enormous pleasure 3000 years ago, long before it was improved and taken to its highest level of artistic perfection by the members of the Hawaiian royalty



THE BEGINNINGS OF SURFING IN ANCIENT PERU



Traditionally, the art of surfing is derived directly from the old members of the Hawaiian royalty, who surfed on boards made by themselves from materials locally available. The art of surfing was considered "the sport of kings", and the major part of the contemporary history, frequently based on studies made at the Bishop Museum of Hawaii, used to find its origins at the blue waters of Oahu and its surrounding islands.

Nevertheless, there are two ancient cultures, Mochica and Chimu, which developed in the north of Peru more than two thousand years ago and were discovered thanks to existence of important ruins and architectural complexes.



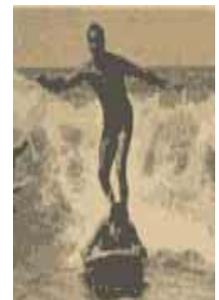
These societies have been the first ones to be related actively with powerful tidal zones, through activities such as transport and fishing. They left us many examples of designs "featuring" waves in the religious iconography and the art expressed on textiles, frescos and ceramics, many of which are scale models of the first crafts made for surfing called "caballitos de totora".



The first men, who experienced the pleasure of surfing, were fishermen who had to utilize the powerful waves in order to get food.

The necessary courage, in combination with the instinct of survival resulted in a ritual similar to that of other warriors in history. This was the earliest example of men using boards created specifically for entering and leaving the sea. These men are still using them in modern times. It is possible to watch them in Trujillo; Huanchaco Beach is famous for this reason.

Because surfing was one of the most important parts in the learning process of every fisherman, the success of the daily catch depended on complete knowledge of the waves and the ocean.



PERUVIAN SURFING IN MODERN TIMES

Even if its true that Carlos Dogny took the first modern surfboard from Hawaii and imposed a way of surfing completely different than the one practiced on Peruvian coasts on "caballitos de totora", it is also true that before its miraculous appearance in the sea of Miraflores, the people from Lima had developed their own way of surfing. In an article published in the newspaper "El Comercio" on Sunday 28th of February of 1960, it stated:

"The origins of this activity in Peru can be found in what our water sport people call "riding waves". It was then, by 1909, that the group conformed by Alfonso and Alfredo "Shark" Granda Pezet, the old Buzzaglo, Celso Gamarra, the "Gringo" Schoeder and Alfonso Cillóniz, among others, resolved "riding waves" using a drawing board, in front of the beaches of Barranco. A little bit later, they were replaced by table boards".



Carlos Dogny was a globetrotter, playboy and sportsman who circled the globe 39 times. One of his favorite sports was polo, and thanks to this, he was invited to visit Hawaii. There he learned to surf, the traditional sport of kings and military chiefs, with the Ambassador of Modern Surfing, Duke Kahanamoku. He named it "tabla hawaiana" (Hawaiian board), and the name still holds in Peru. It required a lot of physical strength, because at that time boards were 5 to 6 meters long, of solid wood and a weighed 100 kilos.



During his studies in New York, the Second World War began in Europe. Even though he was a Peruvian citizen, he could have been sent to war, because he lived in the USA. To avoid this, he chose the place he found more secure and pleasant: Hawaii. But once there, he had the feeling that his life was in danger, because the war expanded all over the world and there was war between Japan and the USA. Due to the turmoil, he came back to South America, bringing with him by ship, one of those big boards with the remote hope to find an appropriate place to practice. When he arrived to Lima he started to study the sea and found in Miraflores, waves that he considered appropriate. Sure enough, the waves proved adequate for his practices. Later on, curious swimmers came close to him while he surfed, and he taught them this new sport. Such was the interest they showed, that the most enthusiastic ones begun to produce their own boards made of wood in workshops and garages. Since there was no place to leave the boards after surfing, the famous Waikiki Club in the "Costa Verde" (Green Coast) of Miraflores was established. He also was an important member in the creation of the first French surf club.

FELIPE POMAR, FIRST WORLD SURFING CHAMPION

In the summer of 1965, when the First World surfing Championship was held, Punta Rocas was a relatively new point break. The day the championship began, it was foggy with big waves. It was impossible to see the waves but a constant roar could be heard. When the fog lifted everybody was surprised by the size of the waves. These conditions favored the surfers accustomed to big waves. Among them was Felipe Pomar, who is with DUKE KAHANAMUKU in that picture, he already had two years of experience surfing in Hawaii. He remembers having been the only Peruvian in the finals, and he said to himself: "being already in the finals is OK, now search for bigger waves and risk everything. Nobody has trained more than you, nobody sacrificed himself more, and nobody deserves it more than you". He almost drowned because he didn't leave his board (leash less at that time) in a wipeout riding a left. Leaving the sea after the Finals many people came down the hill and exclaimed: ' 'iYou won, you won!" He didn't believe them until the results were announced and he was carried away on their shoulders.



However, his most memorable adventure was with Pitty Block when they entered the sea to surf after the 1974 earthquake. It lasted approximately two minutes and they entered the sea around "La Isla" (the Island) of Punta Hermosa with the idea of surfing whatever the ocean could produce. They did not count that the sea would retire and draw them back, which indeed happened. After living through some really terrific moments, they were able to cross the bay and catch a wave each; both of which were deemed "Tsunamis".



THE DEVELOPMENT OF SURFING IN PERU



Peruvian surfing began, developed and thrived in "Costa Verde", but with an ever increasing talent and hunger, the growing number of adventure-surfers discovered new and powerful waves such as Kon Tiki, Punta Rocas, Pico Alto and Cerro Azul in the south, and Chicama, Pacasmayo, Cabo Blanco, Panic Point, Lobitos, among others in the north. The Peruvian coast is 3079,5 Km. from north to south and it is constantly receiving powerful swells during the entire year, however during the winter swells are more frequent. Nowadays surfing is being practiced all over the country: on the north coast, where some of the most perfect waves can be found, in the northern villages of Lima where there are many uncrowded and quality beaches, in Lima, where the surf is more extended and different waves break in close proximity to each other, and finally in the south of Peru, where the waves are heavy, the weather is colder, and there are many beaches yet to be surfed.





The Peruvian sea has different types of waves for surfing: big, small, tubular, shore breaks, long and powerful waves. All of them require different kinds of boards. Those boards made by Peruvian shapers enjoy the highest reputation, not only in Peru but also in foreign countries, where they have been tested in demanding waves. They are being imported by many Latin-American countries. The first surfers to be professionally engaged in this activity were "Gordo" Barreda, Wayo Whilar (who has built surfboards since 1966), among others. Nowadays, there are many places where surfboards are being made, especially in the Lima area. Surfboards there are made to order or can be bought from stock, suitable for the Peruvian coast. Among the most outstanding shapers for their design and quality are Rodolfo Klima (Klimax surfboards), Alfredo Tello (Swells surfboards), Ricky Peschiera (OX surfboards), and Milton and Wayo Whilar. Klimax and Wayo Whilar surfboards also produce computer designed surfboards, which satisfies the increasing demand of the Peruvian surfing market. In addition, Ricardo Buroncle owner of Boz wetsuits are nationally and internationally known for their materials used to thwart the cold winter, and maintain the flexibility of the surfer.



PERUVIAN SURF SCHOOLS

One of the most important developments in Peru surfing history is the SURF SCHOOL, OLAS PERU. It was one of the first surf schools in Peru and began in 1992 in Punta Hermosa with 5 kids. One of those kids was Sofia Mulanovich. The founder Roberto "MUELAS" Meza started his lessons in Punta Hermosa and the school has since become a nest for many Peruvian surfers of the new generation. Luis Miguel de la Rosa, also known as "MAGOO", is the former seven time national champion and has been another important icon in Peruvian surf schools. Also formers champions, as Carlos "CHALO" Espejo, and Rocio Larrañaga are teaching and sharing their experience to anyone who wants to learn to surf.

Thanks to our waves, our history and the phenomenon of Sofia M, Peru has many surf schools which are still growing. It does not matter what time of year, the amount of kids in the water is rising, boys and girls, young and old.





SOFIA MULANOVICH, ASP WORLD CHAMPION 2004, ACTUALLY RANKING #1 IN THE WORLD

Sofia Mulanovich started to surf when she was a little girl at Máncora beach in northern Peru. She continued practicing at her local beach, Punta Hermosa, and was always supported by a family in which everyone practiced the sport. Given her talent since her early days, she was trained by Magoo de la Rosa, and also by Roberto Meza, National Champion 1991 and Director of the oldest Surf School in South America.



Sofia conquered easily since her early age in the Ladies Championships, which made her try her luck in competing against boys of her age where she frequently won, showing quality, and a solid and perfect style in her surfing, envisioning her future stardom as a professional surfer. She took part in International Events since she was 13 years old, acquiring this way the necessary level a surfer of her quality had to have in order to challenge what her surfing would allow her: being the World Champ.

Her sponsors are Roxy, Channel Island surfboards, LAN airlines, Red Bull, Ripley, Movistar and Reef. Her most important triumphs have been four times as National Champion (1996-1999), Panamerican Champion 1998, ISA World Champion 2004, five victories in the World Professional Championship Tour WCT and the World Professional Championship 2004. Actually, she's ranked first after her recent victory in the WCT event in Fiji, Tavarua.

Stepping Out – Peru Surfing

By Michael Hixon

Peru may not be on the map as a top hot surfing destination but filmmakers T.J. Barrack and Wes Brown heard of the country's long surfing history and traveled to its remotest areas to film "Peel: The Peru Project" showing at the Manhattan Village 6 theaters July 13.

Brown's inspiration for Peru came from reading the book "Kon Tiki" in which anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl developed a controversial theory that the Peruvians had originated surfing and later brought it to the Polynesians. "Peel: The Peru Project" is their second film.



Jamie Sterling catches a wave at Cabo Blanco in Peru.

"After the first one ("Islands in the Stream"), we wanted to have a longer, more feature-length film that would have more of a story to it," Brown said. "We wanted to have a gritty early-60's, surf road trip feel to it. We heard South America had places like that".

Once in Peru, the filmmakers enlisted the help of local surfers who took them to remote areas of the coast including Cabo Blanco, a tiny fishing town only accessible by a two-hour ride on a dirt path, where Ernest Hemingway reportedly wrote "The Old Man and the Sea."



Featured surfers in "Peel: The Peru Project," aside from the locals, include Mark Healey, Jamie Sterling, Jesse Colombo, Randy Bonds and women's world champion Sofia Mulanovich.

"We were fortunate enough to team up with two guys including Magoo de la Rosa who is a seven-time national Peruvian surfing champion, and another guy by the name of Octopus (de la Rosa's business partner and a security specialist)," said Barrack. "They are two guys down there that we couldn't make the movie without. They knew every in and out, and every spot to go to."

"That's half the reason they do what they do," added Brown on the surfers. "They love to travel and see different places. Adventure and surfing go hand in hand."

In 2003, Barrack and Brown, who grew up together in Santa Ynez, formed Little House Productions, and produced and directed "Islands in the Stream," which followed a group of world-class surfers looking for the perfect wave around Tahiti. The film was a tribute to Brown's grandfather and filmmaker, Bruce Brown, who created the "Endless Summer" and "On Any Sunday" franchises. Brown first worked with father and director Dana Brown and his grandfather on "Endless Summer II," and as the assistant writer and director for his father's film "Step Into Liquid." In the meantime, Barrack had graduated from USC with a bachelor's in English and creative writing.

While in Peru, the filmmakers learned why the surf in Peru is so special and they also had insight on a different surf culture.

"It's like California but all left point breaks instead of right," Brown said. "The surfing culture, they're very close-knit but there's not very many of them. They're in the main cities like Lima but most of the country, it's dirt roads. To get there takes hundreds of miles. You're talking about the left point breaks like Rincon (California) or Koho (Hawaii) and there's nobody on it. It's an incredible coastline."

But the trip, which took 45 days in desert-type conditions, and the film are not all about the surf. Machu Picchu, the pre-Columbian Inca ruin rediscovered in 1911 high atop a Peruvian mountain range, also takes center stage in "Peel: The Peru Project." Barrack said it definitely was a highlight of the shoot.

For many, the very notion of an "art history of surfing" suggests an oxymoron - how could such a popular past-time have anything to do with serious art? Yet this exhibition sets out to prove otherwise. The catalogue states: "The exhibit is ambitious, covering the history of surfing - in paintings, posters, photographs, film and artifacts - from ancient Peru and Polynesia to the 21st Century."

The connection between the arts and surfing goes back 3,000 years to Peru, where some of the world's first historians carved bas-reliefs of surfers. The intersection of surf culture and art today, however, extends far beyond art documenting life. Through more than 100 artworks, *Surf Culture: The Art History of Surfing* explores this phenomenon through the work of a cross-disciplinary group of artists. Art today incorporates graffiti, advertisements and everyday items, and surfing is as much about clothes, attitude, and punk music, as it is about hitting the waves.