Regional groupings of cultures have played important roles in South American anthropology, both in its culture history and in the interpretative models employed by social scientists investigating indigenous cultures, past and present. It is also clear that anthropological and archaeological interpretations were shaped by the information available (and not available) at key moments, as when the Handbook of South American Indians was edited, or the conference reappraising Peruvian archaeology was convened (see Bennett 1948b). It is equally apparent that arbitrary biases such as modern boundaries, and the nationalisms that accompany them, have influenced the way anthropologists have thought about the culture areas in South America, including the Central Andes.

For more than half a century, the Peruvian co-tradition, as the “over-all unit of culture history of an area within which the component cultures have been interrelated over a period of time” (Bennett’s 1948b: 1; see also Tello 1942), has dominated thinking about the Andean past. Its prominence is demonstrated by the many books that offer an introduction to the prehistory of the region, tacitly accepting it as the culturally relevant unit. Following A Reappraisal of Peruvian Archaeology, the next new synthesis to treat the region defined as the Peruvian co-tradition was by Bennett and Bird (1949). This influential book was followed by other synthetic presentations of the Central Andes, for instance, by J. Alden Mason (1957), Geoffrey Bushnell (1966), Rafael Larco Hoyle (1966), Edward Lanning (1967), Gordon Willey (1971), Luis Lumbreras (1969, 1974), Michael Moseley (1992), Craig Morris and Adriana von Hagen (1993), and James Richardson (1994), among others.

The way archaeological cultures are grouped must depend, at least to some degree, on the goals of one’s research. But there also is a real past whose remains we should not misrepresent. In our introduction to this volume, we called attention to problems associated with the southern boundary of the Peruvian co-tradition. Bennett (1948b) followed earlier convictions that Tiwanaku and the Bolivian shore of the Titicaca Basin belonged with cultures of the Peruvian sphere, immediately to the north, but excluded everything farther from the modern Peruvian border, including the eastern valleys that descend from the altiplano to tropical forests and grasslands. The archaeology of these “valles transversales,” as they are called in
Bolivia, was little known in the 1940s, and remains under-investigated even today. However, it certainly seems that large villages, intensive agriculture, advanced weaving, and perhaps even permanent buildings that included monumental architecture were part of the cultural repertoire of the people of at least the largest and best known of the eastern valleys, Cochabamba. Perhaps some of the cultural traits, which were formerly judged as Amazonian or Pampas in origin, appearing in regions such as Cochabamba, are as authentically Central Andean as irrigation and permanent architecture. Should the Central Andes be extended farther south, to include Cochabamba or even areas farther removed? There is no question that Cochabamba maintained a long-term relationship with Tiwanaku. For example, Isbell and Burkholder (2001) think that the kero ceramic form—so definitively associated with Tiwanaku and that appeared suddenly at that site—probably had its origin in Cochabamba.

When Bennett wrote in 1948 he was convinced that features such as urn burial were not part of the Peruvian co-tradition, but Isla and Reindel (this volume) report that nearly a third of the Nasca dead were buried in this fashion. Similarly, the bow and arrow was excluded from Central Andean culture traits, but a recently discovered Wari burial from Conchopata has an archer’s bow in it, and iconography from the same site shows Wari warriors armed with shield, bow, and arrows, kneeling in a reed boat (Isbell 2001: fig. 26; Isbell and Cook 2002; Ochatoma and Cabrera 2002).

Upon what basis did Bennett draw the northern boundary of the co-tradition between Peruvian Cajamarca and Ecuadorian Loja? Was his decision based on real material differences, or on the scarcity of information about remote mountain cultures between these two large basins, or on convictions that have nothing to do with the prehistoric past, such as the modern history of animosity between Peru and Ecuador? Lau (this volume) shows that Cajamarca’s ancient societies were interacting a great deal with Central Andean peoples farther to the south, and we know that Cajamarca ceramic styles appear on Peru’s north and far north coasts as well. So Cajamarca appears a legitimate inclusion in the Central Andes—but would Bennett have been confident about placing a co-tradition boundary between Cajamarca and Loja if he had known about the important Initial Period and Early Horizon occupations at Pacopampa (summarized in Burger 1992), the impressive chullpas of Chota/Cutervo (Isbell 1997; Shady and Rosas 1976), and the prominence of Huari stylistic influence in these same valleys (Shady and Rosas 1976), all well north of Cajamarca? These remain—and many others—show that Central Andean cultural features were more broadly distributed than realized in 1948, so the gap between the northern extremes of the Peruvian co-tradition and the southern extent of an Ecuadorian region is really quite modest in the highlands (and see discussion in Burger 1984).

Similar questions about a northern frontier of Central Andean culture are raised by Peter Kaulicke (this volume) in terms of coastal cultures. He shows that Vicús is at once part of the Moche sphere and that it also interacted significantly with Ecuadorian cultures. As Kaulicke indicates, a normative and overly simplistic view of the Moche ceramic style and interaction sphere appears to need significant