

## **The Early Intermediate Period: Nasca geoglyphs and the empty city**

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- The Moche were not the only people in the Andes in the Early Intermediate Period
- South of the Moche area in the coastal valleys
  - around 200 cal AD, the Lima culture developed
  - much of the evidence is now under the modern city of Lima
  - big mud-brick huacas, now surrounded by the city
  - the Lima pottery style and wall painting style were also used in other valleys
    - may indicate contact, alliances, etc.
  - population rose, agricultural area expanded as canals were lengthened
  - Pachacamac was founded
  - We won't do much more than note that this culture existed, and then continue south...
- Further south, around the Paracas peninsula
  - during the Early Horizon, the Paracas culture developed
  - we neglected this culture when we discussed the second part of the Early Horizon, but now we will go back and fill it in
  - not much is known about it yet other than large numbers of spectacular burials
    - not much data on where or how people lived, although this is currently being studied
    - absolute dating and chronology not clear
    - given that, Paracas can be dated roughly from 400 to 50 cal BC
  - actually two types:
    - Paracas Cavernas
      - deep shaft tombs
      - ceramics had incised designs with colors added after firing, using resin-based paints (called "post-fire painting")
        - (in contrast to colored mineral or clay paints applied before firing, as is more common)
    - Paracas Necropolis (now also called Topará culture)
      - Tombs in domestic areas, including ones that were already ruins when the burials were placed there
      - Often rectangular tombs, not as deep
      - Simpler, more elegant ceramics with thin walls, refined shapes, high polish, no colored designs or incisions
      - Iconography was on elaborate textiles
        - Often very large textiles representing a huge amount of labor
  - Apparently overlapped in time, but Necropolis may continue later
  - mummies bundled in large quantities of textiles, many highly decorated with embroidery and other techniques
  - clearly indicates the presence of extremely high status individuals
    - shamans? chiefs? or...?

- tombs often contained numerous individuals
  - maybe they were family burial places for high-status kin groups
- but Paracas is usually thought to have been a not very stratified or politically complex society
- no monumental ceremonial architecture, cities, etc. known
- textile technology was different from the north
- as was ceramic technology
- iconography was quite different from the north
  - apparently mostly supernatural motifs, or shamans in supernatural states
- Paracas influence also extended a bit south, into the Ica and Nazca valleys
  
- Nazca and Ica valleys
  - Spelling detail: Nazca vs. Nasca
    - Moseley just uses the modern Nazca (z) for everything
    - Silverman uses the two spellings distinctly
      - Nazca (z) = valley, geographic term
      - Nasca (s) = culture, style, period, archaeological term
      - based on the idea that Nasca (s) is the older, more correct spelling
      - does not really make much difference unless you encounter a zealot
  - Dating and chronology detail
    - Dates I give here differ from many you may see elsewhere
    - they are based mostly on a recent summary by Silverman 2002:37-39
    - she uses uncalibrated dates; I present the same dates here calibrated and rounded, which makes them look about 100 years more recent
    - I also lump some of the Nasca phases for purposes of this class, as you will see
  - 8 valleys that come together in a broad part of the coastal plain
    - the valleys are narrow, with no large farmable area at the mouth
    - the rivers are relatively small
      - some actually disappear underground for some stretches
      - Silverman 1988:411 "...the paltry source of water known as the Nazca river"
    - all the valleys together probably never supported more than 25,000 people
  - although the region seems an unlikely one, it has attracted interest because of
    - the dramatic, fine pottery and textiles found there
    - a monumental center called Cahuachi
    - the famous Nazca lines
  - so, what kind of society produced these things?
  - Paracas influence or people appeared in the Ica and Nazca area during the later part of the Paracas culture
  - Paracas style probably developed into Nasca style
    - Nasca pottery style is broken up into a series of 9 sub-periods (phases 1-9)
      - (Moseley only counts 8, since Nasca 9 is really a manifestation of the Wari culture from the highlands, which we will get to later)
      - during which the subject matter and style change over time

- but the chronology is still somewhat arguable
- Early Nasca (Nasca 1 and 2): around 50 cal BC to 300 cal AD
  - Nasca 1 pottery has the incisions of Paracas Cavernas style, but uses colored clay slip paints before firing, rather than postfiring resin paints
    - technically more like the north but stylistically still very different
  - kept some of the Paracas supernaturals/shamans, but added naturalistic motifs, too
  - later, the incisions were abandoned and the purely painted Nasca style developed
  - Early Nasca seems to have concentrated iconography more on textiles than on ceramics
    - very impressive, labor-intensive textiles
    - lots of wool
    - Moseley suggests that this implies a lot of exchange with highlands, where alpacas would have been more at home
- Very little data on Early Nasca residential sites
- starting in Nasca phase 2 and culminating in Nasca 3, four valleys shared the Nasca pottery style
  - the core Nazca and Ica valleys
  - plus Pisco valley to the north
  - and Acari valley to the south
  - there were at least at a few modest centers
  - Nasca iconography at this time was mostly supernatural
    - and appeared on ritual paraphernalia: ceramic drums, trumpets, panpipes, vessels; textiles; gourds, etc.
- In Nasca 3 (300-500 cal AD), the Nazca valley site of Cahuachi grew very large
  - 2 km long; 150 ha
  - around 40 impressive platforms
    - made by modifying natural contours, facing with mud bricks
    - with plazas in front
    - some rooms attached and on top
    - some contain burials, textile offerings (?), etc.
    - *not* solid mudbrick huacas as in the north
    - instead, much of the volume is the natural hill form, and the remainder is retaining walls holding rubble and soil fill with garbage mixed in
  - Cahuachi was unique in the region, and presumably served as a focal point for all four valleys
    - there were other sites with mounds, but much smaller
  - unlike Cerro Blanco in the Moche valley, Cahuachi was not an urban center
  - Silverman argues that it was a nearly empty ceremonial site
    - numerous projects there have found only minimal residential debris, and that was Nasca 1, before the platforms were built
    - no areas with houses, hearths, etc.
    - instead, open spaces with postholes, shallow depressions, small amounts of garbage
    - some of the fill of the platforms contains garbage

- but not just the garbage that would result from a normal village, which would be mostly pieces of plain cooking pots and food garbage like bone, shell, and dried plant scraps
- there is some of this, but also a very high percentage of decorated pottery, panpipe fragments, exotic feathers, etc.
- suggesting mostly non-domestic, ritual activities, along with a little food preparation
- cuys with necks broken and bellies slit, as in modern divination practices
- llama offerings in pits, etc.
- Silverman suggests that Cahuachi was visited only periodically, maybe by large numbers of people
  - who brought fancy pots, panpipes, drums, feathered objects, etc. for ritual use
    - or maybe made them there?
  - and built temporary shelters, lived there for a few days, then dismantled everything until next time
    - leaving little more than postholes, fired patches from cooking, and a thin scatter of trash
    - as at a fairground
    - they would have come for special ceremonies of some kind
    - and associated networking, etc. as in the Dillehay article on the Mapuche
- Silverman also describes a room with wood posts
  - prepared clay floor, plastered walls
  - either kept ritually clean or carefully cleaned out by later Nasca 8 people
  - long after being abandoned, it was intentionally filled with clean sand and a few carefully placed offerings by Nasca 8 people
  - this may suggest a ritual purpose or sanctity of the site that people still remembered centuries later
  - (but that is already obvious from the mound architecture, and it would not preclude people living there, too)
- Moseley suggests that the mounds are variable in size and details because each kin group would build its own platform
  - the differences in size may simply reflect the different numbers of people that celebrated at each
  - Remember the Mapuche mound example?
- meanwhile, people actually lived in numerous small villages, and a few medium-sized ones, but not in large towns
- Ceramic style seems fairly consistent in the different valleys
  - and additional examples are found in other valleys to the north and south
- So what was going on during Nasca 3?
  - four drainages with one shared ritual center
  - some large towns, but no urban capital
  - some very marked elite burials, but Silverman does not think they are dramatic enough to imply really powerful elites
  - she also doubts that there was a marked elite class because fine Nasca ceramics are found in all sorts of sites

- not just Cahuachi, or large villages, or cemeteries
- so most families apparently had access to fine, decorated pots, panpipes, etc.
- while these may look like items that could have indicated wealth or status, their wide distribution suggests otherwise
- iconography stressed the supernatural, not militarism or human individuals
  - people that are shown seem generic and idealized, not identifiable individuals
  - suggests that the iconography was not controlled by a self-aggrandizing elite
  - but instead served more supernatural and ritual purposes
- maybe one or more small polity in each valley, interlinked by ritual and alliance interests, with not-very-pronounced leaders largely based on ritual roles?
- All using Cahuachi as their ceremonial center
  - probably making periodic group pilgrimages there
  - maybe involving walking along certain of the Nazca lines
  - and apparently sharing very similar ritual ideas, since their pottery was relatively uniform
  - possibly making a small number of ritual experts permanently associated with Cahuachi into multi-valley authorities based on their ceremonial roles
    - maybe with their own pottery experts producing most or all of the Nasca pottery acquired by visitors to Cahuachi
    - recent work suggests many or all Nasca pots were made from a single clay source, possibly near Cahuachi
- While Silverman uses the term "state" in her 1988 article, she seems to have backed off that idea since then
  - I think most people would agree - Nasca does not look convincingly like a state
- The Nazca lines
  - some time during the Early Intermediate period, people draw 30-odd figures on the pampa across the river from Cahuachi, extending to the next river
  - they are made by pushing aside desert-varnished rocks to expose light soil underneath
    - very little labor involved
    - can be made by few people, in little time
    - one figural geoglyph is probably a matter of a small group for a few days, maximum
  - several types of designs
    - lines
      - many radiate from centers, often on small hills
    - trapezoidal-triangular areas
      - often these are widened sections of lines that continue in one or both directions
    - geometric designs like spirals, zigzags, etc.
    - figures like birds, a monkey, etc.
  - the lines and other markings cross each other seemingly randomly, like a blackboard that was not erased between drawings
  - some are visible from nearby hillslopes and hilltops, but many are not
  - geoglyphs are not unique to the Nasca drainage
    - although they are most numerous, dense, and elaborated there

- also found from northern Chile to northern Peru
- many different styles of figures, llamas, geometric, long lines, rectangles and trapezoids, etc.
- not even limited to the Andes: cultures around the world have made various kinds of geoglyphs
- hard to date, but appear to have been made throughout the duration of the Nasca culture
  - and continuing up to late prehistoric times
  - mostly dated by style of potsherds found along the lines
    - often "pot drops" where an entire pot was broken
    - these presumably date to the time of construction of the line they are found on or later,
      - since before that, the area was just empty desert, with no reason to be there, with or without a pot
      - and the pieces would have been swept up when the line was made if they had already been there
  - the figural drawings can be roughly dated by noting that some match designs on Nasca pottery
  - some lines have wooden sighting posts (possibly used to lay them out) that have been radiocarbon dated to the Late Intermediate Period (well after the Nasca culture)
  - it should be possible to tell the order of lines that cross each other - except that in the last 50 years or so various people have "cleaned" many of them, possibly changing which overlay which, not to mention possibly changing other small details
  - conclusions on dating
    - sherds associated with the figural drawings are mostly Nasca phases 3 and 4
      - contemporary with Cahuachi's main period of growth and the following period
      - although some figures seem to go back to Early Nasca
      - the lines, trapezoids, etc. may span a longer period, starting in Early Nasca and continuing on after people stopped making the figural drawings
- why was decorated pottery brought out there?
  - (as opposed to plain pottery simply for carrying water)
  - intentionally left as offerings?
  - accidentally broken during use in rituals, maybe being used in processions?
  - accidentally broken while being carried from one place to another along the lines, implying that the trip was to or from a place of ritual activity where fancy pots were used?
- purpose/use/meaning of figures and lines
  - they are clearly *not* astronomically (or calendrically) aligned
    - even fewer have astronomical alignments than would be expected by chance...
  - they cross each other indiscriminately, suggesting that making new ones was more important than using and maintaining existing ones
  - most of the figural drawings are a single line that does not split or cross itself
    - possibly meant to be walked on, as a ritual path
    - there are three exceptions

- it is possible that they were originally single lines, but have been inadvertently changed by later prehistoric users or recent "cleaning"
- lines and trapezoids also intended for walking?
  - trapezoids have a hint of this
    - paired rockpiles forming gateways at the ends where narrow lines enter and exit
    - and usually with a faint path running down the center
  - many examples of modern and recent Andean groups that used ritual walkways, often dead straight over rough topography, for processions
  - associations with water, mountains, and fertility
- some connect Cahuachi to other sites: possibly indicate walking routes
  - one line runs straight between Cahuachi and Ventanilla, a large village on the other side of the pampa
- Moseley suggests that, like the many mounds at Cahuachi, the figures reflect many separate little groups doing their own rituals in similar ways in similar spots
  - but not a single, coordinated, corporate action
- Nasca 4 (500-600 cal AD): Apparently some kind of collapse or major change
  - People stopped building at Cahuachi or visiting it for ceremonies as they had in Nasca 3
  - instead, Cahuachi became a place for high-status burials
  - many large villages were abandoned
  - overall population may have declined
  - pottery styles became more variable from valley to valley
    - this could suggest less contact between groups
      - due to no longer getting together at Cahuachi to celebrate shared rituals?
    - or it could suggest a greater desire to emphasize group identity as opposed to other groups
      - increased social group "boundary marking"
    - either of which might be related to increasing competition or conflict between groups
- Nasca iconography shifted to more militaristic themes, and some vessels seem to depict individual high-status people
  - less supernatural content
  - suggests a shift from egalitarian ritual emphasis to stratified political emphasis?
  - further supporting the impression of rising competition within and between social groups
    - but no known urban capital...
- some connect these changes to a dramatic flood event (El Nino) that damaged Cahuachi and presumably had other harmful effects
  - the jury is still out on this
    - some excavations at Cahuachi have found evidence of flooding, others have not
    - and no evidence for flooding at this time has been reported from other sites or valleys
    - but it is a reasonable possibility, and there is not enough data yet to rule it out
- some connect it to a long generally dry period of "desertification"
  - or one or two severe, several-decade droughts
  - again, the evidence is equivocal

- Late Nasca (5, 6, 7) (600-800 cal AD): settlement shifted to middle valleys and secular elites may have emerged
  - 3 of the valleys have dry segments, where the river disappears
    - then reappears in springs 20 km further down the valley
  - earlier settlement avoided these areas
  - in Nasca 5, they were suddenly settled
  - Kathy Schreiber argues that this must coincide with the construction of the famous Nazca filtration galleries (“puquios”)
    - These are specialized water systems that allow the middle valleys to be farmed
    - at the lower end of the dry segments, they are trenches deep enough to reach the water table
      - the trench fills with groundwater
      - and the water flows down the trench into reservoirs for irrigating fields
    - further up the dry segments, where the water table is deeper
      - the trenches become tunnels
      - with periodic vertical shafts to allow for cleaning
      - or to facilitate construction
  - this system is very rare outside the Nazca region
  - the fact that people moved into these areas in Nasca 5 strongly suggests that the filtration galleries were built then
  - but they are difficult to date directly
  - Monica Barnes argues that they were actually built under the direction of early Spanish colonists
    - they are very similar to filtration galleries used in Iran called qanats
    - which had been adopted in Spain before the conquest
    - she has some impressive historical documentation
    - but if she is right, how could Nasca 5 people have lived in these sections of the valleys?
- Moseley points out that Nasca 5 people clearly developed *some* way of using the middle valleys, but that it need not have been filtration galleries
  - He suggests “sunken gardens” as an alternative if the filtration galleries prove to be post-conquest
  - There is no evidence of these, but maybe they have been obliterated by river meanders and later agriculture
- Overall population increased
- Ceramics started to depict naturalistic fat, nude women decorated with supernatural iconography (maybe tattoos?)
  - Maybe indicated more interest in fertility (human and agricultural)?
  - Maybe associated with dependence on water projects for agricultural fertility?
- Silverman argues that the practice of drawing figures on hillsides near sites, and lines on the pampa increased in Late Nasca
  - if they were part of rituals concerning water, that might fit with the pottery changes and filtration galleries



- Starting in Nasca 5, at the site of La Muña, a few dramatically large, rich burials suggest the appearance of a more powerful elite class
- Pottery began to show a lot more humans, and more distinctly individualized human males
  - with more naturalistic, elaborate clothing, jewelry, etc.
  - Maybe part of the legitimization of an emerging elite
- From Nasca 5 on, trophy heads on pottery seem to be associated less with supernatural themes on pottery and more with individual males
  - and at one site, there is a cache of 48 trophy heads
  - this may be another way in which an emerging elite expressed its power
- Settlement in the middle valleys had required some form of infrastructure projects, whether filtration galleries or sunken gardens
  - these would represent big labor investments (or maybe not?)
  - maybe organizing the construction, maintenance, and distribution of water projects fostered the rise of more powerful, secular elites
  - since people would have been absolutely dependent on the projects and the water they produced
- in Nasca 5, the pottery style diverged into three distinct variants
  - including a "conservative monumental" style that may have continued earlier religious ideas
  - a "progressive monumental" style that may reflect some divergent faction or creed
  - and a "bizarre innovation" style that dramatically recombined and changed supernatural themes
  - if these represent different factions within the religious community, that might reflect jockeying for power, followers, allies, etc.
- these ceramic style variants seemed to coalesce into a more uniform style again in Nasca 6
- In Nasca 6 and 7, people shifted from living in many small villages to fewer, larger towns
  - perhaps due to increasing tensions between groups?
  - but still nothing large enough to call a city
- warfare was always a theme in Nasca pottery, but it may have increased in Late Nasca
  - some Nasca pots seem to pick up themes from the contemporary Moche ceramics
  - especially warfare and sacrifice themes
- In Nasca 7, Nasca pottery was most widely distributed in other valleys to the north and south
  - suggesting more long-distance contacts
  - possibly exchange for exotic goods that elites could have used to impress less well-connected people
- overall, looks like Late Nasca probably saw the development of multiple chiefdoms with genuinely powerful, secular chiefs
  - using pottery, textiles, trophy heads, etc. to legitimize their positions
  - as well as real or threatened warfare
    - albeit not on a scale large enough to cause people to live in defensible sites or build fortresses
  - but without a single center for a multi-valley polity

- Nasca 8 (800-1100 cal AD): Wari influence from the highlands, loss of "Nasca-ness" according to Silverman
  - As we see next time, Wari was an urban state located in the highlands directly inland from Nasca
    - much larger scale and presumably more socially, politically, economically complex
    - picking up around 500 cal AD, that is, around the peak and especially the decline of Cahuachi
    - and contemporary with the later, more secular Nasca chiefdoms
  - Wari pottery, though different, shares a lot with Nasca style
  - so the relationship of the two cultures, is probably important to understanding both of them
  - in Nasca 8, possibly a shift in the ritual and political nature of Nasca chiefs, apparently related to an influx or adoption of Wari ideas
  - but the story is not at all clear yet, so we will leave the Nasca here and shift our focus to Wari next time...