

25. RECENT ROCK ART STUDIES IN PERU

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Introduction

Rock art research in Peru is in a dynamic phase of development. Following the first national rock art symposium, organised by Rainer Hostnig in Cusco in 2004 (Hostnig and Strecker 2004; Hostnig *et al.* 2007), this initiative to present new investigations from different parts of the country was continued by the second, third and fourth symposia held in Trujillo (2006 – see Castillo 2007; 2010), in Huaraz (2008 – see Zavaleta 2009), and in Ayacucho (2010).

The first comprehensive national rock art register (Hostnig 2003) lists some 900 sites (see Figs 25.1, 25.2 for locations). The author estimates that at the end of 2010 some 1500 sites had been registered in Peru (Hostnig, personal communication).

A quick review of new research on Peruvian rock art of the last five years (2005–2009) as published or presented in meetings, reveals the following:

- *Northern region* – 49 reports (departments of Cajamarca and Lambayeque; Dept. of La Libertad: Alto de La Guitarra site, investigated by Cristóbal Campana and others; 27 sites in Chicama river valley: Castillo 2006; rock paintings of Río Seco de Santa Ana that are closely related to the Cupisnique style: Castillo 2008 (Fig. 25.3, a–b); petroglyphs in Moche valley: Castillo 2009; geoglyphs of the Moche valley: Castillo and Corcuera 2007). No rock art sites have so far been reported from the Dept. of Tumbes. Some petroglyphs of the region have been associated with the Chavín culture or the Early Horizon (1000–200 BC) but may be considerably younger; they are frequently called “chavinoides” (van Hoek 2007) (Fig. 25.4, a–b). An ongoing Japanese-Peruvian research project, directed by Eisei Tsurumi and Carlos Andrés Morales Castro (Tsurumi and Morales 2010) combines excavations

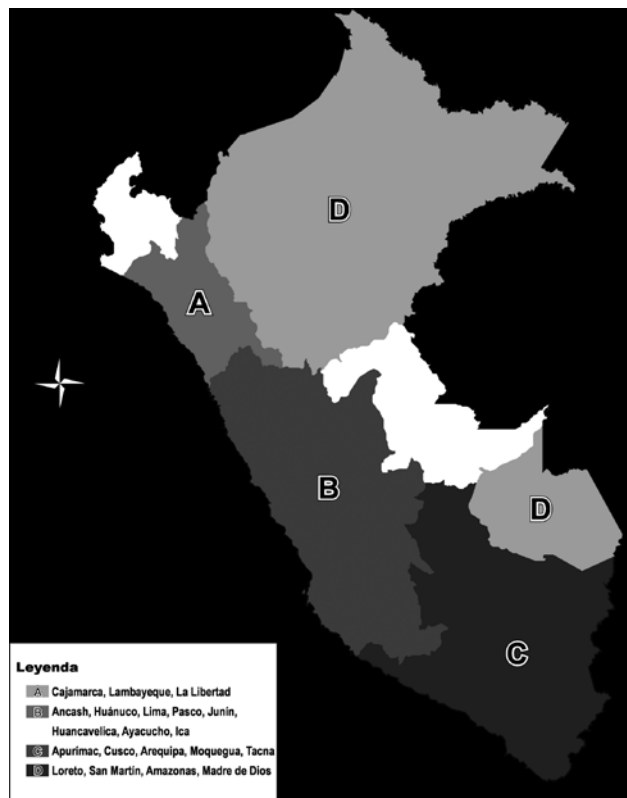


Fig. 25.1. Map showing four regions in Peru: A) northern region: departments of Cajamarca, Lambayeque and La Libertad; B) central region: departments of Ancash, Huánuco, Pasco, Lima, Junín, Huancavelica, Ica, Ayacucho; C) southern region: departments of Apurímac, Cusco, Arequipa, Moquegua, Puno, and Tacna; D) Amazon lowlands: departments of Loreto, San Martín, Amazonas, Madre de Dios, Cusco.

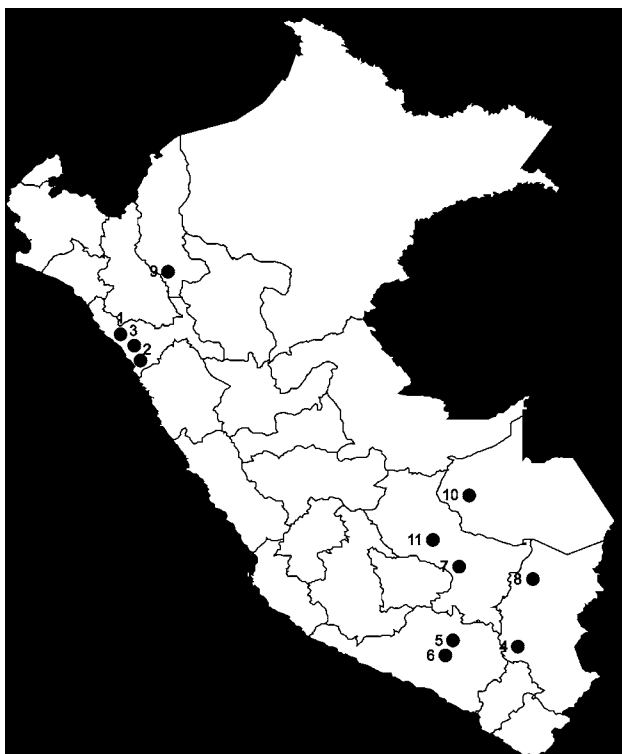


Fig. 25.2. Map showing the location of some of the sites mentioned in the text: 1) Santa Ana, Chicama river basin; 2) Tomabal, Virú valley; 3) Alto de las Guitarras; 4) Cutimbo Grande; 5) Mollepunku; 6) Sumbay; 7) K'echuqaqa; 8) Ch'arampata, Macusani; 9) Pollurua, Utcubamba river basin; 10) Pusharo, MANU national park; 11) Quebrada Honda, La Convención.



Fig. 25.3. Rock paintings at Santa Ana, Chicama river basin, northern Peru (photos: Daniel Castillo).

of Formative architectural complexes with a new documentation of petroglyphs. Daniel Castillo directs a project to map, register and record the Formative and later rock engravings at Alto de la Guitarra (Fig. 25.5).

- *Central region* – 90 reports (departments of Ancash, Huánuco, Pasco, Lima, Junín, Huancavelica, Ica, Ayacucho), with a certain emphasis on the geoglyphs of Palpa-Nasca of the central coast investigated by a multidisciplinary German-Swiss-Peruvian team of researchers (Reindel and Wagner 2009) and petroglyphs in the same region (Nieves 2006; 2007). Several rock art investigations took place in the Dept. of Lima, for example the project by Tantaleán and Pinedo (2009) on petroglyphs in the valley of Mala, central coast.
- *Southern region* (departments of Apurímac, Cusco, Arequipa, Moquegua, Puno, and Tacna) – 78 reports. One of the largest concentrations of Peruvian rock art, the petroglyphs of Toro Muerto (Dept. of Arequipa) have recently been mapped; the new inventory registered 1151 engraved rocks (Pozzi-Escot 2009). Petroglyphs in the Andahuayllas region (Dept. of

Apurímac) have recently been recorded by a research team directed by Brian S. Bauer and others (2010). Studies aimed at achieving a synthesis of regional traditions include a discussion of Late Intermediate and Late Horizon rock art at Cutimbo, Dept. of Puno (Strecker *et al.* 2007), and the definition of a particular tradition of deeply-engraved animal and human figures, sometimes accompanied by rectangular depressions, found at sites in the departments of Puno and Arequipa (Strecker and Hostnig 2010) (Figs 25.6, 25.7).

- *Amazon lowlands* (departments of Loreto, San Martín, Amazonas, Madre de Dios, Cusco) – 34 reports. No rock art sites have so far been reported from the Dept. of Ucayali.

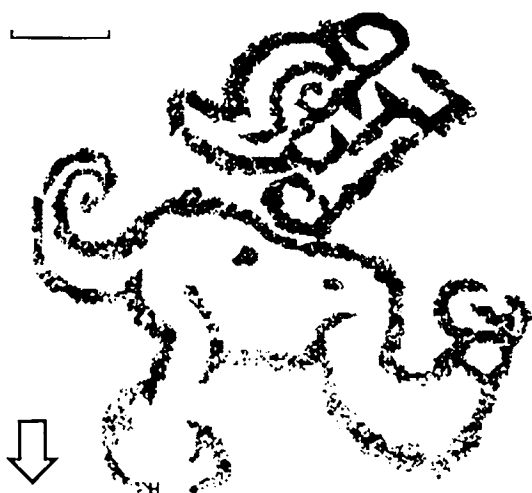


Fig. 25.4. Engraving at Tomabal, Virú valley, northern coast of Peru. Recording by M. van Hoek (van Hoek 2007, 87).

The 251 reports show that in all parts of the country rock art research is progressing.

Considering the multiple and very diverse rock art traditions, it is impossible to analyse all facets of recent research in an article of a few pages. In this brief review, I will concentrate on Archaic rock paintings, the latest prehispanic rock art, as well as examples of regional studies: the geoglyphs and petroglyphs of Palpa-Nasca on the south-central coast, the rock art of Macusani-Corani/Puno, and the Peruvian Amazon region.

Sumbay

Sumbay cave (Arequipa province and department) was discovered in 1968 by archaeologist Máximo Neira Avendaño. It is often cited as one of the earliest Peruvian rock art sites together with Lauricocha (Dept. of Huánuco) and Toquepala (Dept. of Tacna) and has tentatively been associated with the Archaic period. R. Hostnig visited the site in 1982 and again in December 2008. In his publication in SIARB *Boletín* no. 23 (Hostnig 2009) he summarises the archaeological excavations by Neira and reports published by Eloy Linares Málaga and Neira. Based on his new photographic documentation, Hostnig analysed the rock paintings, confirming and correcting some of the previous published data. Motifs consist of several hundred camelids, apparently a wild species, a few felines and rheas, as well as human figures. Approximately 90% of the figures were executed in white. A stylistic characteristic of Sumbay camelids is the so-called “estriado” technique: the interior of the animal body consists of vertical parallel lines, also found in a feline and an anthropomorphous figure. According to Hostnig’s investigation, this technique also occurs at other rock art sites in six departments of central



Fig. 25.5. Petroglyph at Alto de las Guitarras (Dept. of Libertad, northern coast of Peru), recently recorded in a project by Daniel Castillo (photo: Susana Barrau).



Fig. 25.6. Deeply-cut engravings at Cutimbo Grande, Puno (photo: M. Strecker).



Fig. 25.7. Deeply-cut engravings at Mollepunku, Arequipa (photo: R. Hostnig).



Fig. 25.8. Entrance of site SU-3, Sumbay, Dept. of Arequipa (Hostnig 2009, fig. 4).

and southern Peru, but with pronounced stylistic differences
Rock art sites affiliated with the Inca period

In two articles published in SIARB *Boletines* no. 20 and no. 21, R. Hostnig (2006, 2007a) presents late prehispanic

rock paintings. He recorded 25 sites in the Dept. of Cusco, which in some cases can be attributed with great probability to the Inca period, while in others the chronological association is clear. He explains the distribution of the sites and defines three types: those associated with funerary contexts; rock paintings at high altitude, associated with traditional traffic routes; and paintings which could be associated with fertility rites and the protection of camelid herds. The paintings represent camelids (probably llamas), human figures, condors, shields, *uncu* garments and lances or sceptres, as well as some abstract designs, such as circles and solar figures (Fig. 25.11).

In his second article, Hostnig (2007) reports five additional rock art sites in the Vilcanota valley, Calca and Urubamba provinces of Dept. of Cusco. The motifs represented strengthen the theory that the rock paintings were affiliated with Inca culture. Apparently, the rock art is associated with funerary contexts in four of the sites. In the Media Luna community a rock-shelter contains a well-preserved polychrome image interpreted by the author as an Inca anthropomorphic figure; in the same region a second site presents camelid paintings and other motifs where the rural population annually make offerings to influence the fertility of their herds and crops.

Hostnig's research was complemented by a Peruvian-Spanish project, directed by Víctor Falcón Huayta (2009; 2010) which recorded and studied the rock painting at Inkapintay, Yucay valley, near Ollantaytambo, Dept. of Cusco; according to Colonial sources it is believed to represent the emperor Manco Inca Yupanqui. The investigation included analysis of red and white pigments.

Geoglyphs and petroglyphs of Palpa-Nasca

A long-term project on the archaeology of the Palpa-Nasca region has been directed by Markus Reindel and Johnny Isla since 1989. It has resulted in significant insights into the geoglyphs of the central coast (Isla and Reindel 2005;



Fig. 25.9. Rock paintings at SU-3, Sumbay (Hostnig 2009, fig. 71).



Fig. 25.10. Rock painting representing camelid at SU-3, Sumbay (Hostnig 2009, fig. 69).

Reindel *et al.* 2006; Lambers 2006). The multi-disciplinary project applied modern techniques from archaeology, geoarchaeology, geophysics, bioarchaeology, archaeometry, geomatics, photogrammetry, and geographic information systems (GIS) (Reindel and Wagner 2009). Large-scale surveys mapped numerous features of the geoglyphs, converting aerial photography into a textured 3D model of the Nasca pampa. Geoglyphs were dated by using optically stimulated luminescence; this method can reproduce the stratification of two overlying geoglyph lines.

Geoglyphs partly date back to the late Paracas phase (370–200 BC) and to various phases of the subsequent



Fig. 25.11. Rock painting at K'echuqaqa funerary site, Dept. of Cusco (Hostnig 2007, fig. 21).



Fig. 25.12. Abstract rock paintings at Ch'arampata, Macusani, Dept. of Puno (photo: R. Hostnig).

Nasca and even later people (up to AD 800) when their number increased. They were frequently remodelled involving large parts of the ancient population. The spatial investigation of these gigantic figures revealed that places with good visibility were preferred for their construction. They can be understood as stages rather than images where social groups acted and interacted and spectators in the valleys and on other sites were able to watch and observe. Objects such as *Spondylus* shells, crawfish and field crops placed on stone platforms beside the geoglyphs indicate a strong concern for water, irrigation and fertility (Lambers and Saurbier 2009, 335–36).

Three-dimensional models were also applied to the documentation of petroglyphs (Fux *et al.* 2009). The iconographic study of the images allowed the establishment of relations to other regions, such as in the case of monkey representations which point to the rainforest on the eastern slopes of the Andes.

Nieves (2006; 2007) recorded 27 petroglyph sites in the lower part of the Nasca valley (Río Grande system, Dept. of Ica). She defined a typology including data from other sites of the Río Grande basin, arriving at a tentative chronology (Formative period, Early Horizon, Early Intermediate period, and possibly Middle Horizon) based on the iconography.

Rock art of Macusani-Corani/Puno

A special focus of research has been the region of Macusani and Corani, in the Carabaya Cordillera which has one of the largest concentrations of Peruvian rock art. In the last ten years some 300 sites have been registered by different researchers. These sites were declared National Monuments by Peru's National Institute of Culture. However, their preservation is threatened by mining concessions (Hostnig 2008a).

Several preliminary introductions to Macusani rock art were published by Hostnig between 2004 and 2008 (Hostnig 2007b; 2008a). He presented a new synthesis in 66 pages of a comprehensive book on Carabaya nature and culture (Hostnig 2010).

Rock art production in this region spans several thousand years and developed different traditions that can be distinguished by stylistic trends, themes and iconography. Among supposed Archaic rock paintings, similar to those existing in the well-known Peruvian sites of Toquepala and Sumbay, are representations of wild camelids and deer, as well as hunting barriers constructed to lead animals to specific areas where the hunters would ambush them, armed with spear throwers. As can be observed in many other sites throughout the Andes, human figures of that epoch are represented in very schematic form compared to the dynamic figures of the animals that are shown in movement. However, Hostnig also ascribes abstract designs to the Archaic period. Later rock art of agricultural and pastoral societies presents representations of domesticated camelids, but there are also other traditions. Complex abstract compositions, frequently combining two or more colours, may belong to the Middle Horizon; although they are called “mantas” (textile pieces) by local people, the great majority clearly cannot be identified as textiles (Fig. 25.12). Late Intermediate Period rock art features anthropomorphous figures equipped with axes and shields probably representing persons of high rank and their symbols of power and prestige, as well as llama or alpaca figures. Rock art of the Amazonian lowlands is represented by the exceptional site Boca Chaquimayo (see below). Colonial and Republican rock art is present at some 20 sites, introducing drastic changes in the iconography of images, their meaning and function. Representations of churches occur, as well as lines of armed soldiers, which reflect the pattern that Hostnig also found in Espinar province of

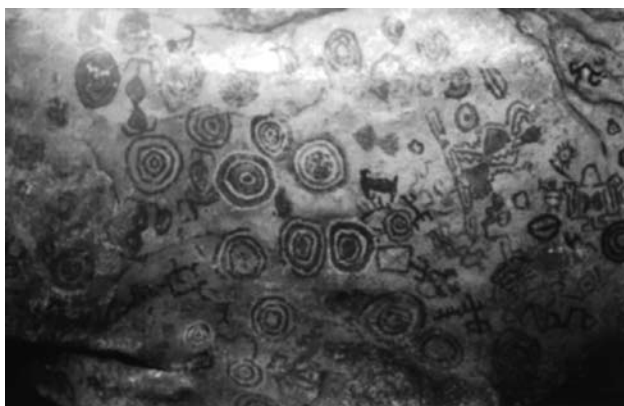


Fig. 25.13. Rock paintings at Pollurua, Utcubamba river basin, Amazon region of Peru (photo: Arturo Ruiz).



Fig. 25.14. Petroglyphs of Pusharo, MANU national park, Dept. of Cusco (photo: R. Hostnig).

Cusco department and which F. Taboada and M. Strecker recorded in the region of Lake Titicaca.

Rock art in the Amazon region of Peru

Rock art research in the Amazon region of Peru has increased considerably in recent years. Major concentrations of sites are found in the in tropical regions of the departments of Cajamarca, Amazonas (Ruiz 2007; 2009a; 2009b) (Fig. 25.13) and San Martín in the north, followed by the department of Cusco in the south (Hostnig 2008b: 16; 2008c). The cultural influence of Amazonia reached further than the foothills of the eastern Andes, as can be observed in the petroglyphs of Ayabaca in Piura on the coast where the iconography contains various motifs that are clearly Amazonian (ibid.).

Rock paintings at Chanque (Ruiz 2007), ascribed to the last prehispanic periods (Late Intermediate period and Late Horizon) provide examples of possible contacts between the regional population and the Inka conquerors (ibid., 109). They feature *unku* garments and symbols of power or ritual (representation of a *tumi* instrument) and seem to be associated with a vast archaeological complex including funerary remains. It is likely that their role was similar to what we assume of rock art in the Andean highlands.

Ruiz also recorded and analysed polychrome rock paintings in the river Gache basin (Luya province, Dept. of Amazonas, Peru) with particular emphasis on the Pollurua site (Ruiz 2009); he noted a certain similarity to wall paintings of late prehispanic structures in the Utcubamba valley of the Amazon region.

Ulises Gamonal (2006) registered 50 sites in the Dept. of Cajamarca, apparently with approximately equal distribution of rock paintings and engravings including also some cases of “mortar holes” or cupules. There is a considerable stylistic diversity and much more research is necessary to establish styles and cultural associations.

One of the best known petroglyph sites in the lowlands,



Fig. 25.15. Petroglyphs at Quebrada Honda (La Convención province, Dept. of Cusco, Amazon region of Peru) (photo: Henry Gamonal).

Pusharo on the bank of the Palotoa river (tributary of the Madre de Dios river, part of the MANU national park in the Dept. of Madre de Dios) has been mentioned in numerous reports and publications. The overall majority of the engravings consists of deeply-cut abstract designs with a few biomorph figures, such as human faces. A comprehensive study was published by Hostnig and Carreño (2006) including detailed observation on the conservation status of the site; in 2005 the authors presented a proposal for a management plan to INRENA (administration of national parks) (Fig. 25.14).

Henry Gamonal located 22 petroglyph sites in La Convención province in the Vilcanota river basin of the Dept. of Cusco (Gamonal and Pineda 2007). Apart from abstract motifs, numerous animal figures occur including llamas which Gamonal interprets as an indication of commercial activities with the Andean region. The same can be observed at other Amazonian sites, such as Yamón, Dept. of Amazonas (Hostnig 2008b, 16) (Fig. 25.15).

In the Amazon region of the Dept. of Puno, one of the most significant sites is Boca Chaquimayo (Hostnig 2008b). Petroglyphs feature zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures, as well as abstract forms, such as long straight or meandering lines. Hostnig identifies some representations of animals as caiman and points out that “humanised caimans” exist which might be related to indigenous cosmology and religion.

Conclusions

Peruvian rock art research has intensified in the last ten years covering the majority of departments and ecological zones. There is still a lack of detailed recording and analysis in the vast majority of sites; however, the examples mentioned above reveal that rock art now plays a major role in archaeological research. Since 2005, a number of Peruvian rock art sites have been listed by the National Institute of Culture as national heritage.

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