

Andean Past

Volume 1 *Andean Past* 1

Article 5

1987

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Recommended Citation

Silverman, Helaine (1987) "A Nasca 8 Occupation at an Early Nasca Site: The Room of the Posts at Cahuachi," *Andean Past*: Vol. 1 , Article 5.

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A NASCA 8 OCCUPATION AT AN EARLY NASCA SITE: THE ROOM OF THE POSTS AT CAHUACHI

Helaine Silverman

Introduction

The archaeological site of Cahuachi, located on the south bank of the Nazca valley on the arid south coast of Peru (Figure 1), has long been recognized as the major site of the Nasca¹ culture (e.g., Strong 1957: 32) which flourished in this region throughout the Early Intermediate Period (EIP). Since at least the turn of the century, Cahuachi has been the locus of intense looting because of the magnificent pottery and textiles found in graves at the site, but there has been little archaeological exploration. In 1984-85 new excavations were conducted at Cahuachi to elucidate the site's occupational history, nature, and function within Nasca society. This paper briefly discusses the previous fieldwork conducted at the site and then describes and considers in greater detail a newly discovered architectural complex which immediately postdates the Nasca 3 apogee of the site.

A Brief Review of Cahuachi in Time and Space

Early research conducted at Cahuachi by Farabee in 1922 (Mason 1926), Kroeber in 1926 (ms., 1956), Tello in 1927 (Tello and Mejía 1967), and Doering in 1932 (1958) was of very short duration and excavations were largely directed at the site's many cemeteries so as to collect examples of the iconographically complex polychrome pottery and woven fabrics characterizing Nasca culture. Kroeber and Doering, in particular, hoped to be able to better understand the development of the Nasca style through the study of well-contexted whole pots.

William Duncan Strong (1957) carried out a year-long project at Cahuachi in 1952. Through stratigraphic rather than grave associations he sought to define the chronological relationship of Nasca to Paracas, which at that time was still floating in a morass of stylistic speculation. At the same time, Strong (1957: 1-2) explicitly sought settlement pattern data from his excavations at Cahuachi and survey in the Rio Grande de Nazca drainage, of which the Nazca River is a branch.

Strong's excavations at Cahuachi yielded pottery identical to Gayton and Kroeber's (1927) "Nazca A" phase. Today, Strong's "Middle Nazca" material can be identified as phase 3 of the fine Nasca ceramic sequence currently in use for the south coast (Rowe 1960; Proulx 1968, *inter alia*). Strong recovered earlier ceramic material as well. He identified a previously unrecognized component of the Nasca style which he called Cahuachi Polychrome (Strong 1957: figure 11) and which today is identified as a Nasca 2 phase diagnostic corresponding to simple geometric motifs painted in red and black on a white background, typically on low-walled bowls.² Strong also defined several Nasca 1 (his "Proto-Nasca") ceramic types such as Cahuachi Polychrome Incised and Modelled Thin, Cahuachi Polychrome Thick Incised, and Cahuachi Stylus Decorated (Strong 1957: Figures 6G-J, 9, 10). Finally, Strong recovered a handful of "Late Paracas" (what today we call Paracas 10) sherds at the site (Strong 1957: figures 6A-E). The author's reanalysis of Strong's strata cuts indicates that this Paracas 10

material was not found stratigraphically isolated beneath Nasca 1 levels (cf. Silverman 1986a: Chapter Twelve). Nevertheless, Strong correctly intuited such a development and his chronology has been substantiated by the similiary seriation of the Nasca style worked out by Lawrence Dawson on the basis of gravelots in the Lowie Museum at the University of California at Berkeley and other museum and private collections (cf. Menzel et al. 1964; Rowe 1960; Proulx 1968).

With his ceramic chronology, Strong (1957: 32) argued that Cahuachi's semi-artificial constructions dated almost exclusively to "Middle Nazca", our Nasca 3. My 1984-85 excavations at Cahuachi confirm the overall validity of Strong's observations about the chronological history of the site as can be seen in Figure 2. Cahuachi's apogee is indisputably Nasca 3. Thus far, the only earlier architecture identified at the site is the mound on which Strong excavated his Cut 5 (which can be dated largely to Nasca 2 based on the high proportion of Cahuachi Polychrome pottery recovered by Strong [1957: 28]) and Strong's so-called "Late Paracas" village whose pottery is actually Nasca 1 and which is temporally and developmentally separate from the "Middle Nazca" (Nasca 3) temple constructed over its remains (Strong 1957: 13). Evidence in support of the Nasca 1-2-3 developmental sequence (Rowe 1960; Proulx 1983) was also obtained from two of my excavations (Silverman 1986a: 341).

At the same time, the recent research at Cahuachi provides important new information about the site. First, no evidence was recovered in support of the widespread contention that Cahuachi was a great urban settlement (e.g., Rowe 1963: 10-11; Lanning 1967: 116-117; Lumbreras 1974: 123, *inter alia*). Excavations were carried out within the major walled area of the site (Figure 3) which, on analogy with Tambo Viejo (see Rowe 1963: 11; Menzel and Riddell 1986: 24-30, figure 3), could have been expected to contain a dense agglutination of habitation structures. Rather than finding house foundations or domestic refuse, few material remains of any sort were recovered. The prominent adobe wall enclosing this area of approximately 20,000 m² was determined to be only 40 cms. high. It was raised on an irregular, lightly compacted, unprepared, earth floor (henceforth: *apisonado*) into which several small cylindrical depressions had been excavated in a north-south row (Figure 4). These are interpreted as the postholes of a perishable structure. The *apisonado* itself was clean.

These results were replicated in 23 test-pits excavated across the site in open, unlooted areas (Figure 5). In other words, I tested Cahuachi's urban nature by excavating in areas without mound construction and without evidence of cemeteries. Approximately 85% of Cahuachi's total area of 150 hectares is composed of open space, looted and unlooted. If there were a substantial, permanent, residential population at the site it would have been in this area rather than on the mounds which survey and excavation showed to be of a non-habitational character because of their lack of stratified kitchen midden and structures appropriate to housing and because of their plethora of elite/ceremonial material remains (cf. below). On the basis of these data I have argued that Cahuachi was not a great city and that its actual residential population was quite small (Silverman 1986a). How small the permanent, residential population was remains to be determined, but it presumably consisted of members of the elite of Nasca 3 society and their retainers. As an alternative to the model of Cahuachi as an urban settlement I have suggested that the site functioned as an essentially empty ceremonial center, used frequently as a locus

of cyclical aggregation of population for the carrying out of rituals (Silverman 1986a). That interpretation does not contradict the reconstruction of Nasca 3 state-level sociopolitical organization, as we shall see below.

In addition, the recent excavations at Cahuachi determined that some construction was still undertaken at the site in Nasca 4 times. Rowe (1963) and Proulx (1968: 97-98) had previously argued that Cahuachi was abandoned at the end of Nasca 3. Only one construction possibly post-dating the Nasca 3 apogee has been located at Cahuachi. This is the "Room of the Posts" on Unit 19 (Figures 6, 7a, 7b), with which this article is concerned. The Room is tentatively dated to Nasca 4. While that Room was functioning, other areas on the same mound, Unit 19, were taken out of use: their accesses were blocked and entire areas were filled in with sand, vegetal materials, and adobe rubble. Offerings, such as a Nasca 4 whole pot (Figure 8), a ritual knife (Figure 9), and trophy heads (Figures 10a, 10b, 11a, 11b)--one of which dates to Nasca 5 or later times--were left in the fill covering some of the passageways and rooms of Unit 19. By Early Intermediate Period 4, Cahuachi was no longer the seat of presumed political decision-making and pilgrimage activity (Silverman 1986a), but rather its functions were restricted to that of a sacred burial and offering ground.

Basing myself on Strong's excavation data and my own I would argue that in EIP 1, or Nasca 1 times, Cahuachi was a dispersed agricultural village, one of the few domestic sites thus far identified for this period of time in the drainage. In EIP 2, or Nasca 2 times, a small amount of ceremonial or civic construction was undertaken at the site. In EIP 3, Cahuachi was suddenly transformed into the greatest Nasca center as some 40 mounds (Figures 12-14) of varying size, form, and construction technique were elaborated over the natural hills on the river terraces on which Cahuachi sits (Figure 15).³ These mounds are not free-standing, solid adobe, labor-intensive, monumental constructions--as the term is commonly understood--but represent a relatively minimal investment of human energy by means of which several rather impressive pyramids and many smaller ones were built (cf. Silverman 1986a: 485-493).

This period of energetically cheap but extensive building activity corresponds to the dramatic spread of Nasca-style pottery out of the Rio Grande de Nazca drainage and into the Ica valley to the north and Acari valley to the south (Rowe 1963: 11-12; Proulx 1968: 96-98). As originally noted by Rowe (1963: 11-12) and more recently confirmed by Wallace (1986), Peters (1986), and Massey (1986), this stylistic expansion is accompanied by notable changes in settlement pattern. The most parsimonious explanation of these concurrent events is that they reflect the rise and expansion of a short-lived Nasca state whose heartland was the Rio Grande de Nazca drainage (Rowe 1963; Proulx 1968; Lumbreras 1974; Massey 1986). My earlier contentions of uncentralized or chiefdom-like areal integration for the early Nasca social formation (Silverman 1977, 1985) are clearly invalidated by these new data. The abandonment of the fortified Acari valley sites and dramatic decrease in construction and cultural activity at Cahuachi at the end of EIP 3 must mark the demise of Nasca's centralized rule over this multi-valley area.

Although a Nasca 4 construction was identified, Cahuachi's function changed in Epoch 4 of the Early Intermediate Period and, as has been noted by other

archaeologists (e.g., Proulx 1968: 2, 96-97), Nasca 4 and later sherds are noticeably scarce on the surface of the site. Beginning in Nasca 4 times, Cahuachi became a mortuary ground and particularly appropriate locale for the leaving of offerings. A Nasca 5-early Nasca 6 cemetery was located by Strong (1957: figures 13-14) at Cahuachi and a Nasca 8 grave was excavated by Doering (1958) at his Morro locus. Other late Nasca pottery with grave provenience from Cahuachi is also known (cf. Gayton and Kroeber 1927: 45, plate 17d, figure 9c). There are also extensive post-Nasca cemeteries at the site, particularly on the eastern side. It is the abundance of late Nasca and post-Nasca tombs in the open areas of Cahuachi and early Nasca graves on its semi-artificial mounds which accounts for the horrendously looted condition of the site.

Amidst the havoc wrought by looters and in the context of Cahuachi as an early Nasca site, the discovery of an *intact* architectural structure, the Room of the Posts, that had been ritually entombed in clean sand by *Nasca 8* people, is of the greatest interest. The present article discusses this unusual find.

The Room of the Posts

The Room of the Posts was discovered in 1984, at the base of Unit 19, an average-sized mound, approximately 3000 m², on the western side of the central zone of the site. It was located in the course of following out surface traces of a wall at the base of the mound. The southward extension of that wall turned out to be the west side of the Room. Excavation revealed the Room to measure 10.23-10.30 X 12.32 meters in area (Figure 16). It is built of well-made adobe walls which are 2.20 meters high at the back (south) but slope sharply down to the north to a height of only one meter at the front (north) end of the Room (Figure 17). Access to the Room was through a wide doorway on the west side that was subsequently blocked.

In the center of the Room there is a damaged, very low and thick, prepared clay platform of sub-rectangular or square shape (Figure 18). The curving interior line of the platform is probably the remnant of a round opening that was damaged subsequent to use of the Room. The coarse, brown sand filling that area was removed down to a depth of 50 cms. beneath the floor of the room. No remains were forthcoming. This coarse, sterile sand was the same as that found in sterile layers of other pits excavated at the site.

Off center, on the western side of the Room, there are nine *huarango* (*Prosopis chilensis*) posts standing upright at varying preserved heights (from 0-125 cms. above floor level). These *huarango* posts are arranged in three rows of three each (Figure 7b). Parallel to the western wall of the Room, another row of three *huarango* posts was also found. The northernmost post is carved to a smooth, flat, tapering shape as can be seen in Figure 7b.

In the eastern wall of the Room there is a deep niche, almost an alcove (Figures 19, 20). In front of that niche there are two small, cylindrical depressions excavated into the floor of the north side of the Room. Three large, shallow, round depressions were found in the *apisonado* of the room. The depressions have tapering sides. In only one depression, #1 on the plan, could the base be defined (Figure 21). This depression was the only one with cultural

remains; it contained a cache of *huarango* pods and seeds which, in the process of disintegration, had colored the sand a dark brown in places. This decaying condition is most interesting since the rest of the organic materials from Cahuachi were in a magnificent state of preservation. A fourth, similar depression was located just south of the niche.

The *apisonado* of the Room was both broken in places and not particularly hard. The more one walks on it, the harder and more compact an *apisonado* becomes. This suggests that the Room was not a locus of frequent transit, an interpretation also supported by the fact that the *apisonado* was clean except for one early Nasca sherd embedded in it (Figure 22).

It is doubtful that the north-south row of posts fulfilled a roof support function because of the sharply sloped profile of the west wall. The slope of the west wall is not due to damage because the east wall has the same profile.

The other nine posts may or may not have roofed the low, broken central platform. No roofing material was encountered in the sterile sand fill around these nine posts, but such a perishable structure could have easily been lost in the hundreds of years between the time the Room was built and when it was deliberately buried.

The walls of the Room were in varying states of disrepair because in the past they had been damaged by water which pooled in the northeast corner of the room, left water lenses on the upper portions of some of the walls, and eroded the east wall to the south of the niche. Nevertheless, when the room was functioning, these walls were of excellent quality by Cahuachi standards. Various coats of mud plaster had been applied and tiny traces of pigment were detected under the surface coat of mud plaster which was flaking off the north and south walls. The colors observed were "red" (Munsell 7.5YR4-3/4-6), "hot pink" (Munsell 7.5YR6/6-8), "rust orange" (Munsell 2.5YR5/8) and "flesh orange" (Munsell 5YR8/4). There was no evidence of mural art, however.

A series of designs had been incised into the unpigmented surface layer of mud plaster of the west and south walls of the Room (Figure 23). The drawings are therefore probably contemporary with each other. On the west wall there are seven or eight panpipes, one rayed face (Figure 24), and a motif I cannot identify but which is an oval shape laid horizontally from which several lines hang down as pendants. On the south wall it is more difficult to see the tracings because of the poor preservation of the wall surface. Nevertheless, a different kind of rayed face and two possible panpipes can be distinguished (Figures 25, 26).

The rayed face on the west wall can be compared stylistically to similar rayed faces on Nasca 5 pottery (e.g., Roark 1965: figure 49). Such rayed faces may begin in Nasca 4 (cf. Massey 1986: figures 3.17e, 3.18g), however, making it possible that these drawings date to EIP 4 rather than EIP 5. The rayed face on the south wall is generically reminiscent of the face of the main figure of the "Gateway of the Sun" at Tiwanaku. Panpipes are long-lived on the south coast and it would be impossible to date the panpipe tracings to one or another Nasca phase. The presence of these drawings on the wall should represent the

last use of the Room of the Posts because they were incised into the most recent layer of plaster. When, however, was the Room built?

I date the construction of the Room to Nasca 4 on the basis of the recovery of two Nasca 4 sherds (Figure 28) from a fill between the south wall of the Room (AF 45) and the wall behind it (AF 65; see Figure 29). This fill was discovered by extending a hole that looters had dug between the two walls, AF 45 and AF 65. Amplified excavation of the looter's hole revealed that AF 65 had been deliberately covered by the fill contained by the south wall (AF 45) of the Room of the Posts (Figure 16). Therefore, the AF 65 wall was built prior to construction of the Room of the Posts. I believe that the Nasca 4 sherds recovered from the fill between AF 45 and AF 65 represent the minimal date of the Room of the Posts: the Room could not have been built prior to Nasca 4 times. Thus far, this is the only architecture at Cahuachi which can be dated to Nasca 4 and it is clearly the final stage in the construction history of the Unit 19 mound.

The only other interpretation possible is that the fill post-dates both walls (AF 45 and AF 65), in which case the two walls would have formed a narrow passageway more than two meters high. If that is the case, then the two Nasca 4 sherds do not represent the minimal date of the Room and the Room could have been constructed earlier. Three C-14 measurements were obtained on three of the *huarango* posts in the Room using the Libby half-life of 5568 years (cf. samples 20, 21, and 22 in Figure 39). Two of these uncorrected dates are the same at A.D. 150 ± 80 ; the third is earlier at A.D. 40 ± 80 . In terms of the correspondence of Nasca ceramic phases to absolute chronology (Figure 27), these dates fall in the range of Nasca 1-3. As can be seen in Figures 27 and 39, the radiocarbon dates for the early Nasca phases are quite confused. My feeling is that the posts from which the measurements were obtained were reutilized and that the truer indication of the date of the construction of the Room is provided by the Nasca 4 sherds from the fill between AF 45 and AF 65 discussed above. Once built, the Room could have been used for quite some while, even until Nasca 8 times when it was ritually buried.

Excavation of the Room of the Posts encountered only sterile, unstratified sand once the upper, disturbed, surface layer had been removed. The southwest corner of the Room--where the incised drawings were located--had been carefully packed with alternating layers of vegetal fiber and sand with adobe chunks (Figure 30). Offerings had been left at various levels and locations in the sand filling the Room. These consisted of sixteen whole ceramic vessels (e.g., Figures 31-36d) and hundreds of sherds, grouped and ungrouped, all in the Nasca 8 style. In addition, there were four portable looms (Figure 37), a cache of blue-painted *aji* (*Capsicum* sp.) overlying two gourd rattles (one of which is pyroengraved with a woman's face: Figure 38), various gourds which had disintegrated in the sand or as they were exposed to the air, a stone mortar and pestle, a localized concentration of poorly preserved maize, a concentration of *huarango* fruit, and a concentration of cotton fiber, cotton seed, and corn. Last and very importantly, twelve unworked fragments of the sacred Andean shell, *Spondylus*, had been placed in the sand filling the niche in the east wall of the Room. From these data it can be concluded that the Room of the Posts was ritually interred in sterile sand by people using Nasca 8 pottery.

An Interpretation of the Room of the Posts

I suggest that the Room of the Posts was a special, probably ritual area. In support of my contention I cite the following evidence from the Room. The walls of the Room benefitted from constant care, as seen by the many layers of plaster and evidence of paint. Furthermore, the Room was maintained meticulously clean and may not have been used by many people. There was a low, central platform surrounded by nine posts. Three other posts of a demonstrably non-structural nature are also found in the Room and one of these is particularly noteworthy because it is carved flat and tapers. Such carved posts are known as an element of Nasca 3 grave furniture (Doering 1966: 142) and are also found in Nasca 8 graves (Doering 1958: figure 13); I have suggested the possibility that these posts may be related to ancestor worship (Silverman 1986b).⁴ The row of three depressions and the fourth one found in the *apisonado* are also special purpose, even though only one was complete. The panpipes incised into the west and south walls of the Room suggest that activities of a ritual nature occurred in the Room of the Posts, because panpipes are a Nasca musical instrument that is iconographically and empirically associated with Nasca religion/ceremony; Strong recovered scores of panpipe fragments from his cut atop the Great Temple and more than 200 panpipe fragments were recovered in the course of our own excavations at the site. The rayed faces traced on the walls pertain to mythical beings. The whole Room received ritual attention when it was deliberately and rapidly interred in sand and offerings were left by a later people. Those offerings include the *Spondylus* placed in the deep niche of the east wall of the Room. The Room's western access was very carefully sealed with mud mortar and a big boulder was placed in this mortar filling the doorway. These associations all support the imputation of a formerly sacred nature to this locale. Indeed, the Nasca 8 entombment of the early Nasca Room of the Posts strongly suggests a continuity of ritual function in the Room in particular and at Cahuachi in general.

Conclusions: The Room of the Posts in the Context of Cahuachi

One of the most striking aspects of Cahuachi is its multiple mounds. Although the site functioned as the capital of a short-lived, expansionist Nasca 3 state, we must view that state within the holistic context of its heartland as well as the hinterland. From the perspective of the Nasca 3 state's hinterland, the Ica and Acari valleys, there is persuasive evidence of foreign or Nasca conquest and spatial as well as economic reorganization (Rowe 1963; Menzel and Riddell 1986; Massey 1986). In the Rio Grande de Nazca heartland, particularly as manifested at the principal Nasca 3 site of Cahuachi, it is ceremonialism which dominates the archaeological record.

Cahuachi's many mounds were not habitation mounds as is commonly believed. Habitation refuse is not stratified in these mounds nor have Nasca 3 house remains been found. Rather, Cahuachi's approximately 40 mounds can best be interpreted as examples of ceremonial architecture. This interpretation is supported by several lines of evidence. On those mounds thus far investigated by means of survey and/or excavation, there is a plethora of decorated pottery with geometric, naturalistic, and mythical designs on the order of 70% to 30% when compared to the proportion of plainware at the site. Fragments of

elaborate textiles have been found, some of it stored in large utilitarian vessels. Burials contemporary with the Nasca 3 apogee of the site and the state have been found on various of the mounds, for instance by Kroeber on Unit A and by Miguel Pazos and myself on Unit 19. The Room of the Posts itself is a distinctly non-habitational area.

I have previously interpreted Cahuachi's many mounds as a kind of "provincial temple" situation such as that characterizing Pachacamac (Silverman 1985; cf. Jiménez Borja and Bueno 1970). I still believe that this interpretation gives a best fit with the data currently available. Both Rowe (1967) and Zuidema (1964, 1983, *inter alia*) have called our attention to the fact that the Inca capital, Cuzco, was the religious as well as political capital of the Empire. Anders (1986) and Morris and Thompson (1985) have emphasized the high degree of ceremonialism accompanying the administration of the Wari and Inca Empires. At Cahuachi, where we have such abundant material remains of ritual activity, we must not ignore or downplay the very real role that pilgrimage and ceremony played in integrating the constituent social groups of the Nasca 3 state. Cahuachi was the stage where the politics of the Nasca 3 state were quite literally clothed in ritual. This interpretation is a consistent archaeological inference from the data recovered at the great Nasca site and conforms to that school of Andeanist scholarship which integrates rather than dichotomizes the religious and political realms of complex societies. Even in Nasca 4 and later times Cahuachi maintained its fundamentally sacred and ceremonial character, probably explaining why the Room of the Posts was built following the apogee of the site. A topic for a subsequent paper, however, is why Nasca 8 people felt behooved to inter ritually the formerly sacred locale which presumably had long since ceased to function.

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork upon which this article is based was carried out in 1984-85 under Resolución Suprema N^o 165-84-ED. The project was funded by the National Science Foundation, Fulbright-Hays Act, Social Science Research Council, and Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. These institutions are warmly thanked for their generous support. I am particularly grateful to Miguel Pazos for his participation in the project and to Frances Hayashida and Dennis Scott who were of the greatest assistance in the excavation of the Room of the Posts.

This paper has benefitted from the comments of two anonymous reviewers and especially from the attention of the journal editor. I, however, am solely responsible for its content.

Endnotes

1. With all due respect to Menzel, Rowe, and Dawson (1964: 8) and Menzel (1977: 71-72), throughout this article Nasca written with *s* refers to the archaeological culture and Nazca written with *z* refers to the geographical region and the modern town of the same name.

2. Dawson's definition of Nasca 2 also encompasses slip-painted iconography on elaborate vessels such as double-spout-and bridge bottles, panpipes, and drums. One of the key diagnostics of the fancy slip-painted vessels is a technological observation made by Dawson (personal communication). The Nasca craftsmen had not yet perfected their slips and firing temperatures and the surface of Nasca 2 vessels is typically crackled.

3. The new map of Cahuachi presented here stands in striking contrast to the simplified and areally reduced image of Cahuachi canonized in Strong's oft-published map of the site (Strong 1957: figure 4). Indeed, new survey and excavations at Cahuachi indicate that it covers 150 hectares, more than twice the area shown on Strong's map.

4. I have based this interpretation on several lines of argument. First, I identify the object held in the left hand of Zuidema's (1972: figure 5) main figure as a *huarango* post. Second, Sherbondy's (1986) recent study of cultivated trees in the Andes ethnohistorically and ethnographically documents an association of cultivated tree and ancestor. Third, I apply Zuidema's (1977) identification of a four-generational principle in Andean kinship (called "perpetual kinship" elsewhere in the world ethnographic literature: cf. Cunnison 1956) to suggest that the anthropomorphic, carved *huarango* post held by the deity represents the concept of ancestor and/or a specific genealogical position of "ancestor": the fourth generation. The anthropomorphic main figure would be ego, in ego's right hand is his son, and in his right hand is his son or ego's grandson. Balancing these historical ancestors would be the fourth-generation, mythical, generic ancestor represented by the *huarango* post.

I admit that this interpretation is speculation. I recognize that Zuidema's motif is a possible variant of Valcarcel's (1932) Sacrificer Theme, in which a principal figure holds a weapon in one hand and a trophy head in the other. Yet, I maintain the possibility that trophy heads themselves are an element of ancestor worship (Silverman 1987). Clearly this is a topic for further ethnohistoric, ethnographic, and iconographic investigation.

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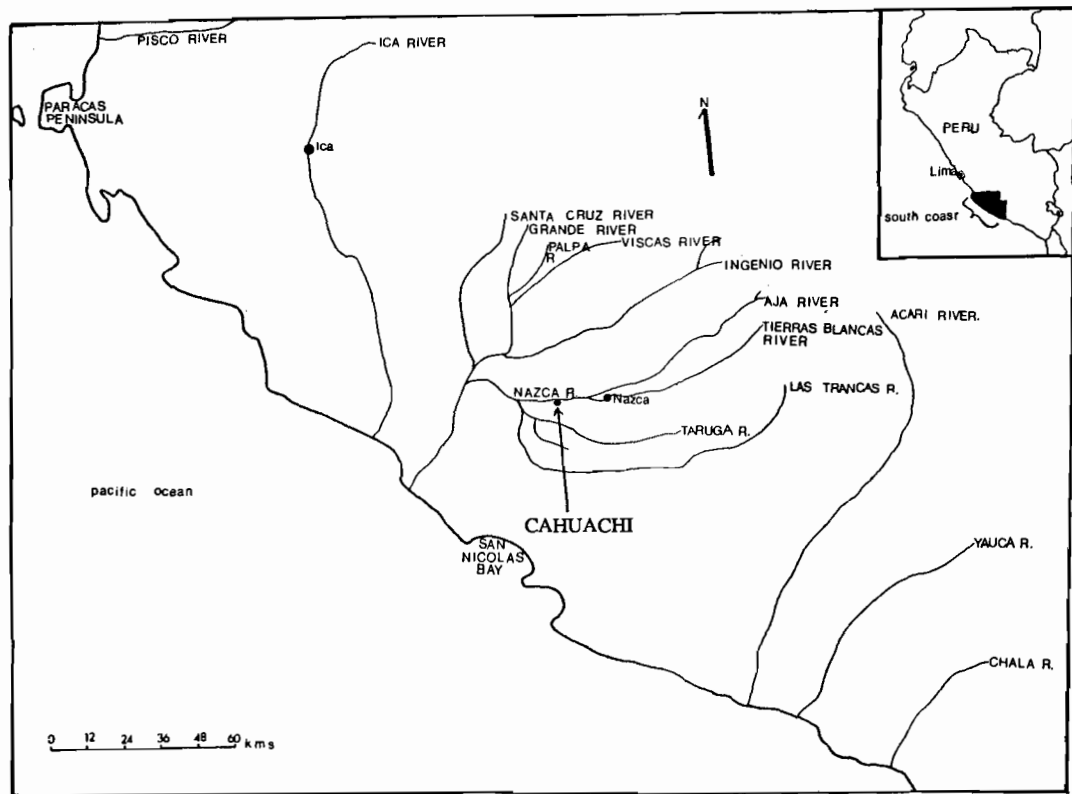


Figure 1. Map of the Rio Grande de Nazca drainage with location of Cahuachi indicated.

**FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF EXCAVATED SHERDS
(excluding those from Room of the Posts)**

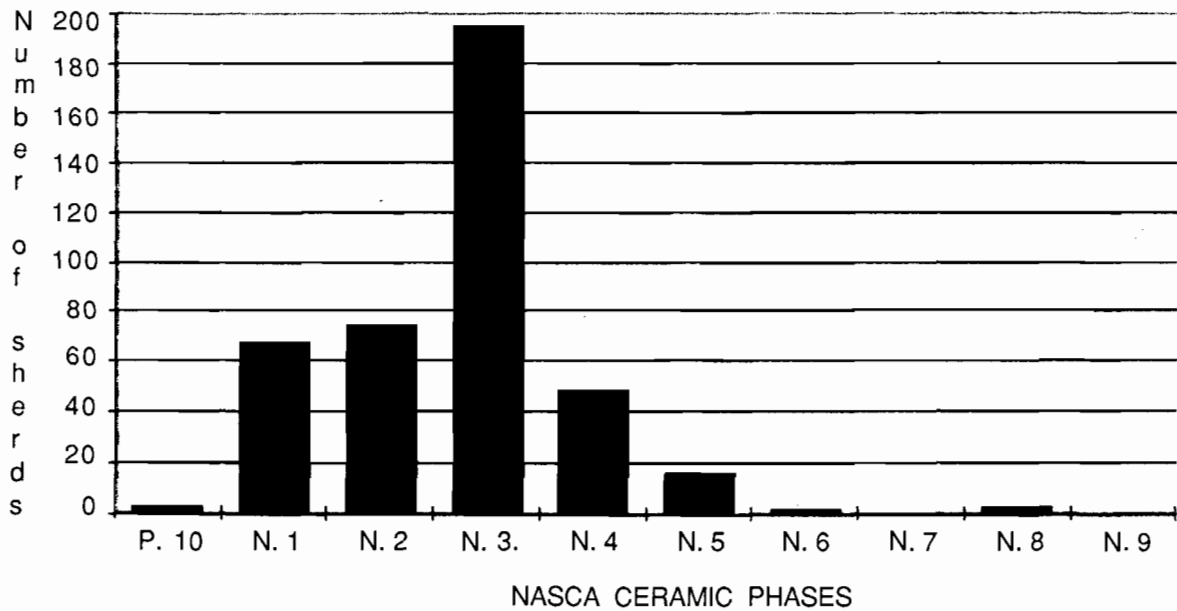


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of all sherds for which secure phase identifications could be made. Note that the sherds from the Room of the Posts are not included for this purpose.

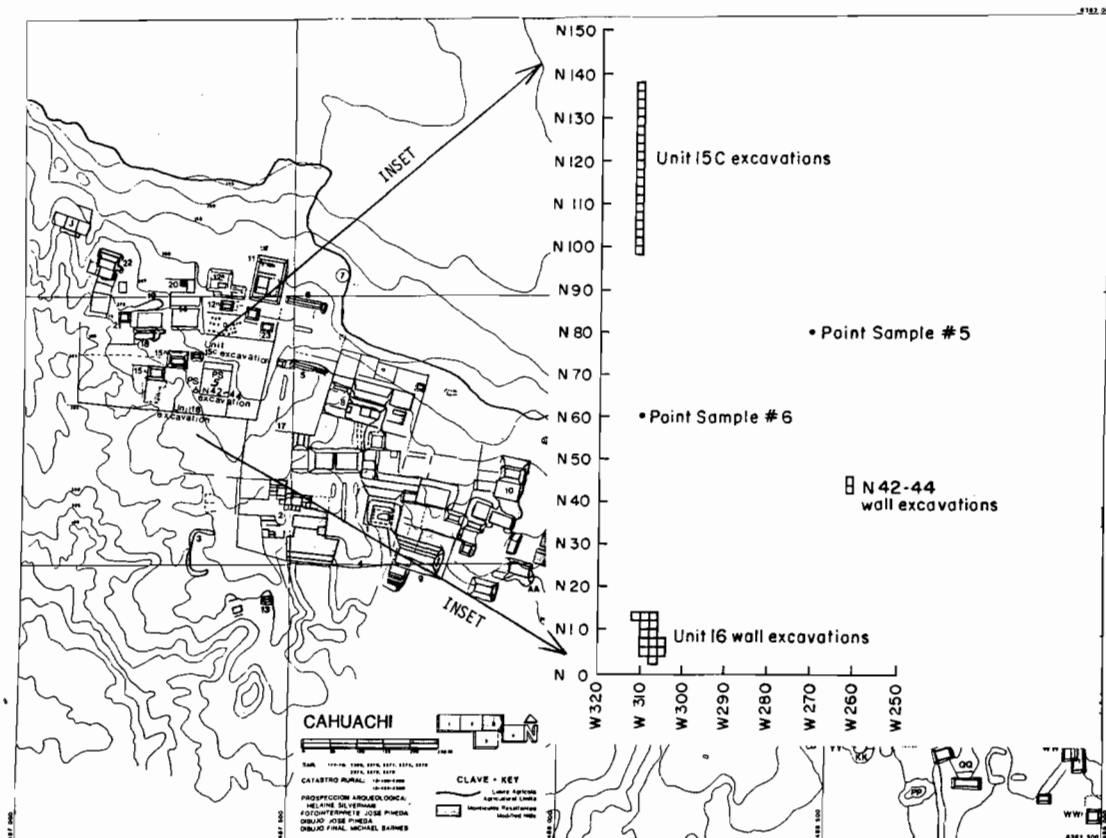


Figure 3. Location of excavation units in Sector One, the Great Plaza enclosed by the Unit 16 wall.

CAPA 6: PARED, HORCÓN Y HUECOS DE POSTE

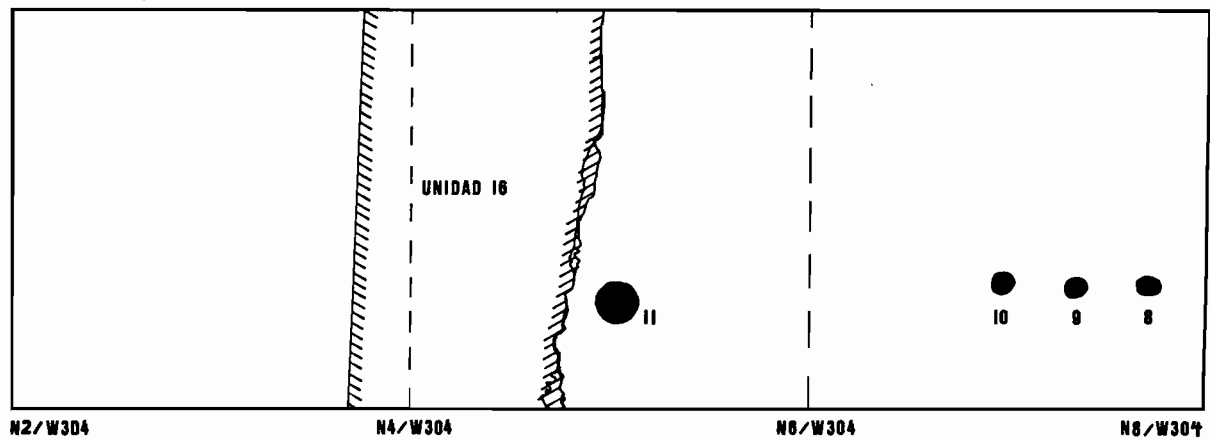


Figure 4. Floor plan of postholes located in stratum 6 of the Unit 16 excavations, in association with the Unit 16 wall. Posthole 11 corresponds to an *horcón* or the forked, vertical roof support post. Postholes 8, 9, and 10 would correspond to the thinner posts around and between which a cane wall was woven.

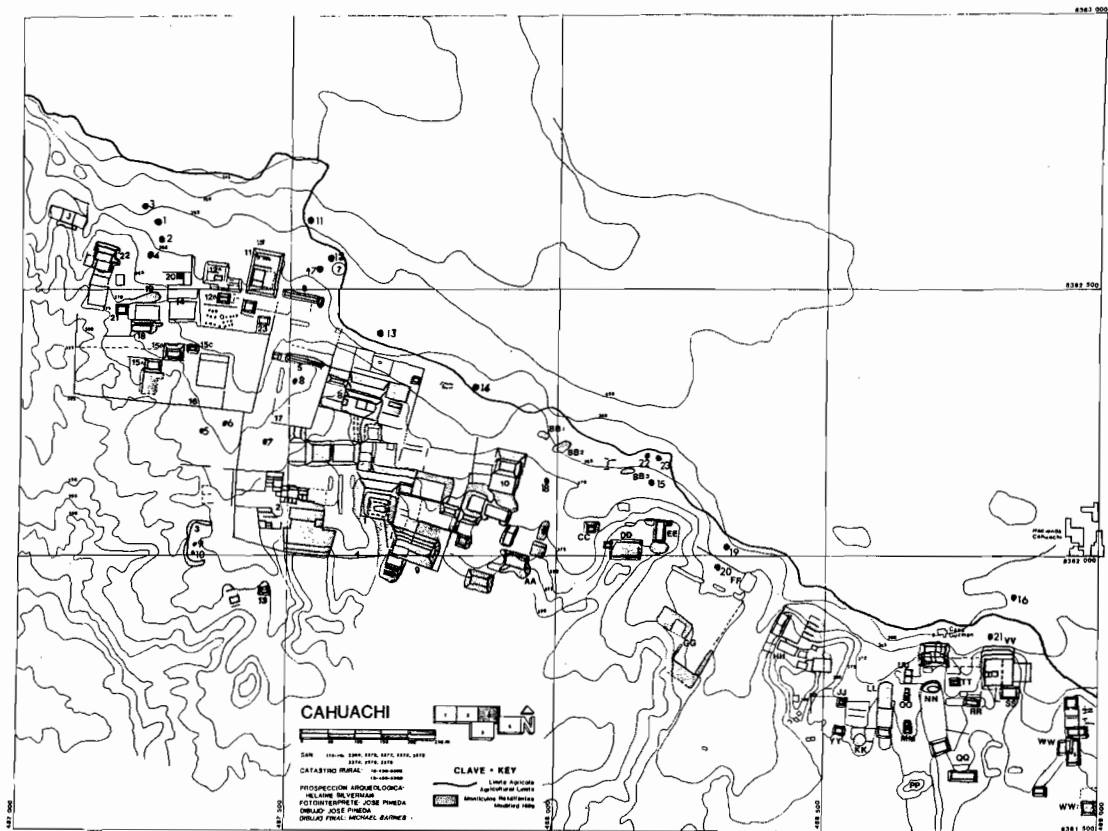


Figure 5. Location of the twenty-three test pits excavated at Cahuachi. They are indicated by the numbered black dots.

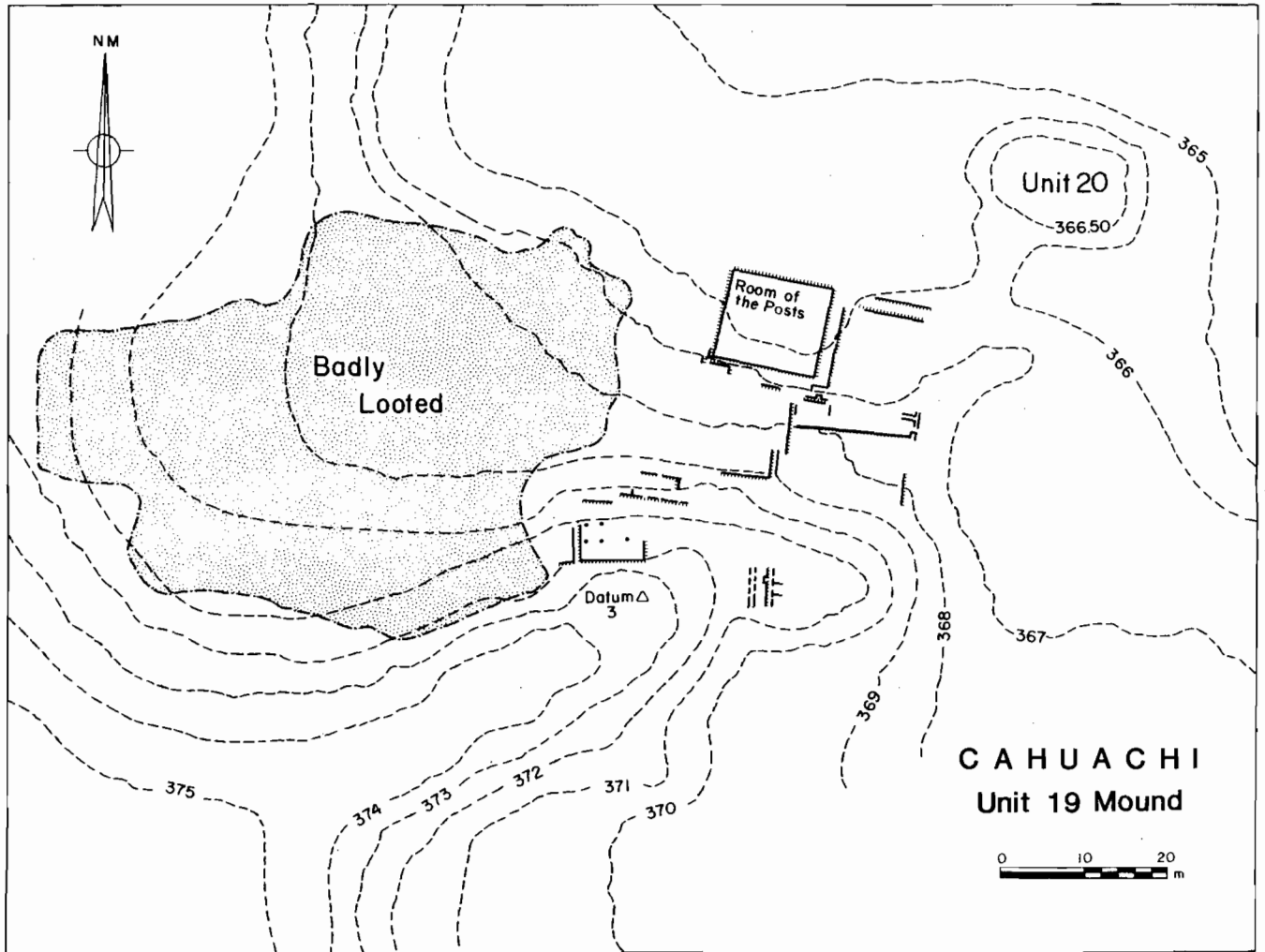


Figure 6. Plan of the Unit 19 mound indicating the location of the Room of the Posts.

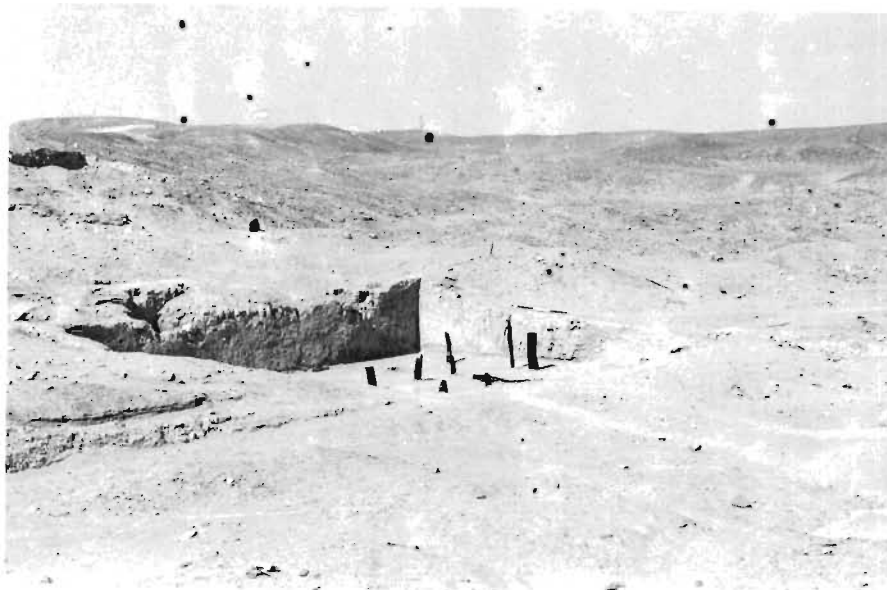


Figure 7a (above). Photograph of the Room of the Posts after excavation. The black dots in the photograph are the silica gel of the camera which melted in the heat. Note the looter's hole behind the south wall of the Room.

Figure 7b (below). Close-up view of the Room of the Posts looking at the west wall. Note the carved *huarango* post. Note the three rows of three *huarango* posts each and the remains of the low platform in the foreground of the photo. Note the sharply sloping profile of the west wall and the boulder placed in the blocked access.



Figure 8. A Nasca 4 bowl found in the fill blocking a previous corridor on the Unit 19 mound.



Figure 9a (above). This wrapped package was found in the fill covering the uppermost *apisonado* in the Lower Eastern Rooms area of the Unit 19 mound. The corn sheaths are secured with a fiber rope.

Figure 9b (below). When the tied bundle was opened, it was found to contain an obsidian knife which had been carefully protected by camelid fur around which the corn sheaths had been placed and secured.



Figure 10a (above). Photograph of first trophy head in situ. Note carrying cord emerging from plainweave cotton bag in which the head had been placed. Head rests in a little cyst excavated into the uppermost *apisonado* of Room 1 on the Unit 19 mound. In the fill underlying that *apisonado* a diagnostic Nasca 5 sherd was found. The head must date at least to Nasca 5 times.

Figure 10b (below). Photograph of the head once bag was removed. Note long carrying cord emerging from forehead and spines sealing lips. Note the blow to the head above the right eye.



Figure 11a (above). Photograph of second trophy head in situ along a wall in the Lower Eastern Rooms of Unit 19. The head rests on the fill above the uppermost *apisonado* in this area and is on the same stratigraphic level as the first trophy head. The head is covered by sherds of a sooted utilitarian vessel.

Figure 11b (below). Photograph of the second trophy head. Note the woven carrying cord with embroidered border. Note the elaborate, braided coiffure. The head has a beard and moustache. The eyes still look out at the viewer.

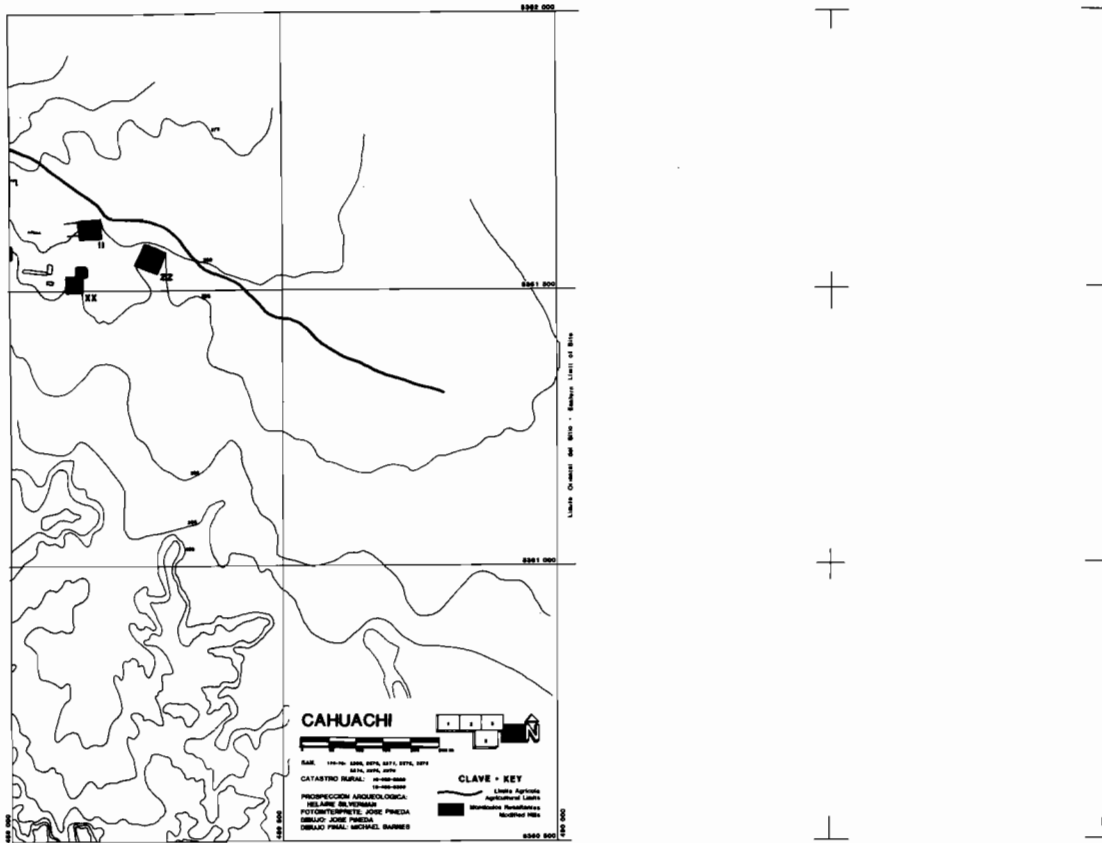


Figure 12. Map of the extreme eastern zone of Cahuachi (Units XX, II, ZZ).

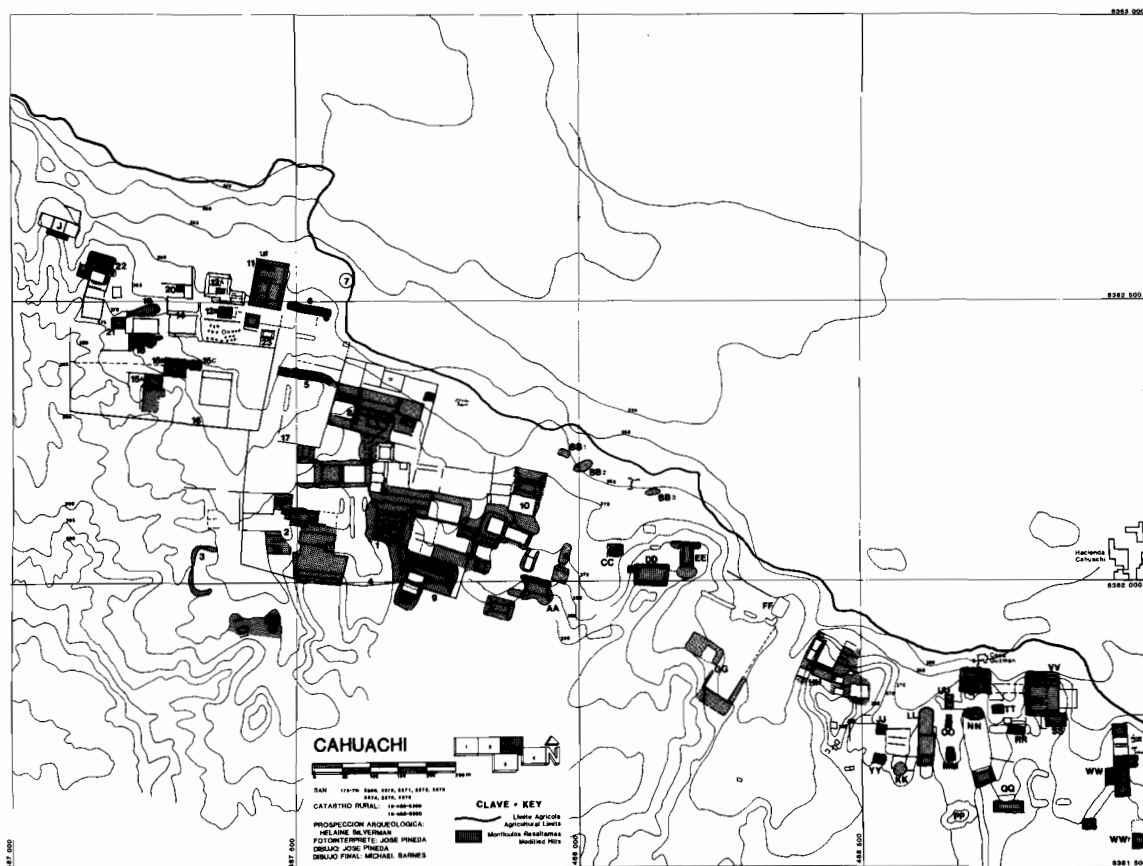


Figure 13. Map of the eastern (Units AA-WW) and central zones (Units 1-23) of Cahuachi. Strong's 1957 map of the site encompassed, west-to-east, Units J through 10 but in much less detail and with certain mounds not indicated.

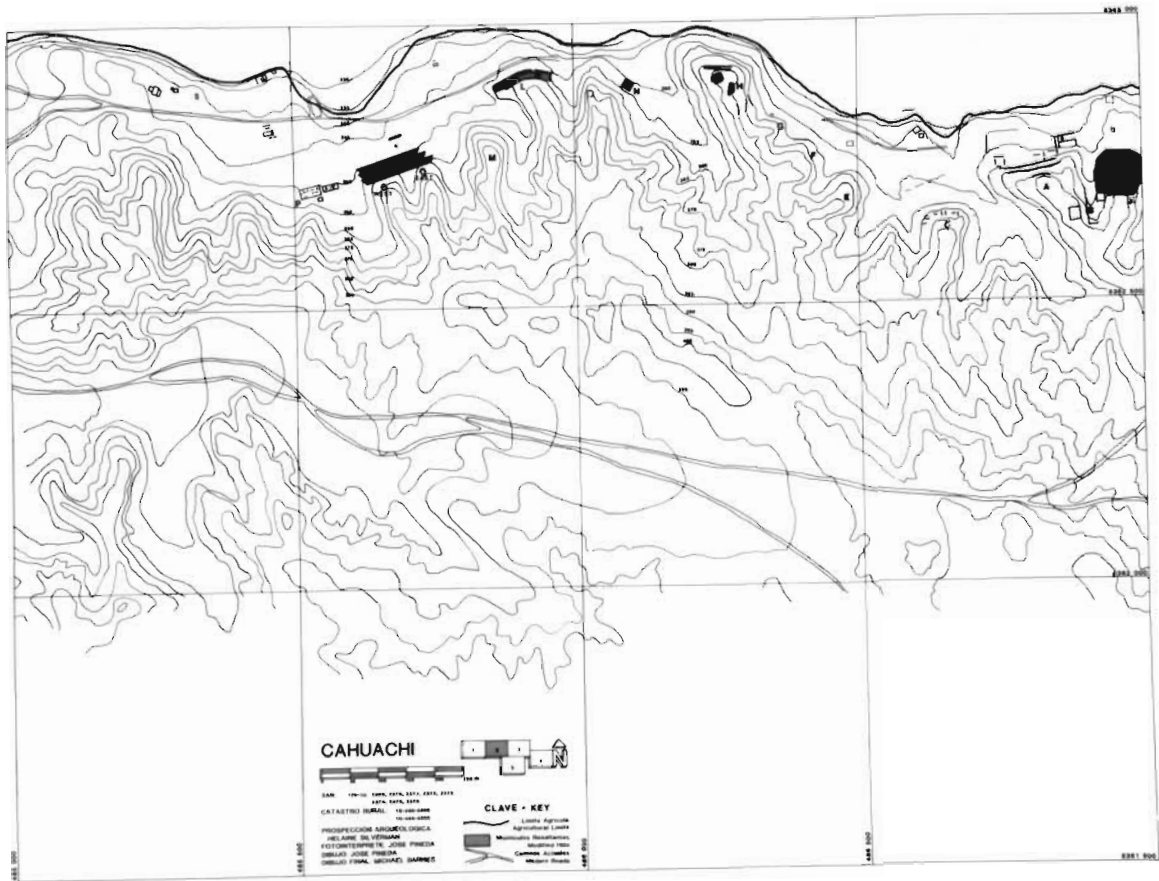


Figure 14 (above). Map of the western zone of Cahuachi. I consider Cahuachi to effectively end at Unit H.

Figure 15 (below). Unit 1 is on the left. Unit 2 is on the right. Note that these are hills which have been modified by terracing the natural hillside and defining the terraces with adobe walls.

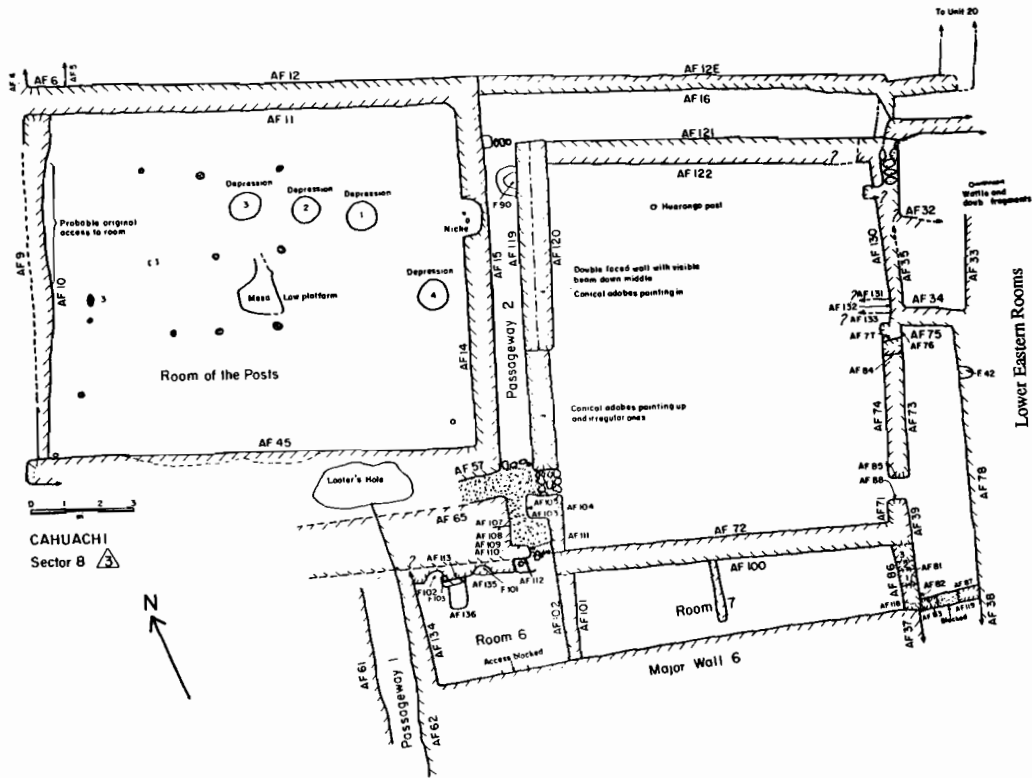


Figure 16. Plan of the Room of the Posts and adjoining Lower Eastern Rooms area.

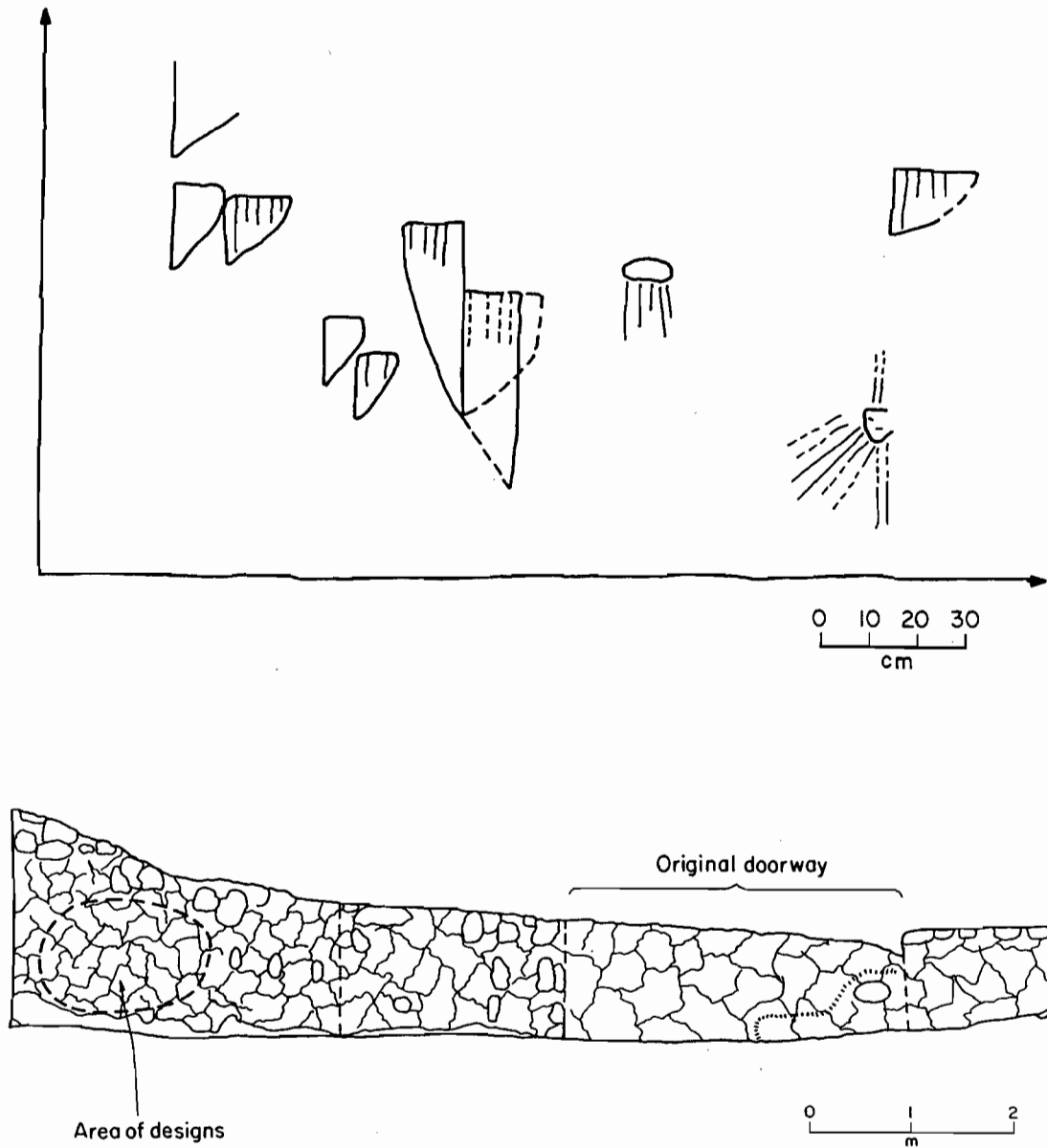


Figure 17. Profile of the west wall (AF 10) of the Room of the Posts indicating the original doorway which was blocked and the area of the incised designs. Those designs are drawn above. Note how the wall steeply slopes down to the north.

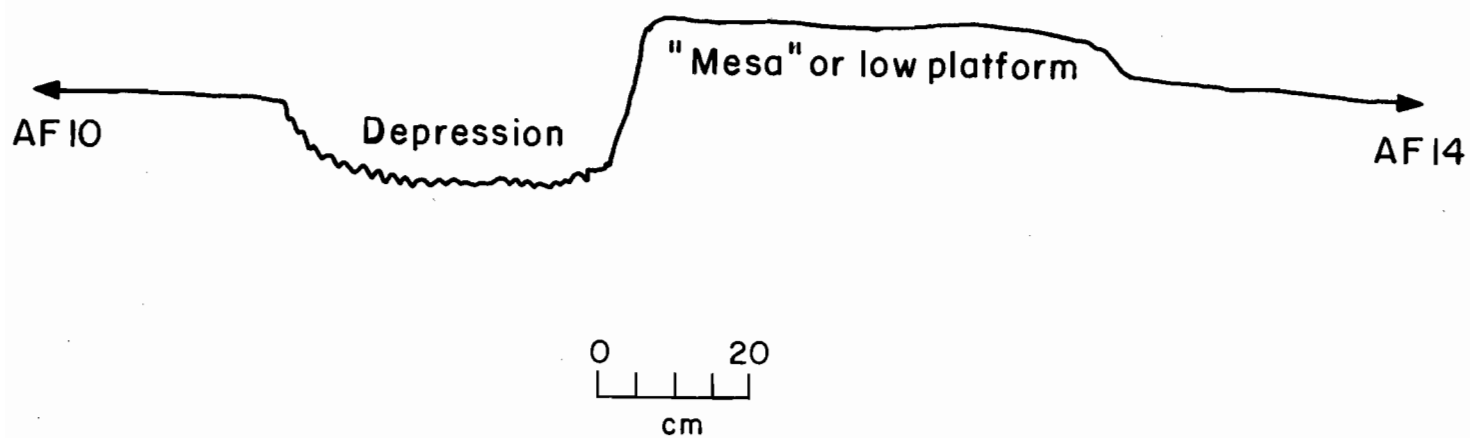


Figure 18. Cross-section of the low platform in the Room of the Posts and the broken circular depression in its center.

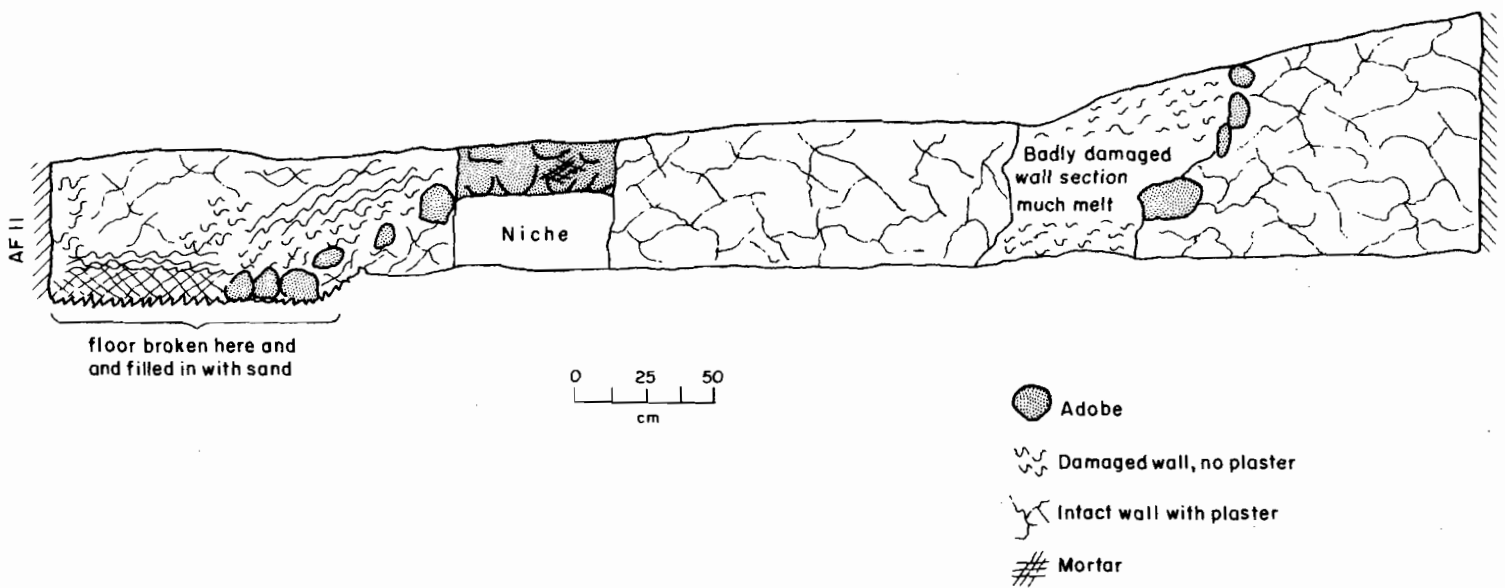
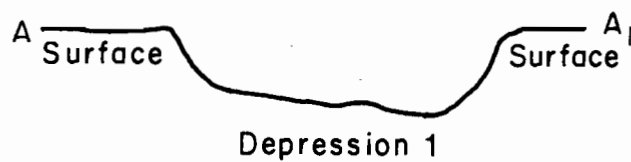
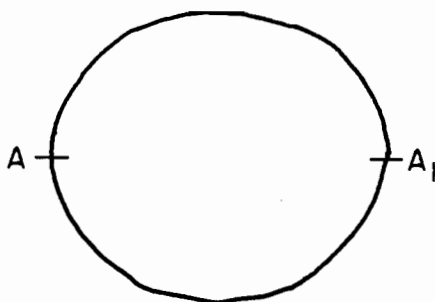


Figure 19. Profile of the east wall (AF 14) of the Room of the Posts with the position of the niche indicated.



Figure 20. Photograph of the niche in the east wall of the Room of the Posts. Note the two little cylindrical depressions in front of the niche. Note how the upper portion of the walls to the north and south of the niche have been damaged by water. Depression 4 is seen at the extreme right.

Top view



Cross-section

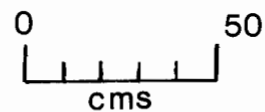


Figure 21. Top view and cross-section of Depression 1 in the floor of the Room of the Posts.

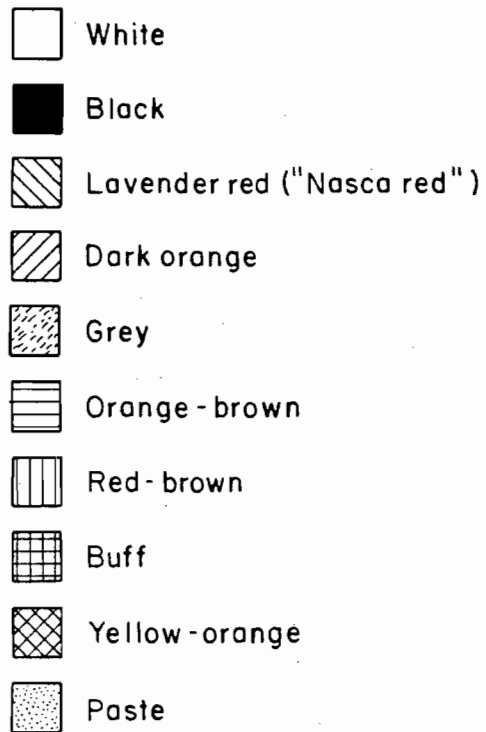
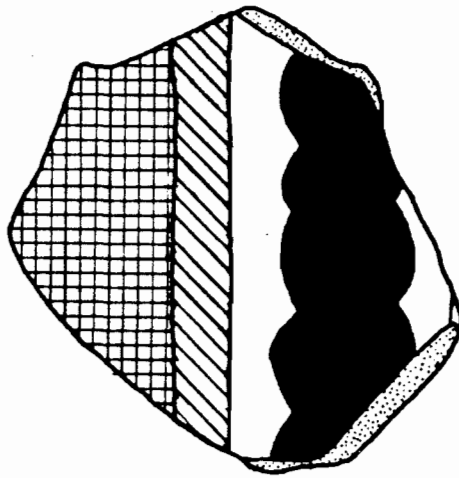


Figure 22. Drawing of the sherd which was found in the floor of the Room of the Posts. It corresponds to Strong's (1957: figure 12) type, "Cahuachi Broad Line Red, White, Black".



Figure 23. Photograph of that section of the west wall of the Room with incised designs. Taken as the designs were first perceived, while the Room was still being excavated. The panpipes and oval motif with pendant lines are clearly visible. The rayed face has not yet been revealed.



Figure 24. Photograph of the rayed face on the west wall. The face is in the lower half of the photograph just left of center.



Figure 25. Photograph of the westernmost section of the south wall of the Room as it makes a corner with the west wall itself. The rayed face is at the very top on the left side of the photograph. Several panpipes may possibly be shown in the picture though the erosion of the wall surface made this difficult to determine.

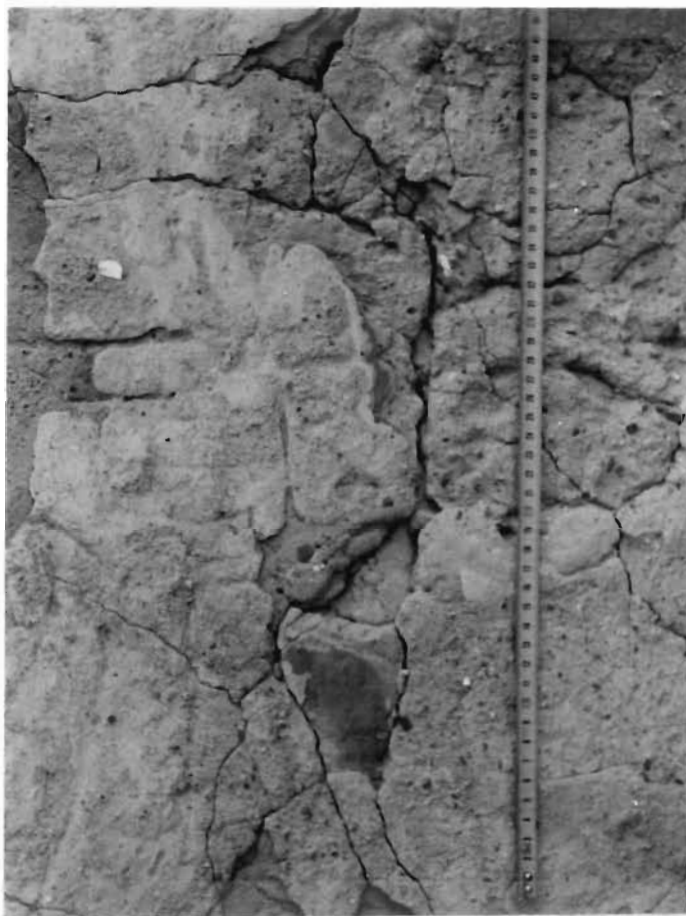


Figure 26. Close-up view of the rayed face on the south wall of the Room. The face is in the center of the photograph just left of the tape measure.

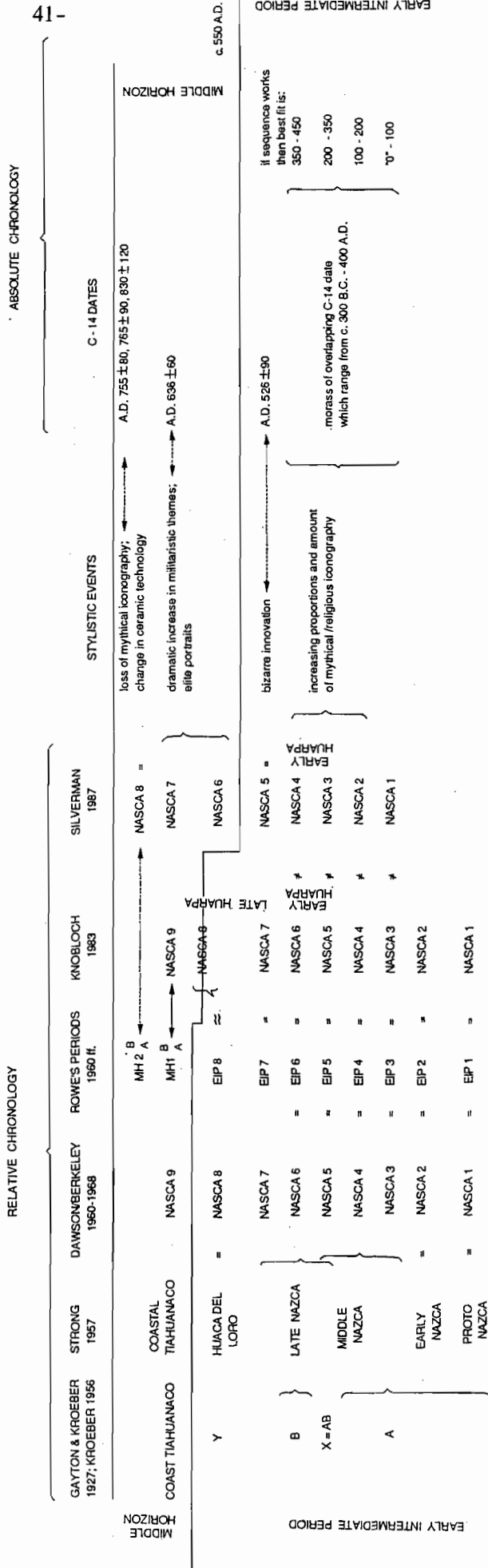


Figure 27. Comparative chronological chart indicating the correspondence of Nasca ceramic phases to radiocarbon dates.

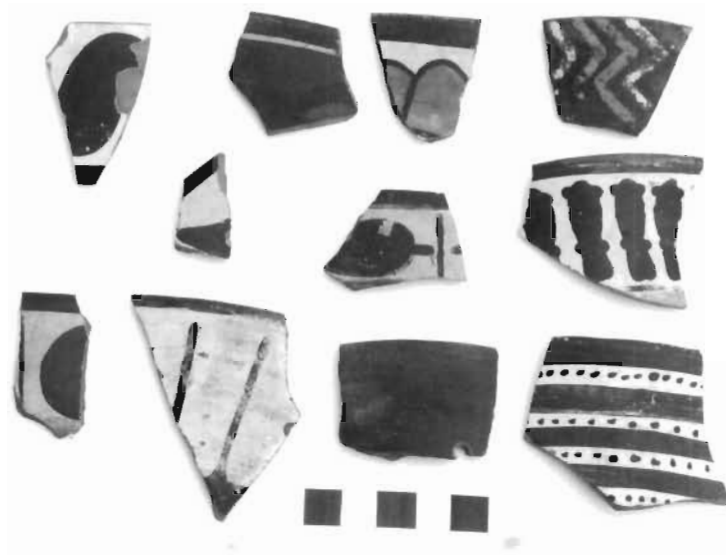


Figure 28. Photograph of decorated sherds recovered from the fill in the looter's hole between AF 45 (south wall of the Room of the Posts) and AF 65. The two diagnostic Nasca 4 sherds are on the far right of the top and middle rows.

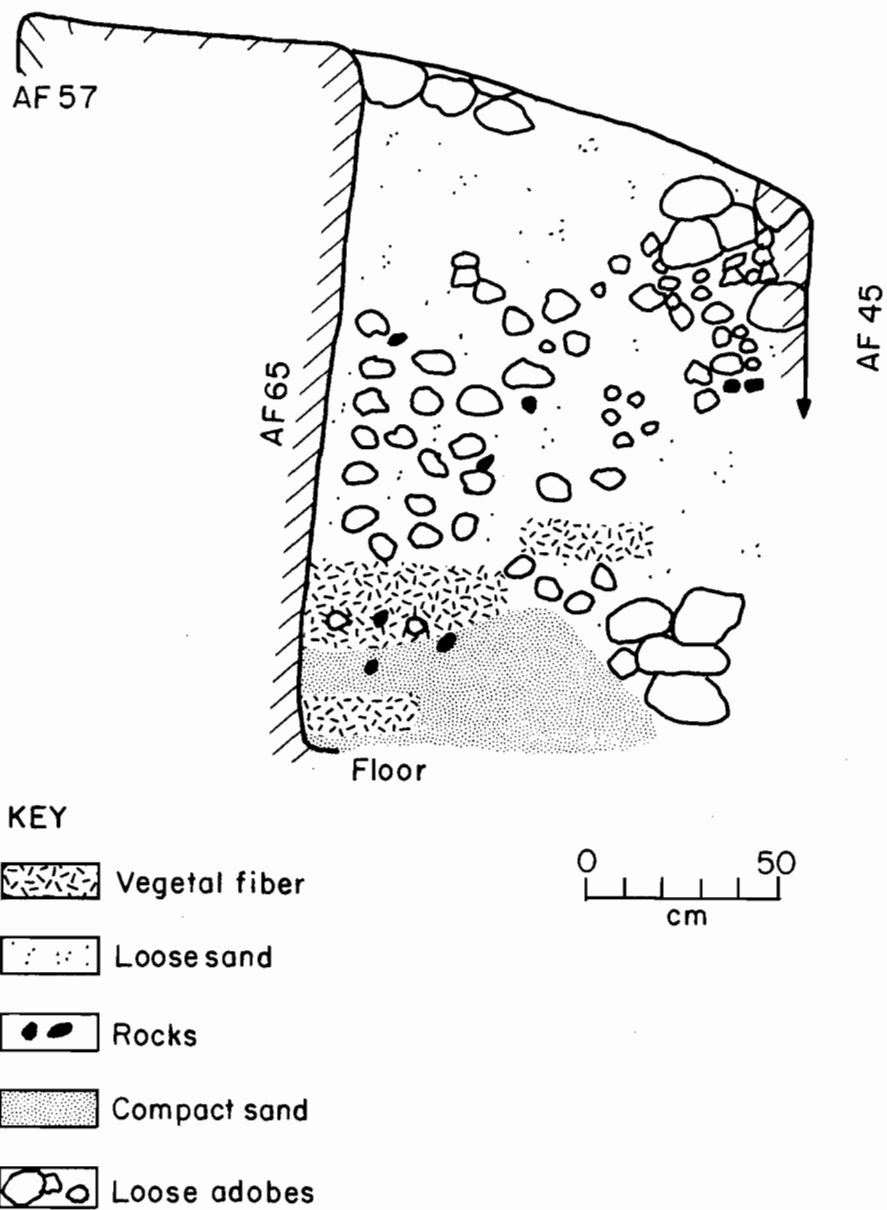


Figure 29. Profile of the fill between AF 45 and AF 65.

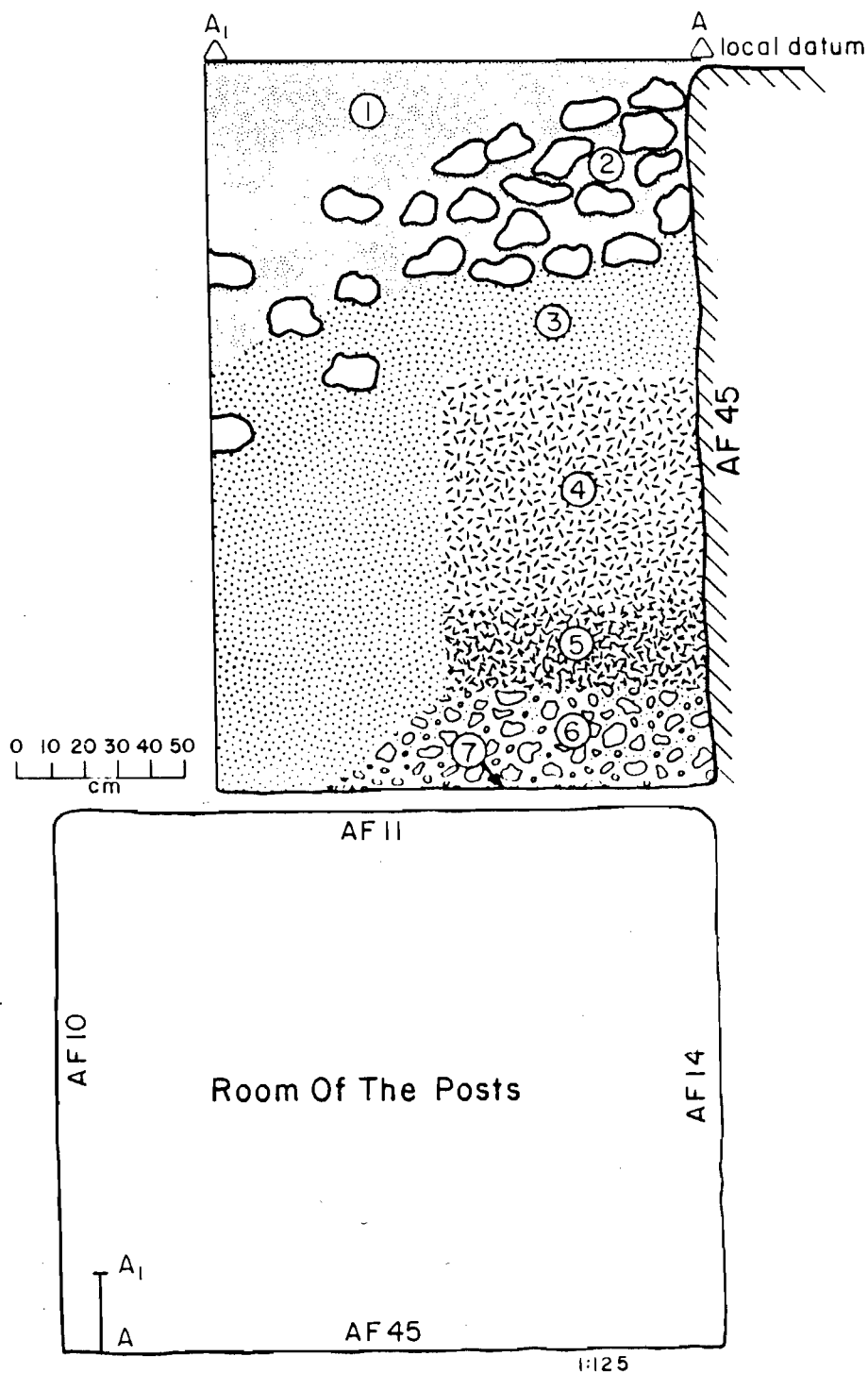


Figure 30. Profile of the packing in the AF 10-AF 45 corner in the Room of the Posts: 1) fine, windblown sand and looter-moved dirt; 2) loose adobes from wall and adobe melt; 3) sterile sand; 4) vegetal fiber; 5) very dense and compact vegetal fiber; 6) bits of adobe in fine sand; 7) *apisonado*.



Figure 31 (above). Nasca 8. Small bottle from the Room of the Posts. Note the watery, red-striped decoration.

Figure 32a (below). Nasca 8. Incurving vessel with banded step-fret decoration. The vessel was found mouth down. Photograph was taken when vessel was turned over, revealing that it was filled with cotton fiber and contained a gourd spoon.



Figure 32b (above). Nasca 8. Also contained in that vessel was this miniature, laterally spouted collared jar.

Figure 33 (below). Nasca 8. Bottle with strap handle from spout to shoulder. This vessel is broken on the other side and was stuffed with cotton fiber. The broken portion was covered with a large decorated sherd from another vessel.



Figure 34a (above). Nasca 8. Incurving vessel with X decoration.

Figure 34b (below). Nasca 8. A shouldered, incurving vessel, found with the former as a pair. Note that the upper band's recurved motif can be easily derived from Nasca 7 antecedents. The domino band is extremely common in the Nasca 8 material from the Room of the Posts.

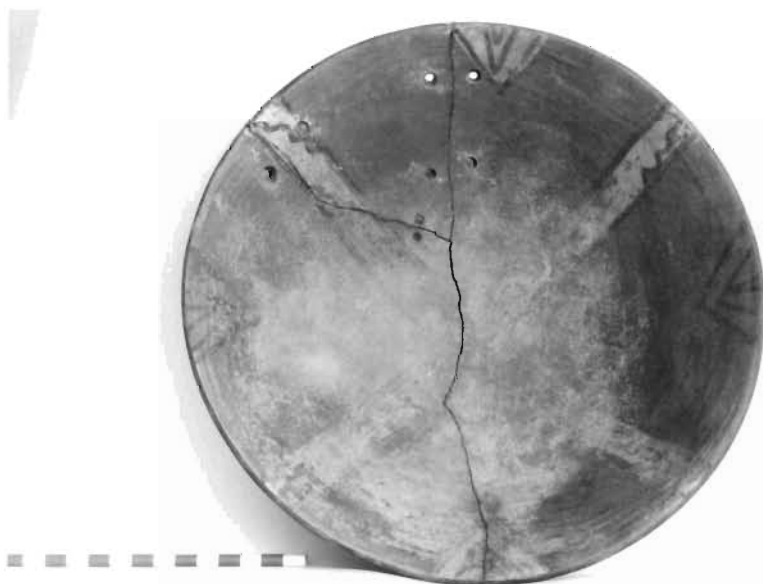


Figure 35a (above). Nasca 8. Four pots were found together. Three interior-decorated bowls were laid on top of each other. A fourth, plain bowl (Figure 35e) was found to the side.

Figure 35b (below). Nasca 8. The top vessel of the group of three. Note quadrupartition of the design area.

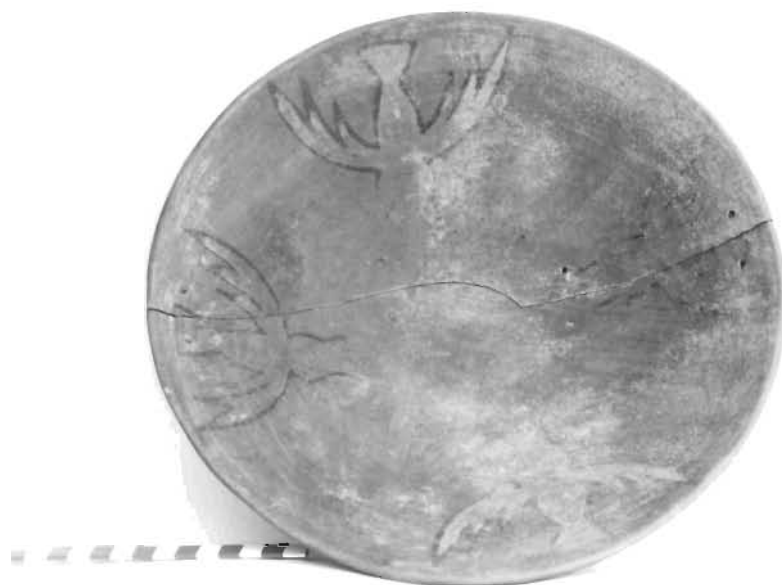


Figure 35c (above). Nasca 8. The middle vessel has just been turned over revealing an interior-decorated bowl with four banded step-frets.

Figure 35d (below). Nasca 8. The bottommost interior-decorated vessel with four birds pointing in to the center of the bowl.



Figure 35e. Nasca 8. The highly polished plainware bowl found alongside the previous three vessels. The paste has a high mica content which glitters on the surface.



Figure 36a (above). Nasca 8. First of three pots found together. This elliptically shaped, interior-decorated bowl covered the small vessel shown in Figure 36b. Again we see quadripartition and the X theme. The little circular space fillers may be schematic top views of this class of vessel and/or may derive from similar elements found on earlier Nasca pottery.

Figure 36b (below). Nasca 8. A little collared jar with strap handle between lip and shoulder. Eroded design.

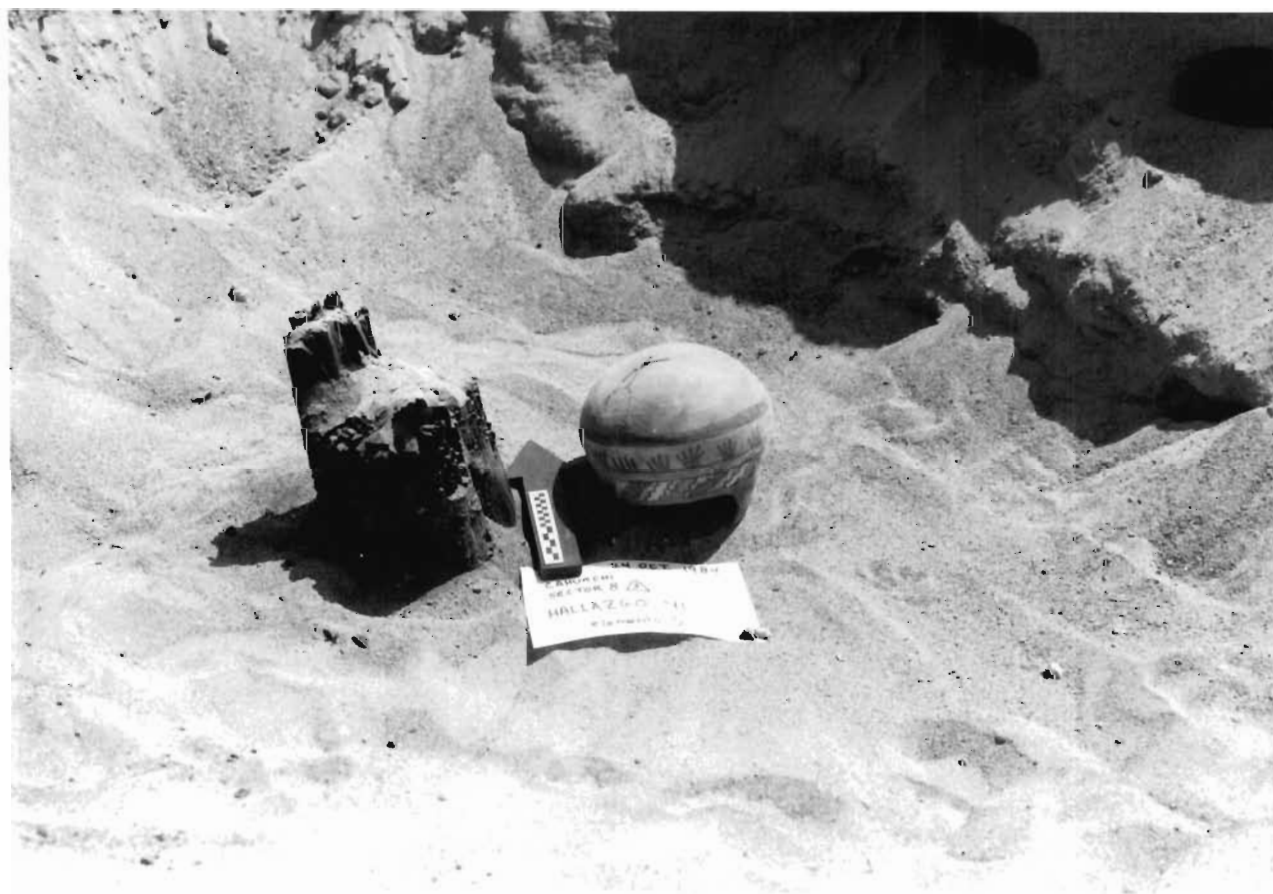


Figure 36c. Nasca 8. The vessel shown in Figure 36a covered this pot which was placed mouth down in the sand along one of the broken posts of the Room of the Posts.



Figure 36d. Nasca 8. Photograph of the vessel shown in Figure 36c. It is a basket-handled incurving bowl with banded motifs. The upper band has schematic step frets. The lower band has derivative Nasca hair hanks. Not shown in the photograph are the trophy heads on the handle which are identical to one illustrated by Strong (1957: figure 17I).

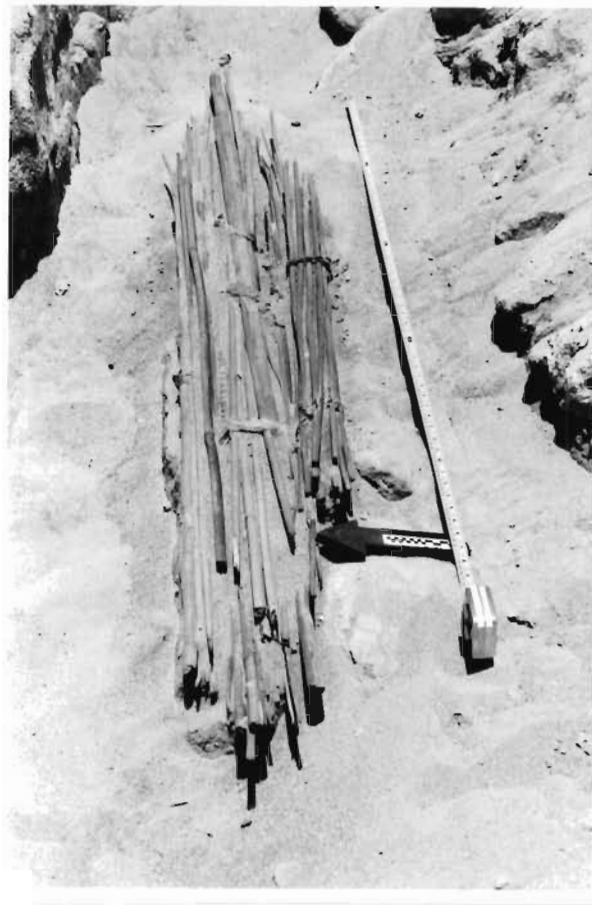


Figure 37 (above). Four portable looms found in the sand filling the Room of the Posts.

Figure 38 (below). A cache of blue-painted ají (pepper) in the Room of the Posts that overlay two gourd rattles, one of which was pyroengraved with a woman's face and braids.

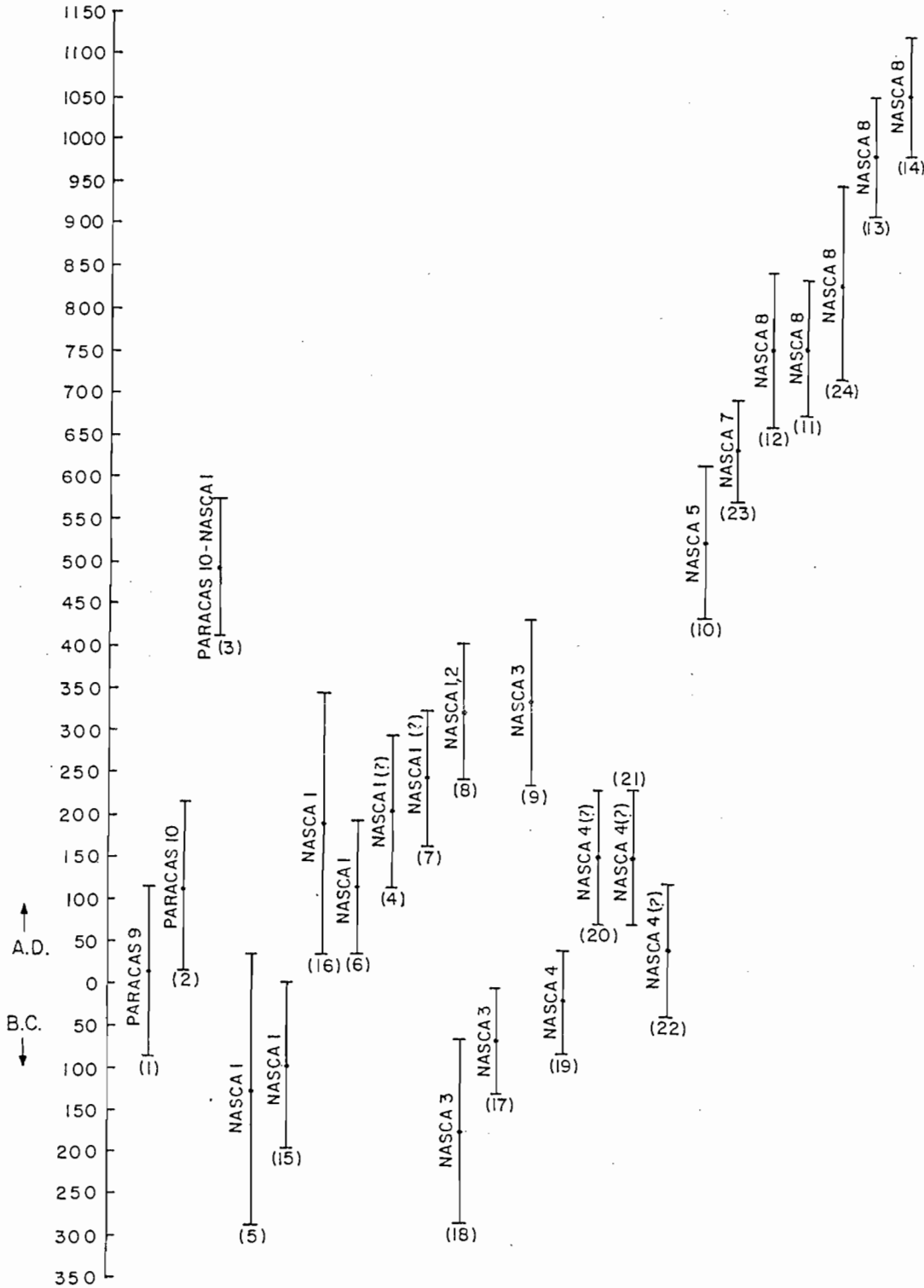


Figure 39. Plot of published C-14 dates for the Nasca phases. Samples 20, 21, 22, and 24 are from Silverman's excavations. Samples 20, 21, and 22 were run on three of the posts in the Room of the Posts. Sample 24 was run on the *huarango* pods removed from Depression 1 in the Room. (Full details on all of the plot dates are in Silverman 1986a: Chapter 12).