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A TENTATIVE SEQUENCE AND CHRONOLOGY FOR CHECTA, PERU

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Abstract. With the intention of examining the value of a hypothesis about the cultural development of the archaeological site of Checta, the author undertook a study of this site through the visual analysis of the figurative images of its petroglyphs, which constitute the main cultural evidence of this site. Checta is one of the most famous rock art sites of Peru, and since its rediscovery in 1925 the site had not been included with consistency in the cultural assemblage of ancient Andean societies. This article revisits the history of this remarkable site, proposing its inclusion in the cultural context of the most complex and early civilisations of the central coast of Peru.

Introduction

Until recently archaeological sites with rock art in the state of Lima truly constituted a cultural mystery and the vast majority of them, if not all of them in central coastal Peru, lacked a historical explanation of any kind, being regarded as disaggregated elements of an unknown past without any relevant cultural attribution. Recently, however, we have begun to develop new approaches to rock art research on the basis of new ideas about the development of these sites. This work, as will be seen later, constitutes a particular attempt to provide archaeological sites with *quilcas* (rock art) with a historical context by proposing a sequence and tentative chronology.

This article draws attention to an important number of archaeological sites with *quilcas* in four drainage basins of the central Pacific coast of Peru, which are considered using a comparative formal analysis whose basic premise is a hypothesis about the sequential development of the archaeological site of Checta. Research suggests that Checta is a crucial part of an extensive panorama of rock art development with cultural and cognitive connotations. To support this idea, this work constitutes an approximation in theory and method, and a proposal for the technical study of a site with *quilcas*, with a clear archaeological perspective.

Background

Checta is one of the most prominent archaeological sites in Peru. This is a site consisting of varied material evidence, especially a profusion of *quilcas* or petroglyphs on numerous rocks. Checta was

rediscovered in 1925 by Monsignor Pedro E. Villar Córdoba northwest of Lima and quickly became the type-site for this kind of archaeological evidence and one of the most renowned sites of Peruvian antiquity (Villar 1935).

Several researchers have studied Checta, especially Villar Córdoba who led several expeditions to the site after 1925. Villar Córdoba's most important proposals are the consideration of the petroglyphs of Checta as 'milestones' between the peoples of the *hanan* (high) and *hurín* (low) regions in the Carabayllo river basin, and the interpretation of the site as a shrine or temple of the snakes, *chinchay* (felines) and *huaman* (falcons), whose representations he found in the site (Villar 1935: 407, Figs 49 and 50). Although Villar Córdoba never stated it expressly in his 1935 publication about Lima archaeology, he should have suspected the great antiquity of the site which he associated with the Chavín Culture explicitly in 1975 (1000 years BCE, according to Tello 1942), mentioning literally 'chavinoid petroglyphs' and the presence of 'Chavín' ceramic at the foot of the Alcaparrosa mountain in the same place (Villar 1976).

While the function and temporal position of Checta was undoubtedly outlined by Villar Córdoba, in 1955 Teodoro Casana also sustained the Chavín cultural association of the site due to an alleged figurative formal relationship, mentioning geometric images, snakes, jaguars etc. (Casana 1976: 51). This affiliation with Chavín was subsequently confirmed independently by archaeologist Hermilio Rosas in 1970, who states that Checta could be 'one of the oldest chavinoid temples of the central coast' due to the close

stylistic relationship of Checta ceramic materials with the earliest components of the Chavinoid period of Ancón that this author had recently excavated there (Rosas 2007: 233).

Until the 1970s the chronology and cultural affiliation of Checta was considered normative; however, the research of the French archaeologist Jean Guffroy dramatically changed the archaeological context of the site. He proposed that Checta corresponds to the Early Intermediate Period (c. 0–600 CE), constituting an 'open-air temple' according to European interpretative parameters (Guffroy 1987: 58). The location of Checta in the Early Intermediate Period was based only on a spatial relationship with an archaeological settlement of that period in the same canyon where Checta is located (Guffroy 1987: 55). Obviously this proposal closed any cultural linking of the site and until today its 'new' chronology has not been questioned scientifically.

However, since Guffroy new ideas about the site have been gradually emerging. The most important of them was developed in 1992 during one of the field trips of the archaeology school of San Marcos University, in which archaeologist Alberto Bueno proposed a redefinition of Checta, assuming a sequential development of at least four consecutive stages of production of *quilcas*, each with a particular figurative corpus. Though Bueno developed this hypothesis from a field analysis through direct observation, this approach remained untested, especially considering its chronological and cultural implications.

Theoretical approach

The present study of Checta has been conducted using basically a comparative method and for its execution I implemented some descriptive categories that have been used in analyses by direct observation of the motifs on the rocks. The resultant distinction, obtained by a simple classification, has been used as the basis for a sequence that has been compared with different archaeological information to corroborate its value. The order of the research has therefore proceeded from observation, the arbitrary arrangement of archaeological materials *intra site*, and the confrontation of this arrangement with external data from other archaeological sites and materials. In this sense one of the objectives of this work, beyond the examination of Bueno's hypothesis on the sequence of rock art production of the site, is the corroboration of the logical value of a formal analysis in Checta rock art.

Epistemologically, however, one of the main advances of this study has been the exposition of the logical flaws in previous investigations of Checta, which are focused on two fundamental aspects that are worth observing here.

First, the chronologies proposed by Villar Córdoba (1976), Casana (1976), Rosas (2007) and Guffroy (1987, 1999, 2009), were not based on an analysis of rock art but on the relative observation of spatially related independent archaeological remains (ceramics or

sites); so what had been dated are not the *quilcas* or petroglyphs but the materials associated with them. Regardless of the indicative archaeological value of the associated materials, the association, in this case, only involves some activity close to the *quilcas* and does not explain or give context to their existence.

Second, the chronology proposed by the mentioned authors is implied to apply to the whole site, which means that these authors assume that the *quilcas* of Checta are roughly contemporary with each other and together the entire site implies a uniform temporary unit. This is a false premise. The contemporaneity of the petroglyphs, within a rock panel or between panels, must be tested using scientific arguments. Given that the chronology and consequently the cultural association of the site are unlikely, all the assumptions about its use and function are also unlikely and do not constitute reliable cultural information about Checta.

As I mentioned above, to technically address the research I used some formal categories that can be recognised as aspects of the production of the *quilcas* or attributes of the rock art motifs, which were applied as discrete variables for the recognition, comparison and classification of the same rock art motif. The used categories are the *technique* and the *form*. I mean by technique the physical way in which the motif was produced, and by form the general physical appearance that can be recognised in the motif including that of smaller-scale attributes that characterise its configuration. These variables, especially the form, were used in examining of the *quilcas* and were compared at the same level in the analysis of independent motifs or complex 'scenes', motifs with motifs, 'scenes' with 'scenes'. In this study the *scene* category only involves a consistent juxtaposition of motifs on a single panel without discontinuities and implies no temporality, cultural association, or any culturally relevant relationship.

These tentative categories have been used to assess their importance for an initial study of Checta that considers primarily an *intra site* analysis, and as the foundation of a material classification of the *quilcas* derived from the identification of certain figurative features. Although theoretically the use of more variables could increase the possibilities that the classification will be more accurate or relevant, this does not determine its relevance *per se*, the value of the classification, as a logical hypothesis for the arbitrary ordering of cultural materials will not be measured by the number of variables used in its definition, but in respect of a context of cultural articulation that can validate their results, which is what I will try to do later.

Once the classification is established, expressed in the distinction of *groups*, it will facilitate the formulation of a sequence of production of these groups, using superimposition and the changes in the formal configuration of the motifs these groups comprise,



Figure 1. General view of the archaeological site of Checta.

this is expressed as a linear scheme of phases. The temporal distinction is another arrangement hypothesis, to be evaluated in the same way as the classification, using archaeological evidence and external comparisons.

It should be noted that the distinction and array of groups does not prove *a priori* anything at all, and they were only applied with the intention of manipulating information obtained from the analysis, as a logical strategy to compare the data and give it an extensive social meaning later. In this sense the distinction of groups, to probe its consistency, will be considered within a basic anthropological theory, which suggests that similar physical features — in this case identified by standardised variables — are conditioned by a 'set of ideas, attitudes and habits' of a human group (Kroeber 1963: 10), or sharing culturally binding ties. Although the classification and/or the sequence will not attempt to demonstrate that the groups have specific cultural relations *intra site*, this premise will provide a basis for the proposal to an initial correlation between the *quilcas* that is socially understandable.

As I mentioned before, the value of the *intra site* analysis must be estimated on the basis of the examination of different archaeological data in a spatial context that includes different sites with *quilcas* in several valleys of the Peruvian central coast, and with whose materials a restricted comparison will be made. The combined explanation of disaggregated evidence, that if it is considered isolated could not be expected to be consistent, is also a logical approach of presentation that must justify a tentative proposition of data articulation and sustaining the testing of the hypothesis that shall be proposed from the analysis of the motifs in the *quilcas* of Checta.

The archaeological site of Checta

Checta is located on a single natural landscape feature: a concave slope covered by sediments and rocks, situated on the right bank of the Alcaparrosa canyon in the *yunga* zone of the Yangas valley, Carabayllo (Chillón) river basin, at approximately 1200 m elevation (Fig. 1). Most of the rocks of the site form a colluvial deposit and are found static and semi-buried between an alluvial, stony and semiarid environment. The archaeological site forms an elongated elliptical concentration of rocks, approximately 200 m long by 70 m wide (Fig. 2) oriented to the principal slope of the canyon on which, beside *quilcas*, also exist other evidence, such as circular constructions and terraces and,

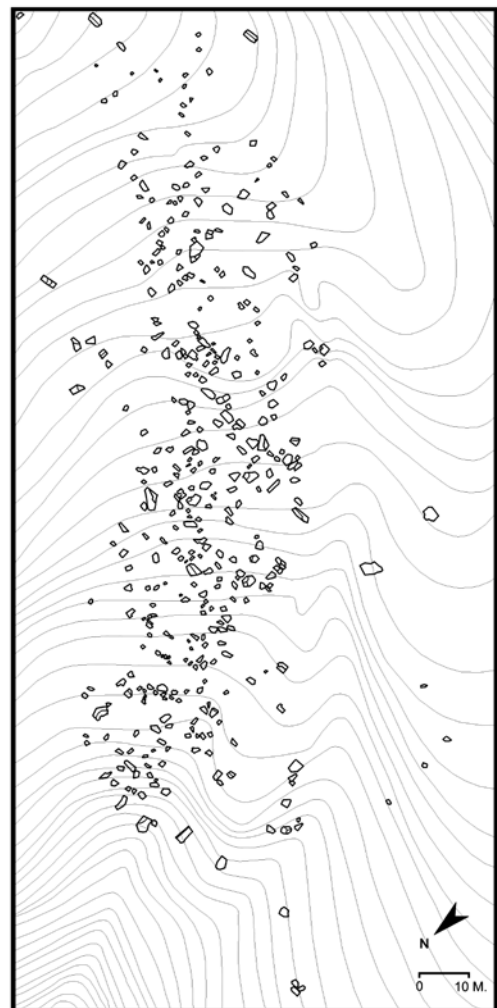


Figure 2. Distribution map of rocks with *quilcas* in the archaeological site of Checta. After Guffroy (1999).

not many years ago, fragmented pottery on the surface. The petroglyphs are in a very bad state of conservation due to vandalism that has affected the site since its rediscovery.

Groups	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
Number of <i>quilcas</i>	5	More than 100	10	11

Table 1. Numbers of *quilcas* (petroglyphs) in a limited random sample corresponding to the isolated *quilca* groups, *Checta*.

According to Jean Guffroy (1999: 83) the site contained at least 450 rocks with rock art, which are found on the blocks without an apparent order, being part of the natural landscape and in a few cases part of the rocks that compose the circular constructions. Since then the site has suffered much degradation, and although a full count has not been made, the present number of decorated blocks or motifs at the site lower, but is unknown.

The marks found in the rocks form individual motifs or apparent scenes of multiple motifs on one or more exposed facets of the rocks. The support of the petroglyphs is in most cases igneous, volcanic porphyritic rock, which shows a clear weathering zone and bears a dark-brown patina.

The technique used for the production of the motifs has been percussion, which has left imprints of convex shapes with few millimetres depth, 2 mm average, and an uneven width of up to 15 mm. This procedure has generated a relief and irregular border in the configuration of the lines of the motifs which has depended mainly on the separation of the large mineral crystals from the matrix of rock, and except the deep percussion used for the production of cupules, most of the motifs have been made with the same technique, apparently of a uniform technological trend

over the whole site.

Distinction of rock art groups

Observation of the petroglyphs showed that most occur on panels with different motifs and groups of motifs, which could involve important representative variations. This presumption allowed me to use a formal analysis for its distinction and primary classification. The use of technological variables was not justified in this examination because no relevant differences were recognised. The assemblage was segregated into separate *groups of quilcas*, which are thought 'figuratively independent'.

The examination of the petroglyphs was made following a random linear circuit through the site without a spatially restricted parameter, covering at least 100 blocks. The result showed (Table 1) that there is a quantitative difference between the corpus of motifs assigned to each group, which do not reach twelve examples in three of the four groups identified, surpassing the hundred in the remaining group. Probably the difference in the number of *quilcas* between groups as well as their distribution within the site has particular cultural implications, however, I consider that each group is representative due to its own formal independence which is not conditioned



Figure 3. Rock with cupules, group 1 of *Checta*.



Figure 4. Rock with cupules, group 1 of Checta.

by the number of *quilcas* forming the groups.

It is necessary to consider that according to taphonomic logic (Bednarik 2007, 2009) there is no possibility of knowing the exact numbers of *produced quilcas* corresponding to each group, and the total numbers of *surviving quilcas* are not representative diagnostic indexes. Survival could be affected by different causes, both natural or anthropic. Although this fact could inhibit quantitative consideration, the value of these data will be considered subordinate here to the diagnostic value of the 'identified groups'. Using the same logic any random sample can be as representative, in formal terms, as that based on a quantitative or statistical estimate if we knew the exact number of members of the sample; potentially each *quilca* may serve as a representative of any figurative group of petroglyphs which, following this approach, could not be recognised without estimating any specific regularity conditioned by an analytical variant deliberately selected.

The groups are described on the basis of their more general formal attributes and major details, which I believe are clear and verifiable. In this sample the figures selected for its illustration are representative and have referential value (for a more extensive sample of the Checta *quilcas* see also Núñez Jiménez 1986). The *quilca* groups are as follows:

Group 1. Rocks that bear small cupules made by percussion (Figs 3 and 4). These *quilcas* occur mainly on four rocks distributed at the top and bottom ends of the site and on the west part of the site (Fig. 5).

Group 2. Individual motifs or grouped sets of motifs. In formal terms I recognise two classes of motifs: simple (lines, spirals, dots or cupules, circles, irregular curved outlines) and compounds (formed by the combination of the simple motifs). When the motifs appear to form groups they seem to be arranged randomly with a predominance of the curved lines in the feature of the figures (Figs 6 and 7). Although this arrangement is fairly general it was noted that there is a change in the trend of organisation of some 'scenes' inside the group,

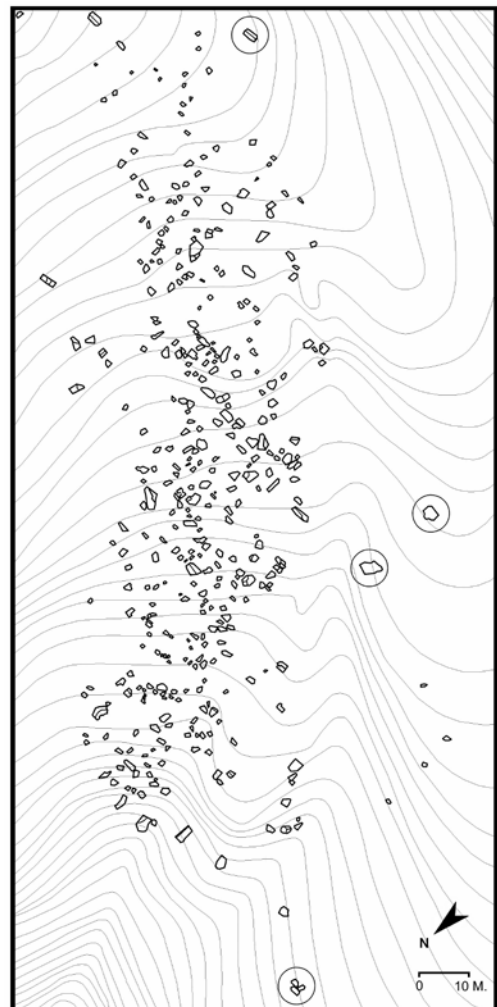


Figure 5. Map of Checta showing the distribution of *quilcas* from group 1.



Figure 6. Abstract and geometric quilca (petroglyph), group 2 of Checta.

which include motifs of geometric linear type, made up of straight lines, circular motifs and compound motifs of symmetrical structures (Fig. 8). The presence of motifs with straight lines forming angles of 90° is an outstanding detail in some of



Figure 8. Abstract and geometric quilca, group 2 of Checta.



Figure 7. Abstract and geometric quilca, group 2 of Checta.

these 'scenes' (Figs 9 and 10). These *quilcas* with abstract and geometric motifs and groups are located in all parts of the site and are numerically in the majority.

Group 3. A small number of compound motifs, ten *quilcas* of semi-naturalistic figures, which can be



Figure 9. Abstract and geometric quilca, group 2 of Checta.



Figure 10. Abstract and geometric quilca, group 2 of Checta.

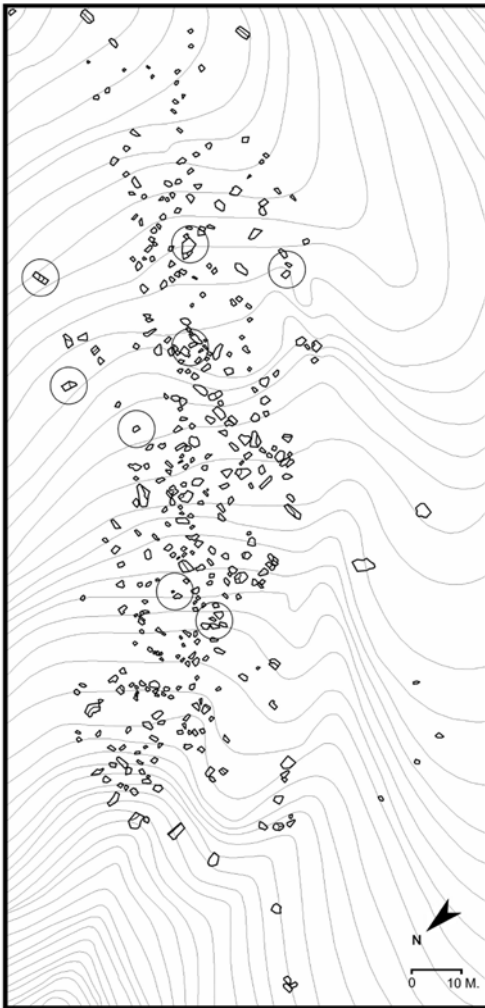


Figure 11. Map of Checta showing the approximate distribution of quilcas from group 3.



Figure 13. Semi-naturalistic quilca, group 3 of Checta.



Figure 14. Semi-naturalistic quilca, group 3 of Checta.

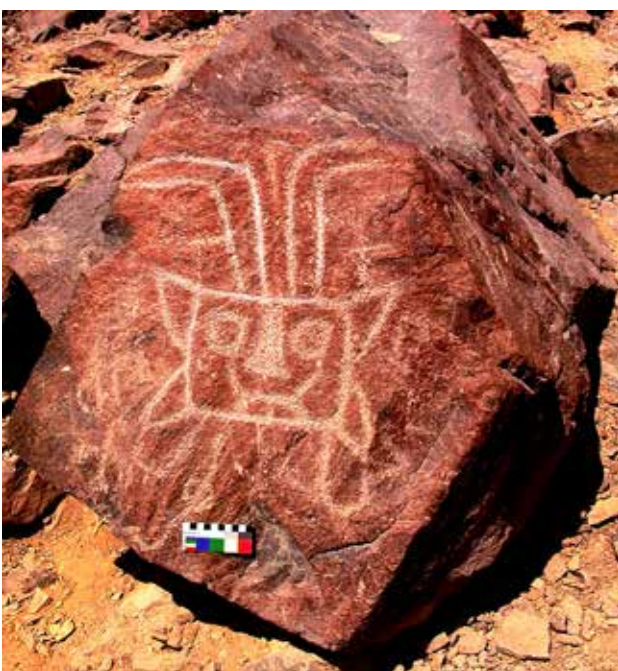


Figure 12. Semi-naturalistic quilca, group 3 of Checta.

interpreted as anthropomorphic or zoomorphic. These motifs, scattered in the central part of the site (Fig. 11), mainly describe individual heads with facial features and extra-corporal devices (Figs 12 and 13) that in only one case occur with a full body (Fig. 14). The main formal difference within this group is the presence of heads either with a quadrangular framework or semicircular or elliptical elements (Figs 15 and 16).

Group 4. Motifs elaborated with parallel lines that form bands, depicting semi-naturalists figures. Most of these motifs show 'heads' explicitly represented and could be interpreted as *amarus* or snakes. The motifs are shown individually in their support including an example of overlapping and in only one case forming a complex 'scene' (Fig. 17). The area occupied by this group has wide dispersion within the site (Fig. 18) although the number of *quilcas* that this group presents, at least 11 *quilcas*, is not very large. The main formal variation of this group is the linear trend that configures the body of the figure, which varies between linear geometric, straight with angles, and winding or semi-circular (Figs 19 and 20), which is also evident



Figure 15. Semi-naturalistic quilca, group 3 of Checta.



Figure 16. Semi-naturalistic quilca, group 3 of Checta.



Figure 19. Semi-naturalistic quilca, group 4 of Checta.



Figure 17. Semi-naturalistic quilca, group 4 of Checta.

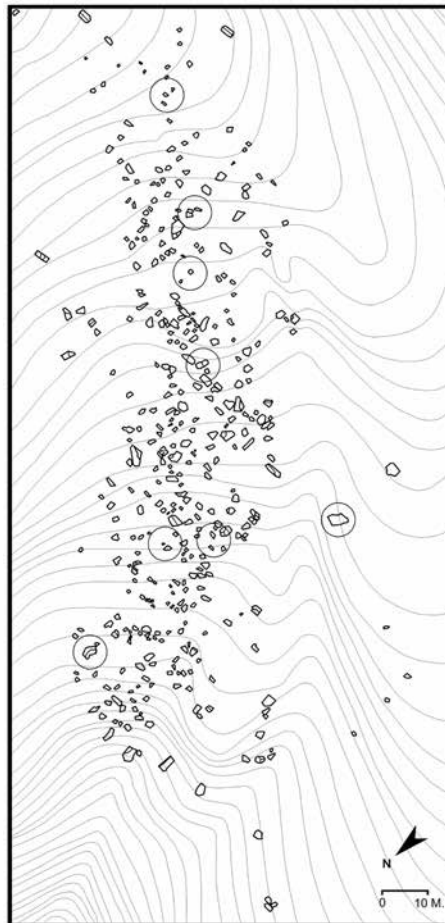


Figure 18. Map of Checta showing the approximate distribution of quilcas of group 4.

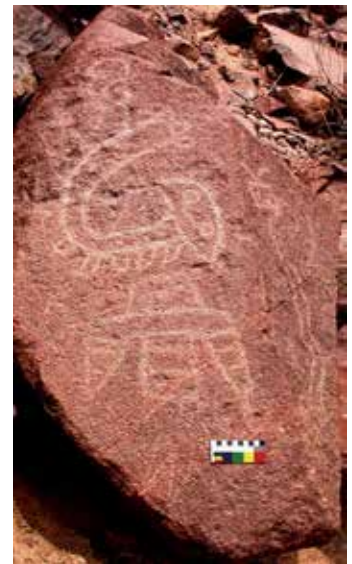


Figure 20. Semi-naturalistic quilca, group 4 of Checta.

for Group 3.

Tentative sequence

The *quilcas* groups are arranged sequentially in the order of their presentation. The principal argument is based on the figurative similarity of the groups, using criteria of archaeological seriation, supported by two instances of superposition of motifs. As a result of this approach some phases of the sequence are tentative. In the first place we have the rocks with cupules which have been superimposed by petroglyphs of Groups 2 and 4, evidence that can be examined on the rocks with cupules of the far north of the site, lower part (Fig. 21), and especially in one of the two flat rocks with cupules located at the west part of the site. This fact proves that the cupules, at least in those zones, are earlier than two of the groups

with *quilcas*.

After of Group 1 is the Group 2 that as we have seen is quite complex and extended (see Figs 6 to 10). That the Group 2 figures are associated with or overlap the cupules (Group 1, see Fig. 21) to configure their own compositions, whichever the case, may indicate that these two groups were related temporally; however, given the extent and figurative individuality of the group it seems to clearly constitute a particular well-defined phase on the site.

The Group 3 on its own is highly differentiated and is not explicitly superimposed on any group of *quilcas*, which renders its location in the sequence arbitrary. Some elements of the motifs of this group in the composition of the heads, as the circular eyes with internal single point (see Figs 15 and 16), which are very common in Group 2, and suggest some temporal relation with this early group. However, its low dispersion within the site and so far its null relationship with the *quilcas* of group 1 suggest that there was not a temporal association with this mentioned group, to strengthen a relationship with the group 2 to that would follow in the sequence.

My group 4 is characterised by semi-naturalistic zoomorphic figures (*amarus*) which show the same type of formal variations that separates into two the figurative trends of group 3, the winding and straight outline structure, which I also consider here as representative trends within the group (see Figs 19 and 20). The zoomorphic figure in this group is also a special single motif, which constitutes, in representative terms, another remarkable resemblance to the formal configuration of group 3.

Given these similarities it can be argued that this latter group is a continuation of the preceding, but with an independent figurative deployment. The image of a *quilca* showing a winding parallel lines motif topped with a square head, typical of the group 3 (see Fig. 20, right motif), can mean that this temporal proximity relationship may overlap, in the consecutive rock art tradition of the site. Besides, we know that motifs of this group are superimposed over group 1, which gives us a relative indicator of its temporality, although its specific position, as in the previous group, is still arbitrary.

Other purely geometric motifs, such as framed crosses (Fig. 22) and convex interlocking half circles (Fig. 23) perhaps can be associated with this last group, given its high recurrence and its figurative independence, although it is necessary to better define this series. Many petroglyphs should stay out of the sequence until the procedures for their recognition and association are improved. It is likely that there are figurative matches between *quilcas* from all periods of rock art production at the site, which does not necessarily imply specific cultural relations.



Figure 21. Overlapping *quilcas*, group 2 over group 1.



Figure 22. *Quilca* with geometric forms, undetermined group, *Checta*.



Figure 23. *Quilca* with geometric forms, undetermined group, *Checta*.



Figure 28. Quilca of Pucará, Yangas valley, Lima.



Figure 29. Quilca, Yanacoto, Rímac valley, Lima.



Figure 30. Quilca of Quebrada Verde, Pachacamac valley, Lima.

When considering that Checta had a figurative component of the Initial Period, the chronology of the site was explicitly revised and we assume now that the motifs related in the Chocas site correspond to the group 2 of the Checta sequence. These figurative parallels have been reinforced as comparative information of sites with *quilcas* from other areas of Lima has increased; most of these sites are located very near to buildings with monumental architecture of the Initial Period. Thus we have the *quilca* of Pucará

(Fig. 28), related to the archaeological site of Pacaray or Pucará (Bueno 1983; Silva and Jaime 2000) in the same Yangas valley; the *quilca* of Yanacoto (Fig. 29, Echevarría 2008a) related to the site of Yanacoto (Bueno 1983) located in the Rímac River basin; and the *quilcas* of Quebrada Verde (Fig. 30), related to the sites of Parka, Mina Perdida, Cardal, and Manchay Bajo (Echevarría 2008b), in the valley of Pachacamac (Lurín river basin). It should be emphasised that all these *quilcas* showed the same figurative parameters that characterise the group 2 of Checta.

An interesting aspect of this relationship is obviously the quantitative difference between the *quilcas*, being an outstanding fact that all sites near to the Initial Period buildings presented a single *quilca* while Checta well passes a hundred examples. Although



Figure 31. Quilca from the site of Caral, Supe valley, Lima. Published in Shady and Kleihege (2008).

this difference might depend on different aspects, such as the particular function of the sites and their relative taphonomic processes, the presence of individual *quilcas* in distant archaeological contexts with figurative contents explicitly linked to group 2 of Checta suggests that in Checta this group and the temporal phase that implies are independent and should be differentiated from the other isolated groups. The presence of group 2 as the only occupation related to the rock art tradition of Lima on other sites besides Checta is an important indicator that helps sustain the definition of the group in Checta as a unit with temporal value.

Lately more secure data on the Checta chronology have come from the archaeological settlement of Caral in the valley of Supe, whose general chronology has been estimated between 2627 and 2020 years BCE, using radiocarbon analysis of organic materials obtained principally from sealed architectural contexts (Shady et al. 2001). Caral is a totally a non-ceramic site and its upper time limit reaches the Initial Period. The site presents massive monumental architecture and covers an approximate area of 65 hectares, where the main buildings include at least seven formal constructions, six pyramids and two buildings incorporating large circular plazas with lower floors.

Archaeologist Marco Machacuay from the Special Caral Project (PEACS) who is investigating this evidence has been able to corroborate the presence of *quilcas* in sealed architectural contexts confirming their contemporary use to some constructive phases of the buildings. However, the main and more numerous samples come from the external parts of the buildings that were covered by aeolian sediments, sand and rubble walls produced after the abandonment of the

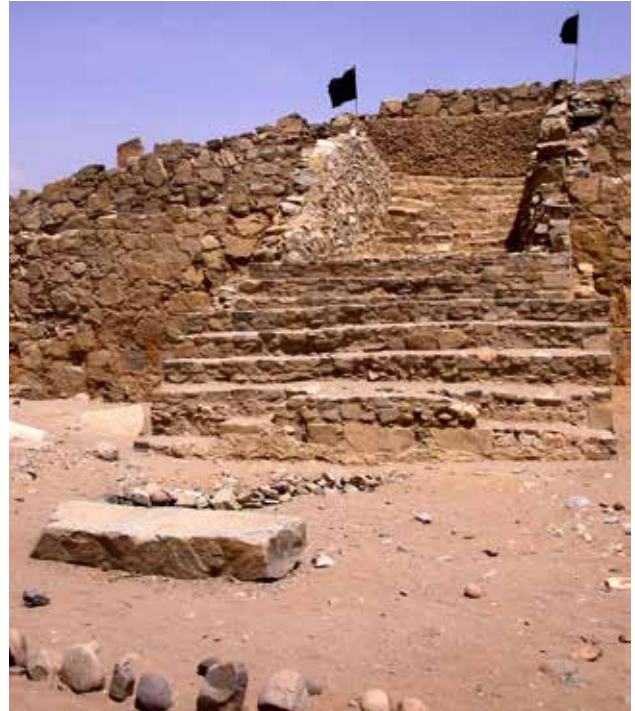


Figure 32. Quilca or petroglyph with cupules at the foot of the sector G building or 'Pyramid Minor' of Caral.

sites. According to Machacuay (pers. comm. 2009) the petroglyphs are commonly found associated with the buildings in direct relation to the front staircase of main access, and at random either around the buildings or inside the circular plazas.

An outstanding fact of the Caral petroglyphs is that they match the figurative corpus of Checta but on a smaller quantitative scale, presenting at least three of the four isolated groups. Formally the *quilcas* of Caral are characterised by stones with cupules (group 1 of Checta), stones with spirals and circles (group 2 of Checta) and stones with motifs of heads (group 3), one of them with a very similar figure to the same group in Checta (Fig. 31).

As mentioned before, it is known with confidence that there is a significant number of *quilcas* that were in use during the occupation of the buildings and the realisation of activities relating to them. The archaeological findings of Caral reinforce this approach to corroborate a *quilca* with cupules beneath the floor at the foot of the first step in the central staircase of the building of Sector G or 'Pyramid Minor' of Caral (Fig. 32) excavated by archaeologist George Chauca, that is to say prior to the construction of the floor and before the last renovation of the staircase (Machacuay 2009). Machacuay also estimated that the rest of *quilcas* were made at the abandonment of the site, at the end of the Late Archaic Period (final of the Preceramic Period), approximately 1800 BCE.

Following this evidence, it is clear that the *quilcas* with cupules (mainly) and spirals are in use in relation to buildings, at least during their last occupation, forming a significant 'group' of *quilcas*; later, upon the

decline or abandonment of the settlement, the petroglyphs depicting heads are introduced, which in Caral constitute the second group of *quilcas* (group 3 in Checta). If our estimates are correct the *quilcas* described as heads must relate to the Initial Period or no later than the beginning of the Early Horizon Period (Chavín period). If Caral continued to be used during these periods (as *Guacas* or as site for burial or rites), the relationship between *quilcas* and monumental architecture is direct and strong and the petroglyphs could not functionally be associated with the buildings after the Early Horizon Period where the settlement is completely abandoned.

The chronological estimates for Caral and the remarkable formal similarity of its rock art component with Checta's should be seriously considered from an anthropological perspective; the high level of coincidence between these groups should indicate some contemporaneity as is implied when comparing any morphological complex in ceramics or other archaeological material in the Andes. The explicit similarity between morphological complexes operationally defined by controlled comparisons 'represent or symbolise a period or an important moment in the historical development of a cultural area' (Mueller et al. 1958, my translation).

Considering Caral now, the implications for Checta are evident. In the first place, it would be confirming the proposed sequence and at least the groups 1 and 2 of this site (first group of Caral) would correspond to the lapse between the Preceramic Period and the Initial Period; leaving group 3 of Checta (second group of Caral), within the Initial Period or Early Horizon Period, which is when the urban use of the buildings of Caral had already been discontinued. The last group of Checta (group 4), which has no parallels in Caral or another site, must be regarded as a late figurative development, and given its relations with group 3 perhaps falls within the Early Horizon (Fig. 33).

In the second place, this would corroborate the chronology for the sites with *quilcas* of the valleys of Yangas, Rímac and Pachacamac that should correspond to the Initial Period, as the associated monumental architecture has suggested; they could be related in all the cases examined to the group 2 of Checta. The fact that there are no motifs that can be related to the groups 1, 3 and 4 in these sites suggests that the figurative content of these groups are exclusive, as we have deduced by implementing the hypothesis, which seems to sustain our classification and reinforces the chronology.

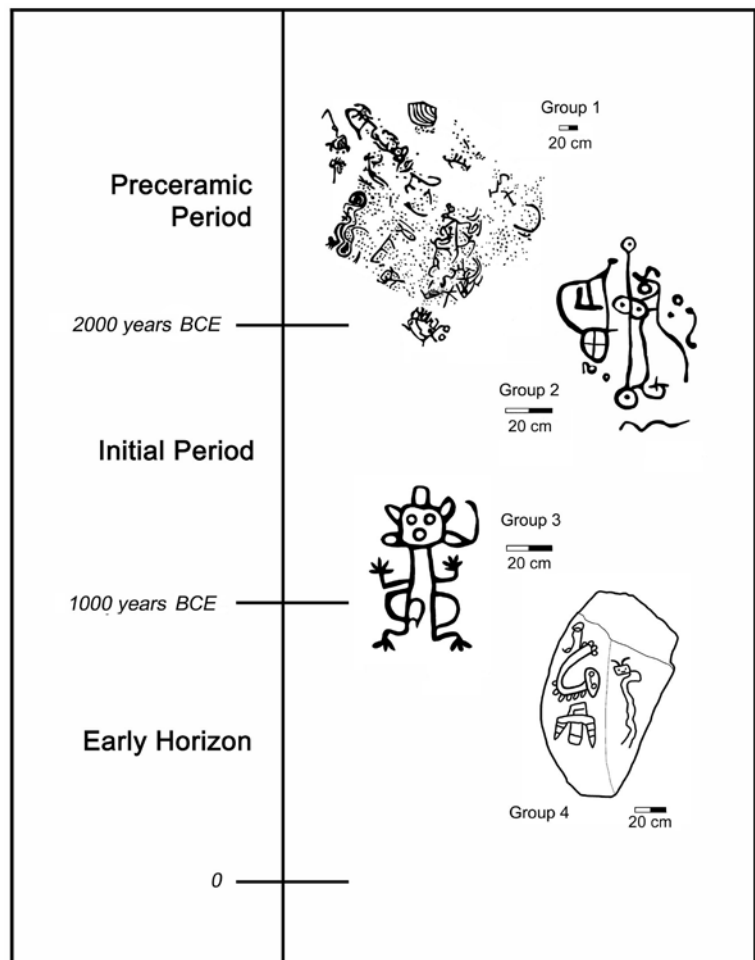


Figure 33. Relative chronologic sequence of the Checta rock art. *Quilca* drawings of group 1 and 2 by Antonio Núñez Jiménez (1986), of group 3 by Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (1962–1963), of group 4 by Gori Tumi Echevarría López.

Conclusion

The presented information drastically changes the impression of Checta, which was seen as a socially disaggregated site with an arbitrary and improbable chronology. Now Checta appears as a highly developed site with a long cultural history, a history that evidences a continuous tradition of rock art production for at least two thousand years (the longest in Lima), related to big architectural complexes. Although this aggregation is still initial, there is no doubt that Checta contains the most notable sample of the graphic expression of its time, and in some period formed part of a formalized figurative system, apparently very extensive and popular, that covered at least four river basins along much of the central coast of Peru.

But the complete Checta history is still to be written, and in this relation we should not forget the Peruvian researchers Pedro E. Villar Córdoba, Theodoro Casana and Hermilio Rosas who approximate the chronology of Checta more than any another researcher who has been interested in studying this site. As it was assumed, Checta was fully in use during the Chavín period and

probably reflected, in its own style, several of the pan-Andean figurative conventions that characterised this time, as the representations of *chinchay* (felines), *huaman* (falcons) and *amarus* (snakes), and my work vindicates this proposal.

Finally I confirm, after eighteen years, that Alberto Bueno's hypothesis on Checta, which he proposed to be a sequential development of the site following a multi-stage rock art production (developed by the observation of the figurative variations of the *quilcas*) is, from an anthropological view, still coherent and could serve as a basis for the primary consideration of archaeological sites with rock art in Lima.

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