



Nazca

The small town of Nazca is located 470 km south of Lima, Peru. The soil in that region is arid. When seen from above, an incredible panorama unfolds - the largest picture book in the world. Over an area more than 500 square kilometers in size, 60 km long and up to 15 km wide, the Nazca plain (the Nazca pampa) in southern Peru is covered with lines that have been scraped into the dry soil: No way to overlook them from the ground and even sometimes difficult to notice them.

- straight lines, several kilometers long, spanning hills and valleys
- areas resembling airstrips of up to 3.8 km in length and 70 m in width
- Giant drawings ("scrape drawings"). These may take the form of giant animals (monkeys, spiders, dolphins) 50 to 300 meters long; they are found in the ground, but also on mountain slopes
- Although they had largely been forgotten until modern times, one chronicler, Cieza de León, knew about the lines around 1550. The first photos were taken in 1939 when Paul Kosok, from the US, flew over the area - he is credited with rediscovering the drawings. A few years later (first, in 1941 and then, from 1946 on), Maria Reiche (1903-1998), who was originally from Dresden, but then relocated to Peru, began to protect and survey these structures in the ground - a project that would keep her busy for decades to come. It is thanks to her work that these monuments have not been destroyed by vandalism or ignorance



The puzzle of Nazca cannot be seen from the ground when walking or driving around - the images only become visible from an airplane. To any person on the ground, they will be nothing but rust-brown desert soil and hardened sand as well as brownish-black gravel. Since 1949, scientists, as well as amateurs, have put forth several possible explanations for the mystery of Nazca. But none of these theories succeeded; they can all be refuted. Some of them are actually quite curious - "ancient sports stadium" or "job-creation program for Indios", to name but a few.

Dr. Richard Nikolaus Wegner, back in 1939, still held that it was an irrigation system; in 1941, Paul Kosok, a historian at Long Island University, and his assistant John Harward examined it more closely.

Interpreting this phenomenon as a giant astronomical calendar poses some problems, because, according to Maria Reiche, only very few of the lines coincide with astronomical coordinates.

That an astronomical interpretation fails has been confirmed by Prof. Thomas Barthel, an Americanist at the University of Tübingen in Germany. Erich von Däniken had his own theory: Perhaps the various lines and figures scraped into the barren ground had been created by the natives later so as to invite the "Gods" to return to them. If that is true, the Nazca structures, visible only from the air, could be the traces of a type of "cargo cult" of prehistoric Indian tribes.

Nazca is surrounded by hills that bear drawings of people with rays shooting out of their heads: Is there a causal connection? The drawings of figures, abstractions of spiders, birds, snakes, flowers, etc. are probably more recent than the straight geometrical lines. Did, as originally assumed, the long lines have anything to do with weaving (for practical or ritual purposes)?

A new theory on the origins of the scraped drawings and lines was put forward by Jim Woodman, a photographer and pilot. He believes that the drawings were created and viewed using hot-air balloons. Using what he perceived to be prehistoric examples, the engineer Ken TeKrony constructed an angular shell and a gondola using materials that were also available to the South American tribes. In 1976, the balloon "Condor I" with Woodman and the pilot Julian Nott aboard took to the skies over Nazca. A little-known fact: Shortly after its take-off, the balloon failed: and it was not a soft landing. The same seems to be true of his theory.

But there is even more: At the end of these "airstrips", as even tour guides call them now, holes were discovered; the bottoms of these pits had clearly been exposed to extreme heat. Scientist Michael DeBakey, however, found no traces of "any radiation", according to Jim Woodman, who, of course, was looking to confirm his theory of natural prehistoric firing sites and his balloon theory. But what led the scientist to look for radiation in the first place?



Nazca, meanwhile, has become the leading example of the "scraped drawings" phenomenon. Since 1997, scientists of the University of Applied Sciences in Dresden (HTW Dresden) have been in charge of surveying the drawings of Nazca as part of a research program (Unesco, World Heritage) (based on the photogrammetric evaluation of aerial photos especially taken for this purpose).

The purpose is to create a digital terrain model as well as a basic set of data to be used in computer simulations; these simulations will serve to prove, or disprove, any astronomical links contained in these drawings.

About 400 km to the south of Nazca, near Mollendo, Peru, and in the province of Antofagasta, Chile, additional scraped drawings were found: they show arrows and squares. From Antofagasta to Valparaíso, mountain slopes are marked with numerous geometric shapes. This hilly region is called Pintados, named after the drawings. This phenomenon, which in terms of its dimensions is comparable to the lines and drawings of the Nazca plain, only comes into full view in aerial photographs. The director of the Museum of Archeology of Antofagasta, Guacolda Boisset, discovered figures and symbols over a stretch of land of several kilometers: the Pintados. The squares, arrows, ladders with curved rungs and rays resemble pictograms. Are the symbols a type of script? Signs from the Gods - or for the Gods?

In the Bay of Pisco, Peru, a slope is adorned with an ancient drawing of a kind of candelabra. This drawings, too, could have a geographic connection to Nazca.

Relationship to Nazca? This hypothesis might be confirmed by the discovery of additional scraped drawings found in the desert of Tarapacá in Chile. The Chilean newspaper "El Mercurio" published an article on August 26, 1968, entitled, "New archeological find through aerial pictures taken from a plane" - about giant images in the desert of Tarapacá – which gave rise to further expeditions.

And not too far from there: 1968 saw an archeological sensation when details were released about a Chilean plain called El Enladrillado (i.e., "square paved with bricks"). An entire mountain seems to have been hollowed out in the shape of an amphitheater. Hewn blocks of stone measuring 8 meters in length and with a weight of 10,000 kg lie there scattered helter-skelter. The monoliths were stuck deep in the ground - faces had been cut into the bottom. Some formations give rise to astronomical theories, but the overall concept remains a mystery.

Strange finds similar to the Nazca lines are not limited on South America. Worldwide we find such "pictures for the gods". Even in Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, etc., there are similar scraped drawings that can only be viewed from the sky.

How much is there yet to be discovered? A challenge for any true scientist.

One example of the controversy revolving around the age of the markings in the ground are the pictures of Blythe, California. Next to giant figures (28 to 51 meters), there are depictions of four-legged animals (13 to 16 meters long), which have been interpreted as horses. The North American horse became extinct 10,000 years ago - and the European species was not introduced until 1540. Proof of the incredible age of these drawings?

There is evidence that they were created at different times - spanning hundreds of years. What was the "common denominator" or motivation behind these drawings? Mountains and valleys across Peru are covered by "bands" of holes in the ground.

Archeology is often limited to just documenting finds. One theory is pitted against another - which one is the most likely? Messages left behind for the Gods. What Gods?

