

The Early Horizon-Early Intermediate Period Transition:  
A View from the Nepeña and Viru Valleys

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On the basis of research conducted recently in Nepeña (Daggett 1984), a new perspective regarding the nature of the settlement of the Viru Valley at the end of the Early Horizon and the nature of the settlement of the Nepeña Valley at the start of the Early Intermediate Period will be offered. It will be noted that the occupations of these valleys during these distinct periods of time were at first markedly similar and then strikingly dissimilar. For each period conclusions will be supported by information drawn from published sources concerning work done elsewhere. In part, then, new information relevant to the settlement of the Nepeña Valley will be provided. More importantly, however, for this time frame a new perception of the settlement of the north to north central coast and highlands will be offered; one which more clearly defines the temporal and spatial parameters of distinct cultural phenomena.

The End of the Early Horizon

The nature and extent of the occupation of the Nepeña Valley at the close of the Early Horizon has been discussed (Daggett 1982, 1983, 1984). The settlement at that time was heaviest in the upper valley (400-1500 m.) and particularly in what may be designated the Moro Pocket (Figure 1). In this pocket of prime agricultural land the remains of a number of centers characterized by spatially distinct megalithic compounds and aligned stone-faced platforms or platform mounds have been identified (Figure 2). In part, because of their relatively

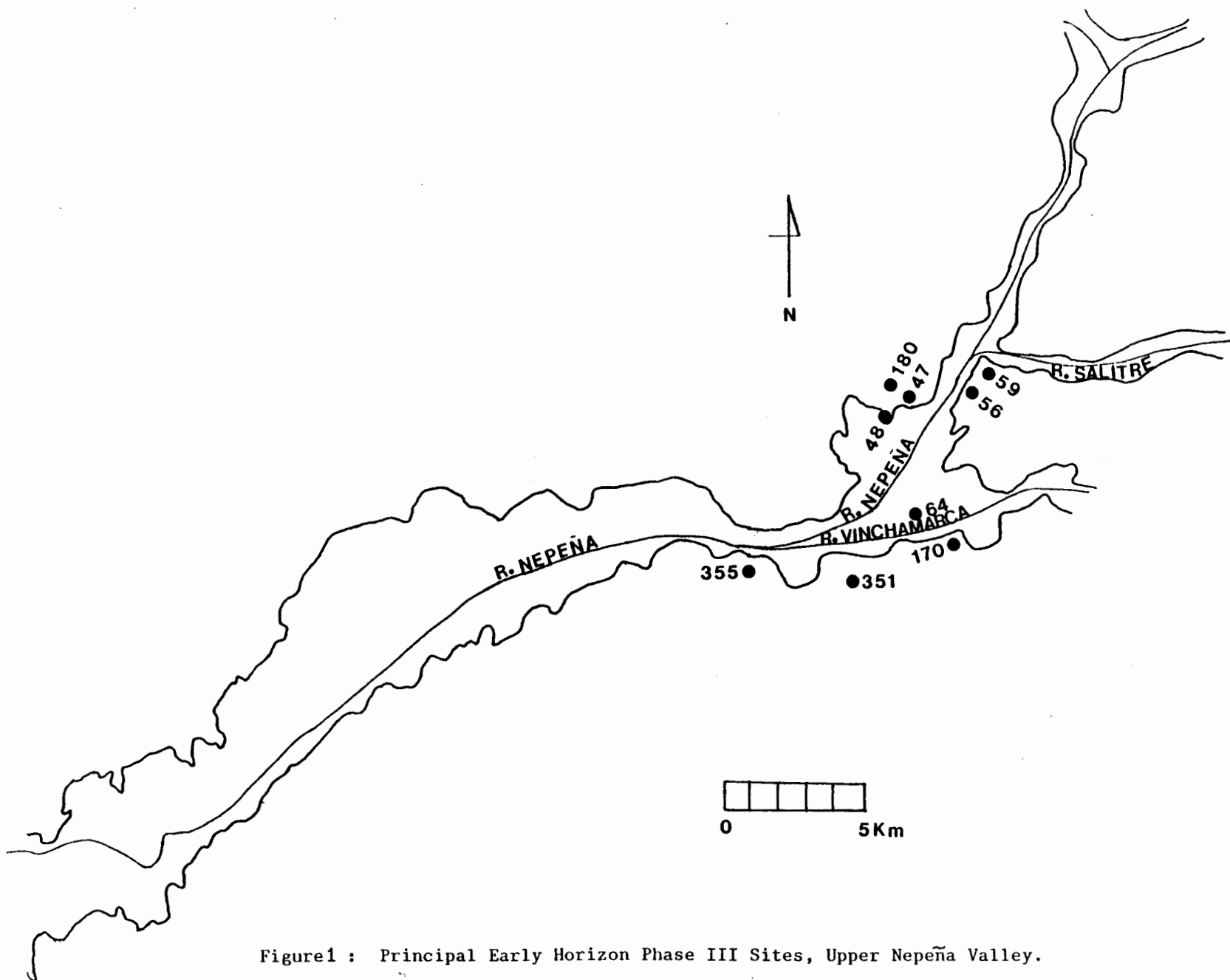


Figure1 : Principal Early Horizon Phase III Sites, Upper Nepeña Valley.

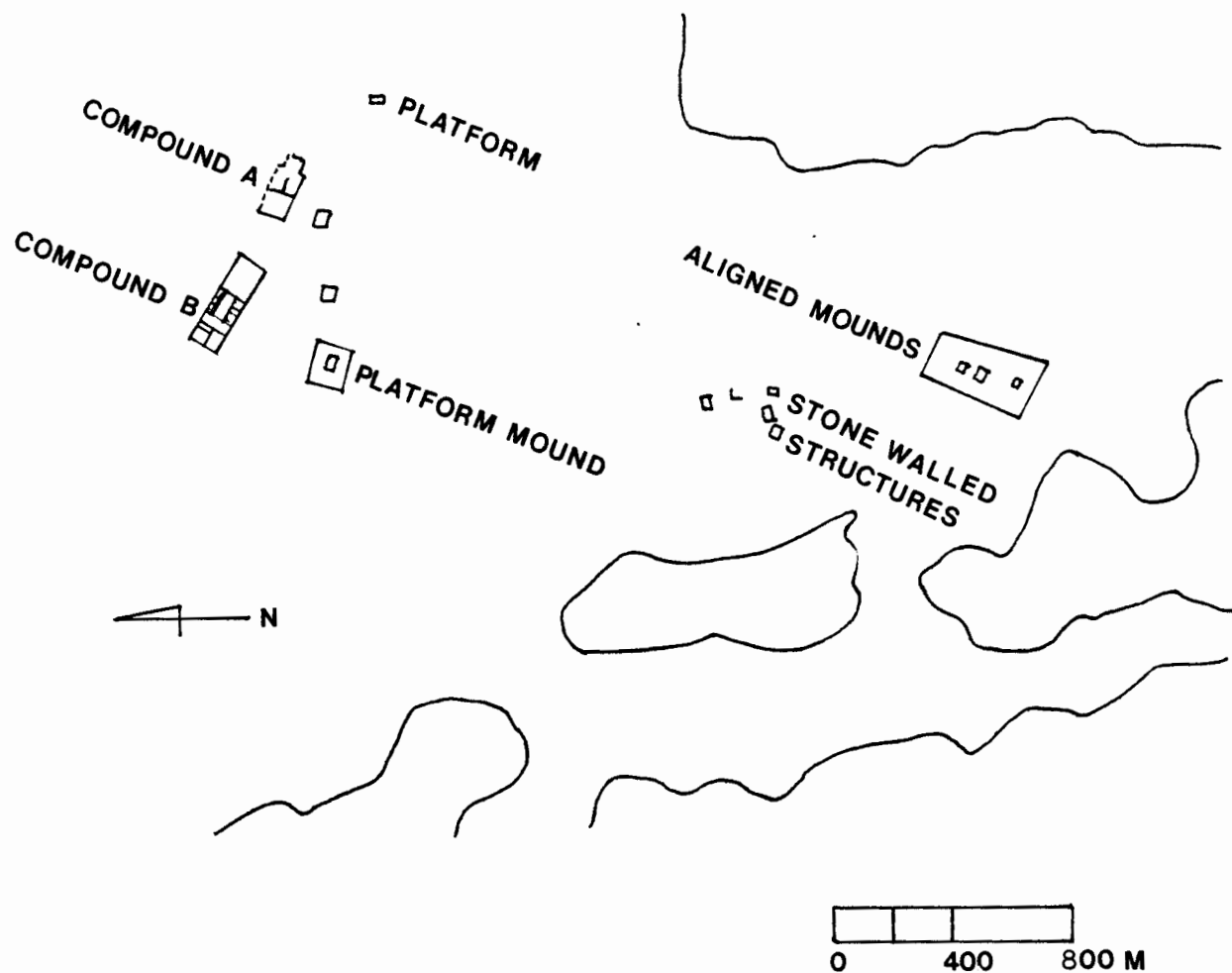


Figure 2: Virahuanca Bajo (PV31-351), Upper Nepeña Valley.

isolated setting and, in part, because of the presence of stone-lined cists atop them, it has been argued that the aligned mounds or platforms had a ritual function. Finally, the settlement of the valley at this time was marked by the use of such things as pattern burnished bowls, ground stone blades, neckless jars, large underground storage jars, and polished stone, donut-shaped club heads.

A comparative analysis of information recovered from the Viru Valley (Collier 1955; Ford 1949; Strong and Evans 1952; Willey 1953) with that which has been briefly summarized above for the Nepeña Valley leads to the conclusion that the period comparable to the end of the Early Horizon in Nepeña is Early Puerto Moorin in Viru (Table 1). Huacapongo Polished Plain is the dominant type for this phase in Viru and it is characterized by marked pebble striations or polishing which may be related in general technology to pattern burnishing (Gordon Willey, personal communication). In addition, there are reports of the discovery in Early Puerto Moorin context of neckless jars, large underground storage jars, ground stone blades, and polished stone, donut-shaped club heads. Of greater significance, however, is the heavy emphasis on upper valley settlement at this time, a settlement characterized by cyclopean compounds or enclosures and stone-faced platform mounds with stone-lined "cist tombs" atop. That these cists were indeed used for the interment of the dead was made obvious by the presence in and around them of human remains and grave goods.

The patterning of platform mounds and compounds in the upper Viru Valley is highly suggestive of the patterning of centers reported for the Moro Pocket of the Nepeña Valley (Figure 3). There appear to have been at least four centers in Viru, each of which may be identified by

		NORTH COAST		NORTH CENTRAL COAST	SOUTH COAST	NORTH CENTRAL HIGHLANDS		NORTH HIGHLANDS
		MOCHE VALLEY	VIRU VALLEY	NEPEÑA VALLEY	ICA VALLEY	KOTOSH and SHILLACOTO	CALLEJON DE HUAYLAS	HUACALOMA
EARLY INTERMEDIATE PERIOD	GALLINAZO	LATE GALLINAZO	PHASE III	N A Z C A	H  I  G  U  E  R  A  S	MIDDLE HUARAS	L  A  Y  Z  O  N	
		EARLY GALLINAZO	PHASE II					
	SALINAR	LATE PUERTO MOORIN	PHASE I					
EARLY HORIZON		EARLY PUERTO MOORIN	PHASE III	OCUCAJE 9-10	EARLY HUARAS			

Table 1: Correlation of Transitional Early Horizon - Early Intermediate Period Sequences.

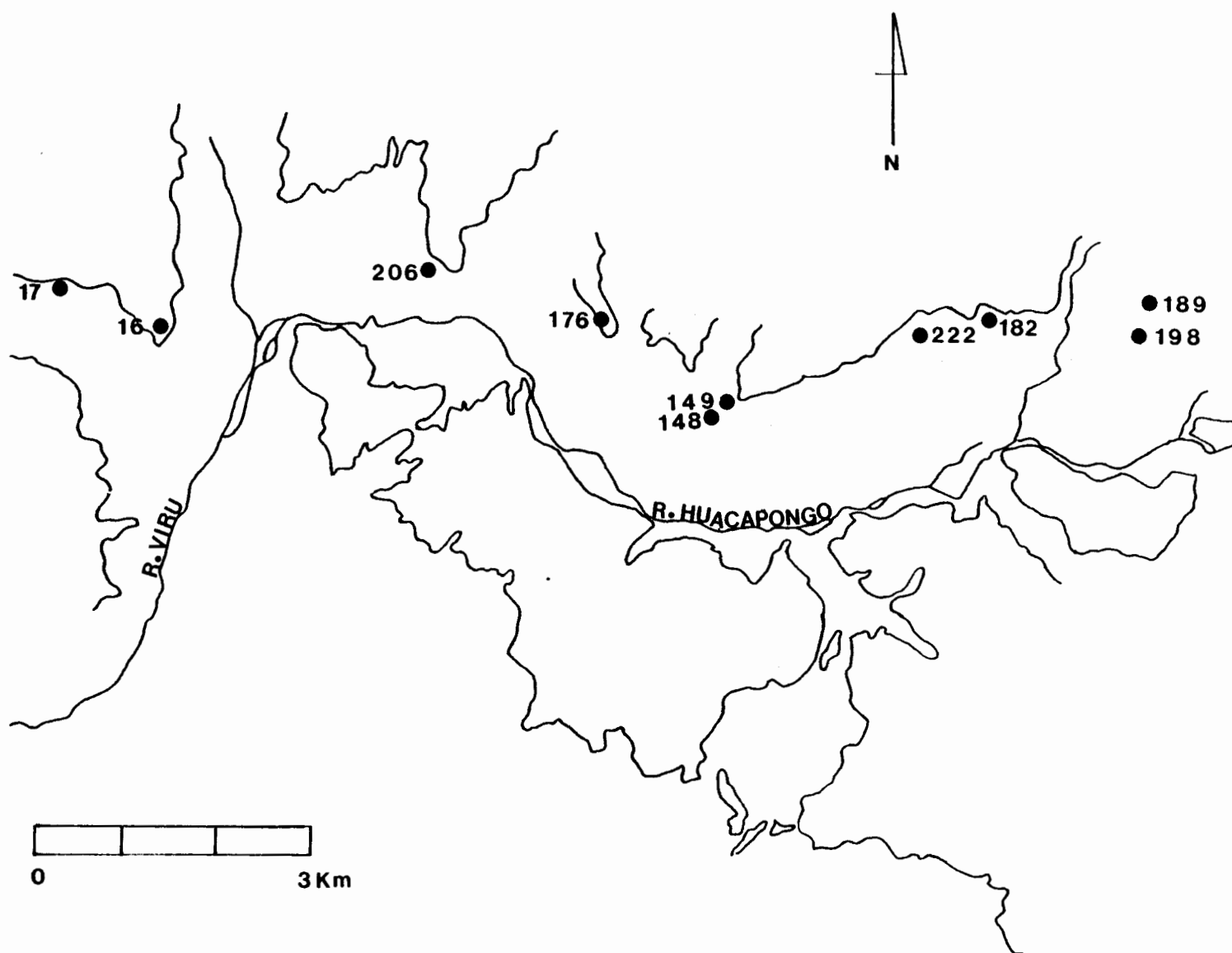


Figure 3: Principal Early Puerto Moorin Sites, Upper Viru Valley.

a name reflective of its valley location. Accordingly, the Queneto center consists principally of the so-called Queneto Temple (V-17) and a nearby cyclopean enclosure (V-16) while the Tomaval center may be perceived as being comprised of a small platform mound with "cist tombs" atop (V-206) and a small cyclopean enclosure (V-176).

Between these first two centers and the remaining two, another small platform mound with "cist tombs" atop (V-148) and a larger platform mound (V-149) may be seen. The major features of the third center, Huacapongo North 1, may be viewed as consisting of a rock-covered mound set within a rock-walled compound (V-182) and a rectangular enclosure compound (V-222). Finally, the center of Huacapongo North 2 may be conceived of as having included, first, two platform mounds fifteen meters apart and connected by a massive rock wall (V-198) and, second, a rectangular enclosure with four principal and four "bin-like" rooms (V-189).

On the basis of research conducted in Nepeña, then, it may be argued that the Early Puerto Moorin settlement of Viru was characterized by a number of upper valley centers similar to those identified as dating to the close of the Early Horizon in Nepeña. However, because Early Puerto Moorin is usually equated with the beginning of the Early Intermediate Period (e.g. Willey 1971:132), it becomes necessary to demonstrate how it more appropriately equates with the end of the Early Horizon.

The Early Horizon starts with the introduction of the Chavin style; its end, in the south coast Ica Valley, has been arbitrarily linked with the switch from resin painting to polychrome slip painting (Menzel et al. 1964:4; Rowe 1962:49). By the Chavin style is meant the style

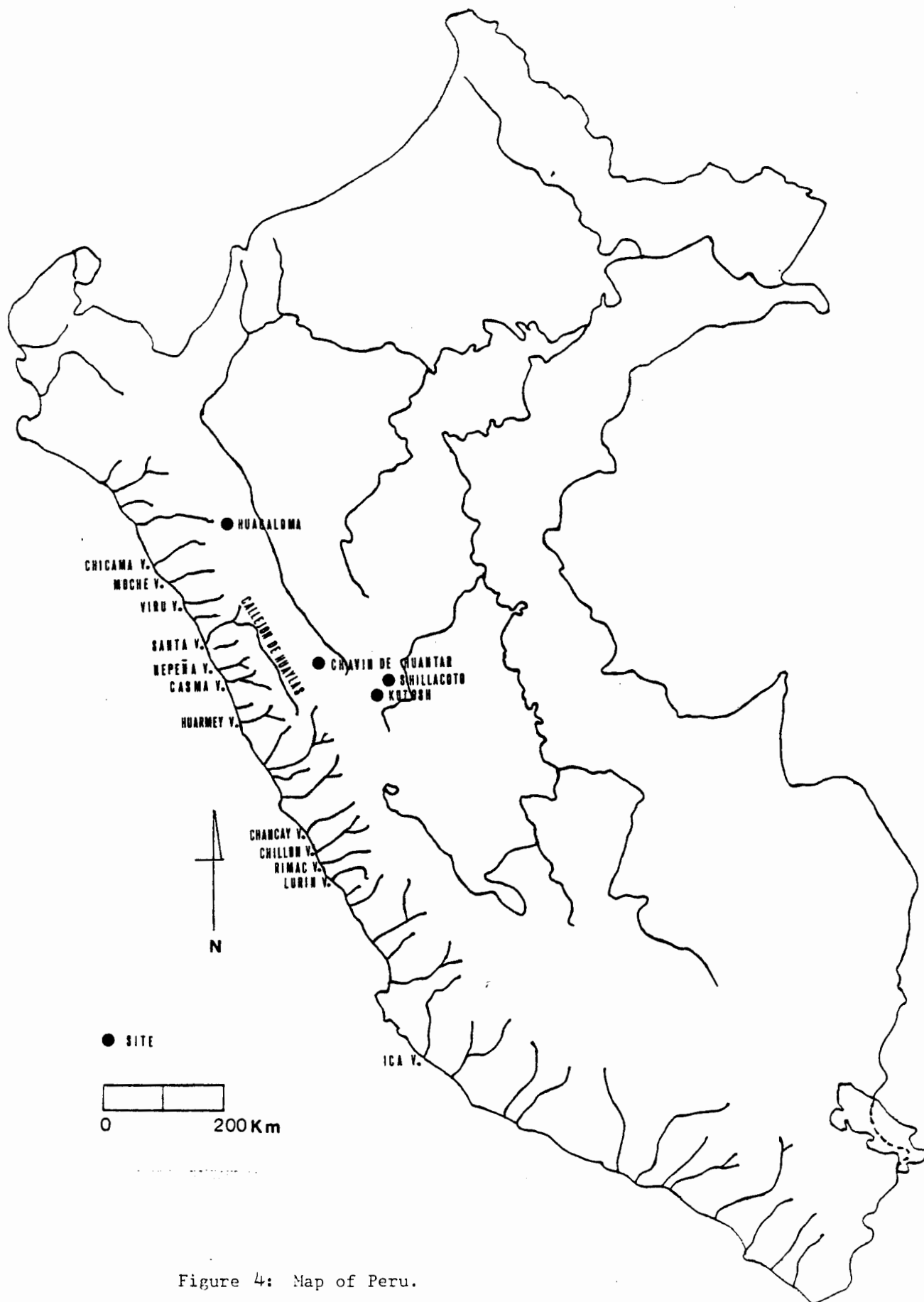


Figure 4: Map of Peru.



carved in stone at Chavin de Huantar in the North Central Highlands (Rowe 1950:171; Willey 1951:109) and, it should be noted, the end of the Early Horizon sequence in Ica (Ocucaje 9-10) is characterized by the presence of pattern burnished ware (Menzel et al. 1964:192, 230).

Recently a sequence of three phases of Early Horizon occupation has been stratigraphically derived for Chavin de Huantar (Burger 1978). The last of these three phases, the Huaras, has been linked with the last four phases of the Ica Ocucaje sequence (Burger 1979:138). The Huaras Phase at Chavin derives from the Huaras (Lumbreras 1974b:39) or Huaylas Period (Lanning 1965:140), which was originally defined for the Callejon de Huaylas, an intermontane valley in north central Peru. This period has been divided into early, middle, and late phases, the first of which dates to the end of the Early Horizon and the latter two of which date to the Early Intermediate Period. The early phase is marked in the Callejon by "simple stone cyst graves" (ibid.), pattern burnished pottery (Lynch 1980:230), ground stone blades (Lumbreras 1947b:39, 50), and white-on-red pottery (Lanning 1965:140). Actually, this latter decorated ware is more diagnostic of the middle phase during which time it enjoyed great popularity (Lumbreras 1974b:51).

In order to complete the connection between late Early Horizon and Early Puerto Moorin it is necessary to consider information about the Salinar Period occupation of the Moche Valley situated just north of Viru. Salinar and Puerto Moorin are periods commonly equated in the literature (e.g. Lumbreras 1974a:81; Willey 1971:190, Note 187) and as such it is interesting to note that the major Salinar site of Cerro Arena in Moche is distinguished by megalithic architecture, pattern burnished pottery (Brennan 1978), and ground stone blades (Curtiss

Brennan, personal communication). In fact, pattern burnishing has also been reported to date to late pre-Salinar times in the Chicama Valley (Lanning 1960:306), while the equivalent of the Salinar and Puerto Moorin periods in the Santa Valley, the Cayhuamarca Period, is said to be marked by pattern burnished pottery and megalithic architecture (Wilson 1981:41-45).

In addition, it should also be pointed out that megalithic architecture, and particularly the construction of compounds, characterizes the late Early Horizon occupation of the Casma Valley (Pozorski and Pozorski 1981:84). Not surprisingly, given its proximity to Nepeña, pattern burnished pottery like that found in Nepeña has been found in Casma at the upper valley site of Rumipallana (Fung P. y Williams L. 1977, Lámina 1n, o). Further south, in the Huarmey Valley, pattern burnished pottery has been found at the late Early Horizon stone fortress of Aiguay (Tabio E. 1977:110-111) while, in the Chillón, Rimac and Lurin valleys of the Central Coast, the initial phase of the Miramar style (Base Aérea) is characterized by neckless jars and the decorative technique of pattern burnishing (Patterson 1966:5, 14-15). Given evidence now available for the coast and highlands farther north, this initial phase is now thought to date to the end of the Early Horizon (Thomas Patterson, personal communication). This phase of the Miramar style has been compared favorably with the Baños de Boza style of the Chancay Valley (Patterson 1966:98-99) and, as such, a link between the megalithic architecture already discussed and that of Cerro de Trinidad in Chancay (Willey 1943) may be suggested.

Finally, the coastal distribution of this distinctive late Early Horizon cultural manifestation appears to be equalled by its sierran

distribution. Megalithic architecture and pattern burnishing characterize the Layzon Period or late Early Horizon occupation of Huacaloma in the North Highlands (Terada and Onuki 1982:122, 262; Plate 26) while, at Shillacoto in the North Central Highlands, rock-lined cyst tombs are reported to date to the Higuera or "post-Chavin" Period (Izumi et al. 1972:49-50, 80; Kano 1971:34). Not only is it possible, then, to link Early Puerto Moorin with the end of the Early Horizon by way of the Salinar, Huaylas, and Ocucaje periods, but it is also possible to begin to identify the spatial parameters of what seems to have been a highland oriented/derived megalithic culture.

#### The Beginning of the Early Intermediate Period

The clear bias toward upper valley settlement in the Viru and Nepeña valleys at the end of the Early Horizon and the stark difference in the settlement of the Viru Valley and its north coast neighbors before and after this period combine to suggest a strong highland influence on the north to north central coast in late Early Horizon times. The Guañape Period precedes the Puerto Moorin Period in Viru and the settlement at this earlier time was heaviest in the lower valley (Willey 1953:44). During the Gallinazo Period, which follows that of Puerto Moorin, there was a return to a lower valley emphasis in settlement (ibid:102). Artifacts diagnostic of this later period are easy to distinguish from those of Puerto Moorin and they include face-necked jars, pedestal-based bowls, corn poppers, stirrup-spouted and stirrup-bridge-and-spout bottles, as well as such decorative techniques as incision, triangular punctation or stamping, and both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic modeling (Ford 1949). In addition, white-on-red pottery

continued in use during Gallinazo times (ibid.).

At the same time, adobe became a principal building material while pyramids and platforms became primary architectural forms. A total of fourteen "pyramid-dwelling-construction complexes" were built in Viru at this time, most in the lower valley (Willey 1953:109). These complexes have been assigned to two categories: "One is a Pyramid or Pyramids built as part of, or upon, platforms which were composed of abandoned houses and served as bases for occupied houses ... The other variety is the Pyramid around which have been clustered a group of attached dwellings" (ibid:111). The best known of these complexes is that of the Gallinazo Group for which the period was named (Bennett 1950).

Furthermore "... there are no Early Gallinazo sites in the Huacapongo or the upper portions of the Middle Valley ... We can fairly conclude that the Huacapongo, Upper Viru, Queneto, and immediately surrounding areas were deserted throughout the Late Puerto Moorin and Early Gallinazo sub-periods. Late Puerto Moorin sites were found mostly in the Lower Valley and, as Early Gallinazo sites are mainly confined to the Lower Valley, there is a continuity of distribution here between Late Puerto Moorin and Early Gallinazo" (Willey 1953:105).

Given that Early Puerto Moorin marks the end of the Early Horizon in Viru, then Late Puerto Moorin marks the beginning of the Early Intermediate Period there. It follows that Gallinazo falls within the latter period and, in addition to Viru, a Gallinazo "culture" may be identified for a number of North Coast valleys. In the Chicama Valley the Salinar Period was followed by one comparable to that of Gallinazo in Viru (Ford 1949:66). The same is true for the Moche Valley where

plastic decoration and thicker-walled vessels become popular and where settlement at that later time was essentially confined to the middle valley (200-1200 m) (Topic and Topic 1982:4-5). In the Moche Valley, naturalistic modeling was practiced more commonly during Gallinazo times than during Salinar, while stirrup-spouted, figure-spout-and-bridge, and spout-and-handle bottles come into fashion at this later time (Donnan and Mackey 1978:53). Finally, the large Moche Valley site of Cerro Orejas, with its agglutinated masonry rooms and two large mud brick corporate labor platforms (ibid.) compares favorably with sites like the Gallinazo Group in Viru.

In Santa, to the south of Viru, the Suchimancillo Period corresponds to the Gallinazo Period (Wilson 1981:47-52), and at this time a reduction in the use of pattern burnished ware was offset by the use of Gallinazo-related wares such as Castillo White-Red-Orange and neckless jars decorated with triangular punctation. Among the sites dated to the Suchimancillo Period are a number of adobe mounds. That the Santa Valley came under the influence of what may be loosely referred to as a Gallinazo culture may be demonstrated, then; but what about the Nepeña Valley?

Although a few Gallinazo pieces have been reported to be included in pottery collections held by residents of the Nepeña Valley (Proulx 1973:31-32), the fact that extensive survey has failed in the discovery of comparable surface sherds leads to the strong suspicion that the pieces in question were found outside Nepeña. In addition, though rare triangular-punctated body sherds have been surface-collected in Nepeña, all were discovered in Moche period contexts. The fact of the matter is, no Gallinazo artifact assemblage can be identified for Nepeña and there are simply no Gallinazo architectural complexes to

be found there. This being the case, is anything known about the settlement of this valley at this time?

The answer lies in the recent documentation of two sites located on Cerro Chacuascucho near where the Rio Vinchamarca empties into the Moro Pocket. The first of these sites, Cerro Chacuascucho West (PV31-184) is complex and is best perceived as having four parts, A-D (Figure 5). Part A consists of what appears to have been an eastern habitation sector arranged in step-like fashion on a ridge leading up to Part B. There are at least five levels to Part A, only the central one of which lacks evidence of fieldstone architecture. Part B may be seen on the summit of the ridge. Seemingly ceremonial in function, it includes three earthen mounds separated by plazas and it is aligned approximately north-south. The southern-most mound is quite narrow with short projecting arms while the northern-most plaza is sunken. A fieldstone wall extends from an open space at the rear of the northern mound.

As for parts C and D of Cerro Chacuascucho West, they are situated on a lower approach ridge to the south of Part B. Part C may be described as a large stone-walled enclosure with a stepped entryway while Part D is a stone-faced platform mound lacking evidence of summit architecture. Surface collections suggest that this mound dates to the Early Horizon while the remaining parts of the site date to the beginning of the Early Intermediate Period. Pottery decorated with stamped circle and dot, a diagnostic of Early Horizon Phases I and II in Nepeña (Daggett 1984:134, 258), was found only on and in the vicinity of the platform mound while elsewhere the site was littered with fragments of pattern burnished bowls and necked jars occasionally evidencing strap handles. The absence of neckless jars in the collections from

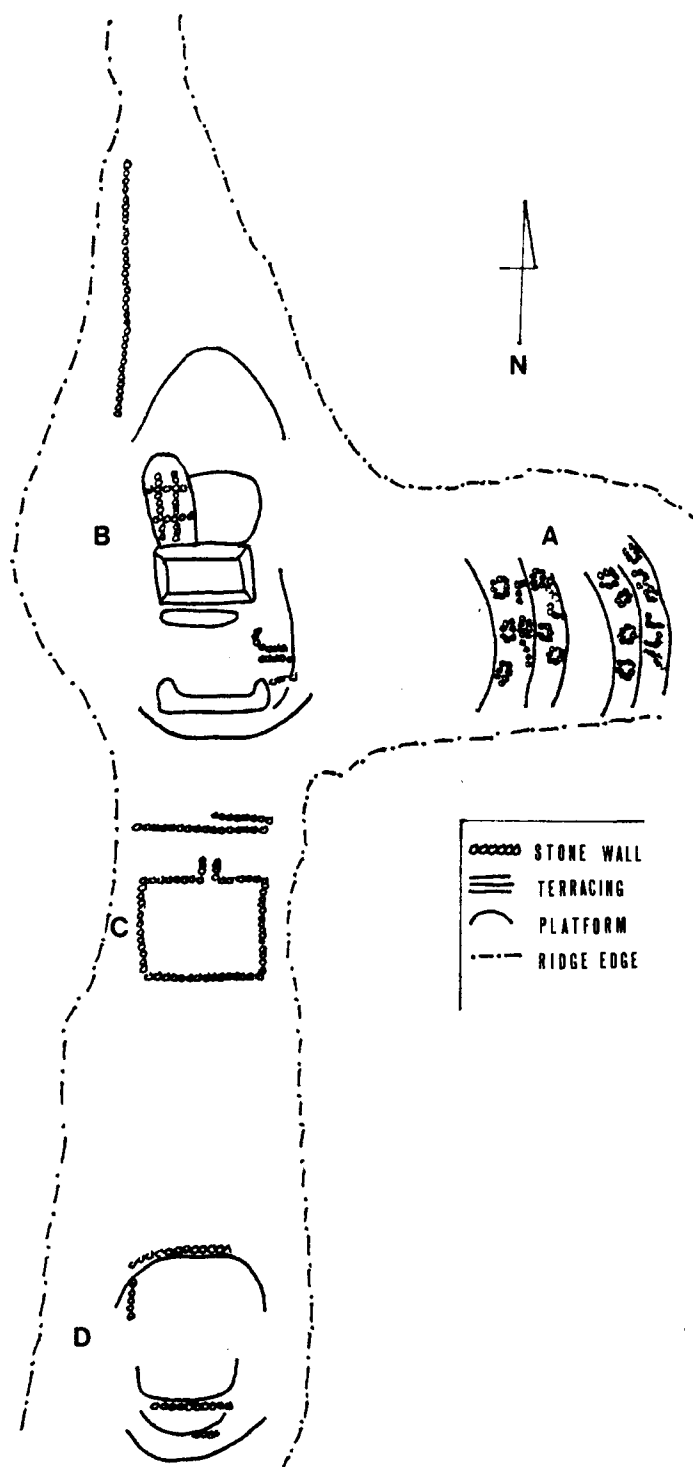


Figure 5: Cerro Chacuascucho West (PV31-184), Upper Nepeña Valley.  
Not drawn to scale.

Parts A-C is significant because such jars enjoy markedly reduced popularity at the start of the Early Intermediate Period (e.g. Patterson 1966:31).

Separated from its neighbor by a few hundred meters and a deep saddle in the ridge, Cerro Chacuascucho East (PV31-185) is also best discussed in terms of four principal parts (Figure 6). Part D is a stone-faced platform mound with surface remains of fieldstone architecture. The ridge that continues to the east forks and Part C is to be found on the southern arm overlooking the Rio Vinchamarca. This part of the site consists of a number of flattened areas of ridge arranged in step-like fashion. It is on the highest such step closest to the platform mound that a complex of stone-walled structures and boulders worn smooth on their tops are situated. A number of large stone pestles are to be seen on the ground near these boulders and they evidence the fact that the boulders had provided surfaces for grinding activities.

The remaining two parts of Cerro Chacuascucho East are to be found on the northern arm of the forked ridge. Part B is situated closest to the platform mound and appears to have been a terraced slope which functioned, in part, as a cemetery. A line of natural boulders faces a wall of well-cut blocks of stone there and the opening between these natural and worked stones suggests an entryway or corridor. The end of this area of ridge is marked by retaining walls and terracing below a stepped entry. These features plus the remains of fieldstone structures even further below make up Part A.

Surface collections at Cerro Chacuascucho East indicate that there had been an Early Horizon occupation there. There is no doubt, however,



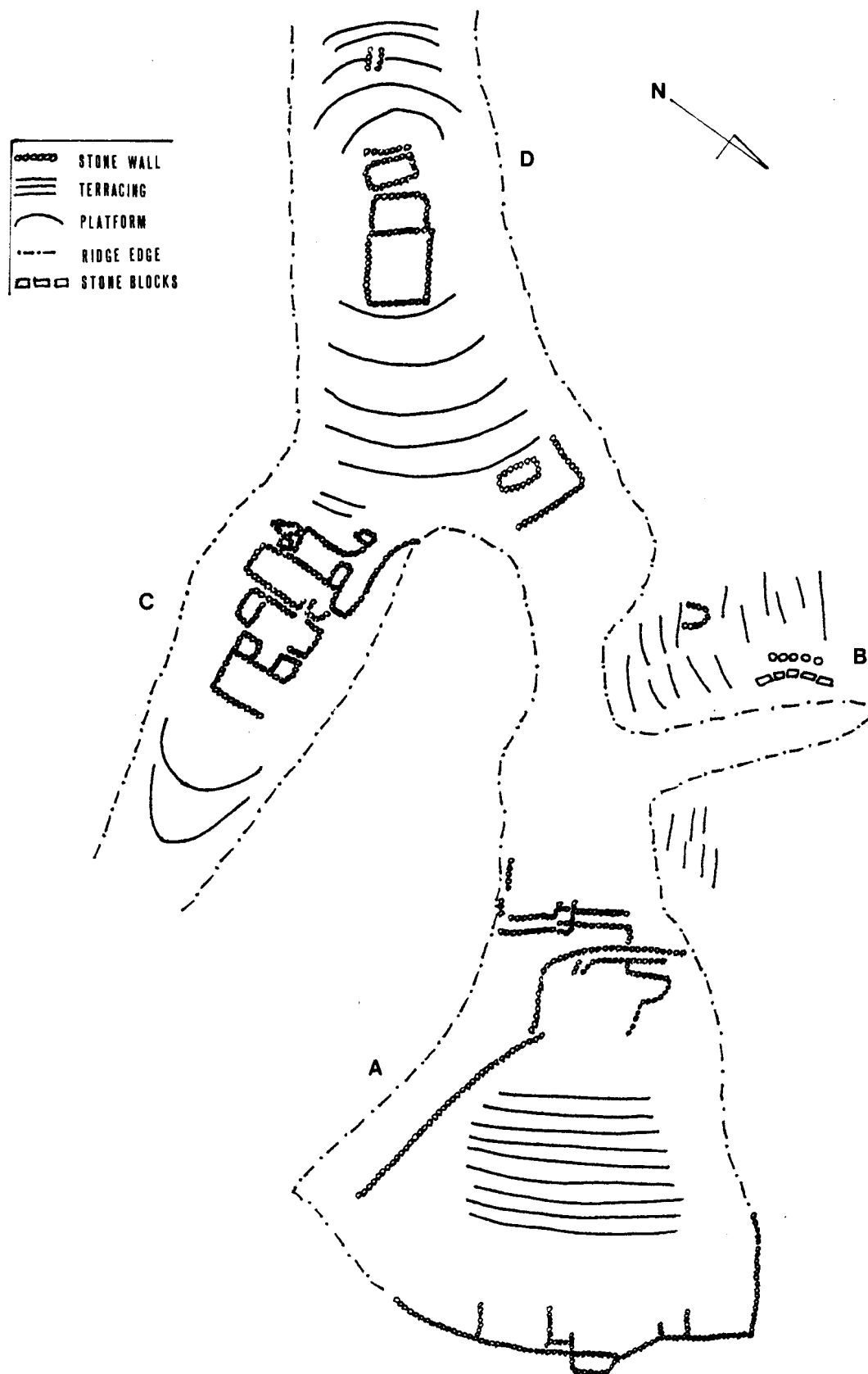


Figure 6: Cerro Chacuascucho East (PV31-185), Upper Nepeña Valley.  
Not drawn to scale.

that the most intensive occupation of the site took place at the start of the Early Intermediate Period. In addition to the grinding implements mentioned above, artifacts distinctive of this later time period include shallow bowls decorated with white-on-red, red-on-white or white-on-orange geometric designs; squared-off ceramic vessels; and ceramic spoons and dippers. In addition, at this time it was very common to append strap handles to necked jars, kaolin pottery was probably in use, and neckless jars had fallen into complete disuse.

Preliminary analysis suggests at least two and, perhaps, three phases of Early Intermediate Period occupation of Cerro Chacuascucho. By virtue of its configuration, Cerro Chacuascucho West seems best interpreted as having been constructed at the very beginning of this time period. In terms of architectural tenets and ceramic practices, this site logically follows the centers described as dating to the end of the Early Horizon in Nepeña. The degree of overlap in the occupation of this site and its neighbor, Cerro Chacuascucho East, is unknown but it does seem clear that this latter site assumed greater importance with the passage of time. One question that remains is whether there was a distinct Recuay-related phase distinguished by the use of kaolin pottery.

Be this as it may, it is known that the Early Intermediate Period occupation described for Cerro Chacuascucho East was mirrored in its essentials at two other upper valley locations. Such an occupation has been documented on Cerro Siete Huacas (PV31-59 and PV31-159) and on Cerro Ichihuanca (PV31-267 and PV31-297) (Figure 7). Strikingly, all three of these ridgetop settlements were so situated as to have been able to monitor natural highways to the highlands. This leads

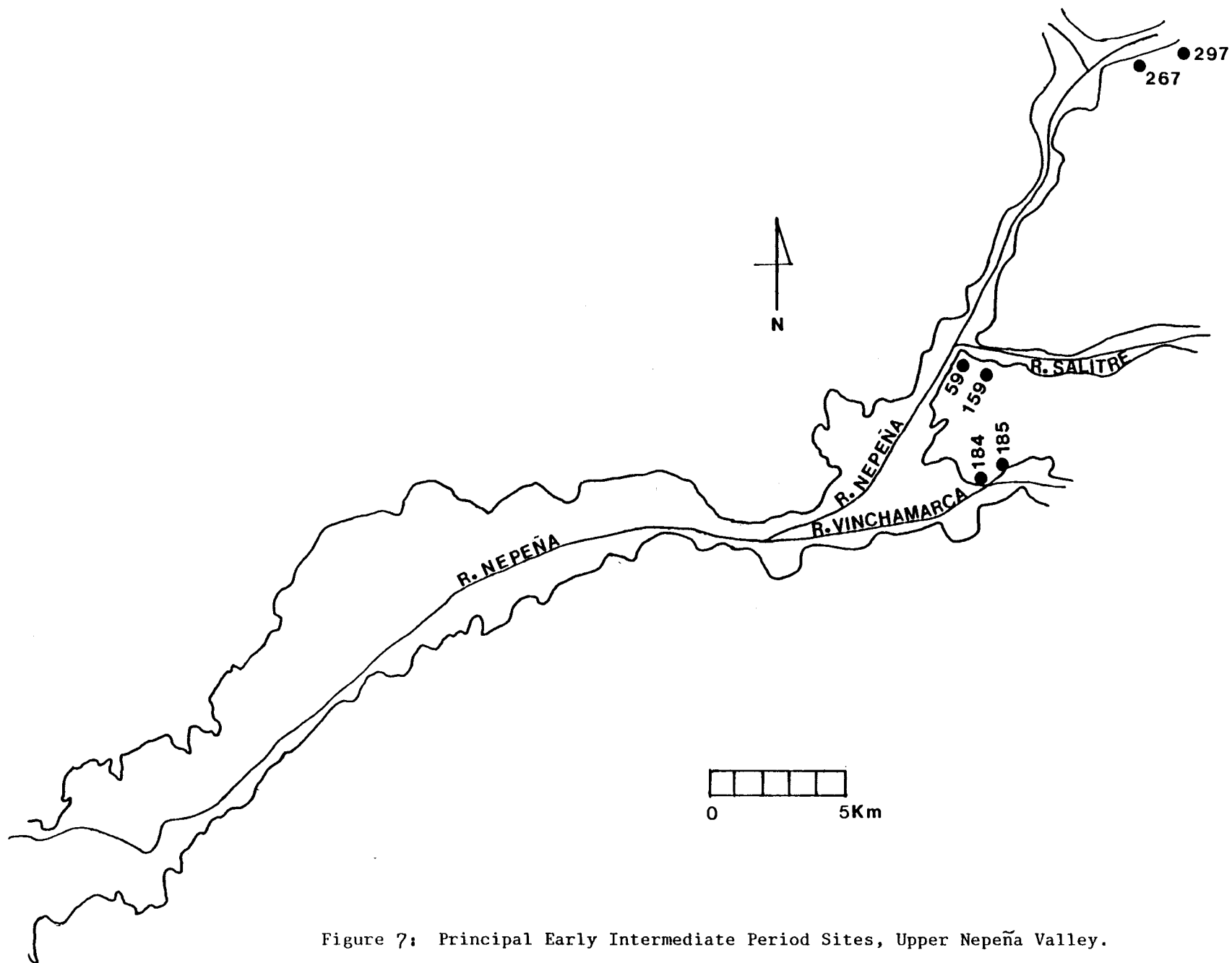


Figure 7: Principal Early Intermediate Period Sites, Upper Nepeña Valley.

to the question of whether or not artifacts similar to those found in Nepeña have been found in the Callejon de Huaylas or elsewhere in the North Central Highlands.

The Higuera Period occupation of Kotosh is reported to have been characterized by very large mortars, ceramic spoons, and necked jars with strap handles (Izumi and Sono 1963:106; Izumi and Terada 1972:67; Plates 98, 126-13). In fact, some of the necked jars with strap handles found on Cerro Chacuascucho compare very favorably with those found at Kotosh. As for the Callejon de Huaylas, the Middle Huaylas phase was characterized by white-on-red pottery as well as pottery decorated in other two-color combinations (Lanning 1965:140), while undecorated handled jars discovered in the Callejon are said to compare favorably with those of the Higuera style of Huanuco (Kotosh and Shillacoto) and the Callejon style of Chavin de Huantar (Lynch 1979:619).

On the Central Coast funerary pottery found at Villa Salvador near the ocean and on a desert pampa between the Rimac and Lurin valleys is dated to the beginning of the Early Intermediate Period (Stothert 1980; Stothert and Ravines 1979). This pottery is distinguished by bichrome painting and necked jars with strap handles and, while difficult to compare with Miramar style sherds, this pottery compares favorably with the white-on-red pottery found at the sites of Baños de Boza and Cerro de Trinidad in the Chancay Valley (Stothert 1980:288). This Chancay pottery is characterized by necked jars with strap handles (Willey 1943, Plate 1) which, in turn, compare nicely with some of the jars found at Cerro Chacuascucho East in Nepeña. It seems clear, then, that, on the basis of comparative analysis, the assemblage of artifacts recovered from Cerro Chacuascucho may be dated with some

confidence to the beginning of the Early Intermediate Period.

#### Concluding Remarks

It has been argued that a megalithic culture stretching over much of the north to north central highlands and coast dates to the end of the Early Horizon. On the coast, where settlement practices are best understood, occupation was heaviest in the upper parts of valleys while, on the basis of settlement patterns derived for Nepeña, it has been argued that Early Puerto Moorin sites in the upper Viru Valley may be sorted into a number of centers. This marked shift toward a highland orientation was briefly manifested in Viru as it was followed there by a return to a lower valley and, presumably, coastal orientation at the start of the Early Intermediate Period. This change is reflected as well in the Chicama, Moche, and Santa valleys but not in Nepeña which maintained its highland orientation while at the same time sharing cultural ties with valleys on the Central Coast.

It becomes necessary to make this leap from Nepeña to the Central Coast because so little is known about the settlement of the intervening valleys at this time (Collier 1960:415; Thompson 1962:297; 1966:544-546). Based upon what is now known about the settlement of Nepeña, it may be postulated that similar occupations will become known for these other valleys. In such an event it will become even more apparant that there existed distinct cultural traditions on the north and central coasts and that they were separated by a shifting frontier which included the Nepeña Valley.<sup>1</sup>

#### Footnote

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