

# Preface

In 2002 the multidisciplinary research project “Nasca: development and adaptation of archaeometric techniques for the investigation of cultural history” (*Nasca: Entwicklung und Adaption archäometrischer Techniken zur Erforschung der Kulturgeschichte*) started, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF*) in its priority program “New scientific methods and technologies for the humanities” (*Neue Naturwissenschaftliche Methoden und Technologien für die Geisteswissenschaften, NTG*). This new project continued and in a certain way fulfilled a lasting goal of the ministry to integrate different branches of scientific activities and to foster the transfer of expertise gained in natural sciences to the humanities and vice versa. Archaeometry, by definition the application of scientific methods in archaeological investigation, has been a major focus of the priority program since its beginnings in 1989.

After funding numerous fruitful research projects that developed new archaeometric techniques mostly in bilateral cooperation, an even greater outcome was expected from a more multifaceted approach with the participation of various scientific disciplines around a well-defined, archaeological research topic. Furthermore, it was intended to establish a project outside the traditional research areas in central Europe or the Mediterranean. It was the great merit of the person formerly in charge of the BMBF priority program, Dr. Edgar Pusch, to develop these far-reaching perspectives and we are extremely grateful that after a rigorous screening our project among other interesting ones was selected for funding.

Our project was in a favourable situation because it met precisely the requirements defined by the BMBF, having developed a challenging research design centered on the puzzling problem of the Nasca lines in the desert of southern coastal Peru. The initial archaeological steps were financed by the Swiss-Liechtenstein Foundation for Archaeological Research Abroad (SLSA) and we are not only grateful for this support of the archaeological activities, but even more for this unique opportunity to develop a key project which in many ways became exemplary and trend-setting for future research activities. We also received very valuable financial support from the Japan Maria Reiche Fund, which enabled us to build a little museum in the center of Palpa where we can now present the results of our scientific work to the public.

We were always supported and assisted in the organization and management of the project by the project-executing institution at the Research Center Jülich, especially its representatives, Dr. Hans-Joachim Krebs and Dr. Sabine Gerhard. It was their idea to organize not only meetings and workshops in Germany, but also a field conference directly in the research area, in Palpa, where the base camp of our field campaigns was located. Five days of very intensive talks and discussions and the following excursion with about 70 participants of the field conference, among them the project members, Peruvian partners and colleagues, and international specialists from many different countries, reflected very well the special spirit of this project group: the concentration of knowledge in an interdisciplinary project in direct contact with the areas of research yielded an exceedingly high output of scientific results in an excellent working atmosphere.

At this point we as the coordinators and at the same time the editors of this volume, which constitutes the final report of our research project, would like to thank all our German, Swiss, Peruvian, and other international colleagues for their dedicated work in this very productive cooperative effort to develop new methods and technologies for archaeological investigation and to advance the knowledge of the ancient South American cultures.

In Peru we always received optimal support from the authorities and the cooperating institutions. We are indebted to the National Institute for Cultural Heritage (Instituto Nacional de Cultura, INC) for always handling the permits for our archaeological investigations in a nonbureaucratic and effective manner, and we especially thank the former director of the INC, Dr. Luis Guillermo Lumbreras, for his steady support of and interest in our project. We also thank our direct partners at the regional department of the INC, Rubén García and Susana Arce, for their very friendly and effective cooperation.

The realization of the high goals of our project, sometimes resulting in a very tight working schedule, would not have been possible without the support of the German embassy, which not only aided at the administrative level, but also enabled the logistics; exchanging research equipment and samples for the analyses in laboratories in Germany were crucial for the success of this project. We are especially grateful to the ambassador Dr. Roland Kliesow and the attaché for cultural affairs, Jens Urban, for their support and sincere interest as well as their visits to Palpa and participation in public activities of the project in Lima and Palpa.

Our special thanks go to our Peruvian colleagues and friends in Nasca and Palpa, for their hospitality and for their patience while introducing us to their fascinating world and showing us the enigmas of their pre-Hispanic history. Without their knowledge and careful observations, but also the ability to assimilate quickly new skills and at the same time to adapt to the sometimes seemingly strange behavior of the “gringos” who populated the Palpa valleys for a short time every year, they contributed a great deal to the success of the project. Our host for several years at the Fundo Jauranga, merits special mention: Don Oscar Tijero, who not only followed our research activities

with special interest, but also transmitted to us his fascination for the local history and motivated some of the most successful archaeological activities of the project.

In summary, after five years of intense research activities with a multitude of scientific results, new insights into Andean history, the development of new technologies for archaeology being useful also in other regions of the world, countless publications in different disciplines, public presentations and documentaries on radio and television, the people of Palpa will be astonished when they realize that the slogan they coined many years ago for their little forgotten desert town, turns out to be quite accurate: *Palpa es más de lo que te imaginas* (Palpa is more than you can imagine).

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