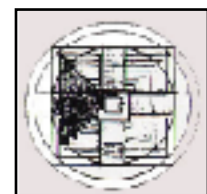


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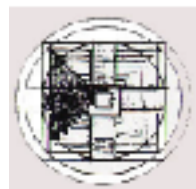
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Newsletter #2
 Spring-Summer 2001

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Exploring the Largest Archaeological Site in the Andes

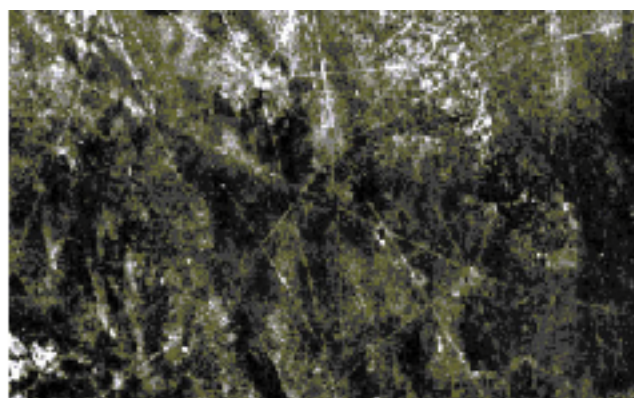
The Nasca Lines in Peru are among the most recognizable, and mysterious, archaeological and tourist attractions in the world. Since their discovery in the early 20th century, the Nasca lines have been the focus of intense study and appreciation, generating an industry of explanations ranging from the bizarre to the sublime. Equally fascinating, though less well known, is a vast network of lines in the high plateau of western Bolivia in a region called Sajama. The lines of Sajama are usually described as "paths," straight lines of up to 10 kilometers long and 1-2 meters wide. Because the features are carefully designed and executed, we prefer to call them roads. Most were created in the same manner as the Nasca Lines, where the oxidized dark surface material (stones and earth) was scraped away to expose the lighter subsurface.



As author Tony Morrison described, these ancient pathways lead to the mountain gods. Sam Green took this picture of one of lines on his last trip to Bolivia

In early February of this year, Sam Green, the founder of the Landmarks Foundation, traveled to Bolivia with the purpose of visiting several important sacred sites and investigating the condition of the lines in Sajama. With the assistance of the Bolivian Institute of Archaeology, this small expedition set forth for a few days across the expansive high plateau towards the towering snowcapped mountain of Sajama. The team discovered the presence of distinct roads that rose from the flat plain and led to the peaks of prominent mountains. After a few days, it became quite clear that nearly every town had one of these roads leading from the center of the plaza to the nearby mountain top. As in ancient times, these roads formed the routes for religious processions for the village to the mountain top where powerful spirits lived. Mimicking the cycles of the heavens by walking, dancing and carrying out ceremonies along the lines, the procession of the faithful assured continuation of the delicate natural balance that maintained their fields and llama herds.

The expedition however, did have a greater goal based on a report by a geographer taking aerial pictures of the landscape. He reported long lines cutting back and forth at strange angles, giving the appearance of wings. He provided us with a photograph and the probable location (see next page). But, the conditions on the high plateau too were poor for further exploration. One of the most intense recent rainy seasons had all the rivers flowing fiercely, making roads impassible. After several days of travel, the expedition's antiquated vehicle broke down in a spectacular display of grinding steel and pavement. Returning by bus to the capital of La Paz, research continued from the safety of the laboratory at the Institute of Geographic Survey, where the team searched for the location of these lines from aerial photographs. After a preliminary analysis of the photographs and satellite images processed at the University of Pennsylvania, a network of sacred roads covers an area much larger than the Nasca lines - making it the largest sacred archaeological site in



Aerial photograph of the lines of Sajama. These ritual roads radiate from sacred centers such as mountaintops.

the Andes. This realization inspired the Bolivian Department of Archeology, with the assistance of the Bolivian Air Force, to continue searching their extensive collection of aerial photographs in order to map and understand the importance of this ritual landscape. (continued on next page)

In This Issue

- * *The Lines of Sajama, Bolivia*
- * *Tiwanaku: City of the High Andes*
- * *The Cemetery in Cuba*
- * *The Huichol Project*
- * *Update on the Costa Rica Archaeological Park*
- * *Letter from the Founder*