

## CERAMICS FROM THE HACIENDA TARAPOTO, DEPARTMENT OF SAN MARTIN, PERU

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In August, 1978, the Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología, Lima, received a small collection of pottery collected by Jorge Sandi from agricultural fields of the Hacienda Tarapoto, Department of San Martín. While in Lima in October, 1980, I had the opportunity to examine this pottery through the courtesy of Hermilio Rosas, Subdirector of the Museum. Because the archaeology of the tropical forests of San Martín is so very poorly known, and because of the interest of the collection, I solicited, and received permission to publish a description of this distinctive pottery along with a preliminary estimate of how it fits into the archaeology of the upper Amazon.

Unfortunately, the precise location of the archaeological site is not specified in the museum records; nor is the hacienda located with respect to the city of Tarapoto. Nevertheless, we may gain some feel for the locality from the description of Richard Spruce, a botanist, who worked in the Tarapoto region from June 22, 1855 to March 22, 1857. He states that:

Tarapoto is situated in a large pampa or plain . . . so completely encircled by mountains as to form a vast natural amphitheatre. It is about 1500 feet [460 m.] above the sea, while the encircling ridges are 2000 or 3000 feet [600 or 900 m.] above the plain . . . .

The climate is much drier than that of the Amazon, but this depends entirely upon the peculiar position of the town, for while heavy rains are frequent on the hills, they are rare at Tarapoto, and we see and hear almost every day violent thunderstorms skirting the pampa . . . . Fogs, however, are frequent in the mornings, and no doubt make up for the deficiency of the rains.

The pampa is or has been wholly under cultivation with the exception of the precipitous banks of the rivulets. The summits of the hills are clad with the same dense forest as the Amazon, showing rarely scattered bald grassy places (called pajonales or pastos). (Spruce, 1908, vol. II, pp. 45-49)

## Ethnohistory

Tarapoto is located east of Moyobamba (see fig. 1). This region was inhabited by Indians whom the Spanish dubbed "Motilonos" for their custom of shaving the hair from their heads (Aguirre, 1865, p. 280; Ortiguera, 1909, p. 310; Arias de Alместo, 1909, pp. 424). The Indians of Tarapoto continued the practice as late as the early 1850's (Spruce, 1908, vol. II, p. 57).

The first Spanish entrada into the lands of the Motilones took place in 1558 when Captain Pedro Ramiro founded the short-lived pueblo of Santa Cruz de Capocovar on the banks of the Huallaga (Arias de Almesto, 1909, p. 424). The next year Pedro de Orsúa established the embarkation point of his ill-fated Amazon expedition near Santa Cruz (Arias de Almesto, 1909, pp. 424, 425). Because food was difficult to obtain at Santa Cruz, Orsúa sent his men to forage in nearby Indian villages. Tabalosos is specifically mentioned (Arias de Almesto, 1909, p. 425). This is the first of the component groups of the Motilones to be identified. The Tabalosos retained a separate identity in 1611 (*Entrada de los Motilones*, ms.) and in 1653 (Riva Herrera, 1900, p. 42), very likely near the place where the town of Tabalosos now stands.<sup>1</sup>

Various other Motilón groups are identified from the entradas of 1611 (*Entrada de los Motilones*, ms.) and 1653 (Riva Herrera, 1900). For our purposes, the most important of these is the Suchiches who were later residents of Tarapoto (Sobreviela, 1924, p. 222; Raimondi, 1942-48, vol. 1, p. 279 note). "Suchichi" first appears as the name of an overlord in the general vicinity of Tarapoto in a document dated 1611 (*Entrada de los Motilones*, ms.). In 1653 the "Sichinches" are identified as a "parcialidad" with several chiefs (Riva Herrera, 1900, p. 51).

Several Spanish priests or missionaries were in the territory of the Motilones about 1616 at a time when the Indians welcomed priests but prohibited the entrance of soldiers (Arriaga, chap. 20; 1968, p. 162).

After 1654 we lose track of the Motilones until 1782 when the city of Tarapoto was established (Raimondi, 1942-48, vol. 1, p. 279). In 1790 there were 281 Suchiches in Tarapoto as well as 262 Coscoasas and 266 Amasifuenes residing in the nearby village of Cumbaza (Sobreviela, 1924, p. 222). In 1847 there were 1210 Suchiches in a separate barrio of Tarapoto and 500 Indians living in nearby Cumbaza (Raimondi, 1942-48, vol. 1, p. 279).

In the seventeenth century the Motilones maintained a dispersed settlement pattern with settlements composed of one or two large houses separated from the next settlement by fields of maize, bananas, manioc and cotton (*Entrada de los Motilones*, ms.). Individual provinces of named tribes such as the Tabalosos and Suchiches, as identified in 1611, seem to have been only a few leagues across inhabited by a few hundred Indians (*Entrada de los Motilones*, ms.). The size of one house is given as 70 steps long by 30 steps broad (*Entrada de los Motilones*, ms.); certainly not less than 140 feet long by 60 feet wide, approximately 8400 square feet or 780 m.<sup>2</sup>. Two or three such multifamily dwellings could have sheltered the entire population of a province.<sup>2</sup>

#### Ceramics

The ceramic collection from the Hacienda Tarapoto is composed of one complete double composite silhouette vessel (fig. 2; Vessel 1, MNAA no. 49140), one fragmentary double composite silhouette vessel (fig. 3; Vessel 2, MNAA no. 49139) and twenty unnumbered sherds which are said

to be from more than one funerary urn.<sup>3</sup> While it is not definitely stated that the two vessels and the sherds came from the same site, there is nothing which would lead me to believe otherwise.

### Color

Surface colors vary from light brown to dull orange except in areas where fire clouds are present. The urn sherds are oxidized throughout but the composite silhouette vessels have a thin dark core near the interior surface.

### Temper

Ground sherd temper is found in all sherds and in the complete vessel.

### Hardness

The surfaces can be easily scratched with the fingernail indicating a hardness of approximately 2.0 on Mohs' scale (Dana, 1897, p. 76).

### Manufacture

All ceramics seem to have been manufactured by the coiling process including both the vessel walls and the base of Vessel 2. The coils of the "urn" sherds vary from 1.9 to 2.8 cm. in height. The lower body walls of Vessel 2 bear the impressions of a plaited basket. The bottom of Vessel 1 bears similar impressions. This evidence suggests that the lower portions of these vessels may have been formed in a basket.

### Fracture

The pottery tends to break along the coil lines. The "urn" sherds also tend to break perpendicularly to the coils but the sherds of Vessel 2 broke at an acute angle to the coils.

### Thickness

The double composite silhouette vessels range from .8-1.2 cm. in thickness while the "urn" sherds range from 1.6-2.7 cm.

### Vessel forms

A. Double composite silhouette vessel constructed by stacking two single composite silhouette segments on top of one another. Vessel 1 (fig. 2) is an open vessel in which the mouth diameter is slightly greater than the uppermost shoulder angle. Vessel 2 (fig. 3) is a closed vessel in which the mouth diameter is slightly less than the uppermost shoulder angle. The inflection points of maximum and minimum diameter of the vessel segments are angular. Bases are flat with a low pedestal above which the lower body walls angle outward. The dimensions

of these vessels are presented in Table 1.

B. The twenty "urn" sherds probably represent a second vessel form but the absence of rim, shoulder or base sherds prevents a definition of the shape or shapes of these urns.

TABLE 1

## Dimensions of Complete Vessels from the Hacienda Tarapoto

	Vessel 1 <u>#49140</u>	Vessel 2 <u>#49139</u>
Mouth diameter	14.0 cm.	11.2 cm.
Height	12.6	11.2
Maximum diameter	15.0	14.0
Base diameter	10.2	8.2

Decorative modes

A. Corrugation. Several of the "urn" sherds bear traces of corrugated decoration characterized by large finger impressions which run in opposite directions on adjacent coils. This treatment gives the appearance of a chevron design (fig. 4).

B. Grooved, style 1. On some of the "urn" sherds, deep diagonal grooves run in opposite directions on alternate coils, giving the impression of a chevron design (fig. 5).

C. Grooved, style 2. The designs on Vessel 1 are made by a broad stylus with a striated tip (fig. 2). The chewed end of a stick would have produced grooves of this sort.

D. Stick impressions. On the upper part of the lower composite silhouette segment of Vessel 2 there are two rows of stick impressions. The uppermost row was made with the stick pointing downward; the lower row was made with the stick pointing upward (fig. 3).

E. Incised. On the upper portion of the upper composite silhouette segment of Vessel 2 is an incised design made by a stylus with a rounded tip (fig. 3).

F. Painted. The grooves of Vessel 1 were filled with red paint, possibly after firing.

Design modes

A. The corrugated designs and the grooved designs on the "urn" sherds face in opposite directions on adjacent coils to produce a chevron design (figs. 4, 5).

B. The incised designs on Vessel 2 form a horizontal zig-zag (fig. 3).

C. A horizontal band design is composed of an upper and a lower continuous fret design which alternate to fill most of the band. Between the two continuous fret designs is a horizontal line which steps upward or downward to go above or below the fret which nearly fills the band. The design is repeated five times on the upper composite silhouette segment of Vessel 1 and four times on the lower one (fig. 2).

#### Archaeological Comparisons

The archaeology of the Peruvian *montaña* is still little known. Reasonably detailed archaeological sequences have been developed only on the central Ucayali (Lathrap, 1962; 1970; Myers, 1970) and on the upper Pachitea (Allen, 1968; Lathrap, 1970). Beyond that, few sites or sequences have been investigated or reported.

#### Huallaga River

Two areas on the Huallaga River have been investigated briefly: Tingo María and Achual Tipishca, midway between Yurimaguas and Lagunas.

#### Tingo María

The archaeology of Tingo María is known only from the Cave of the Owls (Lathrap and Roys, 1963) and from the Airport Site.<sup>4</sup> The earliest ceramics from the Cave of the Owls are closely related to Formative materials from Kotosh and are quite dissimilar to the materials from the Hacienda Tarapoto. The later ceramic complex, Monzón Coarse Ware, is known both from Cave of the Owls and from a collection of nearly 1400 sherds from the Airport Site. Two stratigraphic levels were visible in the cut bank of the Airport Site but separate complexes could not be defined from the small samples collected in situ. The bulk of the collection was made from the talus below the cut bank.

Monzón Coarse Ware from Cave of the Owls includes composite silhouette bowls (Lathrap and Roys, 1963, fig. 6), but my notes on pottery from the Airport Site do not include a record of similarly abrupt shoulder angles. However, bowls with vertical side walls were recorded so the apparent absence of shoulder angles may be an oversight. Base forms from the Airport Site include pedestals similar to those on the double composite silhouette bowls from Hacienda Tarapoto. While decorative modes at the Airport Site do not include grooved lines made with a striated tool, both corrugated decoration and deep parallel grooves which meet at an angle are present. Though fragmentary, incised designs on Monzón Coarse Ware at Cave of the Owls and at the Airport Site are not similar to the incised designs at Hacienda Tarapoto.

#### Achual Tipishca

Ceramics from Achual Tipishca are still very poorly known, but

two ceramic complexes seem to be present.<sup>5</sup> Neither has a significant similarity to either Monzón Coarse Ware or to the ceramics from the Hacienda Tarapoto.

### Ucayali River

The best known ceramic sequence in eastern Peru comes from the central Ucayali where Donald W. Lathrap and his students have been working for many years (Lathrap, 1970). Lathrap has noted that Monzón Coarse Ware bears several important similarities to the Yarinacocha Complex, notably in vessel shape and surface finish, but that other vessel shapes of that ware as well as corrugated decoration come later in the Ucayali sequence (Lathrap and Roys, 1963, p. 36). His observations still hold even though the Ucayali sequence is now much better known than when he wrote, and there is a larger sample of Monzón Coarse Ware available. On the Ucayali, corrugated decoration first appears in the Cashibocño Complex (Myers, 1970; Lathrap, 1970, p. 132) and is still sometimes found on Shipibo pottery.

### Aguaytía River

Among the pottery collected from AGU 4 were two sherds ornamented with broad, deep parallel grooves (Myers, 1975, p. 74). These bear some resemblance to the grooved decoration from the Hacienda Tarapoto and the Airport Site. However, corrugated decoration was not found at AGU 4 nor is the incised decoration at AGU 4 similar to that of the ceramics from the Hacienda Tarapoto. Further, there is no evidence of composite silhouette vessels at AGU 4.

### Conclusions

The ceramics from the Hacienda Tarapoto are most similar to Monzón Coarse Ware from Tingo María. However, the dissimilarity of incised designs at the two sites is sufficient to persuade me that they belong to distinct ceramic complexes. The composite silhouette bowls which characterize both groups of pottery are similar to those of the Yarinacocha Complex on the Ucayali. But the absence of incised decoration in Yarinacocha suggests an even more distant relationship though all three complexes may belong to the same ceramic tradition, broadly defined.

In the Peruvian Amazon corrugated decoration may be a horizon marker indicating a date of later than A.D. 500 based upon data from the central Ucayali and the upper Pachitea (Allen, 1968). If so, both Monzón Coarse Ware and the ceramics from the Hacienda Tarapoto should be later than 500 A.D.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Riva Herrera reached the first Tabaloso village by marching down the Rio de la Sal "por una cuesta muy aspera de montaña" (Riva Herrera, 1900, p. 42). Spruce (1908, vol. II, p. 87) and Raimondi (1942-48, vol. 1, p. 277) found that the modern town of Tabalosos was located on "Cachiyacu," a Quechua term meaning "Salt Water." Coming from Moyobamba it is necessary to descend a steep ridge known as the "Andarra" (Spruce, 1908, vol. II, p. 87).

<sup>2</sup>On the basis of data from 22 societies, modern multifamily dwellings in the Amazon house from 9 to 10 to more than 100 persons at densities ranging from 2.5-14.0 persons per m.<sup>2</sup>. Most houses have densities ranging from 2.5-8 persons per m.<sup>2</sup>. At these levels, the Motilón house might have sheltered from 97-312 persons.

<sup>3</sup>Notes by Hermilio Rosas who received the collection for the museum. I deeply appreciate his courtesy in making the notes and the collection available for study.

<sup>4</sup>In 1964 Lathrap and I identified a second site near the Airport where we made a small collection. This collection is now in the Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología, Lima.

<sup>5</sup>In 1980 I conducted a brief investigation at Achual Tipishca on the lower Huallaga River.

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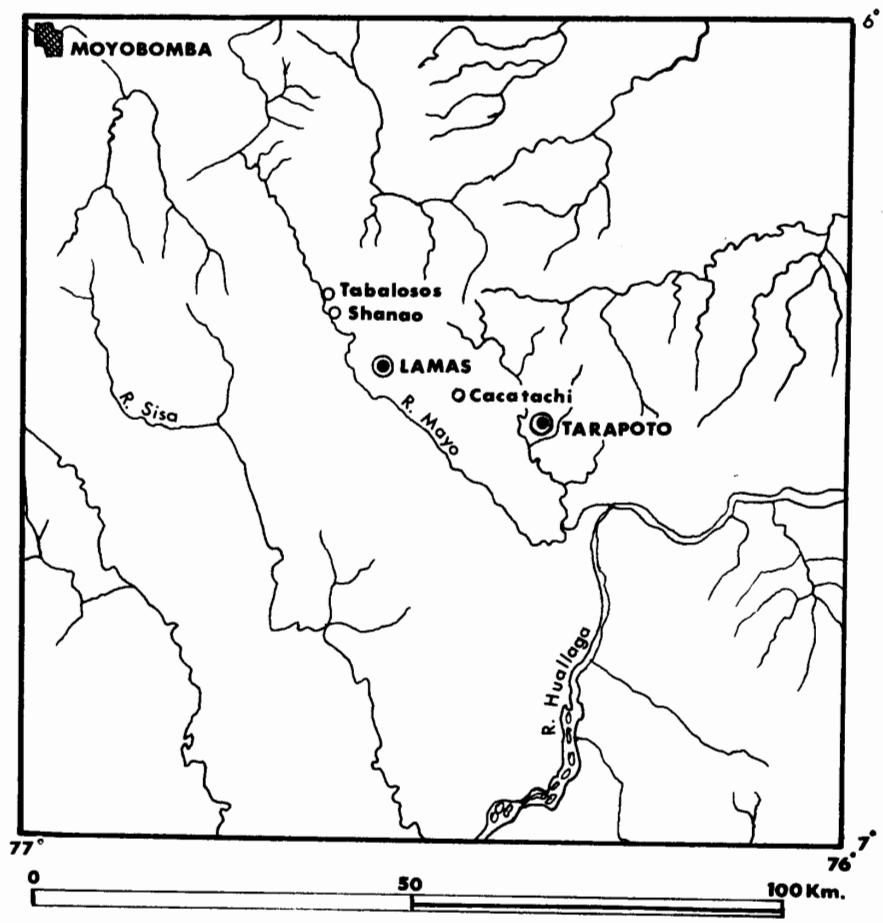
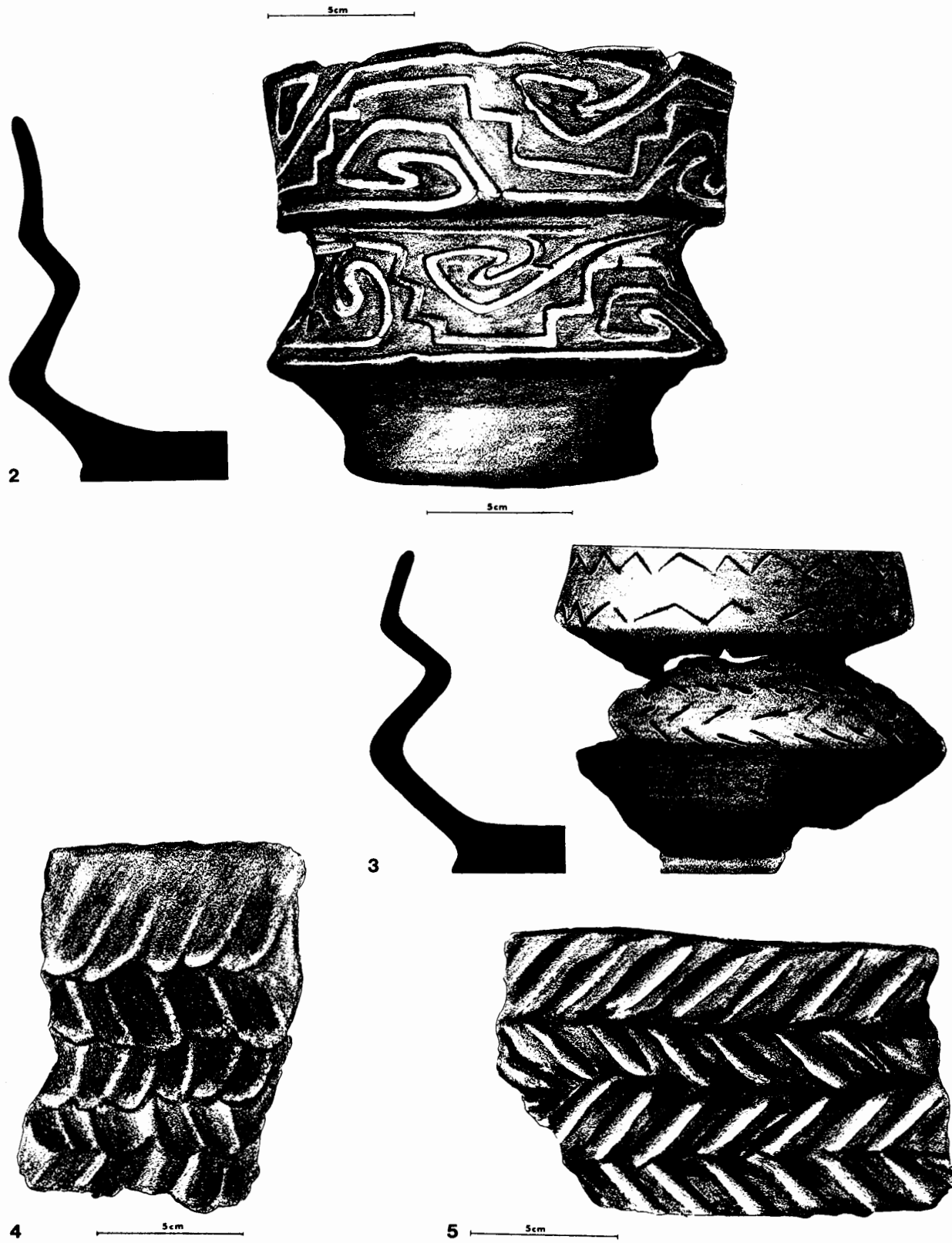


Fig. 1, map of Tarapoto region, Department of San Martín, Peru.



Figs. 2-5, ceramics from the Hacienda Tarapoto, San Martín, Peru.