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RESEARCH BRIEF

A Reevaluation of PaleoAmerican Artifacts from Jaywamachay Rockshelter, Ayacucho Valley, Peru

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As part of the "Botanical Archaeological Project Ayacucho-Huanta" in central Peru, excavations at Jaywamachay rockshelter were performed in 1969–1970. To reevaluate the rockshelter's oldest human occupations, remains from its lower levels (layers J2 and J3) are currently under study. Based on new radiocarbon dates and technological/morphological observations made of tools, we confirm that Jaywamachay is one of the few dated sites with evidence of hunter–gatherers using fishtail points in highland Peru during the Pleistocene-Holocene transition.

Keywords fishtail point, bone tools, Pleistocene-Holocene transition, Peru

In 1969–1972, a significant number of sites were discovered by the interdisciplinary "Botanical Archaeological Project Ayacucho-Huanta" in central Peru (MacNeish 1969, 1971, 1976, 1978; MacNeish et al. 1970, 1980a). As a part of this undertaking, excavations at Jaywamachay rockshelter (13°18'55.96"S, 74°21'15.60"W, 3350 m.a.s.l) were performed in 1969-1970 (Garcia Cook 1981, 57-79; MacNeish et al. 1983, 189-218). This site is located on the low side of a mountain, 200 m from the Cachi River bridge, Department of Ayacucho, Province of Huamanga (Figure 1a-b). As seen in Figure 1c, a large surface was excavated by Mexican archaeologist A. García Cook, identifying an archaeological sequence spanning the terminal Pleistocene to middle Holocene periods (García Cook 1981, 65-79, figure 3-10). Stratigraphically, 19 strata were exposed. From top to bottom, they were labeled with letters A to N (Figure 1d). Based on the finds coming from twelve layers (H, I, J, J1, J2, J3, K, K1, L, L1, M, and N), the lowest archaeological human occupations in the site were identified as belonging to the *El Puente* phase (García Cook 1981, 79; MacNeish et al. 1983, 190-202).

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Archaeological finds collected in Jaywamachay are currently curated in the Museum of Archaeology, San Marcos University, Lima. To reevaluate and deepen the knowledge of the oldest human occupations of the site, remains exhumed in its lower levels are currently under study. As a part of this investigation, this paper presents technological and morphological observations performed on a few tools coming from layers J2 and J3 (Figure 1d).

From a chronological and archaeological viewpoint, the J2 and J3 materials reflect vestiges of hunter-gatherers that lived in Jaywamachay during the Pleistocene-Holocene transition. Two conventional ¹⁴C dates have been obtained from charcoal samples recovered in these strata. Lacking calibration curves at the time, they were reported as calendar years BC (Garcia Cook 1981, 77; MacNeish 1981, 212, 227). However, the original dates were published in the Andean Radiocarbon database available on the web (Ziólkowski et al. 1994, 332-333). We corrected them with the Oxcal 4.2.4 calibration program (Bronk Ramsey and Lee 2013) employing the ShCal13 curve for the Southern Hemisphere (Hogg et al. 2013). Following are the results: J2 is $9890 \pm$ 310 ¹⁴C yr BP (I-5683), or 12,424–10,496 cal yr BP (two sigma); J3 is $10,280 \pm 170^{-14}$ C yr BP (I-5699), or 12,548-11,325 cal yr BP.

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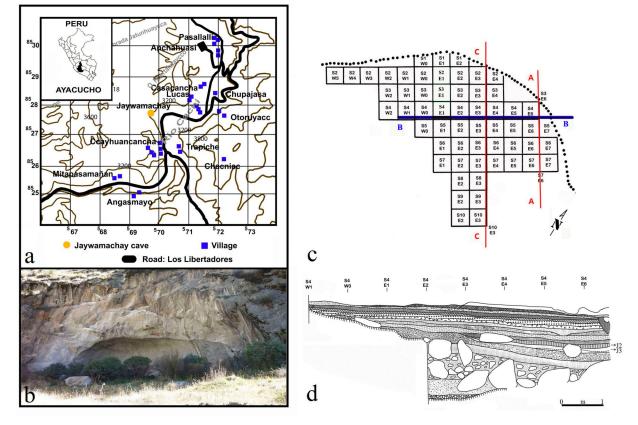


Figure 1 (a–b) Location map and image of Jaywamachay rockshelter in central Peru, (c) plan of the excavated surface and locations of profile drawings; (d) stratigraphic profile (B-B), showing the levels where radiocarbon dates came from in the sequence (MacNeish 1981, 67).

From the J2 and J3 levels, extinct horse, deer, and possibly camelid bones were recovered (Lynch 1980, 111-112, 1983, 116; MacNeish 1971, 43-44). Significantly, among the bones from J2 are two nicely worked implements (Figure 2a-b) formerly identified as a "cylindrical bone pin" and a "long bone flesher" (MacNeish and Nelken-Terner 1980, 316, figures 8–10, 8–11). One of them (catalog number Ac335 51-12) is 42 mm long and 5 mm in diameter, and it bears a cylindrical cross-section with a carefully pointed tip, which is partially broken (Figure 2a). The second (Ac335 46-11h'h'23) is a fragmented diaphysis (89 mm long, 20 mm wide, and 6 mm thick) of a long bone that exhibits a flattened broken tip with several striae, possibly made during the manufacturing process (Figure 2b). Both tools show polishing, probably due to use.

Lithic artifacts consisting of unifacial and bifacial implements as well as debitage were recovered in J2 (n = 33) and J3 (n = 20). Among these are various bifacial specimens which were reported as "Fell's cave fluted points" (MacNeish et al. 1980b, 51, figures 2–3); however, no detailed information about them has been published. Consequently, we provide additional data on these artifacts. As shown in Figure 2c–e, they are made of obsidian with tones ranging between light brownish gray (5YR 6/1) and

rock-color chart). Specimen 1 is from J2 while specimens 2 and 3 are from J3. As depicted in Figure 2c, the former (without catalog number) is the lower part of bifacial point, probably broken in its middle portion. Its dimensions are 32 mm long, 26 mm wide, and 7 mm thick. It has mostly non-regular parallel retouch, some in diagonal form, made by pressure flaking, and it has a biconvex longitudinal crosssection. Probably the fracture was produced by impact (Dunbar 2012; Weitzel et al. 2014). The artifact shown in Figure 2d (catalog number Ac335 47-11a1) is a complete blade of a broken fishtail point lacking the lower part of the stem. It is lanceolate in shape with light convex edges and a biconvex transverse cross-section. Its dimensions are 41 mm long, 21 mm wide, and 6 mm thick, and the blade length is 32 mm, stem length is 9 mm, base width is 14 mm, and blade/stem intersection is 20 mm. It was finished by pressure flaking which left irregular parallel retouch mostly reaching the symmetrical axis of the piece. Underlying them, it is possible to observe bifacialthinning flake scars probably made with soft percussion. The artifact shown in Figure 2e (catalog number Ac335 47-11a2) is 27 mm long, 23 mm wide, and 7 mm thick. It is a fragmented preform, originally identified as the basal portion of a point

black (N1) (following the Munsell 2009 geological

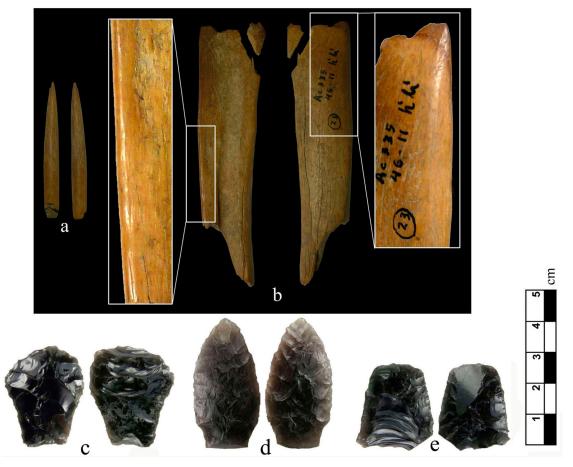


Figure 2 Analyzed artifacts from the J2 and J3 layers (photos by Juan Yataco, MAA-UNMSM): (a–b) bone tools and close-up images showing the polishing and tip of artifact b; (c–d) Fell points (specimens 1 and 2); (e) fluted tip preform (specimen 3).

(MacNeish et al. 1980b, figures 2 and 3). It has been mostly flaked by pressure, leaving irregular parallel retouch. One face still shows the remains of the flake-blank used in its manufacture. The opposing face has the terminal portion of a flute ending with a step fracture. On the tip there is a retouched beveled edge, probably the remnant of platform preparation during flaking (Nami 2014a, figure 13). The aforementioned observations suggest that this represents the tip of a preform broken in two or more pieces during fluting, such as has been archaeologically and experimentally observed (e.g. Frison and Bradley 1980, figures 29c, 34–35; Nami 2014a; Sollberger 1977).

The analyzed artifacts undoubtedly correspond to those manufactured by hunter–gatherers that used Fell points in their weaponry. In fact, specimens with contracting stem similar to artifact 1 (Figure 2c) exist among these lithic points (Mayer-Oakes 1986, figure 3; Nami 2014b, figure 21, Nami 2015, figure 2a). The morphology of artifact 2 (Figure 2d) is consistent with the lanceolate variant with narrow blade of fishtail points (Nami 2014a, figure 22). Similar pieces have been found in several countries in South America, for example Ecuador (Nami 2014a, figure 21), Brazil (Loponte et al. 2015, figures 4–5; da Silva and Nami 2011), Uruguay (Nami 2013, figure 4a–b, d and n–o), Argentina (Flegenheimer et al. 2013, 370, figure 21.6; Hermo et al. 2015, 106, figure 2), and Chile (Bird 1969, figure 5d, o-p). It is well-known that some Fell points were fluted (Flegenheimer et al. 2013; Nami 2014b); therefore, the flute on the preform is another clue confirming that the artifacts from layers J2 and of Jaywamachay represent the remains of J3 PaleoAmerican hunter-gatherers. Fishtail fluted points and preforms in Peru have been found in Quebrada Santa María (Chauchat and Briceño 1998a, figure 53 right), Quisqui Puncu (Lynch 1970, figures 12j, 20d-e), El Palto (Maggard 2015, 30, figure 3), and the Pucuncho basin (Sandweiss and Rademaker 2011, 279, figures 3-4) as well as in other locations in South America (Hermo et al. 2015, 106, figure 2H; e.g. Jackson et al. 2007; Nami 1987, 2001). It is worth mentioning that artifact Ac335 46-6 aa16, which was illustrated by MacNeish et al. (1980b, 51, figure 2-3, left) cannot be found in the collection; however, judging by the illustration, it is consistent with the Fell points variation named "El Inga broad stemmed" identified in Ecuador and other places in South America (Mayer-Oakes 1986; Nami 2014a, 201, figure 20).

The above-described lithic artifacts support the conclusion of MacNeish et al. (1980b) that the remains

from levels J2 and J3 at Jaywamachay belong to the makers of Fell points. Similar diagnostic remains were found from the north in Chiapas State in southern Mexico (García Bárcena 1980) and Belize (Pearson and Bostrom 1998) south to the southern tip of South America (Bird 1946; Massone 1987). Particularly in Peru, they have been found in several localities across the country (Briceño Rosario 1999; Chauchat and Zevallos-Quiñones 1979; Chauchat et al. 1998; Díaz Rodríguez 2008; León Canales et al. 2004; Maggard 2010; Maggard and Dillehay 2011; Ossa 1976; Sandweiss and Rademaker 2011). Also, dates from both layers fit with other radiocarbon assays obtained at Fell point sites along the Andean Cordillera (e.g. Jackson et al. 2007; Maggard and Dillehay 2011; Nami and Heusser 2015; Nami and Stanford 2015; Nuñez et al. 1994) and other places in South America (Flegenheimer et al. 2013; Nami 2007; Prates et al. 2013). In addition, the nicely made bone tools from Jaywamachay agree with the assertion that these early foragers, in their traditional technological knowledge, also had a well-developed bone technology (Nami 2010).

In summary, the results of this study provide further data about the earliest occupations in western South America. Excavated in a period with scarce evidence on the subject, we have confirmed that Jaywamachay is one of the few dated sites that provides evidence of hunter–gatherers who used fishtail points in highland Peru during the Pleistocene-Holocene transition. Ongoing research and analysis will add more data and discussions on the remains excavated from the lower archaeological levels of Jaywamachay rockshelter.

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