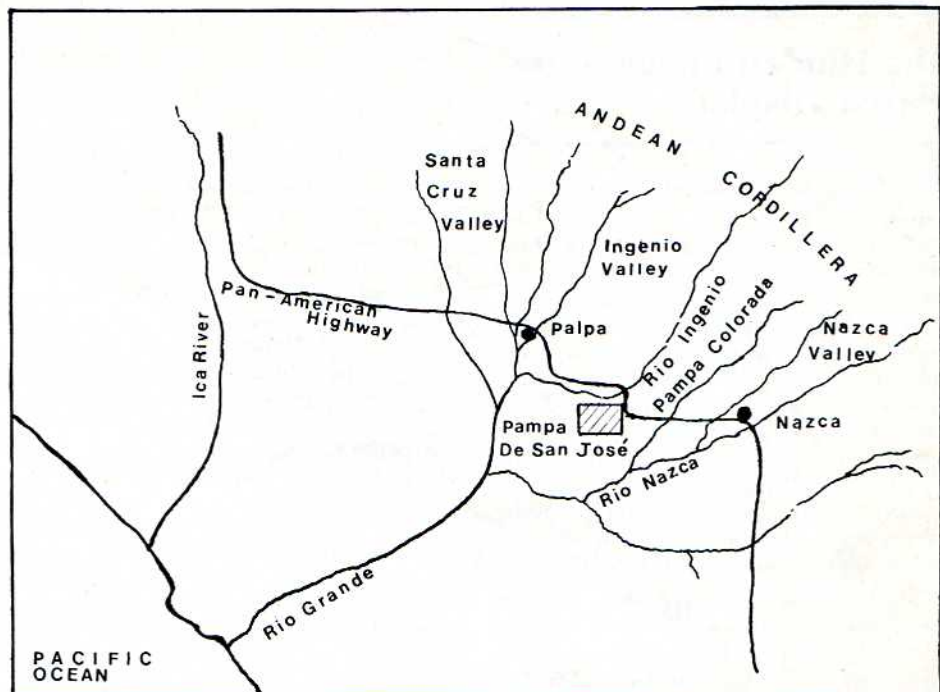


## The Hidden Image of the Nazca Display

unswerving for up to twenty miles, over hillocks and down into gulleys, with a reported deviation of less than four yards in a mile. The maze of lines is interwoven with zig-zags, spirals, meandering seaweed-like strands and star shapes, all supported on a geometric mélange of huge rectangles, trapezoids and extended spear-like triangles.

Not content with this exhibition of precision draughtsmanship our Pre-Columbian artists incorporated a veritable zoo of birds, animals, fish, a lizard, a spider, side-by-side with flower, plant and human hand-shapes, even stretching their ingenuity still further by drawing composite figures, half bird – half fish. Finally, as if to finish the whole with a flourish, the tracery of lines and geometry were extended into the neighbouring hillsides where stylized human figures were carved out of the slopes to look down upon the whole extraordinary archaeological riddle.

Whilst startling in its enormity, the actual "etching process" to form such a display is very simple. Just clear a line of rocks to one side exposing the lighter alluvial underneath so creating the basis of an art form which will last perhaps, more than 2000 years. Exactly how the



The areas known as the Pampa Colorada and the Pampa de San José have the greatest concentration of markings. Potsherds found in both areas suggest that the Nazca Display was constructed some time between 200 B.C. and A.D. 600 by the inhabitants of the Nazca Valley area.

display elements were originally planned and then converted on to the desert floor remains a mystery. It is fairly certain that the Pre-Incas had no basic writing materials as we know them. Perhaps the constructors

were able to scale-up sand drawings, or to make baked clay tablets with the required design imprinted into the clay surface. Then by using simple practical geometry, which successive generations could have learned entirely by rote, the desired shape was marked out upon the Pampa in its finished size for subsequent etching.

This latter stage is not quite as easy as it sounds however and is precisely one of the reasons that the Nazca Display kept its secret until 1941. For the drawings are so vast that they cannot be seen from ground level. Stand on a line and it is clearly visible either way for considerable length but step to one side and the line completely disappears. Even the construction gangs that built the Pan-American Highway crossing the Pampa de San José Archaeological Zone were unaware of the Display. But, ascend to an altitude of, say, 1000 feet in a light aircraft and the whole immense panorama becomes clearly visible.

So how was it possible to produce such an enormous and precisely constructed monument in the first place? Even when finished, the creators would never actually be able to see it. And what was the purpose of such an immense undertaking?

To have even a glimmer of understanding we must first consider a few of the most popular theories to see whether they contain any archaeological substance, taking the most unlikely – the space port theory, first. There is no evidence for even the slightest suspicion that Nazca, or any other place in the world for that matter, was built for, or by, extra-terrestrial beings. Were the roads for every day use or celestial pathways? Many of the long, single lines have been used in the past as an aid to crossing the desert. In general however the lines are multi-directional which tends to suggest that the Nazca Lines are not a network of Pre-Inca roads and rules out the possibility that the lines



Inserted in a network of straight lines is this huge 150ft spider. The mound at the left is part of a huge trapezoid, the line running through the centre portion of the spider is aligned in a solstice direction.  
Photo courtesy Maria Reiche Collection.