

Chapter 1

From Art to Material Culture

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At the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, archaeologists' thinking about the meaning of ancient Andean art was revolutionized as a result of spectacular discoveries at Sipán, a Moche culture pyramid complex in the Lambayeque Valley on Peru's far north coast. Initially ravished by looters, excavations at the pyramid were soon taken over by archaeologist Walter Alva (1988, 1990; Alva and Donnan 1993) who revealed a series of royal graves containing bodies of the ancient polity's kings and counselors, resplendent in their ceremonial attire and ritual paraphernalia.

Before Sipán, archaeologists had no idea that Moche graves could be so elaborate and contain so much wealth. Moreover, the archaeological world was astonished that the principal men in two of Sipán's tombs were buried with the costumes—including even such details as the spotted dog beside his feet—of the iconographically known Warrior Priest. A royal tomb in the back of the same pyramid complex held the remains of another principal individual spectacularly dressed as the iconographically known Bird Priest. A few years later, at San José de Moro, a Moche center in the Jequetepeque Valley some fifty kilometers south of Sipán, archaeologists discovered a magnificent tomb containing the costumed body of the iconographically known Priestess (Donnan and Castillo 1992, 1994). The recent discovery of a massacre at Huaca de la Luna, in the Moche Valley, similarly confirms the reality of the Sacrifice Ceremony. For the first time, with these discoveries, it was clear that Moche art's formalized, representational, complex imagery depicted real people participating in the iconographically depicted scenes: living rulers and counselors had presided over real events, appropriately costumed as the Warrior Priest, the Bird Priest, the Priestess, and other adjudicators of the temple/court. It is also apparent that several royal Moche courts existed (see Bawden 1996; Castillo and Donnan 1994). They followed the same set of rules and recognized a more-or-less standard hierarchy of priestly and more secular offices, but all clearly of profound ritual significance.

It must be remembered that South American civilization developed without writing, (Margaret Jackson's important analysis of Moche proto-writing, in this volume, notwithstanding). As a consequence, scholars of the prehispanic past are forever disadvantaged in their attempts to understand ancient Andean peoples and cultures. Yet it is now clear that Andean people produced messages about themselves and their world, at least some of which have survived into modern times and can be "read" more or less as they were intended to be understood if archaeological associations and contexts are sufficient for us to properly identify the complex signs.

The stunning breakthroughs in understanding Moche visual art that have come with the new discoveries at Sipán, San José de Moro, Huaca de la Luna, and Huaca El Brujo can only be fully appreciated because of a century of antecedent scholarship which, with recent field and/or museum research, has greatly advanced Moche scholarship (chronologically and among others: Middendorf 1892; Uhle 1913, 1915 who reported the first scientific excavations; Larco Hoyle 1938, 1939, 1945c, 1946b, 1948 who created the Moche relative chronology; Benson 1972; Donnan 1973, 1976, 1978, 1982a,b, 1988, 1996, 2001; Donnan and McClelland 1999; Hocquenghem 1987; Alva 1988, 1990, 1994; Alva and Donnan 1993; Castillo 1989; Bawden 1996; Uceda 1997; Uceda and Chapdelaine 1998; Uceda et al. 1997, 1998; Chapdelaine 2000; Chapdelaine, Kennedy, and Uceda 2001; Chapdelaine, Millaire, and Kennedy 2001; Chapdelaine, Pimentel and Bernier 2001). Similarly, understanding other Andean "messages from the past" has not been immediate or simple, and breakthroughs, when they occasionally take place, are virtually transcendental in importance. The emerging new understanding of Huari is almost as exemplary as the Moche case. For years archaeologists have argued about the nature of contact between the Tiwanaku capital on the south shore of Lake Titicaca and the south-central highland city of Huari. During the Middle Horizon they shared a religious iconography so similar that a single origin is indisputable. Several modern scholars proposed that devout pilgrims may have traveled from Huari to witness ceremonies conducted at Tiwanaku. This, in turn, would explain the appearance of symbols from the Lake Titicaca religion in highland Ayacucho. But in the last few years archaeologists have discovered messages painted by Conchopata's ancient artists (Isbell and Cook, Ochatoma and Cabrera, this volume) that represent Huari-style men, brandishing weapons and shields, and kneeling in reed boats of the kind used to cross Lake Titicaca. Conchopata potters may have been telling of real trips made to the far-off lake. If so, Huari travelers were not modest pilgrims, but apparently aggressive raiders declaring their military power far beyond the boundaries of Huari political influence.

The experience of Andean civilizations was not written but, rather, inscribed with painted and modeled iconography, symbols, graffiti, and the places created by ancient built environments. Andean art, iconography, and architecture are extremely rich, providing many "messages from the past" that remain to be

explored. But before archaeologists can confidently interpret, we must first complete descriptive studies of the corpus of representations, determining their contexts, associations, sequence, and functions. An important goal of this book, therefore, is the descriptive presentation of visual information, along with new evaluations of context, association, dating, and style that are prerequisites for reaching understandings of the past at new orders of magnitude.

EARLY INTEREST IN ANCIENT ANDEAN ART

Meaning in Andean art has never been ignored, but it has not been emphasized in recent years. In contrast, there were many important studies of ancient Andean art when it was first being discovered. By the end of the 19th century, avocational scholars were quite familiar with ancient monuments and art throughout the Andes. Several books had been published about antiquities (e.g., Reiss and Stübel 1880–1887; Stübel and Uhle 1892) and fine, large collections of precolumbian objects existed in many of the world's leading museums. The fast pace of archaeological research in Peru at the beginning of the 20th century led to the discovery and/or definition of a plethora of precolumbian styles. Among these were Chavín (Tello 1923, 1943), Cupisnique (Larco Hoyle 1941), Gallinazo (Larco Hoyle 1945b, 1946a; Bennett 1950), Huari (as distinct from Tiwanaku: see Rowe, Collier and Willey 1950), Ica-Chincha (Uhle 1924; Kroeber and Strong 1924a,b), Killke (Rowe 1944), Lambayeque or Sicán (Larco 1963a; Zevallos Quiñones 1971, 1989, 1992; Shimada 1981, 1985, 1990), Lima and Chancay (Uhle in 1904; see Kroeber 1926b, 1954; Jijón y Caamaño 1949), Moche (Kroeber 1925a, 1926a; Larco 1945c; Uhle 1913), Nasca (Uhle 1914), Paracas (Tello 1959), Recuay (Tello 1923: 205; Larco Hoyle n.d.), Salinar (Larco Hoyle 1944, 1945a), Tembladera (Lapiner 1976), Tiwanaku (Uhle 1903a,b; see also Stübel and Uhle 1892), and Vicús (Matos Mendieta 1965–66; Larco Hoyle 1965a,b; Lumbreras 1978; Makowski et al. 1994). In Bolivia other styles were identified, including Chiripa (Bennett 1936), Wancarani (Ibarra Grasso 1965; Ponce 1970), Mollo (Ponce 1957), and Chullpa Pampa (Ryden 1952), as well as Yampará, Huruquilla and the lovely polychrome traditions of the eastern Andean valleys, especially Tupuraya, Mojocoya, and Omereque (or Nascoide) described by Argentine archaeologist Dick Edgar Ibarra Grasso (1965).

Interest in ancient Andean art has ranged from a desire for personal (see, e.g., Bonavia 1994; Nagin 1990) and institutional (see, e.g., Tello and Mejía Xesspe 1967: 144–145) acquisition to a primary interest in art styles as the basis for constructing a time-space framework (e.g., Uhle 1903, 1910, 1913; Kroeber 1925a, 1944; Kidder 1948; Bennett 1948; Strong 1948; Willey 1948; Rowe 1960, 1962) to the more recent synthetic view of art in terms of its visual systems, technology, and communications about the societies that produced the works.

Max Uhle became fascinated by Andean archaeology through Alphons Stübel and the collections he curated at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (Rowe 1954). Even though Uhle defined several of the ancient Andean pottery styles as a result of his fieldwork, he was little interested in the aesthetics of the art. Rather, his primary goal was to use pottery to establish a relative chronology. North American scholarship in the early 20th century continued Uhle's focus, largely through A. L. Kroeber and his students' analyses of the Uhle collections curated at the University of California in Berkeley (see Gayton 1927; Gayton and Kroeber 1927; Kroeber 1925a,b, 1926b; Kroeber and Strong 1924a,b; Strong 1925).

Archaeological exploration and anthropologically informed art historical analysis proceeded concurrently in the three decades following Uhle's departure from Peru in 1912. These were tremendously productive years animated by a group of brilliant, original scholars whom Silverman (1996) has referred to as the Peruvian School. Its key members were concerned with topics that are central in Andean iconography: sacrifice, propitiation of nature, initiation, ritual, shamanism, and power. The study of these themes interrelated the work of the individual scholars and joined them as members of an intellectual movement.

The leader of the Peruvian School was Julio C. Tello. Tello (1923) saw Peruvian civilization moving through a series of ages in which a principal medium dominated: wood, stone, pottery and textiles, and finally metallurgy. In this formulation he was clearly influenced by the three-age scheme then current in Europe. But Tello eschewed chronology in his iconographic analyses because of the spatio-cultural unity he perceived in ancient Andean art (Zuidema [1972, 1992 *inter alia*] clearly follows Tello in this regard). Tello argued forcefully that the great art styles of Peru were the representation of Central Andean religious ideas, a unified and coherent complex (Tello 1923: 101, 311, 590). His work built upon the foundations laid by Uhle (1903; Stübel and Uhle 1892), Joyce (1912), Urteaga López (1914, 1919), Means (1917), and Czaplewski (1917) among others. But Tello went far beyond them in his use of ethnographic and ethnohistoric texts, including oral legends from the coast, highlands, and jungle which Tello (1923: 151–152) showed were basically the same except for superficial changes reflecting the local environment.

Tello argued that the interpretation of mythological representations in Peruvian art should be informed by the study of indigenous myths and legends (Tello 1923: 203). He identified Wira Kocha as the central mythological figure who created the gods and humanity in the Titicaca Basin (Tello 1923: chap. 4) and he argued that the myth of Wira Kocha was a variation of the basic jungle myth (Tello 1923: 175). He identified the jaguar with the Pleiades, the most important constellation recognized in native astronomy (Tello 1923: 183), and as Wari, the god of the forces of nature (Tello 1923: 187). Tello (1923: 188) argued that this same jaguar, the most powerful animal of the tropical forest, was

mythologically the progenitor of all other felines, the human tribes inhabiting the jungle, and humanity and living things in general.

Tello observed that the ancient Andean gods could amalgamate and fuse attributes. He identified representations of the gods in ancient Peruvian art and argued that Wira Kocha, the feline god, was transformed but recognizable in the various great art styles of the Central Andes: Chavín, Moche, Nasca, Recuay, Tiwanaku (Huari), and Inca (Tello 1923: 204–311). Others have subsequently referred to a “cult of the feline” (see Benson ed. 1972).

Although there are gigantic leaps of faith or logic in his analysis, Tello precisely described Andean iconography and he recognized the artistic conventions, such as conventionalization and idealization and the process by which these were achieved (see Tello 1923: 216–219; see also Rowe 1967; Lathrap 1971). Perhaps most important was Tello’s understanding of the meta-language by which ancient Peruvian artists indicated and encoded divine character (non-humaness) in their images (see, e.g., Tello 1923: 218, 258). The meticulous care with which Tello broke down and explained complex visual images, such as the one portrayed on the stone obelisk from Chavín de Huántar that today bears his name, is precocious and praiseworthy (see Tello 1923: 274–294, 312–317; see subsequent analyses by Lathrap 1973 and Urton 1996).

In the early 1930s Tello’s primacy and interpretations were challenged by Eugenio Yacovleff who had a strong interest in agriculture, geography, and history (Yacovleff 1931, 1932a,b, 1933a,b; Yacovleff and Herrera 1934, 1935). Jorge Muelle also took an approach to ancient Peruvian art that differed from Tello’s. Trained in fine arts, letters, archaeology, and anthropology, Muelle’s interests ranged between archaeology, art criticism, ethnology, and folklore (Ravines, Bonavia, and Avalos de Matos 1974). More than any other of his Peruvian contemporaries, Muelle brought a solid and systematic art historical and art critical approach to the study of Peru’s ancient art (see, especially, Muelle 1936, 1937, 1943, 1955, 1958, 1958–1959, 1960).

Immediately following Tello’s death in 1947, Rebeca Carrión Cachot, a long-time disciple of Tello’s, came to the fore of the Peruvian archaeological scene as the new director of the National Museum in Lima. She was an adherent to the indigenist perspective that characterized the Peruvian School and her principal publications (Carrión Cachot 1948, 1949, 1955, 1959) strongly followed Tello.

Tello’s *Arqueología del Valle de Casma* (1956), *Paracas. Primera Parte* (1959) and *Chavín. Cultura Matriz de la Civilización Andina* (1960) were published posthumously and dealt with three major artistic phenomena (the stone frieze temple of Cerro Sechín, Paracas pottery and textiles, and the Chavín lithic and ceramic style). But by the time that *Chavín* was published Carrión Cachot also had died and the Peruvian School was defunct, though Tello’s broad interpretive sections continued to exert some influence on Peruvian archaeology (notably in the work of Donald Lathrap).

Andean Archaeology II
Art, Landscape, and Society
Silverman, H.; Isbell, W.H. (Eds.)
2002, XIV, 376 p., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-0-306-47250-3