

STYLISTIC VARIATION IN PROLIFEROUS NASCA POTTERY

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Although the evolution of the Nasca ceramic style throughout its 800 year history is marked by remarkable continuity and incremental modifications, there were two time periods that witnessed bursts of rapid innovation and change. The first of these permutations occurred in Phase 5 with the introduction of the first proliferous elements into the style. As defined by Roark (1965:2),

"... in the Proliferous substyle the proportion of geometric designs is greater, and representational themes often include abstract elements as part of the design. Large numbers of rays and tassels are appended to many of the designs, particularly those depicting mythical subjects, producing an impression of almost infinitely multiplied elements. . ."

Mary Blagg (1975) went on to discuss the introduction of bizarre themes in Nasca Phase 5 and to suggest that initially three contemporaneous "substyles" existed: a conservative substyle that maintained the strongest continuity with the past by depicting gradual changes in form and design; a progressive substyle which sees proliferous elements added to the traditional themes; and a bizarre substyle which is marked by the introduction of radical new motifs and changes in the formal canons of style. Blagg argued against outside influence as a factor in the bizarre innovation of Nasca 5, suggesting that the change was produced by an internal religious revolution initiated by the elite (*ibid.*:67-68). The short life of this bizarre substyle is attributed to the conservatism of the populace who "preferred a more 'classic' iconography and who probably also rejected the esoteric cult on which the bizarre style may have been based" (*ibid.*:69). While Blagg's theory about an internal religious revolution by the elite needs further substantiation, her argument for an internal source of the bizarre innovation in Phase 5 seems valid. The main changes that occurred in the art were modifi-

cations to an existing corpus of designs, not the sudden introduction of new traits traceable to other outside artistic traditions.

The second period of rapid innovation occurred in Nasca Phase 7, a time when Nasca prestige and influence reached its greatest extent. Nasca influence ranged from the Cañete Valley in the north to Acarí in the south and up the tributaries to influence the Ayacucho region of the highlands, an area extending 300 km along the coast and 220 km inland (Figure 1). I will attempt to demonstrate in this paper that at the same time the Nasca Culture was influencing those groups with which it came in contact, foreign influences were also affecting Nasca, causing much of the variation seen in the pottery. Unlike the earlier Nasca Phase 5 spurt of innovation which Blagg argues was internal, there is ample evidence to suggest that the changes taking place in Nasca Phase 7 pottery were stimulated by contacts with or ideas flowing from sources outside the Nasca realm. This paper will concentrate on the variation within Nasca Phase 7 and the probable sources of this phenomenon.

Following Menzel (1977:88, chronological table), Nasca 7 can be divided into three sub-phases of unequal length which are designated 7A, 7B, and 7C. Menzel never published a detailed analysis of these subdivisions, and therefore I will lump 7B and 7C together for the purposes of this paper. I do believe, however, that in terms of duration, Nasca Phase 7A lasted at least as long as sub-phases 7B and 7C together.

The pottery of Phase 7 maintains a great deal of continuity with the motifs and vessel shapes seen in the preceding phases. Warriors, traditional mythical creatures, trophy heads, animals, plants and birds, depictions of humans in various forms, and typical geometric designs are all commonly depicted. Yet many new motifs make their appearance in the early part of Phase 7, along with a great deal of stylistic variation. Many of the

most common vessel forms found in Nasca Phase 7, including tall vases, double-spout bottles, head-and-spout bottles, collared bottles, and bowls of several types, are continuations of forms found in earlier phases, but some of these major shape categories disappear from the sequence during Phase 7 and other new shapes make their debut (Figure 2).

The appearance of new traits in an art style can usually be attributed to one of three mechanisms: local innovation, archaism or the revival of earlier themes, or the effect of foreign influences. While all three vehicles were operative in Nasca Phase 7, I will argue that the major changes in the style were due to foreign influences coming mainly from the coastal region. Space constraints do not permit a complete elaboration of these data, but as an example I will discuss variation in the depiction of the human form in Nasca 7A.

Themes of warfare are very common in Nasca Phase 7 as they had been in Phase 5, suggesting that conflict and expansion had some effect on the propensity for innovation and stylistic change during these times. Warriors are among the most common themes, and they afford a prime example of the variation I have mentioned. In the earlier Nasca phases, warriors were almost always portrayed in a frontal or full-faced mode (Figure 3). In Nasca Phase 5 warriors were drawn in profile, often with the combatant dressed only in a loincloth holding an *atlatl* upon which a parrot perches (Figure 4). These human figures are a direct continuation of the human form as seen in the earlier phases.

By Nasca Phase 7, warriors appear in a variety of forms, some in manifestations which are quite alien to the style. For example, many warriors now are depicted holding "feather staffs" in their hands, along with round-headed clubs in addition to the more familiar *atlatls* and spears (Figures 5 and 7). The clothing worn by these individuals is a combination of traditional Nasca style loincloths and fringed shirts, with the addition of new varieties of head ornamentation. These warriors are often drawn as if running, or in motion, a concept heretofore alien in the Nasca style (Figures 7 and 9). In addition,

elements of the terrain (mountains, plants, and earth) are painted between the outstretched legs (Figures 5, 7, and 11). Facial features have changed from the more curvilinear Nasca expression to a more angular type of expression, including a hawk-like nose and open mouth, sometimes exposing teeth. Finally, the warriors in these scenes are surrounded by flying missile stones, clothing, and many other unidentifiable elements (Figures 5 and 9).

Like others before me, I will argue that many of the "alien" traits just described are derived from the Moche style, not necessarily through direct or continuous contact, but by means of indirect diffusion. Gayton and Kroeber were the first to note resemblances between Moche and Nasca iconography (Gayton and Kroeber 1927:16). Much later, in the 1960s, Lawrence Dawson of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology (now the Phoebe Hearst Museum) made great strides in examining the similarities and differences of the two styles. Unfortunately, Dawson has not published his ideas, but he did compare representations of human activity in Moche IV and Nasca 7 pottery in a paper presented at the 13th annual meeting of the Institute of Andean Studies, Berkeley, California (Dawson 1973). Allison Paulsen, in a paper presented in 1986, described a number of convincing attributes which suddenly appeared in the Nasca style during Phase 7, which could only have been derived from Moche prototypes (Paulsen 1986).

Returning to the example of the warriors just discussed, Moche traits which appear to have been introduced into the Nasca style include the running stance of the figures (Figures 6 and 10), the depiction of the terrain, particularly between the legs of the running warriors (Figures 8 and 12), flying objects on the battlefield (Figure 6), the profile view of warriors, and certain facial features and elements of the costume. On the other hand, local innovation seems to account for other new traits, such as the use of different skin colors and the depiction of two or more different varieties of humans on a single vessel (Figure 13).

My own research incorporating a sample of 664 Nasca 7 vessels confirms the impor-

tance of Moche contact during Nasca Phase 7 and adds additional points of comparison. A unique vessel, but one definitely in the Nasca style, has been published which displays a stripped prisoner, his throat cut for decapitation, being attacked by predatory birds (Figure 14). This same motif is seen on several Moche vessels where the bound corpses of prisoners are being eaten by vulture-like birds (Figure 15).

The association of birds with ritual or battle scenes may also be attributed to Moche influence (Figure 6). An unusual Nasca vessel portrays figures with birds flying around the masked principal actors (Figure 16) who in turn hold copper decapitation knives. This vessel too has close analogies in the Moche style (Figure 17) where the use of copper knives of the same form are common. Ritual scenes in which caches of trophy heads are enclosed in stepped pyramids (Figure 18) demonstrate a blend of Nasca traits (the style of trophy head) and Moche traits (the depiction of pyramids and other architectural features).

Other Moche traits include two new shape categories introduced in Nasca Phase 7: the single-spout bottle and face-neck jars. Both forms are common in the Moche style but entirely lacking on the south coast until their introduction in Phase 7. A unique Moche-style stirrup-spout bottle from the Nazca Valley painted with typical Nasca Phase 7 designs is further proof of Moche influence (Figure 19).

Moche influence seems to have been limited and confined mainly to Nasca Phase 7 which corresponds to Moche Phase IV (Patterson 1966:102), a period of major Moche military expansion on the north coast. At one time it was believed that Moche influence extended only as far south as the Nepeña Valley (Proulx 1968, 1973; Donnan 1973), but recent work by Wilson (personal communication 1990) in the Casma Valley has revealed the presence of many Moche sites there as well. Tabío (1977:112) reports the discovery of at least a half dozen vessels in the Moche style from the Huarmey Valley. He also illustrates several vessels which he suggests were influenced by this style which he refers to as "Huarmey-Mochicoide"

(*ibid.*:unnumbered, 8th-10th in illustrations section).

The mechanism for the interchange of ideas between Moche and Nasca cannot be determined conclusively on the basis of the available archaeological evidence. One possibility was maritime contact between the two cultures. Moche iconography clearly depicts the presence of reed boats of a type that is still found ethnographically in the same area of the north coast. Today these boats (known as *caballitos* or "little horses") are found principally in the village of Huanchaco in the Moche Valley, but they are small in size, ranging from 9 feet 8 inches to 11 feet 4 inches in length and 20 to 28 inches in width, and are designed to be occupied by a single fisherman (Gillin 1947:35; Benson 1972:72 for illustration). Judging from the iconography, the Pre-Columbian Moche reed boats were much larger, capable of carrying 8 to 12 individuals along with provisions (Figure 20; also see Kutscher 1983:figures 314, 316, 318, and 319; Benson 1972:figures 4.3 and 4.4). Today, Peruvian fishermen in wooden boats often go sixteen to twenty miles out to sea, stay overnight, and return the next day (Benson 1972:71). The ancient Moche almost certainly had the same ability with their larger reed boats. Moche artifacts have been discovered buried deep in the guano deposits on several of the offshore islands such as Macabí, located approximately nine kilometers off the north coast, between the mouths of the Chicama and Moche rivers (Kubler 1948). Kubler also illustrates a Moche vessel in the Larco collection which appears to depict a group of Moche reed boats visiting the Guano Islands (1948:figure 29). Unfortunately, claims by Hutchinson (1873, Vol. 1:104-108) and later repeated by Kubler (1948:32 and figure 21) that Moche objects were found buried under 62 feet of guano on the Chíncha Islands off the south coast of Peru have proved to be incorrect. The objects illustrated by Hutchinson (1873, Vol. 1:104) actually came from Macabí Island (Haberland 1958). The discovery of Moche objects on islands off the south coast of Peru would certainly strengthen the argument for a direct maritime contact between Moche and Nasca, but the lack of objects in the south does not categorically rule out the possibility.

Indeed there is some evidence that in addition to the well-documented *totorá* reed boats, the Moche may also have used balsa log rafts. Many scholars have argued that the Moche were unfamiliar with balsa rafts (which were present in south coastal Ecuador at this time), lacked the material with which to make them, and had no representations of them in their art to demonstrate their presence (Kosok 1951; Larco, personal communication 1966 cited in Buse 1975:197; von Hagen 1966:164). However, several Moche vessels have been illustrated which clearly depict the use of balsa log rafts, infrequent as this may have been (see Bird 1962: figure 42B; Buse *et al.* n.d.:figure 146; and other examples cited in Buse 1975:218-219). All the above evidence suggests that the Moche were proficient seamen capable of navigating the coastal waters off the Peruvian coast for both subsistence and commerce. How far south they traveled in their activities cannot be answered at this time, but the strong Moche influence seen in Nasca 7 pottery suggests they may have reached the south coast.

There is little archaeological evidence for direct overland contact between Moche and Nasca if one looks for Moche influence on the intervening cultures of the central coast. The principal central coast cultures during the Early Intermediate Period are known as Miramar and Lima (Patterson 1966). Their stylistic influences are found from Chancay in the north to Lurín in the south (Lumbreras 1974:15). A review of the main ceramic attributes of these cultures, especially Phases 5 and 6 of the Lima Style which are contemporary with Nasca Phase 7, reveals little that appears to have been derived from Moche, nor have any Moche trade pieces been reported from this part of the central coast. On the south central coast (the Cañete, Chincha, and Pisco Valleys), the Carmen and Estrella Styles are contemporary with the Nasca sequence (Wallace 1977:figure 1). Specifically, Nasca Phase 7 is contemporary with the late Estrella style (Patterson 1966:98-103). Although little has been published on these ceramics, there again appear to be no stylistic traits in this style which can definitely be traced to Moche influence. The lack of a Moche presence in the valleys from Huarmey to Ica gives added importance to the

maritime contact hypothesis discussed above. Other possibilities to account for the influx of Moche traits on the south coast include stimulus diffusion, trade pieces, and possible Nasca travels to the north. Whatever form the contact may have taken, the evidence for Moche influence on the style in Nasca Phase 7 is quite strong and convincing.

Early in Phase 7, Nasca influence spread out of the Nasca "heartland" of the Ica and Nasca valleys to include parts of the Chincha and Cañete valleys, especially the ancient cemetery site of Cerro del Oro in Cañete. Kroeber illustrates several typical Nasca 7 sherds, including one with a typical Nasca warrior (Figure 21). A head-and-spout bottle from this site (Figure 22) reflects the strong Nasca influence on this valley as does a figurine with a Nasca-type head (Figure 23). Although it is often considered outside the traditional boundaries of the Nasca interaction sphere, the Cañete Valley was clearly influenced by Nasca in Phase 7, just as Cañete and Chincha, with their "Topará" and "Carmen" traditions, contributed to the formation of the earliest phases of the Nasca sequence. Estrella, the local style in Cañete, Chincha, and Pisco during the latter half of the Early Intermediate Period, is characterized by the use of a white background, especially on the interior of bowls, scallop designs on the interior rims of bowls, and the use of black and white diagonal lines on an unslipped ground on the exterior of bowls (Wallace 1977:38-39). Estrella exerted much less influence on Nasca 7 pottery than the reverse, yet it is possible that the concept for cumbrous bowls, which start in late Phase 7, and the designs used on them, may have originated in the scalloped geometric designs seen on many Estrella bowls of Chincha and Cañete (Kroeber 1937:plate LXXII; see Kelly 1930 for a more complete analysis of cumbrous bowls).

Other significant changes occur in the latter half of Nasca Phase 7 corresponding to sub-phase 7B/C. The changes I refer to include the disappearance of several traditional shape categories including the popular tall vase, tall head jars, the head-and-spout bottle, and the collared bottle. New shapes that emerge include single-spout-and-handle bot-

bles, face-neck bottles, cumbrous bowls, and goblets (Figure 2). While many traditional Nasca stylistic traits continue in this sub-phase, it is my contention that the major outside influences affecting the style now begin to shift from Moche to Highland sources.

Menzel coined the term "Trancas Strain" to describe highland influences affecting the Nasca style. These influences included background stippling of design areas, black line spirals attached to bars, and special patterns of zigzag lines along with a shift from white to red or black background colors on vessels with flat rather than rounded bottoms (Menzel 1964). While first discovered on pottery from the Trancas tributary of the Nazca River, these influences were widely distributed in the Nazca Valley starting in late Phase 7 but exploding in number and variety in the succeeding Phase 8. Menzel argued that the source of these traits was the highland area near Ayacucho, specifically in the Huarpa style. Huarpa was a local highland style that preceded Tiahuanaco influence in the Ayacucho area. Bennett (1953), Benavides C. (1971), Knobloch (1976, 1983), Lumbreras (1960), and Paulsen (1983) have all worked on Huarpa pottery. Paulsen identifies five "units" or phases of Huarpa pottery. The first three correlate with Nasca Phase 7. Huarpa 1 consists of vessels painted with solid rectangles and narrow parallel framing lines painted in black on a white slip. Huarpa 2 is marked by black and white vessels that contain Nasca Phase 7 elements such as spirals, hooks, and dots. Huarpa 3 adds red paint to the previous black and white, producing what Lumbreras calls Huarpa Tricolor (Paulsen 1983:105-106). Nasca parallels are common. Paulsen (*ibid.*:figure 7a-d) illustrates Huarpa 2 potsherds with "zigzag" motifs which consist of triangular elements formed by a broad line which are then often decorated with small dots or fillers. Although zigzag lines are present in the Nasca style prior to Nasca Phase 7, a number of vessels with motifs similar to the Huarpa examples are found in Phase 7. Bennett (1953:plate 12) illustrates Huarpa pottery with bars and spirals as well as black grid designs, all of which can also be seen on Nasca pottery of Phase 7 (Figure 24). The use of triangular elements filled with dots as

illustrated by Benavides C. (1971:lámina 4) is also shared with Nasca. Finally, the shift to darker backgrounds, specifically red and black, can also be attributed to highland influences according to Menzel.

The case for Huarpa influence on Nasca during the latter half of Phase 7 is not nearly as strong or convincing as the case for Moche influence during the first half of the phase. However, highland influences continue to grow much stronger in Nasca Phases 8 and 9 when the interaction of coast and highlands increases. It would appear that the first contacts with the Ayacucho area occurred toward the end of Phase 7 with the result that some Huarpa traits diffused to the coast and were incorporated into the Nasca style. As Nasca power waned in Phase 8, these foreign elements from the highlands became more prestigious and consequently more frequent on Nasca ceramics. Although Moche influence diminishes greatly in Nasca Phase 7B/C, it can still be seen in the sudden introduction of two new shape categories which are very characteristic of the north coast: the single-spout-and-handle bottle and the face-neck bottle.

Other foreign traits from yet to be determined sources also appear on Nasca pottery during Phase 7, further complicating the scenario just presented. These include depictions of some humans in unusual masks (Figures 16 and 18), others dressed in mummy-like shrouds (Figures 22 and 25), and a wide range of geometric designs with few antecedents in the style. An investigation of these traits will be the subject of another paper.

Conclusions

Nasca Phase 7 was a volatile time both with respect to the expansion of Nasca influence over a wide area, perhaps by military means, and in terms of the great amount of innovation seen in its ceramic style. I have argued that the primary source of this innovation was the Moche Culture of northern Peru, which either directly or indirectly influenced the Nazca region, and I believe that the motivation for the acceptance of the new traits was probably based on prestige. Although local innovation is present to a limited extent,

it does not account for the broad range of new traits that begin suddenly in Phase 7. While Moche influence continues through most of Phase 7, it was strongest in Phase 7A. During the latter half of Phase 7, new influences begin to be seen in the Nasca style, this time coming from the highland area near Ayacucho which was now in direct contact with the coast. Further research is necessary to clarify the degree and nature of these outside contacts.

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List of Figures (see following pages):

Figure 1. Map of the south coast of Peru showing the extent of Nasca influence during Phase 7. Modified from Menzel (1977:map 2b).

Figure 2. Chart showing changes in major shape categories from Phase 6 to Phase 8. Most outline drawings taken with permission from an unpublished paper by Steven Wegner entitled "An Analysis of Vessel Shapes and Shape Changes in Phases 6 Through 9 of the Nasca Sequence" (1975).

Figure 3. Nasca Phase 3 bowl painted with a typical frontal facing warrior. American Museum of Natural History specimen 41.2/7988.

Figure 4. Nasca Phase 5 warrior in profile view holding spears, a *bola*, and an *atlatl* on which is perched a parrot. After Seler (1923: figure 134).

Figure 5. Nasca Phase 7 double-spout flask with "Feather Staff" warrior. Note the running position of the legs, the attempt to show terrain between the legs, the crested helmet, the round headed club, and the "floating" objects in the background.

Figure 6. Painting of warriors from a Moche IV bottle depicting the running stance, terrain between the legs, rounded helmet, and "floating" elements. After Kutscher (1983:figure 98).

Figure 7. Close-up of Nasca Phase 7 "Feather Staff" warrior. Compare with Moche example in Figure 8. Museum of the American Indian 11/2758.

Figure 8. Moche IV warrior with features similar to the Nasca example in Figure 7. After Kutscher (1983:figure 81).

Figure 9. Nasca Phase 7 running warrior. Compare liver-shaped "floating" element, the form of the headdress, and the spotted "terrain" between the legs with similar elements on the Moche example in Figure 10. After Lavalley (1986:164).

Figure 10. Moche IV warrior with traits similar to the Nasca example in Figure 9. After Donnan (1976: figure 37).

Figure 11. Nasca Phase 7 vase painted with "Feather Staff" warriors in a mountainous terrain. Private Collection.

Figure 12. Moche IV/V warriors in motion over a mountainous terrain. After Kutscher (1983:figure 94).

Figure 13. Nasca Phase 7 vase with battle scene. Note the differing use of body colors and features which I am arguing are local innovations in the Nasca region. After Carmichael (1988:figure 19). Drawing by Elizabeth LeMoine. Field Museum of Natural History specimen 171355.

Figure 14. Nasca Phase 7 vessel depicting a decapitated prisoner of war whose body is being devoured by birds. Compare with Moche IV example in Figure 15. After Lavalley (1986:166).

Figure 15. Moche IV painting of a dead prisoner being consumed by birds. Compare with Nasca example in Figure 14. After Kutscher (1983:figure 121).

Figure 16. Nasca 7 double-spout bottle with unusual scene of a masked figure holding Moche style copper knives, strange birds, and trophy heads in a cache. After Lapiner (1976:figure 513).

Figure 17. Moche IV mythical warrior holding a trophy head in one hand and a copper decapitating knife in the other. Compare with Nasca example in Figure 16. After Kutscher (1983:figure 219).

Figure 18. Detail of a scene on a Nasca Phase 7 double-spout bottle portraying a ritual scene with a masked figure and a cache of trophy heads beneath a pyramid. Lima, Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología, specimen C-13466.

Figure 19. Nasca Phase 7 stirrup-spout bottle obviously copied from a Moche prototype but decorated with a typical Nasca 7 geometric motif. Lima, Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología, specimen C-4977.

Figure 20. Painting of a Moche V(?) totora reed boat with several passengers and a cargo of pottery vessels. After Kutscher (1983:figure 318A).

Figure 21. Nasca style sherds (Phase 7) from the site of Cerro del Oro in the Cañete Valley. After Kroeber (1937:plate 72-2).

Figure 22. Nasca style head-and-spout bottle from Cerro del Oro, Cañete Valley. After Kroeber (1937:plate 73-4).

Figure 23. Nasca style figurines from the site of Cerro del Oro, Cañete Valley. After Kroeber (1937:plate 70-3 and 4).

Figure 24. Nasca Phase 7 bottle with Huarpa influenced motif in the form of bars with attached spiral elements. Berlin, Museum für Völkerkunde specimen VA 50713.

Figure 25. Nasca Phase 7 vessel painted with human figures exhibiting foreign influences of unknown origin. Lima, Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología, specimen C-10128.

Fig. 1

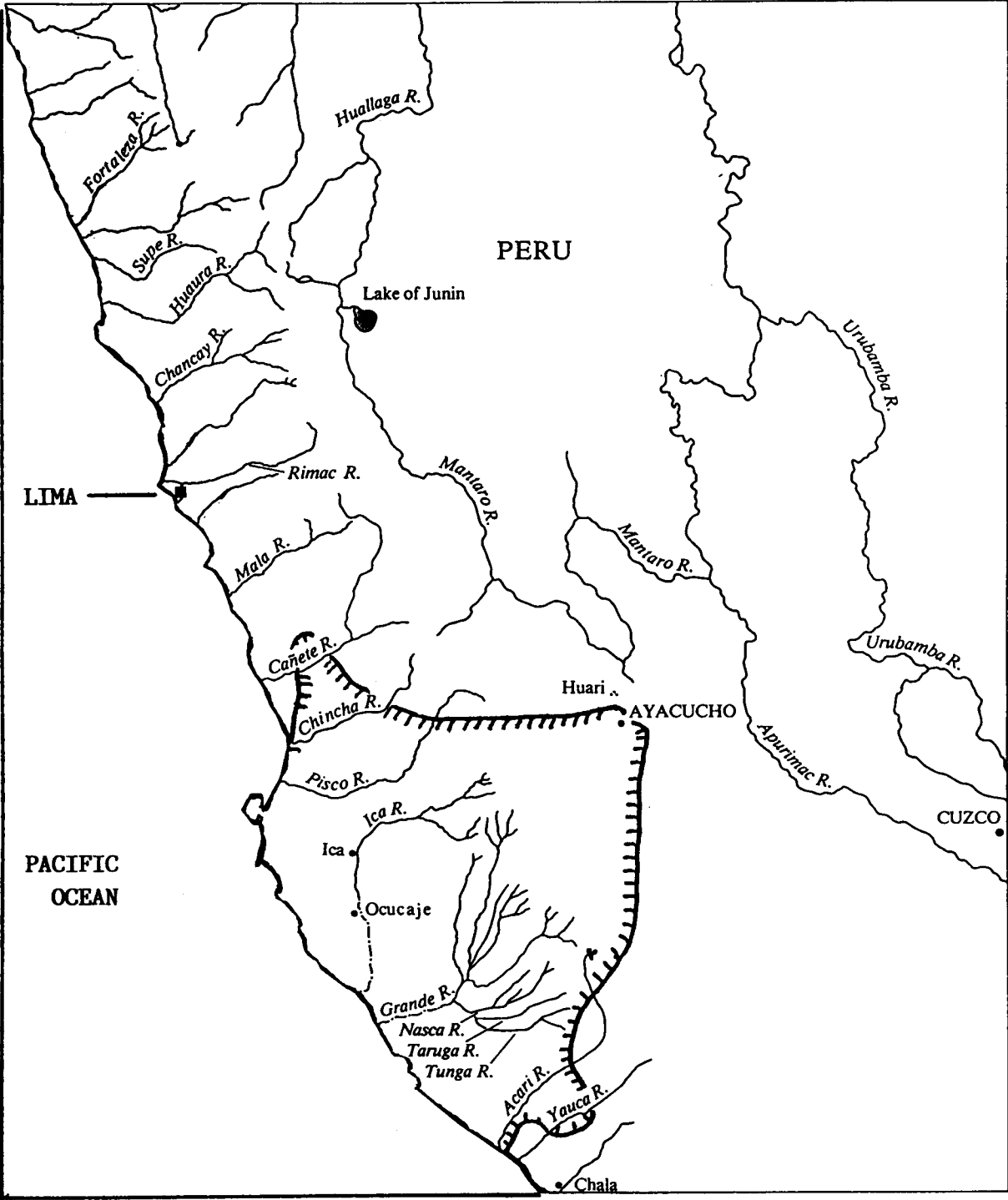
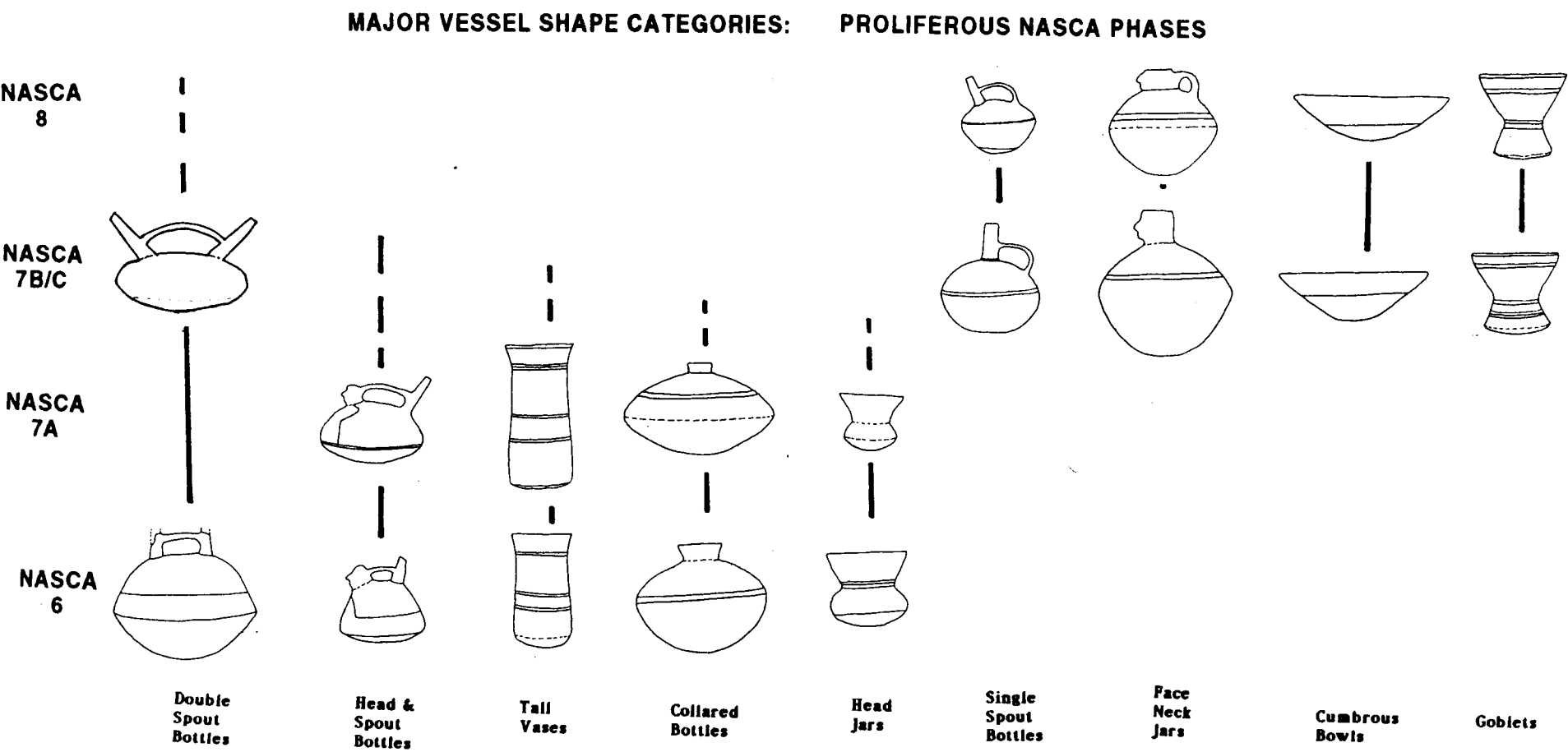


Fig. 2





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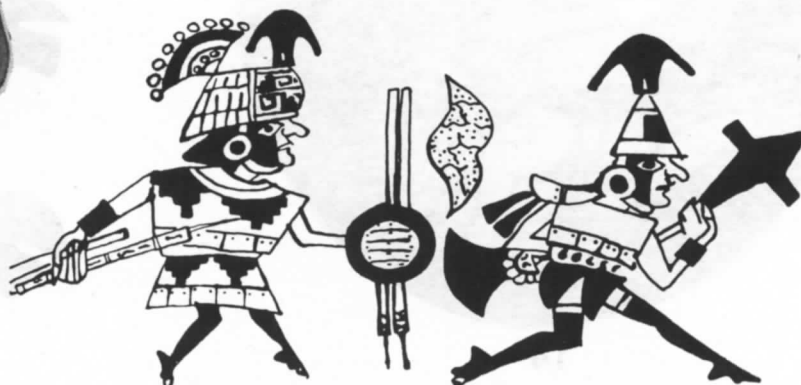
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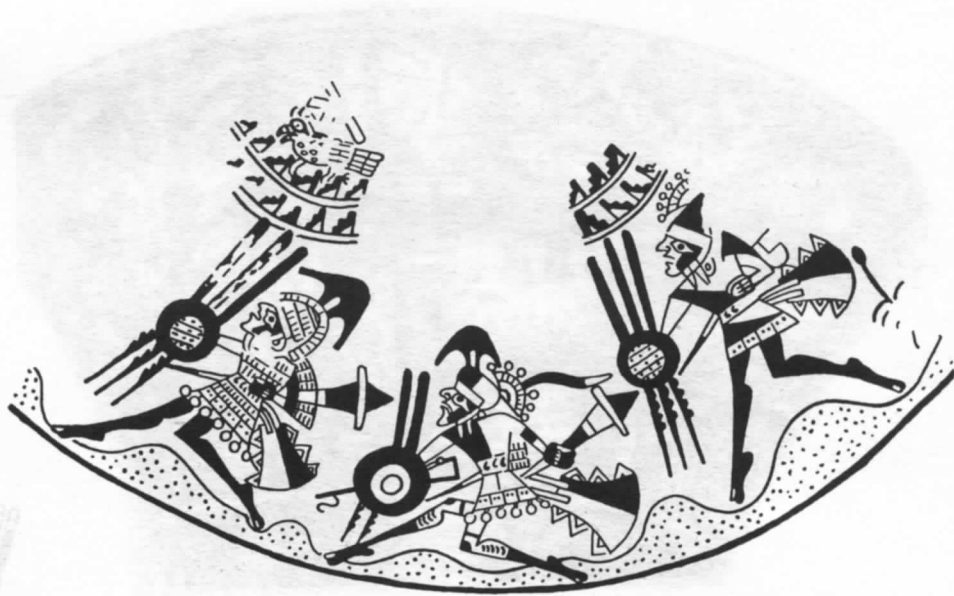
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