

BODILESS HUMAN HEADS IN PARACAS NECROPOLIS TEXTILE ICONOGRAPHY

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Introduction

Depictions of bodiless human heads are omnipresent in Paracas Necrópolis textile iconography. Most commonly they are either held in, or hang from, the hands of figures whose arms are outstretched. They also are shown suspended from elbows, positioned at the mouth and in front of the torso, attached to heads of whole figures, placed at the ankles or in the feet, depicted in and at the edges of costumes, set in containers carried on the backs of anthropomorphs, hung from staffs, and affixed as terminators to hair as well as to various tape-like appendages that emanate from heads and bodies. Images of bodiless heads also appear by themselves embroidered on the borders, fields, and tabs of weavings. They are associated with many different iconographic types, including supernatural beings, human representations, and zoomorphic images (see Figures 1-11). What are the messages that these heads convey?

The over 300 images that comprise the sample for this study are embroidered on ancient textiles that come from funerary bundles excavated from a cemetery called the Necrópolis of Wari Kayan on the Paracas Peninsula, between the Pisco and Ica River Valleys on the south coast of Peru.¹ These weavings were

made for, and buried with, certain members of Paracas/Topará society; the earliest bundles interred in the Necrópolis date to Early Horizon epoch 10 and the latest ones to Early Intermediate Period epoch 2, a time extending from roughly 100 BC to 200 AD. During these 300 years Paracas/Topará weavers favored plain weave fabrics embroidered with autonomous and non-interacting figures. While the specific aim of this article is to interpret one particular aspect of Paracas Necrópolis textile iconography—the bodiless head—the discussion will of necessity encompass a more general problem: what can we see and deduce from the iconography, and what can we not?

Bodiless heads in the archaeological record

Some of the depictions of human heads in Paracas Necrópolis textile iconography may allude to actual bodiless heads like those found at several Paracas and Paracas/Topará cemeteries. Kroeber describes and illustrates at least nine human trophy heads that accompanied Paracas burials dug up by looters at an Ocucaje (Ica Valley) cemetery in 1942 (1944:38 and pl. 11).² These heads had been cut in two vertically, with a front half of the skull (excluding the lower jaw) and a rear half. Skin and hair are preserved on the fore portion of each head.

¹ Vestiges of the Paracas and Paracas/Topará cultural traditions are present on the Paracas Peninsula and in numerous south coast valleys and the littorals between, spanning the Early Horizon and the first two epochs of the Early Intermediate Period, ca. 700 BC to 200 AD (see Paul 1991a for a discussion of the relative and absolute chronology of these traditions). There are three burial zones on the peninsula: Cavernas, Arena Blanca, and the

Necrópolis of Wari Kayan.

² Kroeber (1944:146 and pl. 11) identifies these finds at Ocucaje as "Paracas-Cavernas." According to John Rowe (personal communication 1987), Kroeber's description of the burial site sounds like Cerro Max Uhle, named in 1954 by Rowe.

Kroeber does not mention the presence of carrying cords, but in the fuzzy photograph that accompanies the text there appears to be a rope projecting from the forehead area of each head, and the author says that "these are evidently equivalents of trophy heads such as were buried in the Nazca culture" (*ibid.*:38). There apparently are no spines through the lips, a feature often seen in later Nasca trophy heads. While the front portions of the heads retain the skin, the rear halves (each of which includes the foramen magnum and whole occiput) and the loose mandibles were bare bone at the time of their discovery; Kroeber notes that the back sections and mandibles were buried in groups but does not indicate their burial positions relative to the trophy faces, nor does he provide any information on burials, pottery, or anything else found in association with the heads.

A. Pezzia Assereto records a group of thirteen heads buried together in a Paracas cemetery at Cerro de la Cruz, adjacent to Cerro Max Uhle in Ocucaje (1968:100-102; for descriptions of the heads, see Coelho 1972:134-143 and figures 4-8). The backs of the Cerro de la Cruz crania have been cut off, and many of them are missing the mandible. Hair and facial skin are intact, and even the ears are preserved on at least two heads. Five have carrying cords, and most were reported to have been either partially or completely wrapped in at least one layer of cotton cloth before burial.³ While these thirteen heads resemble, in their mask-like preparation, those found by Kroeber, two other allegedly Paracas heads from Ocucaje have complete crania: Pezzia reports that he excavated two heads from a Paracas context at Cerro Max Uhle (1968:99-100; see also Coelho 1972:131-134 and figures 1-3). One of the heads is extremely elongated (as a consequence of cranial deformation) and has a hole for a carrying rope

on the upper forehead. There are no pins through the lips (Pezzia 1968:99 and 102).⁴

Bodiless heads are also reported from the Paracas Peninsula cemeteries (one of which is the source of all of the fabrics studied here). Tello and Mejía Xesspe note that from the Cavernas section of the peninsula came one human skull, minus a body, wrapped in cotton cloth (1979:167), as well as a head that was bandaged with fine cotton cloth and protected on its left side with cotton (the authors say that the presence of a drill hole on this skull is evidence of surgical intervention; *ibid.*:172). Another human head enclosed in a plain textile may have belonged to the incomplete skeleton of an adult that had been wrapped in cotton cloths and buried in the same grave (*ibid.*:223). One fragment of a human cranium with a perforation in its forehead was discovered in a tomb (*ibid.*:222), and another skull with a hole in the forehead "as though it were a Nasca trophy" was found in the discarded backdirt left by looters (*ibid.*:236). Given that the authors suggest that this latter skull may be a trophy head, it is strange that it was found with its skeleton. The bones and skulls from many skeletons were mixed together in the backdirt from illicit looting activity around the Cavernas burial precinct. Around one Cavernas tomb alone Tello's team recovered approximately 100 crania (*ibid.*:118), but it is impossible to say if any of these heads had been buried without their bodies.

³ According to Coelho (1972:140-142), three of the heads are those of children.

⁴ Pezzia (1968:99 and 100) states that heads from Cerro de la Cruz were buried in a "Paracas" cemetery (no information given about associated materials) and that those from Cerro Max Uhle were found in association with "Paracas Cavernas" potsherds. Pezzia's second head from Cerro Max Uhle is not described in detail nor is it illustrated by the author. Coelho (1972: figures 1 and 2) illustrates what she says is this second head, but the same head is published and identified by Proulx as having been found in the Nazca Valley (1971:18). A slide taken in the Museo Regional de Ica by Proulx in 1985 shows the head with a museum label that identifies it as Nasca. Its lips are pinned together with spines; it has a carrying rope extended through a hole in the forehead, and cloth stuffed in the cranial cavity protrudes through the eye sockets.

Yacovleff and Muelle (1932) also excavated bodiless human heads from the Cavernas sector of Cerro Colorado: three crania, each missing the lower jaw and each wrapped in either fiber headpieces or cloth, were present in one tomb, and a child's head covered by a disintegrated cloth was found in another (*ibid.*:34, 41, and figure 23).

In the Arena Blanca zone of the Paracas Peninsula Tello and Mejía mention the presence of many loose crania in an area that had been badly vandalized by looters (1979:286ff.). Because the skeletons had been disturbed prior to scientific excavation there is no way of knowing if there were any bodiless heads. One excavated burial is described, however, as containing the incomplete bones of an adult "with the cranium separated and wrapped in cotton rags, as though at one time it had been removed" (*ibid.*:294). In addition, five loose human heads without lower jaws are reported from other excavated Arena Blanca tombs (*ibid.*:294).

Evidence of bodiless heads from the Necrópolis of Wari Kayan is scanty. Two human heads wrapped in cloth were found next to one of the large Early Intermediate Period epoch 1B bundles during excavations (Tello and Mejía 1979:363), and one human skull, identified as female by those who opened the bundle, was found inside the same bundle along with a complete male skeleton.⁵ In addition, the inventory of objects found in Early Horizon epoch 10B bundle 2 includes a female head (specimen 2-25) which, given its position among the wrappings, I presume to be a supplementary head in the bundle.⁶

⁵ The bundle is number 310, described in detail by Tello and Mejía (1979:362-384) and by Paul (1990:39-46, 99-112, and 137-158). The specimen number of the female skull is 310-77.

⁶ Although there were few bodiless heads found in association with the Necrópolis mummies, it is worth noting that twenty-three of the bundles contained bunches of human hair and/or human hair objects, such as slings, caps, wigs, and cords. Sometimes different colors of hair were found in a single bundle, raising the

In summary, there are fourteen known Paracas heads that were prepared presumably as trophies, all found at Ocucaje. These probably date to Early Horizon 9 or 10. Four additional crania, two from Ocucaje and two from the Paracas Peninsula, might be Paracas trophy heads; those from the Cavernas date to the end of the Early Horizon.⁷ In addition, there are twenty-five Paracas bodiless human heads that were swaddled in fabric and buried apart from their own skeletons (eight from Ocucaje and seventeen from the Paracas Peninsula); sixteen of these date to no later than Early Horizon epoch 10, three date to Early Intermediate Period epoch 1B, and six lack the necessary associations to be assigned a date.

In view of the fact that the three Paracas Peninsula burial zones were used consecutively for approximately 400 years, the number of bodiless heads reported from there is not large, if one assumes that the widespread depictions of bodiless heads in the textile iconography reflect the practices of Paracas/Topará society. While it is conceivable that such heads were buried in as-yet-undiscovered group caches of the sort found in the Ica Valley by Kroeber and Pezzia, the extensive archaeological activity on the peninsula rules against such a find: at least 800 bodies have been scientifically excavated from the peninsula sites, with scores of others dug up and discarded by looters. The archaeological data must be taken into account in any interpretation of the textile iconography. We need to consider the possibility that the multiplicity of bodiless heads in the textile iconography does not mirror actual customs, or that they are not

possibility that hair from persons other than the one in the bundle was buried with the body. Given the magical connotations of hair (see Paul 1983:46-48), I wonder if hair could have been an equivalent of, and substitute for, human heads.

⁷ Pezzia's description of the context of the two heads that he found at Cerro Max Uhle is too vague to be entirely trustworthy as to their Paracas cultural affiliation, and Tello and Mejía's description of two Paracas skulls from the Paracas Peninsula does not clearly affirm that they are trophy heads.

depictions of real heads. Furthermore, the fact that Paracas bodiless heads from archaeological sites include both trophy heads and heads that were wrapped and buried apart from the rest of the skeleton (but not prepared as trophies) bears directly on the analysis of the images stitched on cloth.

How do we choose our terminology?

The representations of bodiless heads in Paracas Necrópolis iconography frequently have been identified uniformly as trophy heads. A human head that is a "trophy" is by implication something taken aggressively in some sort of combat situation, or in the course of a sneak attack or ambush, or during a ritual battle. The use of this term can be traced back to the early part of this century, when representations of human heads painted on south coast Nasca pottery were described as "trophy-like" by Uhle (1906:586).⁸ Referring to Nasca ceramic vessels found in the Ica and Nazca Valleys, Uhle observed that painted representations of human heads had their mouths sealed shut like the *tsanta* of the Jívaro (1909:10 and 1911:263; paper presented in 1908). Uhle, writing in 1911, (1914:11) also described actual heads that he apparently saw while traveling in the Pisco and Chíncha Valleys: "This ancient people also had the custom of suspending the heads of slain enemies in the manner of trophies, in some instances the back part of the skull was cut off, leaving a mask-like face, which had a hole cut through the frontal bone for suspension."⁹ Uhle

supposed that such heads were trophies of war and employed the term "trophy head" in this article.¹⁰

Another early scholar who used the term "trophy head" is Eduard Seler. Referring to Nasca ceramic iconography, Seler (1916:185-86) says that the image of a hand-held human head with two thorns through its lips is that of a captured enemy. He compares it to Mundurucú and Jívaro prepared heads, calling the painted representation a "dance head" and noting that such "dance heads" with pinned lips have been found in Nasca cemeteries. In a later publication Seler talks about "trophy heads" in reference to images on both Nasca pottery and on Paracas Necrópolis textiles (1961 [1923]:294-95, 297-98, and figure 264).

The first person to use the term "trophy head" for Nasca depictions may have been Tello. In a paper written in 1915 for the Pan American Scientific Congress, Tello discusses mummified human trophy heads found in Nasca cemeteries (1917:286-87) and identifies images on a Nasca painted vessel as trophy heads (*ibid.*:289). However, in a slightly later article on the use of prepared human heads and their representation in ancient Andean art, Tello avoids the expression "trophy head" (1918). Noting that the Mundurucú of Brazil prepared and guarded not only the heads of their enemies, but also the heads of their own chiefs and relatives, Tello adopts a more neutral terminology. He refers to Nasca prepared heads with

⁸ Uhle's term is "trophäenartiger menschlicher Köpfe". Silverman (1993:218) states that "the term 'trophy head' was coined by Max Uhle (1901), who considered the depiction of severed heads in ancient Peruvian art to correspond to trophies of warfare." See also Browne *et al.* (1993:275). Uhle's 1901 article on skull deformation of Peruvian mummies does not, however, mention trophy heads, but see note 10.

⁹ Although he did not identify them as such (given the early date at which he was writing, before the identification of Paracas culture), Uhle may have been describing Paracas heads: the "mask-like" method of preparation sounds like that used for the heads found by

Kroeber and Pezzia.

¹⁰ Uhle states, "We also find simple naturalistic scenes represented among the designs upon this pottery, such as a hunt for vicuñas with arrows, while the animal is grazing between the cacti of the mountain side; or we see a sort of scaffolding from which are suspended a row of trophy heads; or there is a graded temple-pyramid, in the interior of which are deposited the skulls of the human sacrifices, while on one side the priest with the sacrificial knife in his hand is ascending the grades to sacrifice an animal, and on the other side an individual appears to be dancing" (p. 14). The author and the editors of *Andean Past* are grateful to Helaine Silverman for pointing out this.

carrying ropes and spines through the lips as artificially mummified human heads (*Ibid.*:504-06); representations of bodiless heads on Nasca ceramics and Paracas Necrópolis textiles are identified as human heads, mummified heads, or shrunken heads (*Ibid.*:513, 526, figure 8, and plate XI).

While Tello's avoidance of the term "trophy head" even for depictions of heads with carrying cords, pinned lips, and closed eyes may be overly cautious, his judicious use of language in 1918 should serve as a model for how we create our terminology today. The care with which he chose his words bears directly on this discussion of Paracas Necrópolis textile iconography. Implicit in the term "trophy head" is the assumption that the source of the head was an enemy taken through aggressive action.¹¹ This identification in turn has been the premise for the classification of certain figures as warriors—the persons responsible for taking the heads.

Mead was likely the first author to suggest that Paracas Necrópolis embroidered anthropomorphic figures carrying heads represent warriors. In the caption for an illustration of a mantle in the American Museum of Natural History he writes that "the warrior depicted carries over his shoulder two heads of enemies" (1916:388). It is the identification of the heads as those of enemies that led to the warrior attribution, and not vice versa, for there are no other attributes that unequivocally validate the warrior identification. In a later and much more influential article on Nasca iconography (which shares certain themes with Paracas Necrópolis iconography), Seler (1961 [1923]) relates Nasca depictions of figures toting trophy heads to warriors (the pieces illustrated are Nasca 3 to 5). Some of the depictions of his supernatural "Cat Demon"—those holding trophy heads and usually wielding clubs or else associated with arrows—are identified as warriors, perhaps

based on analogy with a Nasca 4 or 5 vessel depicting a combat-related scene with human participants (*ibid.*:figure 137). Several other scholars have referred to the presence of warriors or warrior-like figures in Paracas Necrópolis iconography, based on the depiction of clubs, darts, spears, and knives that are presumed to be weapons and, in some cases, on the association of such implements with bodiless heads (Dwyer 1979: figure 15; King 1965: 340 and figure 80; Peters 1991:298-301; Sawyer 1961:294 and 1997: 37, 45 and figure 23).

The reading of certain figures as warriors with trophy heads has engendered interpretations of the iconography that are questionable in some of their details. For instance, one scholar writes that "the Paracas Culture . . . had a warfare pattern and religious mythology intricately bound to the taking of human heads" (Proulx 1971:16). Another constructs a religious history on the basis of the initial interpretation of the images as trophies of war: "the Cavernas trophy-head cult had apparently provided a ceremonial means of gathering the life- or soul-force of enemies to be used for the benefit of the collector group" (Sawyer 1966:122) and "the warlike trophy-head cult of the 'Cavernas' was being altered and extended to direct the life force gathered from fallen enemies toward the assurance of successful agriculture" (Sawyer 1972: 110).

The inference that some depictions of bodiless human heads and the figures who hold them are connected with warfare is not supported by the Paracas Necrópolis textile iconography examined here. While depictions of fighting and its aftermath, as well as identifiable warriors, are present in the art of some ancient Andean cultures, Paracas Necrópolis textile iconography is different.¹² First, Paracas

¹¹ For a review of the debate over whether bodiless heads from Nasca contexts were war trophies or something else, see Verano (1995:213-218).

¹² There are, for instance, violent battlefield events on a few late Nasca painted ceramic vessels. On one Nasca 8 example, knife-wielding humans sever the bloody heads of the defeated (Museums of the Andes 1981:67; see also Lapiner 1976: figures 496, 497, and 501 and Townsend 1985: figure 16). Depictions of violent combat and its

Necrópolis representations are non-narrative. The isolated, individual embroidered figures do not interact in an anecdotal way with other images: there are no "scenes" of fighting (nor of anything else) in Paracas Necrópolis art. Second, in the absence of depictions of belligerent encounters, there is no iconographic context to help establish the identity—through battle paraphernalia such as weapons or costume—of figures that may be combatants. This fact poses a problem for the interpretation of the iconography: is it actually possible to recognize a depiction of a Paracas/Topará warrior? Because the warrior attribution has been based on the presence of either trophy heads or implements that might be weapons, or on an association between the two, it is relevant to ask what might be the attributes, if any, of combat.

The most common implement carried by embroidered Paracas Necrópolis anthropomorphic images is a knife, usually single-bladed but sometimes with a blade at each end of the handle (see, for instance, Paul 1990:figures 7.11 and 7.12). These resemble real Paracas/Topará knives, which have a wooden handle with an obsidian point inserted into a slit in one or both ends, wrapped securely in place (Tello and Mejía 1979:figures 20, 39, and 68). Another potential short-range Paracas/Topará weapon is a club with a stone head that may be either round, ovoid, or with protruding points (Tello and Mejía *Ibid.*: figure 20). These are found in several Necrópolis funerary bundles, but appear rarely in the textile imagery. Fiber slings are common in the bundles (see Yacovleff and Muelle 1934: 113) and are depicted in the art,

outcome appear in grisly detail in the art and architecture of several other ancient Andean cultures as well. The sculptural reliefs on the temple of Cerro Sechín (Burger 1992:77-80), for example, show helmeted human figures surrounded by images of decapitated heads, human bodies cut in half, spinal columns, disemboweled intestinal tracts, and eyeballs. Painted narrative scenes of actual fighting, showing warriors in combat, sometimes grabbing opponents by their hair or hitting them with clubs, occur frequently on Moche pottery (Alva and Donnan 1993: figures 137, 138, 139, and 146; Donnan 1976: figures 21, 22, 36, and 96).

where they are recognized by the two long straps attached to either end of a doubled stone rest (see Paul 1990:figure 7.58). Spears, with or without feathering, are represented in the hands of many figures (Paul 1991b: figures 5.4 and 5.5). Both spearthrowers and spears or darts were found at the Paracas Peninsula sites, including in association with the Necrópolis funerary bundles (Tello and Mejía 1979:figures 40, 68, and 91); spears and darts are depicted in the embroideries.¹³ Because these implements are never shown in use in the textile iconography, their presence alone is not proof that the figure who holds them represents a combatant. While they could have been used effectively against human enemies, they also may have been hunting or fishing implements.¹⁴ Many of the anthropomorphic figures who carry human heads and the above implements also carry other conceivably ceremonial paraphernalia, such as banded staffs, staffs with bells or other appendages, and feather fans.

¹³ Paracas knives and parts of knives (obsidian points and handles) were recovered from Necrópolis bundles 2 and 290.

Clubs or parts of clubs were found in bundles 49, 91, 94, 157, 190, 254, 392, 401, and 421. Embroidered depictions of figures holding clubs are present on the following textiles: American Museum of Natural History, accession number 41.0/1500 (Mead 1916:388 and Paul 1999:figure 1); Museo de Arqueología de la Universidad Mayor de San Marcos, Lima, accession number not known (Lumbreras 1974:figure 102); the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, accession number 21.2563 (Stone-Miller 1992:plate 7); Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología, e Historia del Perú, Lima, specimen 290-53.

The following bundles contained slings: 2, 39, 49, 89, 91, 147, 157, 190, 217, 253, 262, 290, 310, 318, 347, 355, 364, 382, 392, 401, 421, 438, and 451.

Spears were among the contents of bundles 91, 147, and 157.

¹⁴ According to Yacovleff and Muelle (1934:114), the slings recovered from the bundles could not have been used as weapons because, among other technical reasons, they were too short.

Peters (1997:814ff.) discusses the tools represented in the embroidered imagery, observing that "the objects and tools associated with the daily life for most people and with the production of the burial offerings themselves are not represented" (*ibid.*:819).

Apart from explicit depictions of weapons, is there any other way to identify a warrior in the textile iconography? Is it possible to identify the types of costume depictions that might be indicative of combatant status? The archaeological record reveals that not much in the way of defensive apparel was buried with the Paracas/Topará dead at Necrópolis. Pieces of deerskin hide that may have been used as armor were present in several bundles and five hide shields were found in association with the bodies excavated from the Paracas Peninsula sites; no helmets or ear protectors have been reported.¹⁵ There are no clear representations in Paracas Necrópolis art of helmets, ear protectors, shields or anything else that looks like special protective clothing. Figures often wear simple caps and/or elaborate headdresses, but there is no depiction of a figure wearing a helmet. Hammered gold disks were sometimes attached to the braids of Paracas/Topará men, and these are shown in the textile images; in no case can the ornaments pictured at the side of the head be identified as ear guards. No figure carries anything that could be construed as a shield. It is difficult to know how armor, such as padded tunics, would be distinguished from regular

garments in embroidered depictions.¹⁶ In summary, although apparel and other paraphernalia are depicted in detail in Paracas Necrópolis art and have counterparts in the archaeological record, it is not possible to identify explicit depictions of warriors or of persons who engaged in fighting.

Basically, we know very little about Paracas and Paracas/Topará combat, except that it took place. There is ample evidence that the late Early Horizon was a time of political tension and conflict on the south coast (the archaeological record for the first part of the Early Intermediate Period is less revealing in this respect), but this aspect of life is not reflected in the textile iconography, despite the fact that nearly a quarter of the textiles in this study date to Early Horizon 10.¹⁷ Fighting itself simply was not chosen as a

¹⁵ Yacovleff and Muelle (1934:104-105) describe tunic-sized pieces of deerhide found in pairs in some of the funerary bundles from the Necrópolis precinct on the Paracas Peninsula. Their measurements and the fact that they were found in pairs suggested to those authors that they may have been leather armor, but in no case were the pieces joined together. The authors state: "No se nota vestigios de que los especímenes hubieron estado unidos de algún modo uno con otro, aunque es muy probable que lo estuvieron" (*ibid.*:104).

Tello (1959:illustrated as figure 43 but described in caption number 45) illustrates an object that he calls an "escudo ceremonial" (ceremonial shield), excavated from the Arena Blanca area of the Paracas Peninsula and now in the Museo de Arqueología de la Universidad Mayor de San Marcos in Lima. It is made of cane and deerskin, and measures .80 meters square. The drawing and description are too vague to permit confirmation of this identification. Tello and Mejía (1979:337) describe four shields found in the Necrópolis of Wari Kayan (see also Peters 1997:648 for a discussion of these shields).

¹⁶ Possible examples of cotton armor are known from later north coast cultures. Some Chimú tunics, for example, have unspun cotton placed between two layers of cotton fabric to create a bulky garment that may have repelled some weapons (Rowe 1984:figure 61).

¹⁷ While there are no reported fortified sites on the peninsula and in the nearby Chincha and Pisco Valleys for the time represented by the textiles studied here, there are such Early Horizon 9 and 10 sites in the Ica Valley. The E.H. 9 Paracas Peña de Tajahuana site is fortified and in a defensible location (Rowe 1963:9). This is a large habitation site with a ditch and several parallel walls on the side away from the valley (John Rowe, personal communication 1986; Massey 1991:328). Animas Altas is also an E.H. 9 site. The site was defended on one side by a tall wall (Massey 1991:323). Massey states (1986:298-301) that there is evidence of a military conquest of Animas Altas at the end of E.H. 9. A different reading of the site is provided by Lisa DeLeonardis (personal communication 1999). She thinks that because Animas Altas "is situated on a flat, open plain . . . and completely accessible" it was not fortified, site, even though it may have been partially walled. There is an E.H. 10 fortified habitation site in the Ica Valley, atop Cerro Prieto (J. Rowe, personal communication 1986); Lanning (1960:449) implies that many large obsidian projectile points were present at the site and that they are evidence of warfare. Massey reports that there were a number of small E.H.10 sites "located in defensible positions in areas of steep slope, hill crests and small ravines" (1986:303). There are no descriptions of fortified settlements nor of settlements on defensible hilltops in the valley during epochs 1 and 2 of the E.I.P.

subject for textile iconography, even though it may have been important to the people who made the textiles. The fact that there is no depictive evidence of warfare in Paracas Necrópolis iconography clearly bears on the interpretation of the bodiless heads in the textile imagery.

Interpretation of the iconography

If there is no basis for defining an iconographic type of "warrior" with trophy heads, and if there is no evidence that the images are referents to bellicose behavior, how do we explain the preponderance of bodiless heads? In order to begin to answer this question, it is essential to turn to the embroidered images themselves. A careful examination of all of the bodiless human heads depicted in several embroidery styles on the textiles from the Necrópolis bundles shows that not all depictions are alike: there are two discrete ways to represent them. While almost all heads are depicted from the front with their eyes open (there is a single head shown in profile), there are distinctions made in certain details at the tops of heads. A "Type A" bodiless head is one portrayed with a narrow suspension cord extending from the top of the cranium, often with hair hanging down below the bottom of the head (Figures 2, 4, 7, and 11). The carrying cord may be embroidered in a color different from that of the top of the head or hair, or it may be depicted in the same color; the distinguishing features are its narrow width relative to that of the crown of the head and its position at the top center of the head. Because the linear and broad line styles of formal construction utilize thin and broad lines of stitches to create forms, occasionally it is difficult to say whether or not a suspension cord is represented because the "cord" is the same width as the outline of the head. This usually is not a problem with the easier-to-recognize ropes depicted in the block color style. Type A heads may represent trophy heads like the Paracas archaeological specimens described above. If so, the cord is the *sole* attribute that sustains this identification; no Paracas Necrópolis picture of

a trophy head has spines through the lips in the manner of later Nasca trophy head representations.

Based on these criteria, twenty-five percent of the bodiless-head images can be classified as Type A heads, possibly trophy heads. I call the remaining seventy-five percent "Type B" heads. In the block color style (and occasionally in the linear style) a Type B head has an obvious mass of hair that is usually pulled either over to one side, or straight up and to one side; there is no carrying cord (Figures 1, 6, 8, and 9). When represented in the hand of a figure it seems to be carried by its hair. In the linear and broad line styles the head is suspended from a zigzag "hank" of hair, often with serrated edges, that is normally at least half the width of the crown (Figures 5 and 7). There are often whisker-like protrusions from the cheeks, and sometimes hair is depicted falling below the face.

Taking into account the number of mummy bundles assigned to each time unit in the relative chronology, an examination of the diachronic distribution of the two types of bodiless head depictions shows that there were shifts in preference for one type of bodiless head over the other (see Table 1). Thirty-five percent of the forty-six Necrópolis bundles considered in this study date to Early Horizon 10; the textiles from these have 43 percent of the Type A head images and 18 percent of the Type B head images. Fifty percent of the bundles date to Early Intermediate Period epoch 1; their weavings have 52 percent of the Type A heads and 52 percent of the Type B heads. Fifteen percent of the bundles date to Early Intermediate Period epoch 2; textiles from these have 5 percent of the Type A head images and 30 percent of the depictions of Type B heads. Thus, proportionally there is a moderate preference for renditions of Type A heads on the Early Horizon epoch 10 textiles, and a strong preference for depictions of Type B heads on the Early Intermediate Period epoch 2 specimens.

The archaeological data presented earlier in this paper are too weak to support any conjecture about whether or not these shifts in iconographic preference reflect changing societal customs—preparing heads as trophies versus wrapping bodiless heads in cloth—at different times. Given the fact that the entire sample of textiles examined here comes from the Necrópolis where very few actual bodiless heads were found, we cannot say that the textile iconography "tells us" about real practices. One explanation for the discrepancy between the preponderance of iconographic bodiless heads and the paucity of actual ones in the Paracas Peninsula cemeteries is suggested by the depictions themselves: the scale of bodiless heads relative to the size of figures with whom they appear is always small, with the bodiless head anywhere from 1/10 to 1/2 the size of the head of the principal figure. Because bodiless heads are never represented on a life-size scale, it is possible that these icons are not literal depictions of human heads but rather symbols of the intense concentrations of power in heads. Tello (1918:501) argued over eighty years ago that human heads—as repositories of the vital essence of the living after death—were fetishes, and that because of this they were depicted over and over again in ancient Andean art, conferring supernatural power on those associated with them. The visual evidence from Paracas/Topará culture does not contradict Tello's thesis.

The distinction made here between the two types of bodiless heads seems not to have been a critical one to the persons who produced the images. For example, the images in Figures 12 and 13 are iconographically similar (a winged anthropomorph holds a head), but the first image holds a carrying cord while the second image grasps a hank of hair. Likewise, Figures 14 and 15 represent a similar iconographic type with a bodiless head hanging from the principal figure's hand; the head appears to be suspended by a cord in one image and by a wider zigzag mass that is more like hair in the other depiction. In Paracas Necrópolis textile iconography, at least, Type A and Type B heads appear to be

symbolically interchangeable, with the overriding central idea being one of the collective importance of heads.¹⁸ Clearly human heads carry symbolic weight in the iconography.

While we might presume that Paracas Necrópolis pictures of human heads are endowed with connotations of mysterious and magical powers, it would be more satisfying to push the interpretation of the textile iconography a bit further. Although precise decipherment of these ubiquitous images is beyond our reach, ethnohistorical documents concerning Andean religion and ancestor worship offer tantalizing hints about the kinds of more specific meanings that the heads might communicate.

Over one-third of the Paracas Necrópolis depictions of bodiless heads appear at or near the mouths of whole figures, or are attached to the long tongue appendages of such figures (Figures 16-21). When at the mouth, a head is either held there or seems to stick to the mouth with no visible means of support; often the tongue of the principal figure connects the two as though it is a conduit. These stitched ancient icons mirror the verbal descriptions of a seventeenth century Andean cult of mummified dead ancestors (the cult of *mallkis*) in which a religious specialist summons the persona of a dead human whose spirit or *upani* returns to the living (Frank Salomon, personal communication 1986). The fundamental concept of this cult is that during priestly séances the returning souls or spirits of ancestors would descend and adhere to the officiant so that their speech would pass into his body (Frank Salomon, personal communication 1986, and 1995:323, 336-337). According to Salomon, the nature of what it is that returns when the dead are called upon is "a light, volatile component which contains a

¹⁸ In a lucid article on Nasca iconography, Carmichael notes that today in the Peruvian Andes ancestors' skulls are kept to watch over the fields and protect the harvests, and that the ancient Nasca also retrieved skulls. He suggests that "in the context of fertility there may have been little distinction between ancestral heads and trophy heads" (1994:84).

person's productive, active, fertile, personal qualities... The office of mummy priests is to retrieve it temporarily and reconstitute the ancestor, source of order and vigor among the living" (personal communication 1986).¹⁹

The bodiless head adhering to the mouth or tongue appendage of a whole figure is replaced in several Paracas Necrópolis depictions by a backward-arching anthropomorphic figure with a prominent chest and skeletonized ribs and loose falling hair (Figures 22 and 23). There are also textile renderings of this same figure holding a head to its mouth (Figure 24). This iconographic type has been interpreted as an ecstatic shaman in magical flight to other worlds of the spirits and of the dead (Paul and Turpin 1986). Salomon (personal communication 1986) proposes alternatively that this figure represents not the religious specialist but the returning ancestor adhering to either a mummy or a living shaman.

Could the images of bodiless heads and shamans in the particular iconographic context described above—proximate to the mouths of other images—be symbols of the returning *upani* (or spirit) of the dead? If so, for what was all this ancestral power being harnessed? Many of the Paracas Necrópolis block color style textile figures with bodiless heads at their mouths may depict human impersonators, elaborately costumed dancers who imitated cult images and spirits at religious festivals (see, for instance, Figures 17, 19, and 23). These pictures of bird, feline, fish, and vegetation impersonators reveal

that the ritual obligations of a Paracas/Topará functionary included participation in ceremonies directed toward ensuring the fertility of animals and crops. Soliciting the aid of ancestors in such endeavors would be entirely within an Andean frame of reference. Although relying on ethnohistorical sources as interpretative guides for objects made sixteen centuries earlier is undoubtedly risky, the widespread synchronic and diachronic distribution in the southern Andes of such trait complexes as ancestor worship and bodiless heads implies a certain continuity of religious concepts. Notwithstanding the problems of disjunction (the historical process whereby form and content separate over large spans of time), cultural continuities between the present, the post-Conquest past, and the very distant past do exist in the Andean world.²⁰

Bodiless heads are depicted in many locations other than at mouths, and these, too, may be emblems of concentrated regenerative powers. A number of Paracas textile specialists have written about the symbolic bond between heads (and depictions of heads) and fertility. Sawyer (1972:110ff.), for instance, argues that trophy heads were imbued with a life force that was gathered to ensure successful agriculture, and that the fixation on trophy head depictions is evidence of a preoccupation with agricultural fertility. Peters (1991:311) writes that "agricultural fertility is bound to the image of the trophy head—to be cut, prepared, and planted like a seed". Dwyer (1979:126ff.) suggests that the central idea conveyed by the heads is a metaphorical one, expressing human fertility through an image of agricultural fertility.

¹⁹ For accounts of this cult, see Duviols 1986 and Taylor 1980. The following passage from Duviols (1986:143), translated by Salomon (1995:323), describes the colonial priest Hernando Hacaspoma's contact with *mallquis*: "[In the presence of the ancestors] this witness experienced ecstasy, was deprived of his senses, and heard inside himself that the said *mallqui* was speaking to him . . . having made the sacrifices he embraced the idol Guaman-cama, and he experienced another ecstasy and he said that the *camachen* [forceful spirit] of the said *mallqui ratacurca* [Quechua: adhered to him] and descended to his heart and told him what to do in the matter on which they were consulting him."

²⁰ For instance, it has recently become clear that a distinctive logic underlying numerous domains of contemporary Andean life was present in the Inca past, and was already present in Paracas/Topará culture (Paul 1997). See also DeLeonardis' discussion of the ritual practice of burned offerings (1997:207-209). She places Paracas ritual hearths within the context of a broader Andean tradition, noting that the intentional burning of objects "is a well known tradition in the prehispanic Andes continuous with the present" (*ibid.*:207).

It is possible that bodiless heads embodied all of these concepts, and perhaps others: they are widely distributed in the textile iconography and are not associated with any single element. As the illustrations in this paper show, bodiless heads accompany a diverse range of images. In the most general terms, these depictions connote the pervasive regenerative powers of the ancestral dead. The importance of ancestors in the life of post-Conquest Andeans is well-known through ethnographic accounts, and dates back to very ancient times; the reverence paid to Paracas/Topará dead is abundantly proven by the elaborate burial bundle remains that we study here. When these bundles were placed in the Necrópolis of Wari Kayan on the Paracas Peninsula, their "occupants" became inhabitants of the earth, which along with the neighboring sea contained the vital, generative forces that produced plants and animals, enabling man to survive. Transformed through death into the ancestral spirits residing in the earth, these deceased members of Paracas/Topará society continued to contribute to the well-being of their community. Their life-supporting influence after death is symbolized by the embroidered bodiless heads on the garments that they wore in life and which shrouded them in the grave.

Acknowledgments

My first attempt to write about the depictions of bodiless heads in Paracas Necrópolis iconography dates back many years, when I presented a paper at the 1987 annual meeting of the College Art Association of America. The particular session in which I participated was organized by Mary Miller and was titled *Warfare: Repercussions and Representations in Precolumbian Art*. The papers included in the program were to consider the form, nature, significance, and implications of warfare in pre-Columbian art. My original intentions for the CAA presentation were (1) to try to confirm the identity of bodiless heads as trophy heads; and (2) to isolate the associated "warrior" images in order to explore how they functioned as visual

symbols of one of the social obligations of Paracas/Topará men. I was unable to accomplish either of those objectives. Instead, my findings led me to reconsider the terminology that had been used to describe certain images in Paracas Necrópolis art. I returned to the topic only in 1997, when the informative questions and curiosity of Georges Guille-Escuret stimulated me to reconsider this aspect of Paracas Necrópolis iconography.

When I began tracking down references to real Paracas trophy heads over ten years ago, Donald Proulx kindly answered all of my inquiries and generously provided me with photographs of heads which he had studied. I owe him many thanks. Others offered valuable criticism of the CAA presentation over a decade ago; in particular, I am grateful to Lawrence Dawson, Mary Miller, and John Rowe. For recent readings and comments on the paper published here, I thank Elizabeth P. Benson, Patricia J. Lyon, Susan Niles, Lisa DeLeonardis, and three anonymous reviewers.

Table 1. *Chronological distribution of bodiless head depictions*

	Percentages of each type of head	
	Type A	Type B
16 EH 10 bundles (35% of total N° bundles)	43%	18%
23 EIP 1 bundles (50% of total N° bundles)	52%	52%
7 EIP 2 bundles (15% of total N° bundles)	5%	30%
46 bundles in study	100%	100%

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All of the line drawings and photographs illustrated here are details from embroidered textiles in the collection of the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología, e Historia del Perú, Lima. The information given below includes the garment type of the original textile (some items are today in a fragmentary condition), its specimen number (comprising the number of the bundle followed by the number of the textile within that bundle), and the chronological horizon or period to which the bundle has been assigned. All drawings and photographs are by the author. Drawings are not to scale.

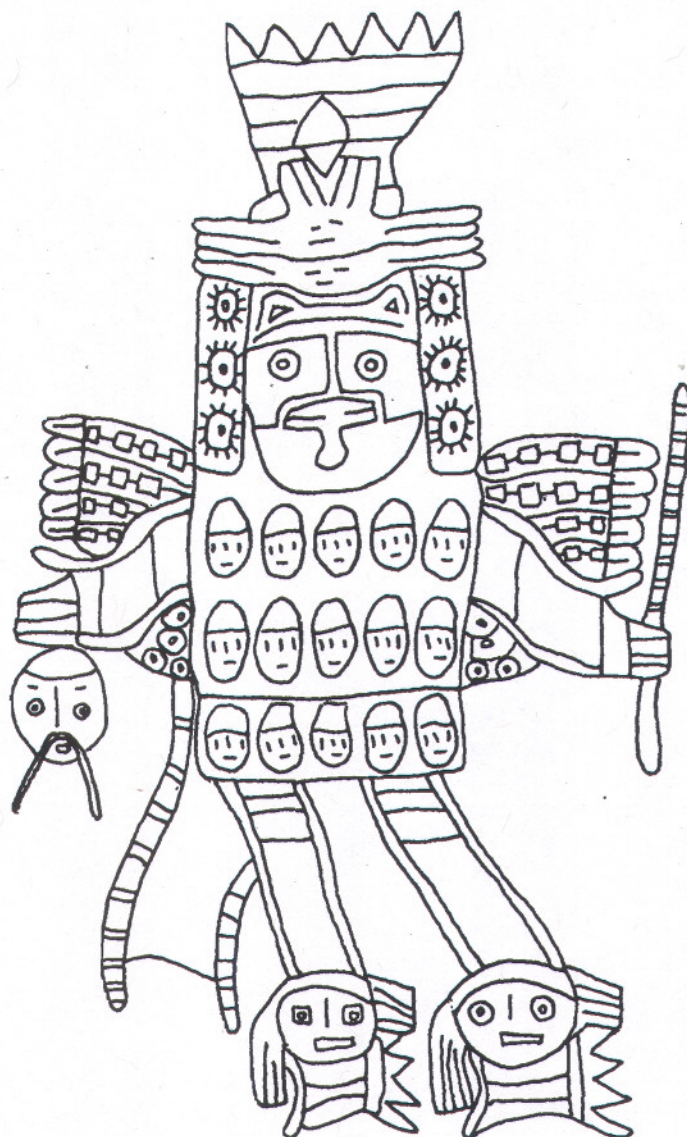


Figure 1. Detail from mantle, 382-10, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1B. Type B heads are present in the hand, on the ankles, and on the tunic.

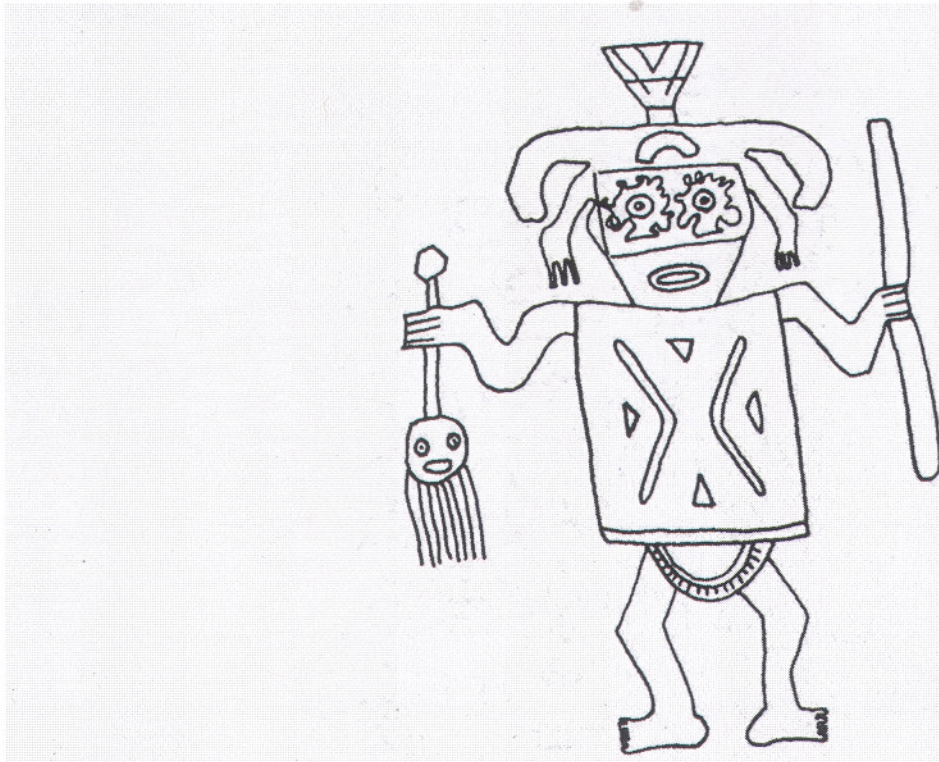


Figure 2. Detail from mantle, 190-17, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1A. The figure grasps a Type A head.

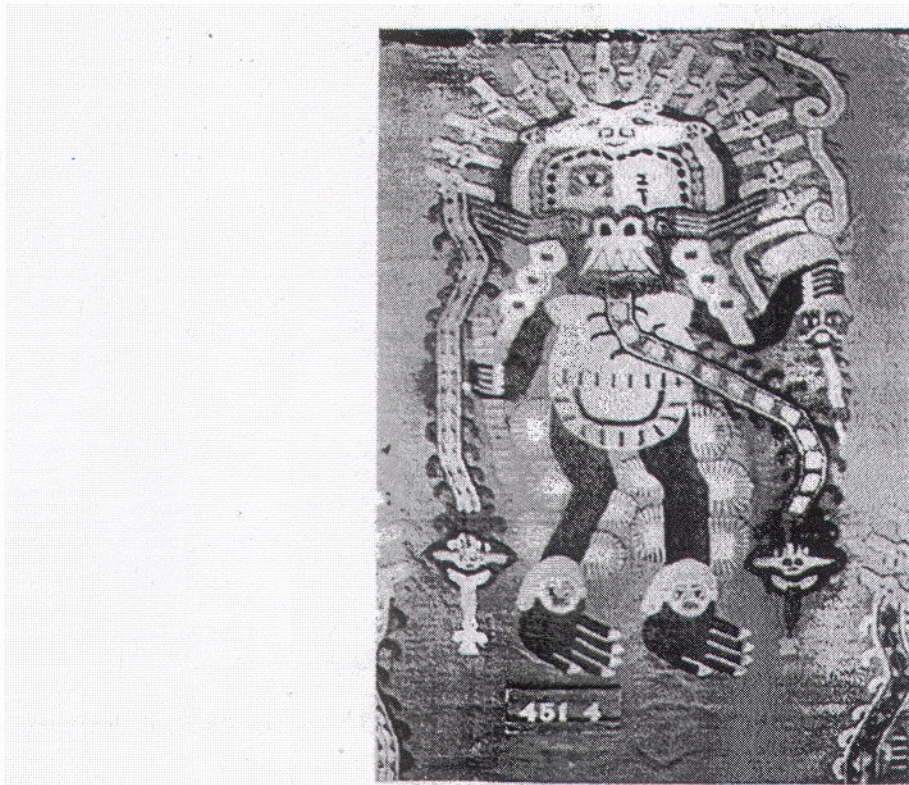


Figure 3. Detail from mantle, 451-4, Early Intermediate Period epoch 2. Type B heads appear in one hand and at the ankles.

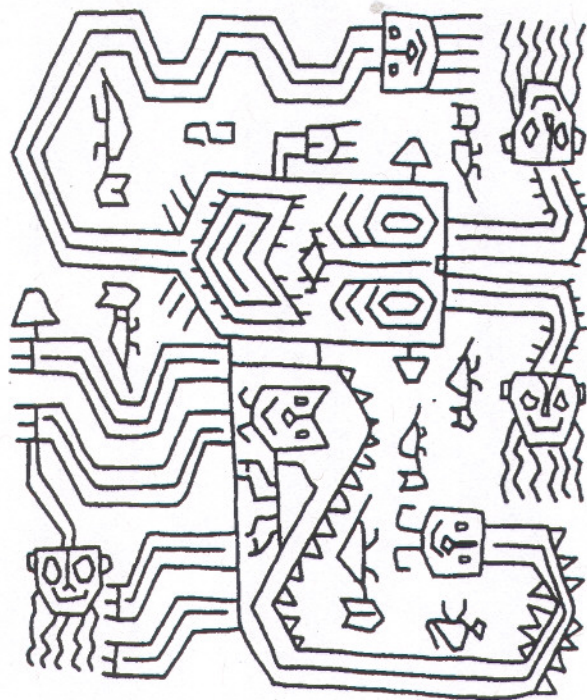


Figure 4. Detail from mantle, 392-4, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1B. A Type A head hangs from one hand while Type B heads terminate the tongue and head appendages.

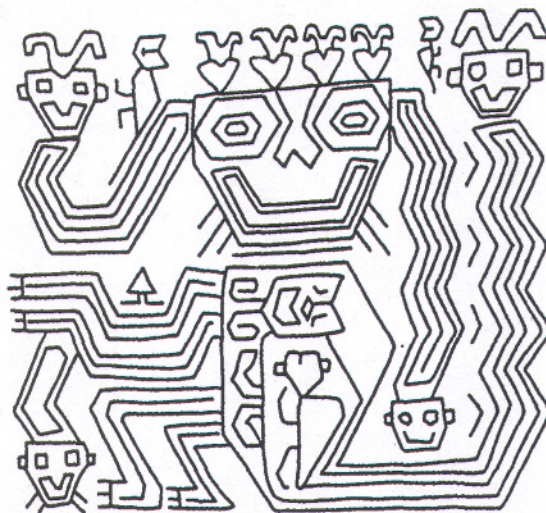


Figure 5. Detail from mantle, 147-40, Early Horizon epoch 10A. Type B heads appear suspended from a hand and at the ends of various appendages.

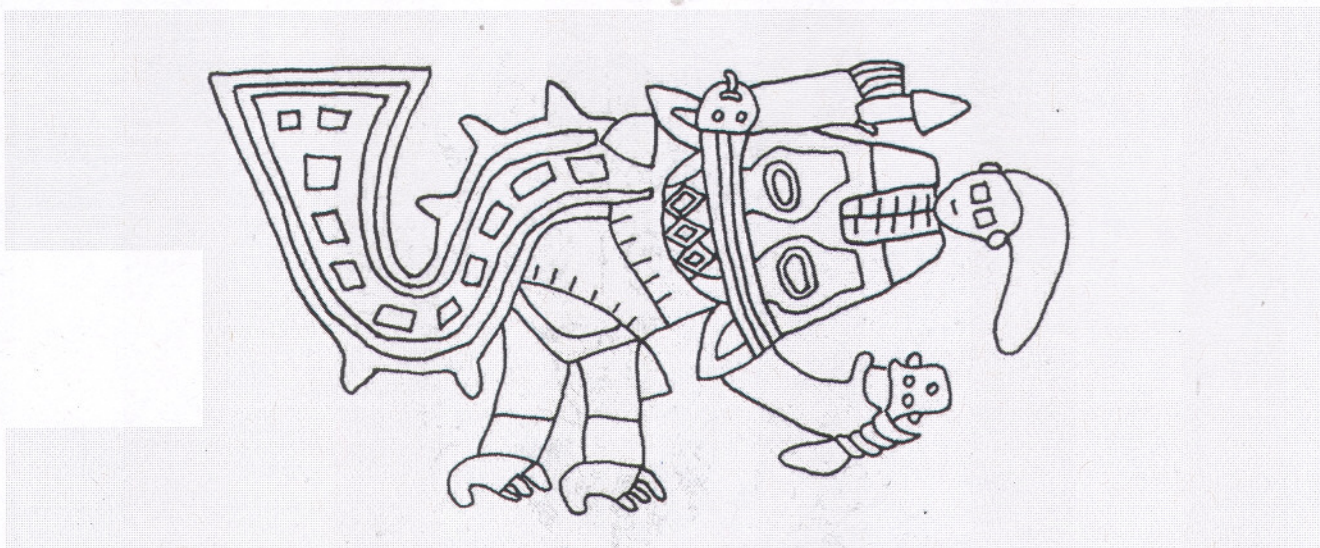


Figure 6. Detail from mantle, 27-6b, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1B. One Type B head is held in the hand and another is stuck to the mouth of the principal figure.



Figure 7. Detail from tunic, 410-192, Early Horizon epoch 10B. One Type A head hangs from an elbow and another issues from the right-hand side of the figure's head; the hair comprises Type B heads.



Figure 8. Detail from mantle, 310-27, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1B. A Type B head is on a net bag.



Figure 9. Detail from poncho, 319-39, Early Intermediate Period epoch 2. Type B heads are attached to staffs.



Figure 10. Detail from poncho, 94-63, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1A. A Type B head appears at the end of a head appendage.



Figure 11. Detail from rectangular cloth (too small to be a mantle, this may be a headcloth), 38-39a, Early Intermediate Period epoch 2. A Type A head is shown in isolation.



Figure 12. Detail from loincloth, 310-58a, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1B. The figure holds a Type A head.

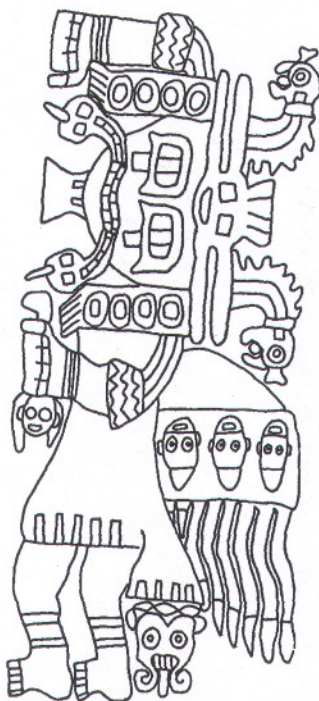


Figure 13. Detail from mantle, 319-56, Early Intermediate Period epoch 2. The figure holds a Type B head by its hair.

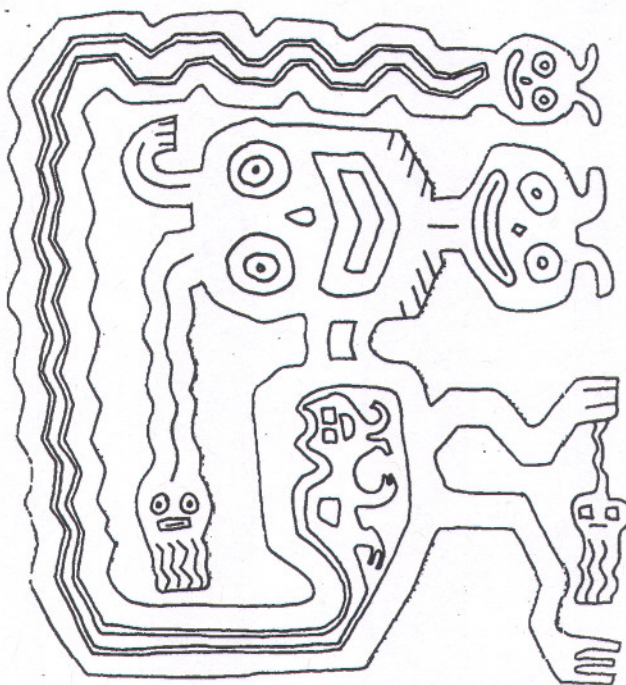


Figure 14. Detail from tunic, 49-34, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1A. A Type A head hangs from the hand of the figure.

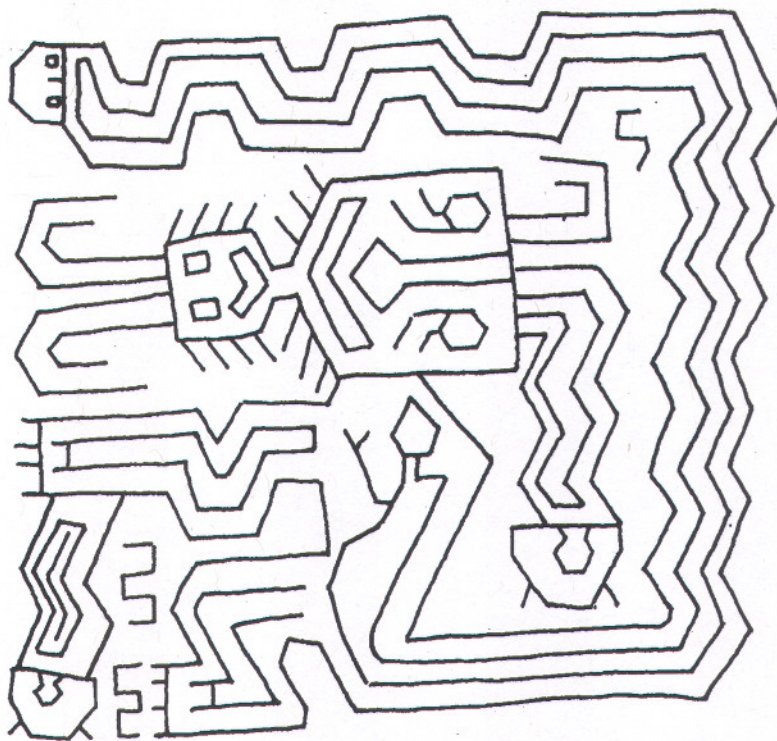


Figure 15. Detail from mantle, 49-56b, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1A. A Type B head hangs from the hand of the figure.

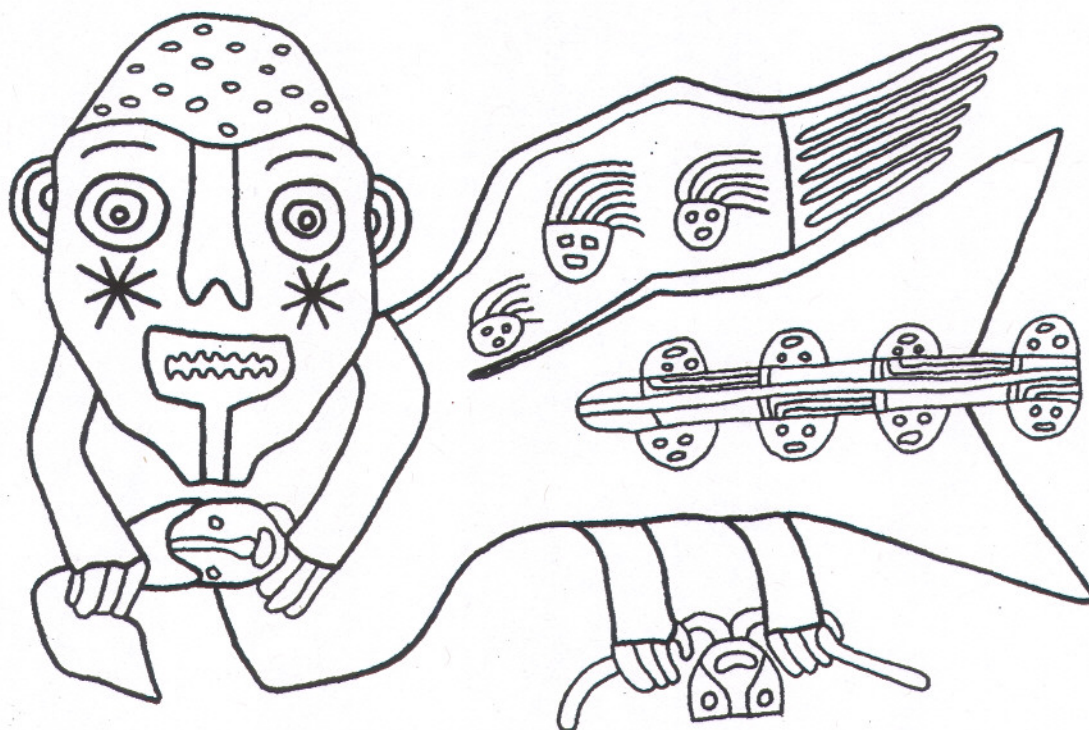


Figure 16. Detail from mantle, 310-24, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1B. A Type B head is held to the mouth.

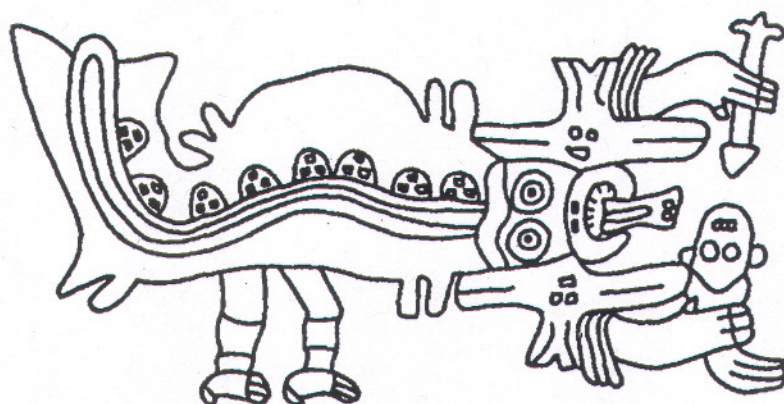


Figure 17. Detail from mantle, 89-16, Early Intermediate Period epochs 1B/2. A Type B head is held in proximity to the mouth.

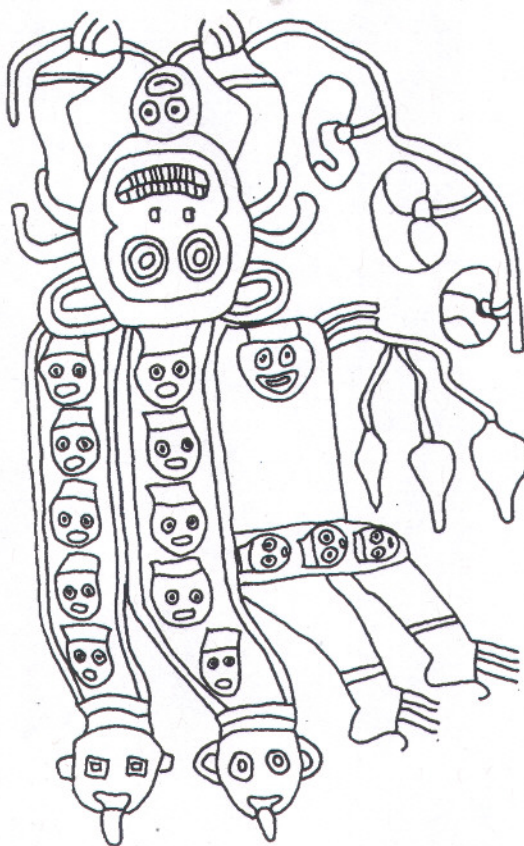


Figure 18. Detail from mantle, 38-46, Early Intermediate Period epoch 2. This figure includes numerous depictions of Type B heads, including one that is held to the mouth.

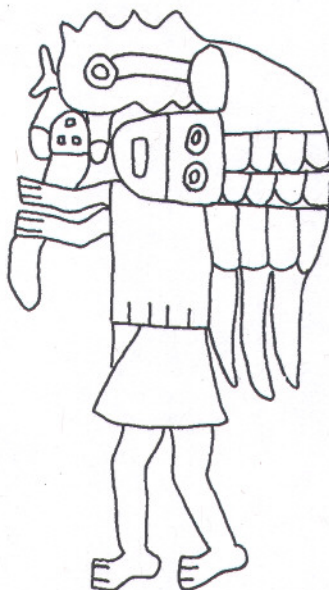


Figure 19. Detail from poncho, 243-23, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1A. A Type B head is in the beak of a condor headdress.

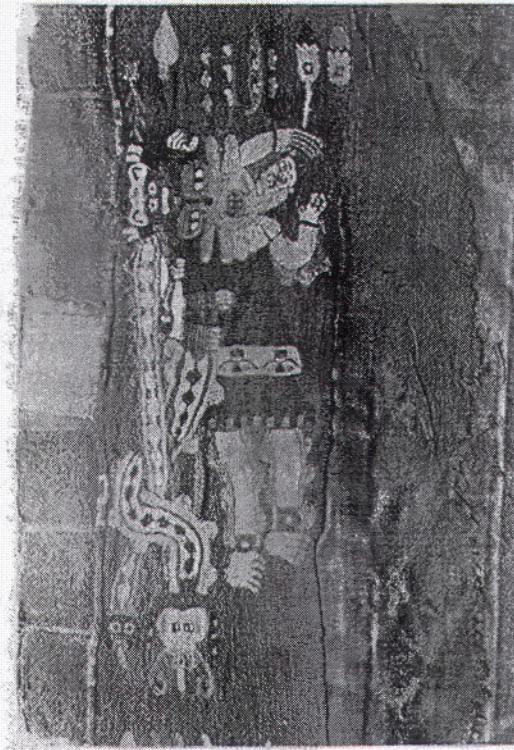


Figure 20. Detail from mantle, 38-37, Early Intermediate Period epoch 2. A Type B head appears at the mouth of the masked figure.

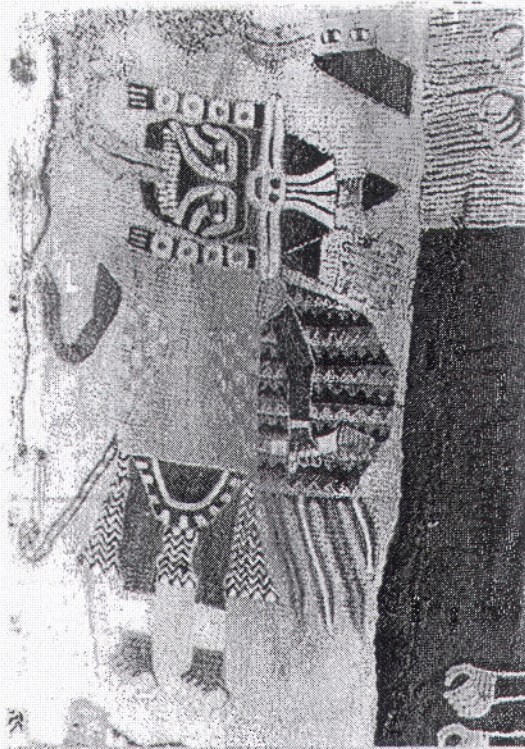


Figure 21. Detail from mantle, 89-14, Early Intermediate Period epochs 1B/2. A Type B head terminates the long tongue appendage of the principal figure.

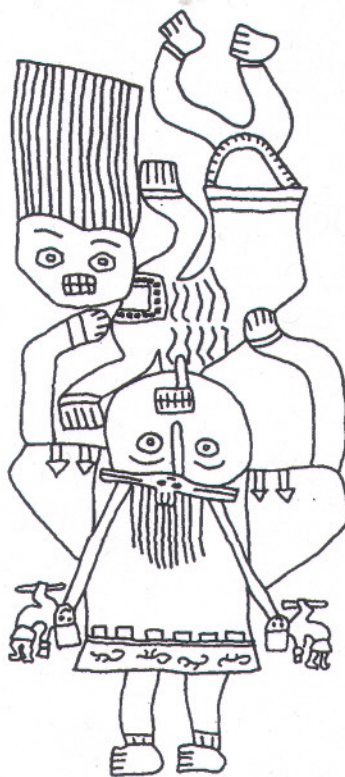


Figure 22. Detail from mantle, 262-15, Early Intermediate Period epoch 1B.



Figure 23. Detail from mantle, 451-29, Early Intermediate Period epoch 2.



Figure 24. Detail from mantle, 253-62, Early-Intermediate Period epoch 2.