

11-13-2017

Lambayeque Textile Iconography and its Continuity in Chimu and Inca Cultures, and its link to modern Ecuadorian Pujilí Corpus Christi Celebrations


Yvonne Fleitman,

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, yvonneft@imj.org.il

Alisa Baginski

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, alisabag@gmail.com

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Fleitman, Yvonne and Baginski, Alisa, "Lambayeque Textile Iconography and its Continuity in Chimu and Inca Cultures, and its link to modern Ecuadorian Pujilí Corpus Christi Celebrations" (2017). *PreColumbian Textile Conference VII / Jornadas de Textiles PreColombinos VII*. 24.

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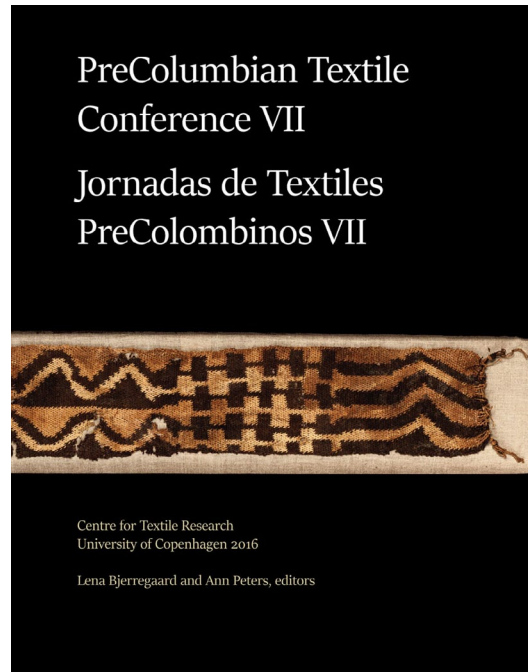
Yvonne Fleitman & Alisa Baginski

In *PreColumbian Textile Conference VII / Jornadas de
Textiles PreColombinos VII*, ed. Lena Bjerregaard
and Ann Peters (Lincoln, NE: Zea Books, 2017), pp.
349–360

doi:10.13014/K2DZ06G6

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Lambayeque Textile Iconography and its Continuity in Chimu and Inca Cultures, and its link to modern Ecuadorian Pujilí Corpus Christi Celebrations

Yvonne Fleitman, Senior Curator; and Alisa Baginski, Textile Historian

Art of the Americas Department, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Abstract

This paper traces the continuity of the iconography and rituals expressed in the textiles of the Late Intermediate Period (900-1470 CE) of the North Coast of Peru.

We suggest a new identification for the Principal Deity of the Lambayeque culture. We propose that this image and its attributes continued to be displayed in ceremonial costumes of the later Chimu culture; that the rituals continued into the Inca Period; through the Colonial evangelization of the Americas; and even into contemporary Corpus Christi processions in Ecuador.

Keywords: Principal Deity of Lambayeque, Andean bear, spectacled bear, Lambayeque iconography, Chimu, Moche arc, bi-cephalic serpent, feathered scepters, Pujilí Dancer, Octavas de Corpus Christi processions

Iconografía textil Lambayeque y su continuidad en las culturas Chimu y Inca, y su vinculación con el Danzante Pujilí en las celebraciones del Corpus Christi Ecuatoriano

Resumen

Este artículo describe la continuidad de la iconografía y los rituales representados en los textiles del Período Intermedio Tardío (900-1470 d.c.) de la Costa Norte del Perú.

Sugerimos una nueva identificación para la Deidad Principal de la cultura Lambayeque. Proponemos que esta imagen y sus atributos continuaron siendo utilizados en trajes ceremoniales de la posterior cultura Chimú; que los rituales continuaron hasta el período Inca; luego durante la época colonial a través de la evangelización de las Américas; e incluso se distinguen en las procesiones contemporáneas de las Octavas de Corpus Christi en Ecuador.

Palabras claves: Deidad Principal Lambayeque, oso andino, oso de anteojos, iconografía Lambayeque, Chimú, arco Moche, serpiente bicéfala, cetros emplumados, el Danzante de Pujilí, Procesiones de la Octava de Corpus Christi.

Introduction

We would like to propose that the image of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque was based on, and developed after, the Andean bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*). This bear, more commonly known as the spectacled bear (*oso de anteojos*), is the only extant bear native to South America – a threatened species spotted in recent years in Ecuador and Peru.

It is estimated that fewer than 3000 exist in the dense Andean jungles¹ of South America. The spectacled bear has a dark body, but the most distinctive feature of the male is the white hourglass pattern on its face. The hourglass pattern runs down from the forehead, encircles the eyes, and broadens over the snout, chin, and chest. The eyes are adorned with concentric black and white circles, resembling eye-glasses, hence the term “spectacled”² (Fig. 1).

1. With the notable exception of the dry forest-scrub habitat in north coastal Peru. See the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ website, accessed March 19, 2017, <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22066/o>.

2. Each bear has its own unique markings, similar to human fingerprints.



Fig. 1. Andean Spectacled Bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*). Photograph © Arco Images GMBH / Alamy Stock Photo

A tapestry textile fragment in the Israel Museum collection depicts a similar frontal black and white face, with spectacled eyes, hourglass nose and gritted teeth, which offers a striking resemblance to the image of a fierce spectacled bear. This image was mistakenly identified as a feline in the past, because the animal was unknown until several decades ago (Fig. 2).

A reconsideration of the image of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque in other textiles is revealing. The attributes present a frontal figure with a very tall headdress, with elaborate crescent-like feather headdress; spectacled eyes (or the so called “comma shaped eyes”); hourglass nose; a tight neckpiece under the chin – reaching up to the ears – in the form of a bicephalic serpent; gritted teeth; sometimes the deity holds one or two scepters.

3. Panels B14.1949 and B14.1950 are fragments from the same loom.

4. The collection of the Museo Regional Arqueológico Enrique Brüning in the city of Lambayeque includes a ceramic vessel representing the Principal Deity of Lambayeque as a zoomorphic figure. See Carol J. Mackey, “Los Dioses que Perdieron los Colmillos,” in Krzysztof Makowski et al. (eds.), *Los Dioses del Antiguo Perú, Vol. 2* (2001), Fig. 8, 118. For images of the same vessel and another virtually identical vessel, see José Antonio de Lavalley, *Lambayeque: Culturas Precolombinas, Colección Arte y Tesoros del Perú*, 1989, 32–33.

5. See Carlos Wester La Torre, *Chornancap: Palacio de una Gobernante y Sacerdotista de la Cultura Lambayeque*. Ministerio de Cultura, Peru, and Brüning National Archaeological Museum, 2016, 309, Fig. 192.



Fig. 2. Fragment with depiction of the Andean Spectacled Bear (*Oso de Anteojos*)

Lambayeque, Peru, 1100–1350 CE
Camelid fiber; tapestry, brocade, 24 x 35 cm
B79.0891 The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

In two textiles of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (IMJ) featuring the Principal Deity of Lambayeque, most of these attributes resembling the bear are depicted³. The spectacled eyes or the so called “comma shaped eyes” may have been inspired by the double lines around the bear’s eyes. Also represented are the hourglass nose, the gritted teeth (Fig. 3); and the neckpiece that resembles the white collar (or pectoral) on the chest of the bear (Fig. 4). To affirm our position, several ceramic bottles of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque shaped in the form of a four-legged bear-like animal are in the collection of the Museo Regional Arqueológico Enrique Brüning,⁴ and cited by Jose Antonio de Lavalley.

The attributes vary according to their material: in funerary metal masks the Deity appears as a broad face with spectacle/“comma shaped eyes” and a prominent nose. The IMJ gold mask (Fig. 5) has at its sides protrusions of heads that suggest the bicephalic neckpiece, similarly depicted with four heads, on the finial of the Chornancap Priestess scepter.⁵ In ceramics the Principal Deity of Lambayeque – who scholars identify with Naymlap, the legendary ruler and conqueror who came from the sea – has pointed cones on the forehead, the so called “huaco rey” bottle (Fig. 6).



Fig. 3. Panel with depiction of the winged Principal Deity of Lambayeque and attendants
Lambayeque, Peru, 900–1350 CE
Cotton, camelid fiber; tapestry, 24 x 41 cm
B14.1949 The Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Fig. 4. Panel with depiction of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque assisting a llama giving birth
Lambayeque, Peru, 900–1350 CE
Cotton, camelid fiber; tapestry, 21.5 x 25 cm
B14.1950 The Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Fig. 5. Funerary mask with depiction of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque
 Lambayeque, Peru, 900–1100 CE
 Gold, copper, pigment, 35 x 51 x 23.5 cm
 B79.0935 The Israel Museum, Jerusalem



Fig. 6. Bottle in the form of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque with
 headband (detail)
 Lambayeque, Peru, 900–1100 CE
 Clay, turquoise inlay, 23 x 16.5 x 18 cm
 B03.1409 The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

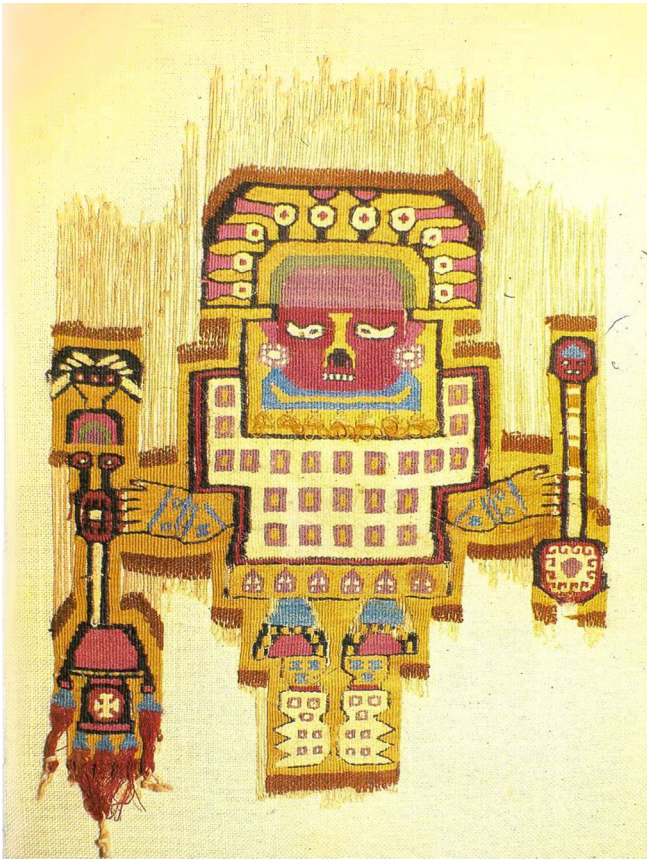


Fig. 7. Textile fragment depicting the Principal Deity of Lambayeque
Published in José Antonio de Lavalle, *Lambayeque: Culturas Precolombinas*. Banco de Crédito del Perú, 1989, 143

Lambayeque Iconography and its continuity in Chimú Culture

The Principal Deity of Lambayeque appears on a textile fragment published in *Lambayeque, Colección Arte y Tesoros del Perú*⁶ (Fig. 7). The face of the Deity is recognizable as that of a bear, particularly because of the snout. He is dressed in full regalia with all his attributes (described above). In addition he wears a tunic with metal plaques, to which quadripartite bell-like ornaments are attached. He also wears shoes that have applied plaques, and pointed toes (or possibly paws?). He holds two scepters.

In the extensive Chimú collection of the Israel Museum, there is an assemblage of a royal or aristocratic burial chamber⁷ that contains 54 objects dating from 1200–1470 CE that illustrate the riches of Chimor.



Fig. 8. Ceremonial attire including: a feathered crown, a headband with silver cones, a small feathered tunic

Chimú, Peru, 1200-1470 CE

Crown: copper, reeds; cotton, applied feathers, plain weave on paired warps, resin

26 x diam. 13.5 cm

Headband: camelid fiber, tapestry; silver

51 x 3.5 cm

Tunic: cotton, applied feathers; plain weave on paired warps; camelid fiber, tapestry; spondylus beads, silver, 64 x 51.5 cm

B79.0384(24), (27), (35)

The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

This assemblage of ceremonial attire contains, in three dimensions, all the attributes of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque depicted in the Lavalle textile fragment: a tall multicolor feathered headdress trimmed with yellow feathers; a small feathered tunic with silver quadripartite bell-like ornaments (Fig. 8); small and non-functional shoes with

6. José Antonio de Lavalle, *Lambayeque: Culturas Precolombinas*, *ibid.* 143.

7. The Armand Pierre Arman Collection, IMJ. A similar assemblage was first published in 1984 by Ann P. Rowe, in *Costumes and Featherwork of the Lords of Chimor: Textiles from Peru's North Coast*. Washington, DC: The Textile Museum, 1984, 151-164. Such assemblages are also found in the collections of Museo Larco, Lima; The Textile Museum, Washington DC; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Fig. 9. Silver scepters, headband, neckpiece, a pair of small shoes
Chimu, Peru, 1200–1470 CE
Silver, wood, feathers, reeds; camelid fiber, tapestry
B79.0384(10), (26), (24), B05.1523, B79.0384(09) (a-b)
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

pointed toes (paws?) covered with silver plaques; and two silver scepters, one in the form of a floral design, the other is an oar-shaped scepter surmounted with a human head⁸ (Fig. 9). In the Chimú culture, the oar was the hallmark of Tacaynamo, the mythological founder of the Chimú dynasty, and symbolized his arrival from the sea by raft; in the preceding Lambayeque culture, the oar-shaped scepter refers to Naymlap, obviously another iconographic influence of Lambayeque on Chimú culture.

Of compelling interest are two objects: a textile headband with three-dimensional silver cones (Fig. 9), for wearing on the forehead, which is depicted on the forehead of the “huaco rey” Lambayeque clay bottles (Fig. 6); and a silver neckpiece with a bicephalic serpent (Fig. 9). It is our understanding that the iconographical purpose of these ornaments when used together completes the illustration of the bicephalic arc of the Moche iconography⁹. The Moche arc is also present on several Chimú painted textiles depicting

8. All objects have textile remnants or textile pseudomorphs with evidence of paired warps.

9. See Santiago Uceda, “The Priests of the Bicephalus Arc: tombs and effigies found in Huaca de la Luna and their relation to Moche rituals.” in Steve Bourget and Kimberly L. Jones, eds., *The Art and Archaeology of the Moche: An Ancient Andean Society of the Peruvian North Coast* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), Figs. 9.2–9.5, 154–157.



Fig. 10. Painted panel featuring a crowned Chimu deity with a bicephalic serpent
 Chancay or Chimu, Peru, 1000–1470 CE
 Cotton; plain weave, painted, 125 x 98.5 cm
 B79.0846 The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

a Chimu Deity wearing a crown – the crown itself is decorated with triangles – with a bicephalic serpent emerging from both sides (Fig. 10). The bicephalic serpent motif assumes the form of pointed cones on the forehead of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque. The completion of the bicephalic arc is achieved by the silver neckpiece which has two animal

heads. Thus part of the iconographical elements of the arc are on the headband, and part on the neckpiece.

To continue with Lambayeque iconography and its persistence in Chimu culture, there are two rare feathered Chimu scepters in the Israel Museum collection in the form of trees with leaves (represented by feathers), with roots



Fig. 11. Scepters shaped like a tree, with macaw and other birds perched on its branches, feathers representing leaves
Chimu, Peru, 1100–1470 CE

Wood, reeds, camelid fiber, feathers; tapirage, 67 x 29 x 19 cm
B81.0809, B81.0811 The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

(represented by loose threads), and with parrot effigies suspended from the branches (Fig. 11). These scepters may have functioned as an allegory for agricultural renewal, and would have additionally demonstrated the holder's power. We consider that these floral scepters are illustrated in Lambayeque textiles as scepters held by the Principal Deity of Lambayeque, showing roots (Fig. 7), or as leafy trees with birds on top as depicted on another textile¹⁰. In this scepter, together with IMJ examples, by specifically using feathers to represent the leaves on the trees as well as the perching birds on the branches, the artist was placing the focus

on feathers, an Andean component which was the distinctive and exclusive domain of aristocracy. In addition, the rooted trees and birds of the scepter recall the duality of the earth and the heavens.

In Ecuador, a similar scepter is still in use today. The scepter is referred to as *alfanje* o *bastón de baile*, decorated with multicolored ribbons and small figures of birds. It is brandished by the Pujilí dancer – known as *Tushug* or Rain Priest – during the colorful *Octavas de Corpus Christi* celebration in the small town of Pujilí in the Cotopaxi province¹¹ (Fig. 12).

10. A Lambayeque textile published in José Antonio de Lavalle, *Chimú: Culturas Precolombinas*, Banco de Crédito del Perú, 1988, 173. Spanish-English version.

11. According to Herrera and Monge, “un alfanje adornado con cintas y figuritas de ave,” that is, “an alfanje decorated with ribbons and figures of birds” (Sylvia Herrera and Elena Monge, “El Danzante, Icono Cultural de la Fiesta de las Octavas de Corpus Christi de Pujilí,” *Kalpana* 8 [2012]:5–13).

After delving for many years into the origins and meaning of the singular Chimú scepters, during a visit in 2013 to the Patio Andaluz Hotel in Quito, I saw a statue dressed in full regalia representing the beloved Ecuadorian Pujilí dancer of the Corpus Christi procession. Amazingly,



Fig. 12. Statue of the Pujilí Dancer, detail of scepter, and cabezal decorated with triangles
Hotel Patio Andaluz, Quito

Lambayeque Iconography and its continuity in Inca Culture

The ancient Pujilí dancer is believed to be of Quechua legacy. However, there are many elements of this Corpus Christi celebration that appear to correspond to prevalent motifs in Lambayeque rituals as depicted in the textiles cited above.

A plausible interpretation of the panel on Fig. 3 is presumably a representation of an act connected to

agriculture. It portrays the Principal Deity of Lambayeque; he dons an elaborate feather headdress with his characteristic hourglass nose and “comma eyes” or spectacled eyes, and with outspread triangular wings in place of arms.¹² These wings are consistent with the story relating to the passing of Naymlap according to an oral account recorded by the Spaniard Miguel Cabello de Balboa in 1586.¹³ Standing under the Deity, on either side, are small attendants in profile, wearing light blue caps. Next to the attendants are

the figure held a similar scepter, made using the same technique, resembling a tree trunk or stalk of maize, with branches wrapped in dyed yarns and adorned with multicolored ribbons. Two additional “Chancay (?)” trees with parrots are cited by Heidi King, *Peruvian Featherworks: Art of the Precolumbian Era*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2012, Plate 65, 202.

12. The wings appear to be diamond-shaped rather than triangular as a result of the pattern that unites the repeating figures that represent the Deity.

13. Miguel Cabello de Balboa, *Miscelánea Antártica: Una Historia del Perú Antiquo*. UNMSM, 1951. (Eighteenth century copy of an original manuscript completed in 1586, now in the New York Public Library).

forms resembling flying fish with white wings.¹⁴ Above the attendants are large pelicans. Shown on the wings of the Deity are small figures with triangular caps, surrounded by numerous birds. The figures hold a colorfully striped implement of some sort. The absence of rafts on this panel makes it highly unlikely that the activity depicted here involves the collection of *Spondylus* oysters or fishing; rather, considering the implements in their hands, the motion of these figures may be interpreted as the collection of guano.¹⁵ In our opinion, because of the position in which it is grasped, the implement held by the figures is not a scepter, which is usually held by its middle or from below, and not from above as depicted here. The narrative seems to imply that the Principal Deity has flown across the sea to a distant destination, traversing the islands where the guano is collected. To emphasize this message, the figure of the Deity is highlighted with bold symbolism representing the ocean – in the form of the blue outline, filled with the ubiquitous wave pattern – which frames his clothing, headdress, tunic, and legs.

The breeding of llamas is the main theme of the panel on Fig. 4, a narrative textile portraying the Principal Deity of Lambayeque, once again donning the characteristically tall and ostentatious headdress.¹⁶ Standing frontally, the Deity assists a llama as it gives birth to a *cría* (Spanish, baby llama); the protruding tongue may suggest that the mother is groaning. The llama's body is covered with a textile patterned with alternating black- and cream-colored camelid footprints. The Deity and the llama are surrounded by four attendants in profile. Three of the attendants wear *crías* as headdresses,¹⁷ and walk in a procession. The fourth attendant (in the upper right) shows gyrating hand postures, presumably suggesting a dance. Different attendants appear to be holding different objects.¹⁸ The smaller object may in fact be a bag known as a *chuspa*, which would have held coca to be fed to the llama.

We believe that the Lambayeque narrative featured in Fig. 4, focuses on a ceremony that was in fact a source for later ceremonies practiced in Cuzco in Inca times, which involved either black or white llamas. The ceremonies were mostly timed to coincide with the winter and summer solstices. One of these ceremonies, the *Cápac Raymi* – celebrated in Cuzco in December and symbolizing Inca authority, involved a royal white llama dressed in a colored tunic, looked after by two human attendants, and never sacrificed. The Inca white llama was for some time fed nothing but coca leaf and chicha, normally consumed by humans. It represented the first llama to have emerged from the Incas' place of origin after the destruction of the world in the Great Flood. In general, the llama played a central role in Cuzco ceremonies, including processions with dancers.¹⁹ Even today, the llama remains an Andean symbol of fertility and abundance.²⁰

Lambayeque Iconography and its links to modern Ecuadorian Pujilí Corpus Christi celebrations

The use of the llama can also be found in the contemporary Christian festival of Corpus Christi, celebrated annually in the Ecuadorian canton and town of Pujilí. Indeed, we believe that the entire festival – widely thought to be strictly of Inca origin – features many of the prevalent symbols and motifs that appear in the Lambayeque and Chimú textiles in the collection of the Israel Museum. These include the most important element of the festival, namely the tall, elaborate headdress of the Pujilí dancers, the most important attribute of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque (Fig. 12). Tall and heavy at 30 kilos, it must be supported from behind with one hand. Altogether, the complete attire can reach 36 kilos. The festive headdress – known as the *cabezal* – is always trimmed with big feathers; the frontal part outlined with triangles in a manner reminiscent of the bicephalic

14. *Exocoetus volitans* or *E. peruvianus*.

15. The collection of guano is a labor-intensive manual task, employed for thousands of years and never replaced by modern labor-saving techniques. The source of the fertilizer, namely the birds, must not be disturbed.

16. Carol J. Mackey, "Los Dioses Que Perdieron Los Colmillos," 127–128.

17. A North Coast textile from The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (accession no. 16.41), depicts an attendant with a big fish over its head. This could be a parallel to the *crías* over the attendants' heads in our textile. The Boston textile also shows an attendant grasping a long implement, which, judging from the position of the hand is similar to the implement which appears on Fig. 3. See Rebecca Stone-Miller, "To Weave for the Sun" (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1992), pl. 36, 125–126.

18. Here again, as in Fig. 3, and as in the textile mentioned in the previous footnote, the position in which the attendants grasp their respective objects strongly suggests that none of these implements are scepters.

19. Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 173.

20. The llama is the largest South American member of the camelid family. Llamas are not restricted to high altitudes; as demonstrated by the Lambayeque textile, they live and breed in the coastal desert. The female gives birth during the rainy season, from December to March.

serpent. The triangles also appear as pointed cones on the forehead of the “huaco rey” in Lambayeque ceramic bottles. These triangles can also be seen on painted Chimu textiles, wherein the bicephalic serpent is represented either overhead²¹ or on, and at both sides of the crown of the Chimu deity (see Fig. 10).

The Pujilí festival – which is indigenous to the region – represents a show of gratitude following the maize harvest. It also portrays the productive cycle of sowing, germination, and harvest. The alfanje (previously discussed) is reminiscent of the maize plant; stalks of maize are often added to the scepter.

In addition to the Pujilí dancers, the participants in the Pujilí procession consist of traditional, characteristic groups of marchers and dancers, always dressed in the same fashion. Like the *cabezal* (very tall headdress), of the Pujilí dancers, elements of the costume and trappings of the various groups resemble the motifs of the Lambayeque textiles.

Included among the groups and elements are the *Peones de Haciendas* (farm workers), who carry spirally decorated, upside-down hoes, and wear uniform hats and costumes, just like the small figures with colorfully striped implements held from above in the agricultural guano collection panel (Fig. 3). Also included are groups of marchers, in black face or wearing dark masks, leading the aforementioned black and white llamas. Some animals are forced to drink chicha during the celebration march.²² This is reminiscent of the breeding textile panel (Fig. 4) with dancers and llama, whose central feature is the Principal Deity of Lambayeque. Again, the hourglass-shaped snout in the image of this deity brings to mind the spectacled bear.²³ Toward the end of the procession individuals donning various masks, including dark, long-snouted, bear-like masks,²⁴ perform and strengthen the notion that an ancient connection does in fact exist between the Pujilí Corpus Christi celebration and the Principal Deity of Lambayeque.

Consequently, the imagery in the Lambayeque textiles reinforces our belief that later festivals such as the celebration of the llama in the Inca Cápac Raymi to the colonial/

contemporary Pujilí Corpus Christi processions may have their origins in the Lambayeque culture. The Pujilí dancer is the syncretic icon of the Precolumbian and Christian beliefs. Furthermore, in some form or another, the imagery common to the festivals and the textiles relates to agricultural and animal fertility.²⁵ To summarize, the Pujilí procession has performances comparable to the Lambayeque narrative textiles, the outstanding features being: the tall and ostentatious headdress of the Pujilí dancer which is the main attribute of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque; and the *cabezal* outlined with triangles similar to the pointed cones on the forehead of the “huaco rey” ceramics. Additionally, farm workers carrying spirally decorated, upside-down hoes; a dressed llama being force-fed chicha; masked dancers wearing dark, long-snouted, bear-like masks; all attest to the fact that the true origins of the festival can be traced back to the Lambayeque culture.

Photographs © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem by: Elie Posner (Fig. 2, 6, 9, 11); Ofrit Rosenberg (Fig. 3, 4, 10); Meidad Suchowolsky (Fig. 8); Yvonne Fleitman (Fig. 12)

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21. See Helmut Schindler, *The Norbert Mayrock Art Collection from Ancient Peru* (Munich: Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, 2000), N.M. 297, p. 171.

22. For video illustrations of the Pujilí dance and celebrations, see Spencer Weart, Corpus Christi Pujilí Ecuador. Published August 6, 2016, <https://youtu.be/NOa14n-jnFM>, accessed March 19, 2017.

23. The dark face paint and dark masks that characterize this large group of marchers in the Pujilí procession are commonly understood to be a reference to the black slave laborers of the Colonial past. But as stated above, in our opinion the dark-colored faces and masks may actually symbolize the spectacled bear which we regard as a symbol of the Principal Deity of Lambayeque. Clearly, the same may also be true of the bear-like masks worn by a number of other participants in the procession.

24. For video illustrations of the Pujilí dance and celebrations, see Mario Alonso R. H., Fiesta de Corpus Cristi, Pujilí. Published June 9, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZOe19tyBKG>, accessed March 19, 2017.

25. With regard to the Pujilí procession, the term “fertility” relates specifically to the fertility of the maize harvest.

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