

# Syracuse Scholar (1979-1991)

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Volume 4  
Issue 2 *Syracuse Scholar* Fall 1983

Article 4

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1983

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Middle Horizon tapestry fragment,  
Peru (A.D. 550-900). Syracuse  
University Art Collections  
(40/50.12)

# The Reconstruction and Analysis of a Peruvian Middle Horizon Tapestry Fragment

*Mary Jean Thomas*



Mary Jean Thomas received her M.F.A. in Textile Arts (Fiber Structure and Interlocking) from Syracuse University in 1982. She was a University Fellow, 1981-82. After graduation she traveled to the West Coast to study Middle Horizon Peruvian Textiles and conducted a feltmaking workshop at the University. She currently maintains a textile studio and is engaged in research on another ancient Peruvian textile in the Syracuse University Art Collections.

At the beginning of the Middle Horizon in Peruvian prehistory (A.D. 550-900) a major culture emerged in the central Andes. Borrowing its mythology from neighboring cultures, this new culture developed powerful religious and administrative classes and established an empire similar in geographic scope and organization to the later one of the Incas (A.D. 1440-1532). Twentieth-century archaeologists have named this culture and its artifacts "Huari," or "Wari," after the area in the central Andes of Peru where the first of its major cities appeared (Fig. 1).

The Syracuse University Art Collections contain, within their substantial holdings of primitive art, a Peruvian Middle Horizon textile of striking appearance and archaeological significance (see Color Plate). This textile, a large tapestry fragment, has no known provenience; that is, there is no documentation of the place where it was first discovered. The weaving techniques and iconographic imagery of this textile, however, clearly point to its having been constructed during the Huari Empire.

The textile is designated a fragment because both the left and right sides lack finished edges, or selvages, suggesting that this is a portion of what was once a larger piece. The fragment is a large cloth 127 centimeters (4 feet 2 inches) high by 160 centimeters (5 feet 3 inches) wide. Most of the documentation of Peruvian Middle Horizon textiles (also called "Huari-Tiahuanaco" or "Tiahuanacoid" textiles) concerns tunics—wide, square shirts which hung below the knees.<sup>1</sup> The large size of the Syracuse fragment therefore places it among the few known large, nongarment textiles from the Peruvian Middle Horizon.

There are several reasons for considering this fragment a major pre-Columbian Peruvian artifact. In the first place, it almost certainly was not a garment and therefore must have been intended for ritual use.

1. Alan R. Sawyer, "Tiahuanaco Tapestry Design," in *Peruvian Archaeology: Selected Readings*, ed. John Howland Rowe and Dorothy Menzel (Palo Alto: Peek Publications, 1967), pp. 165-76. See also Ann P. Rowe, "Textile Evidence for Huari Music," *Textile Museum Journal* 18 (1979): 5-18.

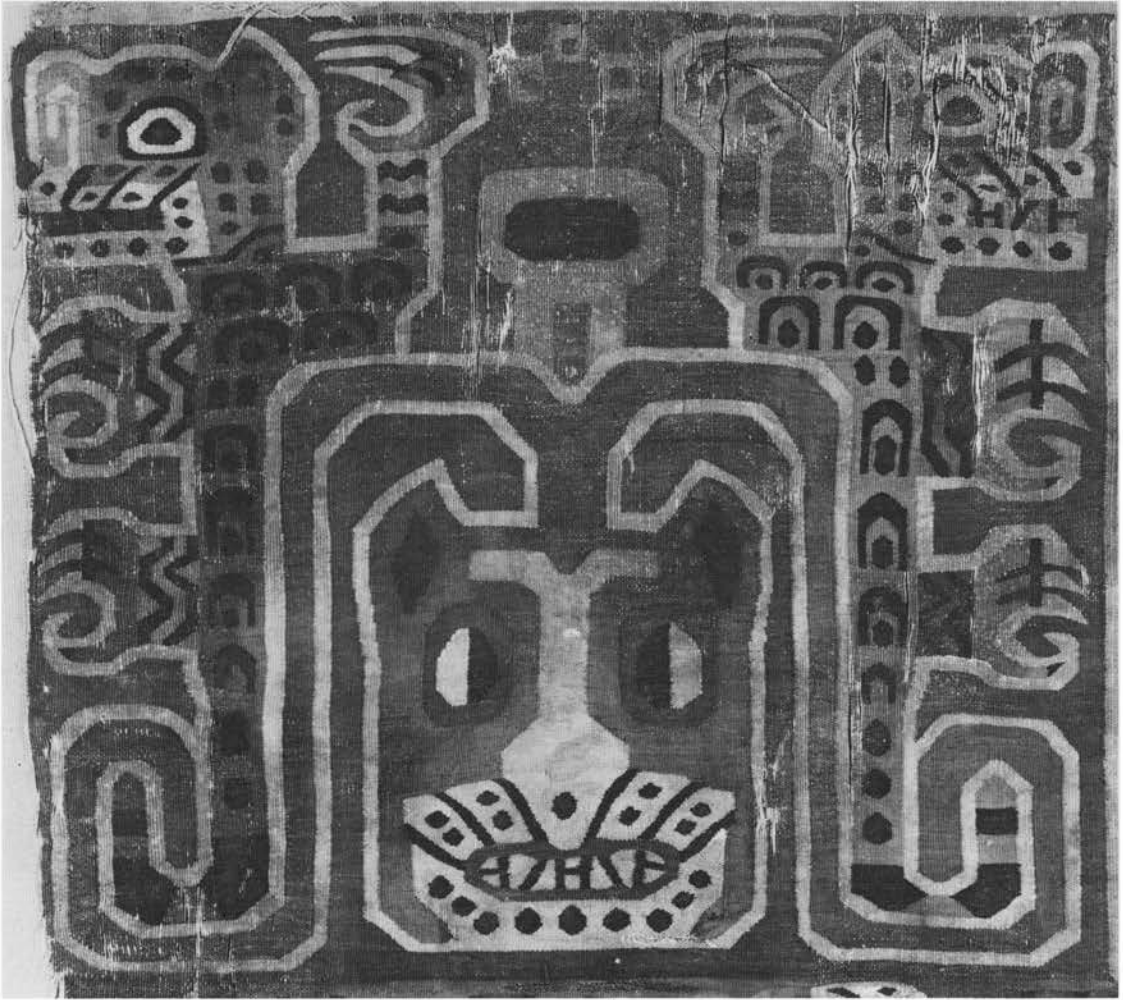


Figure 1. Map of Peru showing pre-Inca centers of cultures referred to in this essay

In the second place, some of the images woven into the textile are identical to those of another, smaller fragment owned by the Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich, substantiating the theory that the Syracuse piece was once part of a much larger textile. Finally, the iconography of the Syracuse fragment strongly points to its being an important link in what we know to be the continuity of pre-Columbian Andean culture and history. A detailed study of the fragment and a conceptual reconstruction of the entire textile to which the Syracuse fragment belonged illustrate how several ancient cultures, physically separated by significant geographical distances, and flourishing over a period of more than a millennium, intermingled.

## Data: Description of the Syracuse tapestry fragment

The Syracuse fragment consists of a checkerboard field with a border at the top and bottom (see Color Plate). Within the checkerboard field plain squares alternate with figured ones. In each figured square the central image is a feline face, shown frontally (Fig. 2). The face has



**Figure 2.** Feline square. Detail of Middle Horizon tapestry fragment, Peru (A.D. 500-900). Syracuse University Art Collections.

2. Dorothy Menzel, "New Data on the Huari Empire in Middle Horizon Epoch 2A," *Nawpa Pacha* 6 (1968): 47-114 and plates 28-40.

vertically divided eyes, and its open mouth is surrounded by a white mask with upswept whiskers. Within the mouth are crossed fangs in the shape of an N. Divided eyes and N-shaped fangs are understood to designate a deity. Rising from the feline head is a headdress with an oval "star" symbol topped by a tripartite "feather" symbol, a design that predominated early in the Huari Empire.<sup>2</sup> On each side of the headdress there is an outward-facing feline. One clawed foot is raised behind its head and two clawed feet protrude from its abdomen. The tail is curled upward. Although the mouth of each outward-facing feline contains N-shaped fangs, the eyes are not divided but consist of concentric circles, possibly suggesting a mythological status subordinate to that of the central feline face.

A deliberate pattern of alternating color occurs in the squares of the checkerboard field. In rows 1 and 3 (reading from the bottom upward) the left feline figure in profile has a gold body and the right figure has a rose body; in rows 2 and 4 this order is reversed.

Both borders of the textile contain repeats of a front-facing humanoid figure holding a staff in each extended hand (Fig. 3). The divided eyes and N-shaped fangs in this figure also depict a mythological being. The

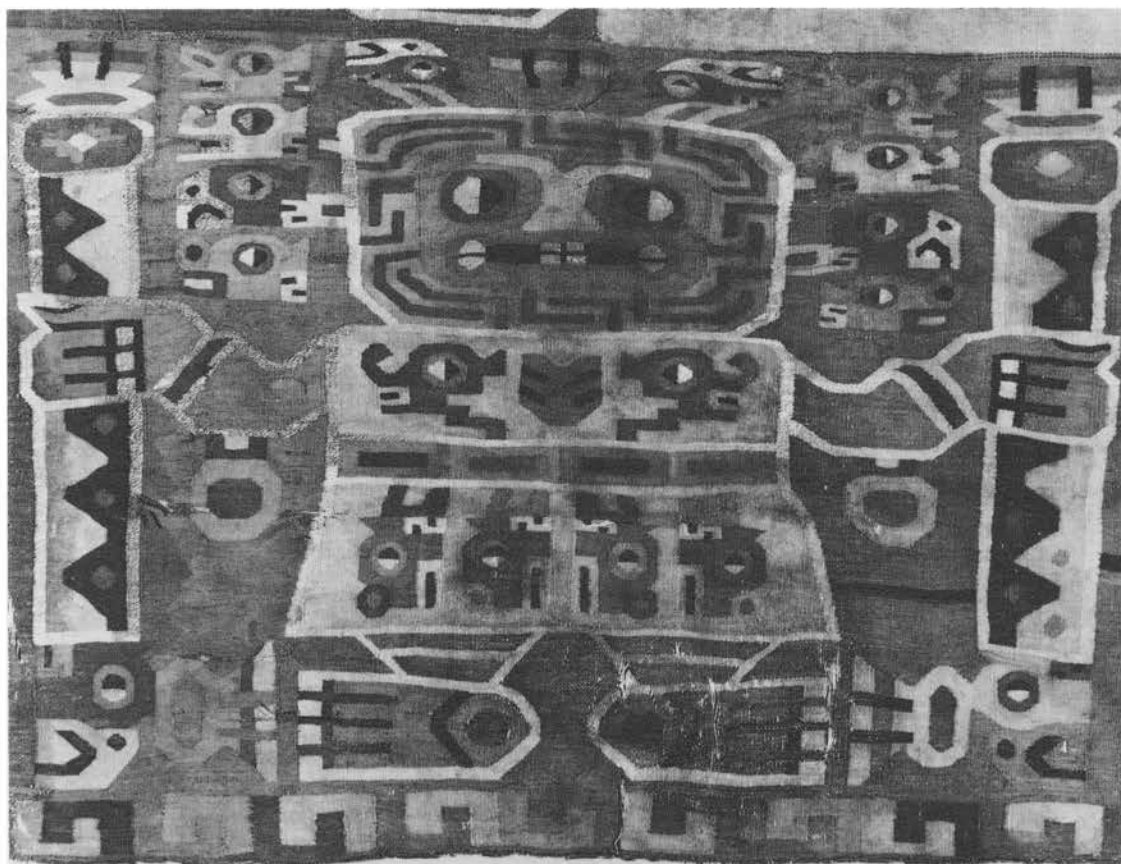


Figure 3. Staff-bearing deity figure. Detail of Middle Horizon tapestry fragment, Peru (A.D. 550–900). Syracuse University Art Collections.

deity's headdress consists of various animal heads in profile, called "animal-head appendages." The animal-head appendages on the left side of the headdress are the same as those on the right side. It should be noted here that in the lower border the uppermost animal-head appendages are so compressed that they are almost unrecognizable. They are, however, eagle heads, the same as those at the base of each staff. In the upper border the legs and feet of the figures are also compressed. Further, the tunic of the staff-bearing deity has a central chevron motif flanked by outward-facing animal heads. The chevron is a common decorative motif in Huari pottery.<sup>3</sup> The edge of each border of the textile contains disembodied heads and an interlocking fret design (see Color Plate). These alternate below the staff-bearing deities.

3. *Ibid.*, 54.

The staff-bearing figures in the borders are of three distinct color combinations. These combinations may be described by type:

Type 1: tunic—light gold, face—gold

Type 2: tunic—gold, face—magenta


Type 3: tunic—magenta, face—light gold

As with the convention of alternating colors in the checkerboard rows, there is an ordered placement, by color, of staff figures in the borders. If one reads left to right, including the half figures at the border edges, the ordered placement of color types is:

Upper border: 1, 2, 3, 1, 3, 2, 1

Lower border: 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 3, 2

The lines between the numbers indicate that although a figure type in the upper border is not the same as the one directly below it, the sequence is the same in both borders. The only difference is that the color sequence of the upper border is placed one figure to the left of the same sequence in the lower border.

Although the side selvages of the textile are missing, the selvages at the top and bottom (called "warp selvages") are intact. The two warp selvages, however, show different finishing techniques. Warp loops in the lower selva were chained together [  ], but in the upper selva the warp loops were cut and each thread was then needle-woven diagonally back into the textile.

As the side edges of the fragment have been cut, many of the feline squares have been cut on two or three of their sides. Where cut, they have been stitched back into the fragment proper (with an overcast stitch). No square has been cut on all four sides. This cutting may have occurred after discovery of the textile but before its coming to Syracuse University. Dealers are known to have divided pre-Columbian textiles containing repeated motifs in order to increase their profits.<sup>4</sup> Supporting this theory is a single feline square in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Munich, apparently identical in iconography and technical data to the squares in the Syracuse piece (Fig. 4). The Munich square was acquired from a private collection and no previous owners are known.

4. Mary Elizabeth King, "The Ethics of Acquisition," in *Archaeological Textiles: Irene Emery Roundtable on Museum Textiles, 1974 Proceedings*, ed. P. L. Fiske (Washington, D.C.: The Textile Museum, 1975), p. 119.

Figure 4. Feline square, textile fragment at Munich Museum für Völkerkunde (51-18-1). Reprinted by permission of the Museum für Völkerkunde. I wish to thank Ann Pollard Rowe, Curator, New World Textiles, The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., for bringing this fragment to my attention.



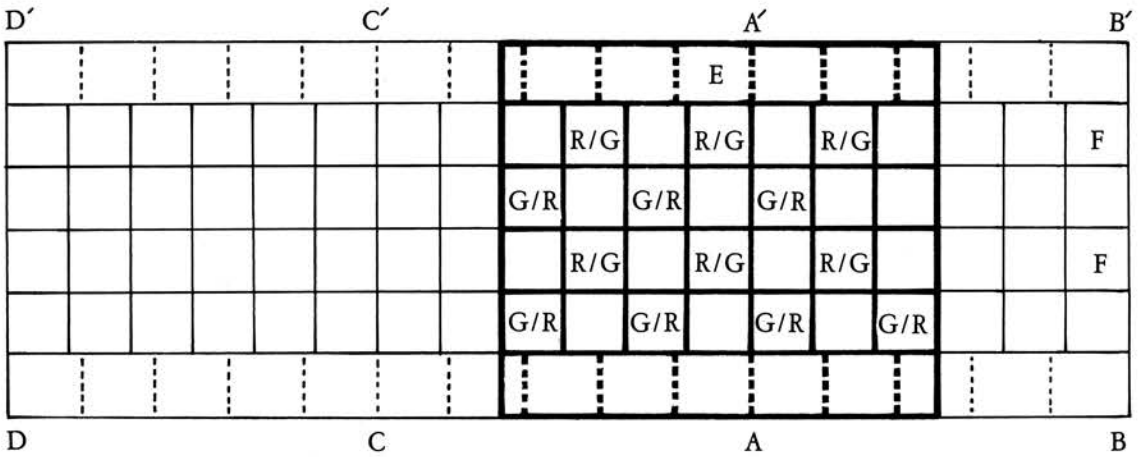


Figure 5. Conjectured size (schematic) of original textile. Bold lines describe the Syracuse fragment. R = rose; G = gold.

In addition to the cut edges around the squares there are thirty-seven patches in the Syracuse textile. Twenty-eight are figured patches inserted within figured areas of the textile; these are found in both borders as well as in the feline squares. Examination of these figured patches, according to color conventions and iconographic data within the fragment, has determined that none of them come from the Syracuse fragment itself but all belong to the missing portions of the original larger textile.

## Conceptual reconstruction of the original textile

The discovery that the patches were transposed from the missing parts of the textile mandated a conceptual reconstruction of the original. This reconstruction is based on color sequence within the present borders and the observed alignment of checkerboard squares with staff-bearing figures.

Inspection of the overall design of the Syracuse fragment shows that the staff-bearing figures of the upper and lower borders are not aligned vertically with the feline squares (see Color Plate). The fragment's edges in the checkerboard field are the edges of the squares; yet at the edges of the borders there is only half a staff-bearing figure. The border figures are wider than the squares. There is within the fragment, however, an alignment of square edge with border figure edge (Fig. 5, *A* and *A'*). By conceptually extending the fragment, new alignments occur both to the left and to the right (Fig. 5, *B-B'*, *C-C'*, *D-D'*) with five border figures and six checkerboard squares between each alignment. We can assume that the right and left edges of the textile would have originally been at a point of alignment.

Next, the edges of the fragment's patches were examined for a doubled warp. A doubled (or "paired") warp was used at the side selvages of woven webs during the Middle Horizon,<sup>5</sup> presumably as a method of reinforcing the side edges of the fabric during the weaving process. The Syracuse fragment does contain a patch with paired warp. Of the twenty-eight figured patches, the largest is an almost-complete staff-bearing figure in the upper border (Fig. 5, area *E*). The left edge of the patch has a paired warp and its warp selvage (the horizontal edge)

5. A. P. Rowe, 7.



is finished with chained loops, as is the lower border selvage of the fragment. By extension, then, this staff-bearing figure can be positioned at the lower left corner of the original textile.

The colors in the misplaced staff figure (*E*) are those of the Type 3 (magenta tunic, light gold face), and the design beneath the figure in the patch is of disembodied heads. If this figure were repositioned in the lower border at the first point of alignment, at *C-C'*, it would be next to the first figure on the left in the fragment proper—also a Type 3 with disembodied heads beneath. It seems certain that the alternation of head with fret designs and the sequence of figure color types would have continued throughout the original textile. In order to maintain this stylistic repeat, the misplaced staff-bearing figure would have to be placed at the second alignment to the left of the fragment (*D-D'*). It should be noted here that the sequence of the three figure types on the left side of the fragment differs from that on the right (from 1-2-3 to 1-3-2), the change occurring at the point of alignment (Fig. 6). Although it is a matter of conjecture, it is probable that the color

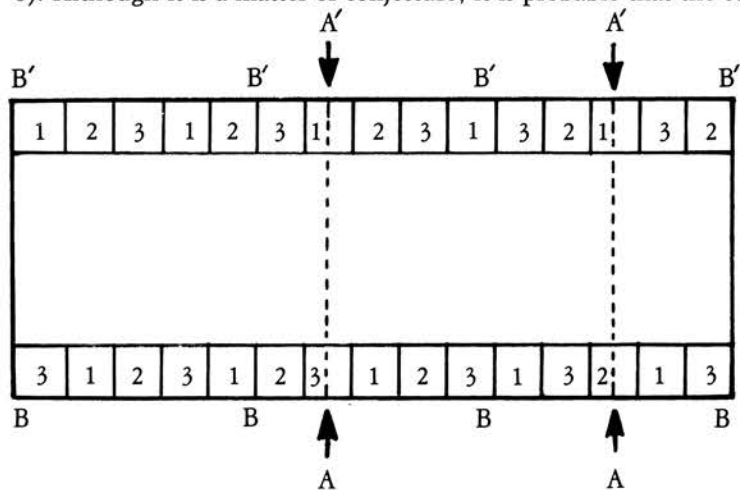


Figure 6. Proposed color sequence in borders of original textile. *A-A'*: Syracuse fragment; *B-B'*: Points of alignment with edge of a checkerboard square. The staff-bearing figure at *B'* of the Syracuse fragment is a patch with weft and warp selvages. These indicate that it can only have been woven as the lower left corner of the original textile. The color conventions of the patch establish that it is a Type 3 image (magenta tunic).

sequence between the original textile's lower left corner and the fragment's lower left corner (Fig. 5, *A*) would be 1-2-3. The change in sequence at the point of alignment within the fragment probably had ritual significance and may also mark the center of what was an even larger original textile, the right edge extending five more border figures to the next alignment. At present, however, there exists no clear evidence to support the possibility of further extension.

The width of the conceptually reconstructed textile is 389 centimeters (12 feet 9 inches), of which the Syracuse fragment measures slightly less than half. Although similar large textiles survive from earlier Peruvian cultures, few on this scale exist from the Middle Horizon.

None of the remaining twenty-seven patches in the fragment can be assigned specific locations within the missing parts of the textile. Concerning the Munich feline square, however, Dr. Helmut Schindler, director of the Museum für Völkerkunde, has indicated that there is a paired warp on one of its lateral edges. It is not clear which side is

the right side of the square because it is identical on both sides.<sup>6</sup> If the paired warp was originally on the left edge of the square the outward-facing felines would be gold on the left and rose on the right. If the paired warp was on the right the colors would be reversed. The latter possibility is more likely because the central feline image of the Munich square contains two spots below the center of the mouth (see Fig. 4). The majority of feline squares in the Syracuse fragment contain three spots below the central mouth. On the right edge of the fragment, however, five squares contain only two spots, which suggests that the Munich square belongs to the same area. The paired warp of the Munich square may well support the theory that the right edge of the original textile is at the first alignment to the right of the fragment, occupying one of either position labeled *F* in Figure 5.

## The weaving of the textile

The Syracuse tapestry fragment was woven in one piece. There is no evidence of joining either while the weaving was still on the loom or after it was completed. Regardless of the size of the proposed original textile, the size of the fragment alone suggests a special loom. O'Neale, in discussing looms that might have been used to weave earlier large Peruvian textiles, suggests a vertical loom of a kind used today by the Navaho.<sup>7</sup> In fact, a modeled depiction of a weaving scene on a Peruvian Late Horizon jar provides evidence that vertical frame looms were used in pre-Columbian times.<sup>8</sup> In the scene two women are weaving on an upright loom constructed of two vertical posts hollowed out horizontally on their tops, across which lies a thick beam. The lower beam is not shown. On a vertical loom the warp threads are attached to the upper and lower beams. The weft threads (see Figs. 7 and 8) are then woven horizontally through the warps.

The people of pre-Columbian Peru were skilled textile artisans long before the appearance of the Huari culture. Tapestry weaving reached its zenith in the Middle Horizon when the workmanship of the weavers attained a high point of refinement.<sup>9</sup> In the Syracuse fragment the smallest areas of color are barely two millimeters wide. The fragment's two-ply wefts, averaging .3 millimeters in thickness, are of camelid wool, presumably alpaca. There are approximately 65 rows of weft per vertical centimeter (165 per inch). The two-ply warp threads are cotton and are set at 14 per horizontal centimeter (36 per inch). The greater part of the Syracuse fragment was woven in the technique of single interlocking tapestry: The wefts of adjacent color areas link with each other in the space between two warps<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 7).

There is evidence in the lower border of the Syracuse fragment that the textile was woven by more than one person. In two separate areas there is a return of wefts from the right and left around a common warp (Fig. 8). These areas extend from the bottom to the top of the border where there are two black wefts (one offset) separating the border from the checkerboard field.<sup>11</sup> The checkerboard squares, however, do not show such clear division of labor. The fragment, and the whole original textile, was probably constructed section by section, each section subdivided into smaller work areas. This would allow one weaver to build up her<sup>12</sup> separate design areas while waiting for an adjacent weaver to arrive at the point where their wefts would interlock. The proposed

6. Communicated by letter, 17 February 1982.

7. Lila M. O'Neale, "Wide Loom Fabrics of the Early Nazca Period," in *Essays in Anthropology, in Honor of Alfred Louis Kroeber* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), p. 219.

8. Ina Van Stan, "Did Inca Weavers Use an Upright Loom?" in *The Junius B. Bird Pre-Columbian Textile Conference*, ed. Ann P. Rowe, Elizabeth P. Benson, and Anne Louise Schaffer (Washington, D.C.: The Textile Museum and Dumbarton Oaks, 1979), pp. 233-34.

9. Sawyer, "Tiahuanaco Tapestry Design," p. 165.

10. Irene Emery, *The Primary Structures of Fabrics: An Illustrated Classification* (Washington, D.C.: The Textile Museum, 1980), p. 80.

11. One example can be seen over the right staff, Fig. 3.

12. There is earlier ceramic evidence that women were the weavers in pre-Columbian Peru. A scene on the interior rim of a Moche (roughly A.D. 100-600) bowl depicts a workshop with women as weavers. See Christopher B. Donnan, *Moche Art of Peru* (Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History, University of California, 1978), p. 65, fig. 103.

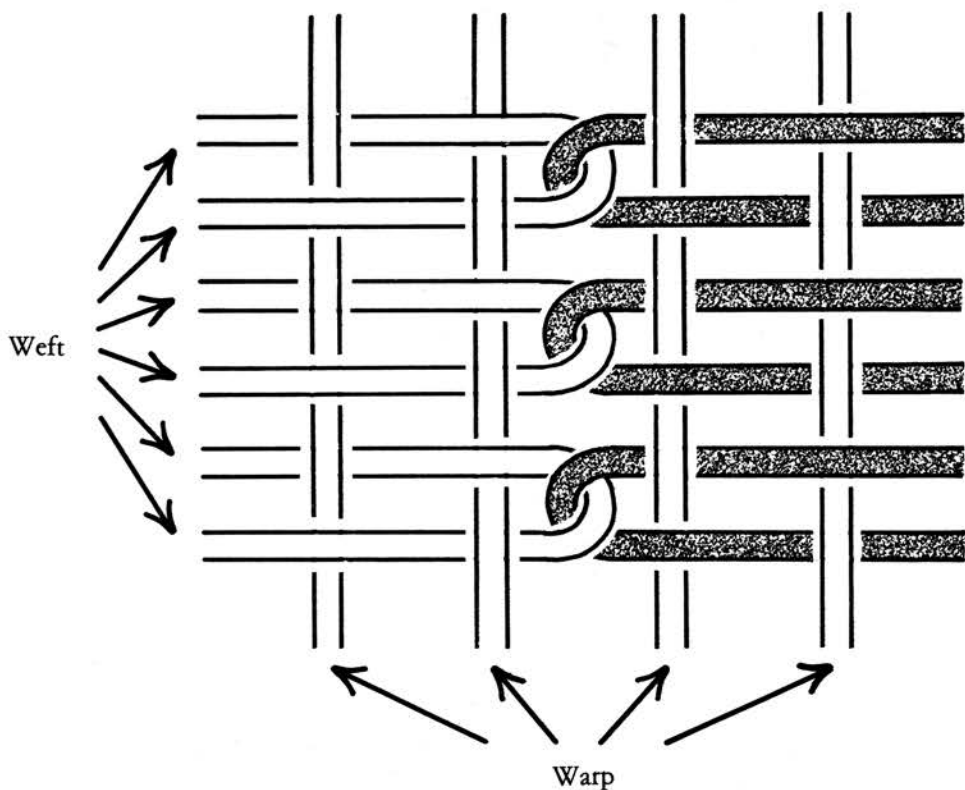


Figure 7. Wefts linking with each other in the space between two warps

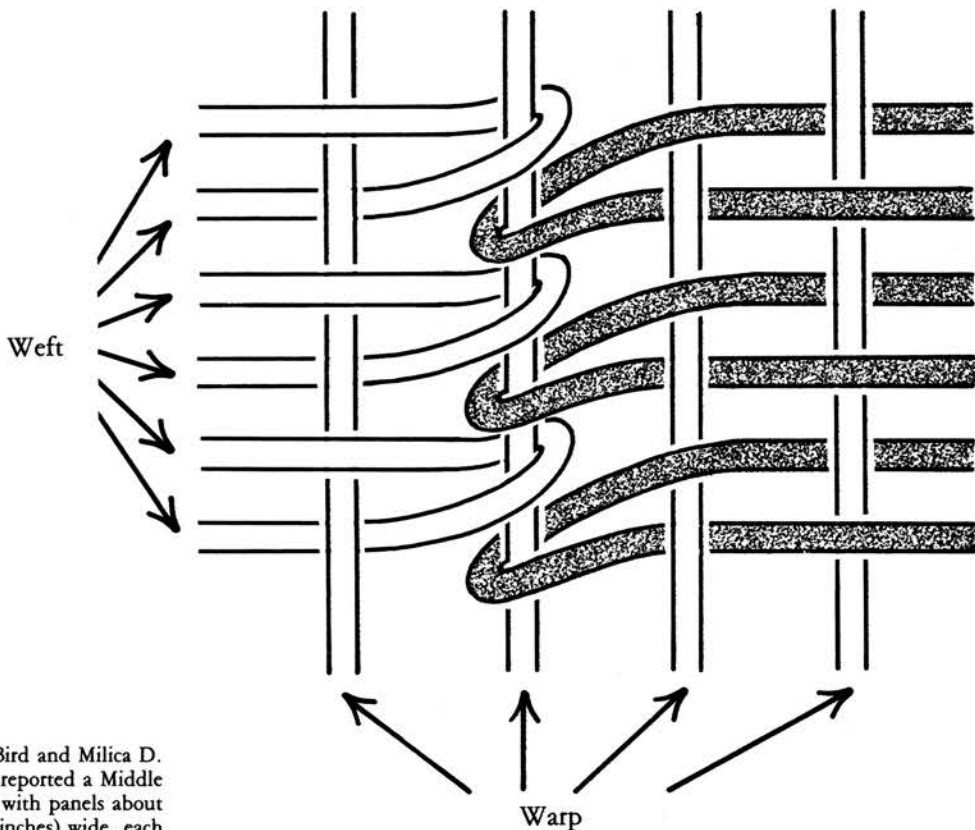
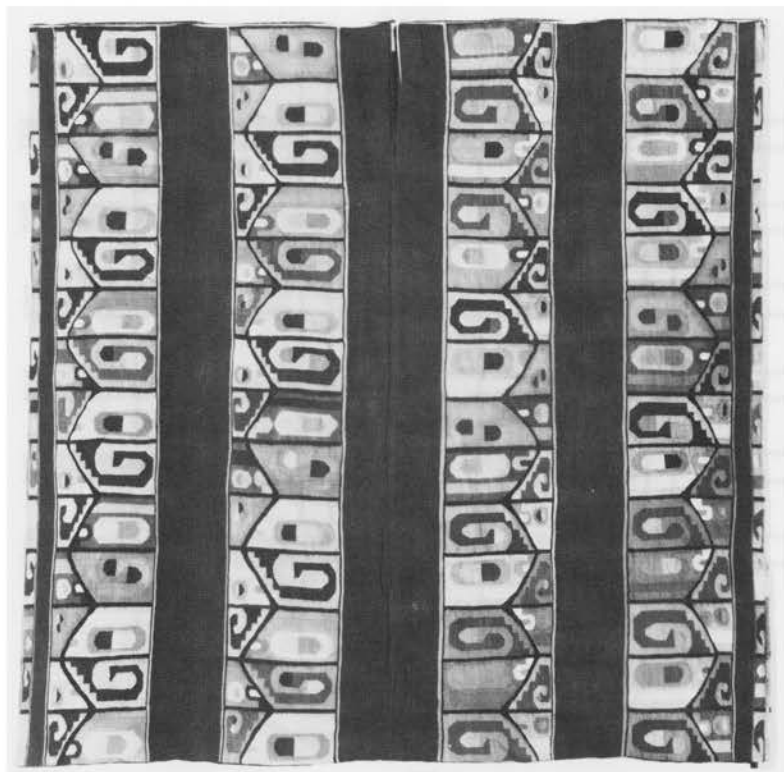




Figure 8. Wefts linking around a common warp

13. Junius B. Bird and Milica D. Skinner have reported a Middle Horizon tunic with panels about 211 cm (83 inches) wide, each panel having been constructed by two weavers. See Bird and Skinner, "The Technical Features of a Middle Horizon Tapestry Shirt from Peru," *Textile Museum Journal* 4 (1974): 7, 9.

twelve-foot original textile might have been woven by four persons, each having a work area approximately 91 centimeters (36 inches) wide.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 9.** The designs of the narrow vertical stripe at each side of this tunic are compressed versions of the step fret and divided eye found in the wider vertical stripes. Tunic, Peru, Tiahuanaco, The Textile Museum, #91.343.

An interesting phenomenon is apparent in the chained warp loops of the Syracuse fragment's lower border. The chaining of the loops changes direction at irregular intervals (from  to ) , the disparity in chaining length extending from 0.5 to 60.8 centimeters. A Middle Horizon tapestry tunic at the American Museum of Natural History (#41.2/770) exhibits the same phenomenon, as does a Middle Horizon textile at the Yale University Art Gallery (#1937.4583). Tapestries containing warp chaining were also examined at the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, but these did not exhibit directional change. This may suggest that directional changes in the chaining of warp loops were limited to a particular workshop.

The Syracuse fragment also shows inconsistencies in design and color convention. Small areas of black weft appear where the color sequence does not call for black. Among the most noticeable examples are the black bars in the lower border (to the right of the second left staff-bearing figure in the Color Plate) and the black area above the nose of a front-facing feline (first lower right square in the Color Plate). It is interesting that another deviation from color convention—small blue green design elements—are used above these misplaced black wefts. One might conjecture that in this textile the positioning of blue green (a color often used in small areas of Middle Horizon tapestries) had something to do with the black wefts. Perhaps blue green was an atonement for a mistake?

The weaver of the inconsistent black bars also substituted a darker thread every other row of weft in the white outlining of the same staff-bearing figure (see Color Plate). The darker thread is substituted again

in the same figure in the upper border, although it does not appear elsewhere in the fragment. If the conceptual reconstruction is correct, this area would be the center of the original textile. This dark weft may have been intentional and significant to the weavers or to cultural rituals.

As mentioned earlier, the design elements at the top of each border are vertically compressed. Many tapestry tunics from the Middle Horizon also contain compressed design elements. In these tunics the compression appears to be lateral—that is, the designs in the two vertical panels become narrower toward the underarm seam (Fig. 9). The two panels of a tunic, however, were woven horizontally to the way the tunic was worn (i.e., the warp threads stretch from side to side, not from top to bottom). Sawyer has theorized that lateral distortion in a tunic gave a cylindrical appearance to an otherwise flat garment.<sup>14</sup> Bird and Skinner, on the other hand, conjecture that the first incidence of compression might have been a weaver's solution to poor planning; the resulting compression being appealing, it was adopted as a textile convention.<sup>15</sup>

More recently, Conklin has proposed a new explanation of Middle Horizon design compression. Noting that the weaver's design elements became more condensed as her work progressed away from her body, Conklin believes that the resulting compression of design was a response to the vastness of the Peruvian Highlands and the visual compression of objects in the distance. It was thus a design statement based on the perspective of line rather than point, as we perceive perspective today.<sup>16</sup> Although the conjectured size of our tapestry precludes its having been worn, there is no specific information on its intended use. While compression of design occurs at the top of each border, it does not occur at the top of any of the feline squares.

Whatever the reason for the directional warp chaining, the insertion of weft not belonging to the color sequence, and the compression of design elements, these deviations heighten our regard for the art and craft of the Middle Horizon weaver at a time when each newly reported Middle Horizon textile provides more knowledge and insight into the ancient Huari culture. Appropriately, Elizabeth King has written, "We should value [pre-Columbian textiles] as much for what they can tell us about their creators and owners as for their own intrinsic beauty and complexity."<sup>17</sup>

## Historical evaluation: The continuity of iconographic traditions

Because Peruvian pre-Columbian cultures had no written languages, most of our information about them comes from archaeology. Archaeologists have divided ancient Peruvian history into "horizons," in which there occurred diffusion of a major culture, and "periods," in which there was no cultural diffusion. The dates of Peruvian horizons and periods given below are only approximate.

Initial Period	2100–1400 B.C.
Early Horizon (Chavín)	1400–400 B.C.
Early Intermediate Period	400 B.C.–A.D. 550
Middle Horizon (Huari)	A.D. 550–900
Late Intermediate Period	A.D. 900–1440
Late Horizon (Inca)	A.D. 1440–1532

(beginning of the Spanish conquest)

14. Sawyer, "Tiahuanaco Tapestry Design," p. 175.

15. Bird and Skinner, 11.

16. William J. Conklin, "Geometry and Numbers from the Middle Horizon" (Paper presented at the Seminar on Mnemonic Schemes and Cognition among Andean Peoples, Colgate University, 24 March 1982).

17. Mary Elizabeth King, "Archaeological Textiles," in *Archaeological Textiles*, ed. Fiske, p. 12.

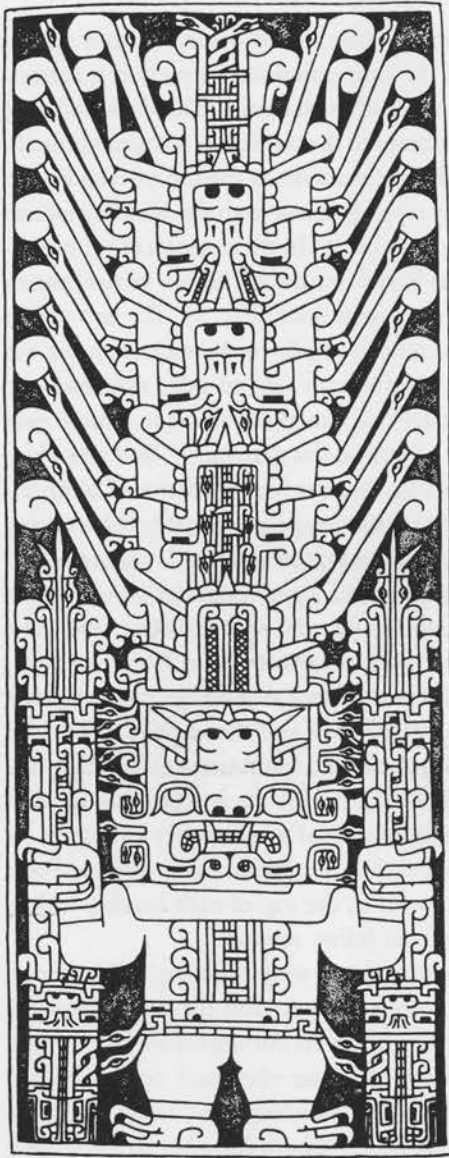


Figure 10. Chavín Staff God. J. H. Rowe, "Form and Meaning," p. 100. Reprinted by permission of the author.

The staff-bearing deity and mythological feline were not indigenous to the Huari culture of the Middle Horizon. Both figures have iconographic antecedents in Peruvian prehistory.

More than a thousand years before the rise of the Huari Empire, a culture now known as Chavín originated in the North Highlands of Peru (see Fig. 1). Among the religious icons of the Chavín were a staff-bearing deity and a feline figure (Figs. 10 and 11). The Chavín deity was front-facing and held a staff in each laterally extended hand. Its mouth exhibited realistically crossed fangs, and both hands and feet had claws (Fig. 10). The Chavín feline figure also had crossed fangs, its feet were clawed, and its tail curved upward (Fig. 11). Both mythical figures had supplementary appendages; however, the appendages were kennings<sup>18</sup> of serpents, eyes, and fangs. Comparison with the iconography of the Syracuse fragment makes it clear that the Chavín feline and staff-bearing deity, while similar mythical beings, have a significance unlike that of the Middle Horizon image. It is not clear whether appendages may be kennings in Middle Horizon imagery. In the headdress of the Syracuse fragment's staff-bearing deity there is a variety of animal heads, each presumably with its own symbolic mean-

18. A kenning here would be a metaphorical object used in place of the usual object (e.g., snakes for hair in Fig. 10). See John Howland Rowe, "Form and Meaning in Chavín Art," in *Peruvian Archaeology*, ed. Rowe and Menzel, pp. 77-82.

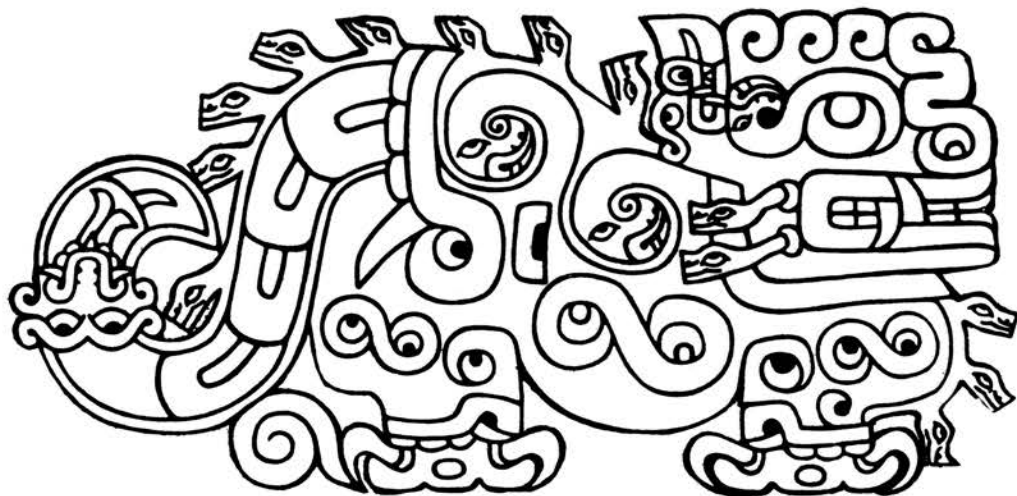


Figure 11. Chavín Feline. J. H. Rowe, "Form and Meaning," p. 102. Reprinted by permission of the author.

ing. Realistic fangs in Chavín iconography refer to the ferocity of the being, whereas in Middle Horizon imagery the fangs are abstracted as a geometric figure (an N) which serves to diminish the fearsome quality of the teeth.

Textiles discovered at Paracas and Carhua indicate that during the Early Horizon Chavín iconography spread to the South Coast of Peru.<sup>19</sup> There, the Chavinoid staff-bearing god and predominantly front-facing feline decorated painted ceremonial textiles that Sawyer believes were produced under the jurisdiction of the Chavín priesthood.<sup>20</sup> Both Wallace and Sawyer suggest that textiles provided the introduction of the Chavín art style to the Peruvian South Coast. Unlike stone and pottery, textiles were an easily transportable medium of the culture.

In the Central Highlands during the Early Horizon the triangular teeth and animal-head appendages commonly associated with the Middle Horizon appeared in the Cuzco region. Three gold and bronze ornaments from the Early Horizon have been found to contain a frontal face with triangular teeth and a headdress with animal-head appendages.<sup>21</sup> It appears, then, that these iconographic conventions, similar to those in the Syracuse fragment, originated in an unknown Early Horizon culture. There is no further record of triangular teeth and animal-head appendages until much later in the Early Intermediate Period and early Middle Horizon.

The ruins of the ancient Middle Horizon city at Huari are not far from the modern city of Ayacucho in the Central Highlands. It is known that in the Early Horizon the Paracas culture on the South Coast maintained contact with the Ayacucho region.<sup>22</sup> Later, during the Early Intermediate Period, the Nazca (or Nasca) culture from the South Coast also influenced the Ayacucho region.<sup>23</sup> In both eras the feline deity was important in South Coast iconography.

In the South Highlands during the Early Intermediate Period a culture emerged at Pucará, located at the north end of Lake Titicaca. Pottery found at Pucará shows the feline figure to have been a predominant symbol.<sup>24</sup> It is at Pucará that triangular teeth and head-

19. Alan R. Sawyer, "The Feline in Paracas Art," in *The Cult of the Feline*, ed. Elizabeth P. Benson (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1972), p. 92. Dwight T. Wallace, "The Process of Weaving Development on the Peruvian Coast," in *Junius Bird Textile Conference*, ed. Rowe, Benson, and Schaffer, p. 48.

20. Sawyer, "The Feline in Paracas Art," pp. 97-100.

21. John Howland Rowe, "El Arte Religioso del Cuzco en el Horizonte Temprano," *Nawpa Pacha* 14 (1976): 1-20 and plates 1-10.

22. *Ibid.*, 7.

23. Dorothy Menzel, "Style and Time in the Middle Horizon," in *Peruvian Archaeology*, ed. Rowe and Menzel, p. 146.

24. Alfred Kidder, II, "Some Early Sites in the Northern Lake Titicaca Basin," *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University*, vol. 27, no. 1 (Cambridge, Mass: Peabody Museum, 1943), p. 3.

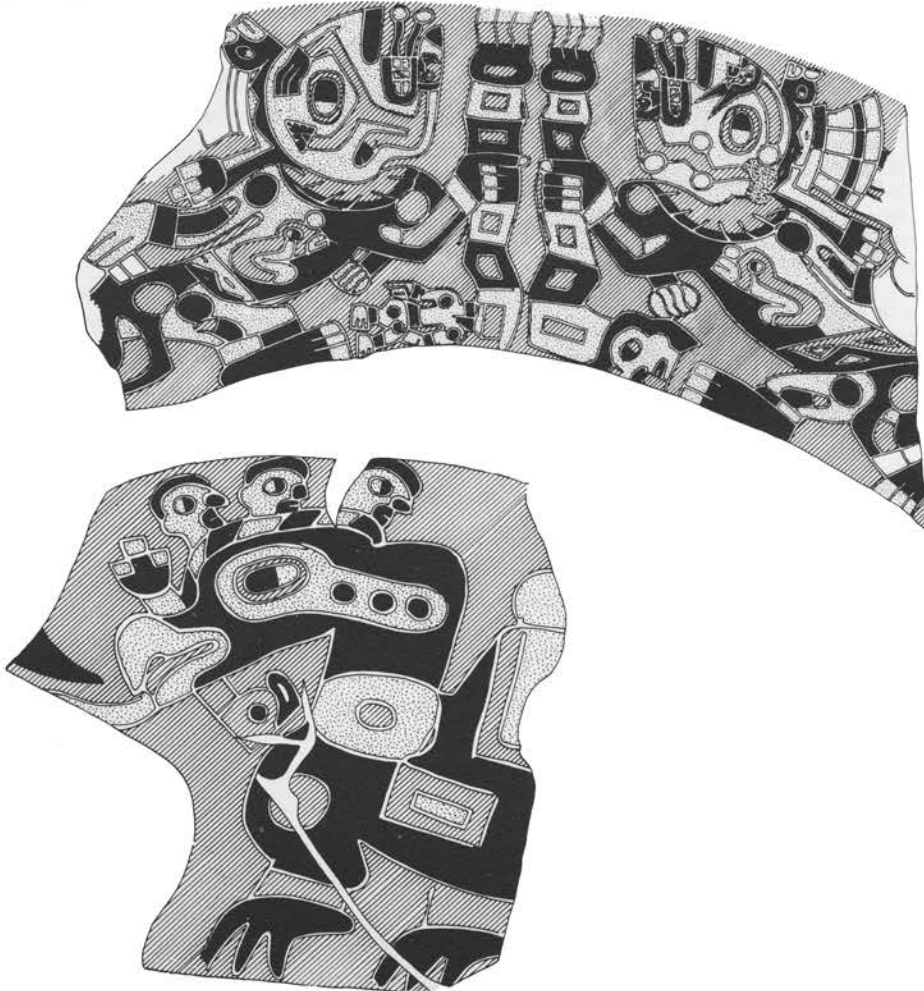
resses of animal-head appendages appear once again (Fig. 12). New to Andean iconography, however, is the Pucará divided eye, which was to become a common mythic signifier in the Middle Horizon.

At the south end of Lake Titicaca is the site of the Tiahuanaco culture. Established at the end of the Early Intermediate Period and continuing into the Middle Horizon, Tiahuanaco had a significant influence on the Huari culture. This culture was centered on a religion believed to have been based on astronomical observations.<sup>25</sup> The stone Sun Door at Tiahuanaco features a mythical central figure (Fig. 13) which bears a strong resemblance to the staff deity in the border of the Syracuse fragment. Both the Tiahuanaco and the Syracuse figures are front-facing, both hold a staff in each hand, and both wear a headdress containing animal-head appendages. There is also a "key" motif surrounding both faces. Other design elements in the Tiahuanaco figure, however, differ from those in the Syracuse one. The only similarities between the Tiahuanaco and Syracuse staffs are the eagles at the base. The headdress of the Tiahuanaco figure has "star" symbols as well as animal heads and is topped by an animal head rather than a star and feather symbol. The face of the Tiahuanaco figure has animal heads extending downward from the eyes.<sup>26</sup> Neither the divided eye of the Syracuse frag-

25. Arthur Posnansky, *Tiahuanaco: The Cradle of American Man* (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1945), vol. 1, pp. 154-55, vol. 2, pp. 11-21.

26. These are referred to as "tears." Although there are no tears in the Syracuse fragment, the design element is present in Huari iconography (See Eugenio Yacoleff, "Las Falconidas en el Arte y en las Creencias de los Antiguos Peruanos," *Revista del Museo Nacional* 1 (1932): 74-75 and fig. 16, p. 77).

Figure 12. Pucará pottery shards exhibiting animal-head appendages, divided eyes, and N-shaped fangs. J. H. Rowe and C. T. Brandel, "Pucara Style Pottery Designs," *Nawpa Pacha* 7-8 (1969): Plates 2 and 6. Reprinted by permission of J. H. Rowe.





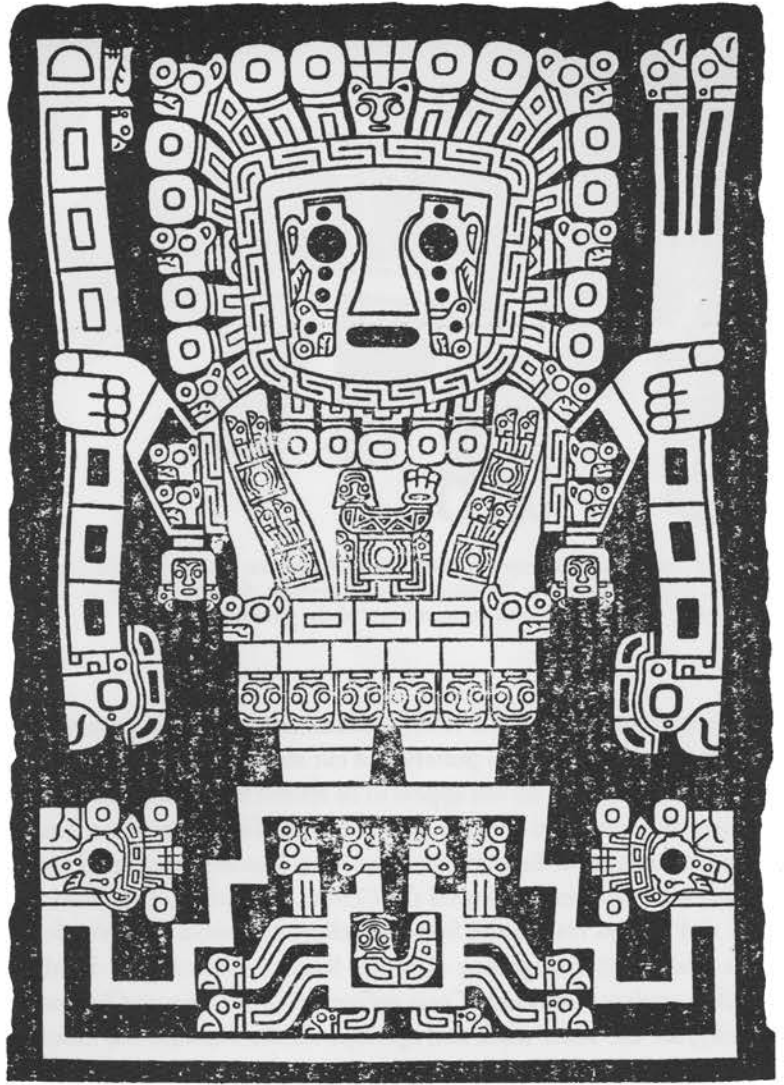


Figure 13. Staff-bearing deity on Sun Door at Tiahuanaco. Posnansky, *Tihuanacu*, p. 154; reprinted by permission of the publisher.

ment nor the N-shaped fangs are present. Indeed, N-shaped fangs are rare in Tiahuanaco icons. The pectoral ornament of the Tiahuanaco figure is not a chevron, nor is it flanked by animal heads. Close comparison of the figures reveals further, more subtle, differences.

In Tiahuanaco iconography the feline is found on pottery and incised stone. In neither case, however, does the feline contain the ferocious attributes—the claws, the raised foot—of the Syracuse feline. Only in modeled ceramics do N-shaped fangs occur. The divided eye is frequently used in pottery design.<sup>27</sup>

Yet there are clear associations between the cultures at Pucará and Tiahuanaco and the Huari culture. The divided eye first appeared at Pucará. The geometric staff-bearing deity with its distinctive headdress appeared at Tiahuanaco. Wallace suggests that the Huari culture may have had contact with both Pucará and the Tiahuanaco culture.<sup>28</sup> However, he stresses that “the Tiahuanaco-like styles are completely distinct in areal distribution and in stylistic configuration. The quality of the differences between the styles is such that a specimen of one style could never be mistaken for that of any of the other styles and there are many traits unique to each style.”<sup>29</sup>

27. Dwight T. Wallace, “The Tiahuanaco Horizon Styles in the Peruvian and Bolivian Highlands” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1957), 50-53, 80-83, 144-46.

28. *Ibid.*, 236-37.

29. *Ibid.*, 228.



Figure 14. Early Nazca ocelot-otter motif, Nazca Valley, ca. 50 B.C. Art Institute of Chicago, Gaffron Collection. Drawing by Grace Brennan. Sawyer, "Feline in Paracas Art," p. 111; reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Nonetheless, although the feline predominated in Pucará pottery and was present in Tiahuanaco pottery and cut stone, the feline images in the Syracuse fragment do not appear to be related to the South Highland cultures at Pucará or at Tiahuanaco. The feline figure was also a South Coast icon during the Early Horizon and Early Intermediate Period when South Coast cultures influenced the Central Highlands. The ferocious pose and clawed feet of the Syracuse felines in profile echo the fearsome Chavinoid iconography of earlier South Coast cultures. Further possible evidence of South Coast influence (while not of Chavinoid ferocity) are the white mask and upswept whiskers around the mouths of the felines in the Syracuse fragment. These may have as their precursors design elements from Paracas and Nazca on the South Coast, where the mask was a feline attribute and the upswept whiskers referred to the otter—the *gato de agua*—which inhabits South Coast waterways (Fig. 14).<sup>30</sup>

The *gato de agua*, however, is also native to lakes and rivers in the Highlands. It appeared as an icon in Pucará and Tiahuanaco stone work (see pectoral ornament on deity in Fig. 13). The use of upswept whiskers as a design element, however, was unique to the South Coast and was used in conjunction with feline bodies.<sup>31</sup>

Just as Wallace inferred a Huari-Pucará-Tiahuanaco association, John Rowe has stated that "the Chavín religion cast a long shadow in ancient Peru."<sup>32</sup> Antecedents to Middle Horizon iconography indicate a general pan-Peruvian symbolism. Since the time spans between cultures having common symbols range from a few years to one thousand years, there are probably links yet to be discovered.

Archaeologists generally divide the Middle Horizon into four epochs. The cultures at Huari made contact with that of Tiahuanaco sometime in the period A.D. 550–600 (Epoch 1A), when Tiahuanacoid iconography first appeared in Huari art. However, because no "pure" Tiahuanaco artifacts have been found at Huari and no Huari artifacts have been found at Tiahuanaco, it is surmised that travelers from the Ayacucho region may have visited Tiahuanaco and then returned home

30. Sawyer, "The Feline in Paracas Art," p. 110.

31. Luis E. Valcarcel, "El Gato de Agua: Sus Representaciones en Pukara y Naska," *Revista del Museo Nacional* 2 (1932): 5–10, 26.

32. J. H. Rowe, "Form and Meaning in Chavín Art," p. 87.

imbued with the Tiahuanaco religion. From that point the Huari culture seems to have altered the new religion to suit its own needs and then, by both religious and militaristic means, annexed successive territories to build an empire that occupied nearly half of what is now Peru. Huari's direct influence on the Central Highlands and the Central and South Coasts is believed to have occurred within the first two epochs (A.D. 550-825) of the Middle Horizon. From A.D. 675 to 750 (Epoch 2A) the Huari Empire suffered a crisis but quickly recovered to become even more influential. The empire fell in the early ninth century, at the end of Epoch 2B, and the city of Huari was abandoned. There was no new Huari influence in Epochs 3 and 4 (A.D. 825-900), although local derivations of Huari art continued after A.D. 825.<sup>33</sup>

During the early expansion of its empire a great concentration of population and power was located at Huari in the Central Highlands. In other parts of the empire there were large building complexes. But excavation of these complexes has uncovered no traces of day-to-day living, which suggests that the complexes were used for the storage of goods to be transported throughout the empire.<sup>34</sup> The redistribution of goods was a major activity of the empire's administration, with peasants providing for the elite populations of the cities.<sup>35</sup> On the fall of the Huari Empire whole cities were abandoned. Rowe draws a parallel between this and the rapid decline of Roman cities on the fall of the Roman Empire. The rural peasantry revolted against the Roman administrative system, often destroying the cities which housed that administration. A similar chain of events, Rowe suggests, is likely to have occurred with the decline of the Huari Empire.<sup>36</sup>

## Significance of the Syracuse fragment

It is estimated that of all Peruvian textiles woven by pre-Columbian cultures, ninety-five percent were garments.<sup>37</sup> The Syracuse fragment belongs to a very large textile and is clearly not part of a garment. Thus, the original textile to which the Syracuse fragment belongs must have been important to the people of its time.

The mythical iconography within the fragment would indicate that the original textile had a religious context. The positioning of the mythical images in the textile may be further evidence of ritual. A system of alternates and opposites occurs in the color and placement of profile felines in the checkerboard field; it also occurs in the placement of animal-head appendages of the staff-bearing figure's headdress. Moreover, number systems are manifest in the color sequences and the placement of design elements. Beneath the feet of the staff-bearing figures the unit "two" is operative in the alternation of disembodied heads with interlocking frets. Of seemingly greater importance is the function of the unit "three" in the original textile. The color sequence of the staff-bearing figures has three types. If the reconstruction is correct, each border would contain fifteen staff-bearing figures and each row in the checkerboard field would contain eighteen squares, nine of which would have been feline squares—all multiples of three. The meaning of these carefully plotted positions and intervals in Huari iconography is unknown. Gayton has suggested that in the absence of written records religious textiles may have had a narrative purpose, the weaver having been the "verbalizer," the layman the "visualizer," and

33. Menzel, "Style and Time in the Middle Horizon," pp. 146-49, 152-53.

34. J. H. Rowe, "Urban Settlements in Ancient Peru," *Peruvian Archaeology*, ed. Rowe and Menzel, p. 306.

35. William H. Isbell, *The Rural Foundation for Urbanism: Economic and Stylistic Interaction between Rural and Urban Communities in Eighth Century Peru* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), pp. 54-55.

36. J. H. Rowe, "Urban Settlements in Ancient Peru," pp. 293-96.

37. Wendell C. Bennett and Junius B. Bird, *Andean Culture History* (London: Robert Hale, 1965), p. 204.

the priest the "narrator."<sup>38</sup> Whatever the purpose of its richness of mythic imagery and its mathematically arranged design elements, it is nevertheless clear that this textile was woven for a specific religious observance and was held in great esteem.

Although the Syracuse fragment is cataloged "Mantle," the width of the conjectured original textile rules out that it could have been worn over the shoulders of an individual. The original twelve-foot textile may have been a temple hanging or banner—a function suggested by Sawyer in his discussion of large Peruvian textiles.<sup>39</sup> Menzel has proposed that the size of the original textile is analogous to the oversize Middle Horizon urns found in deposits of offerings from Epoch 1B (A.D. 600–675).<sup>40</sup> This indeed may be the case. Large Huari urns and jars often displayed front-facing staff-bearing deities and felines in profile.<sup>41</sup>

In our own time the Syracuse fragment can play a significant role in providing us with a greater understanding of the art and cultures of pre-Columbian Peru. In the first place, it is an important example of the continuity of symbols—over both time and space—in ancient Andean religion. On pottery and stone, as well as in textiles, the mythical feline and staff-bearing deity endured from the Early Horizon to the Late Horizon, their use as religious symbols extending from the North Highlands to the South Highlands. In the second place, the unique iconography of the fragment offers an opportunity to learn more about the derivative nature of Huari religion. Further, the striking conjectured size of the original textile provides valuable information on exceedingly large artifacts of the Huari Empire. Finally, and perhaps most important, the Syracuse tapestry fragment is important to us simply for what it is: an ancient handwoven textile. Its undeniable beauty reveals the humanity of its makers of more than a thousand years ago. As with all handwoven textiles, the motions inherent in the act of weaving are preserved in the web for our enlightenment.

38. Anna H. Gayton, "The Cultural Significance of Peruvian Textiles: Production, Function, Aesthetics," in *Peruvian Archaeology*, ed. Rowe and Menzel, p. 291.

39. Alan R. Sawyer, "Painted Nasca Textiles," in *Junius Bird Textile Conference*, ed. Rowe, Benson, and Schaffer, p. 129.

40. Personal communication, April 1982 and January 1983.

41. Yacoleff describes an oversize urn with a staff-bearing figure found at Pacheco ("Las Falconidas," 75–77). An excellent photograph of this urn can be found in *Revista del Museo Nacional* 7 (1938): plate 31b. Menzel describes other oversize Huari urns, both religious and secular (Menzel, "New Data on the Huari Empire," pp. 73, 90–94, plate 32).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The completion of this study would not have been possible without the invaluable guidance and support of Stanton L. Catlin, Professor of Museum Studies and Art History, Syracuse University. Cordial thanks are due to Alfred T. Collette, Director of the Syracuse University Art Collections, Domenic J. Iacono, Curator, and Thomas Piche, Assistant to the Curator, for making the textile available for study.*

*Funds for the publication of the color plate were generously provided by the Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation.*