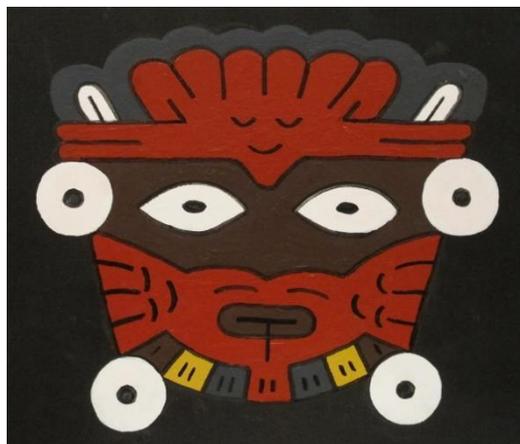


Chavinoid Elements in Paracas Textiles and Nasca Ceramics



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Abstract

From the beginning of the Chavin period several examples exist which prove that the divine image in the form of the feline, or the head of the feline, was combined with the symbolism of the step-wave. It can be assumed that Chavín either created this feline/step-wave combination or possibly adopted it from the northern Andean region. Around 800 BC this accompanying symbolism was changed into the snake-wave, probably for stylistic reasons. The religious leaders perhaps motivated by an external threat such as a climate catastrophe, redesigned the divine image around 500 BC. They "strengthened" it with the harpy, the most powerful bird of prey in Andean space. This new hybrid divine image remained in place until around 200 BC the end of the Chavín period. It was then taken over by Paracas which, until about 400 BC, used the feline with the step-wave symbolism from the early Chavín period while developing their own creations. From around 400 BC onwards Paracas created outstanding geometric textile designs in a limited range of colors, first employing the feline and the step-wave, then the feline with the combination of step and snake-wave, and finally as a hybrid divine image with its ornithomorphic representation. The style changed around 200 BC, when the textiles became more colorful and added new designs and techniques. After initial realistic solutions by the combining of feline and harpy, the divine representation of the feline and ornithomorphic characteristics succeeded by means of the forehead and mouth mask. These powerful new designs show the flying feline, supplemented by the snake-wave symbolism. The beginning Nasca took this Paracas representation into a transitional period known as Proto-Nasca. The Paracas culture came to an end around 50 AD.

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Introductory Remarks

It is remarkable that in the 100 years since its rediscovery archaeologists, ethnologists and anthropologists have not used the tools of their professions to provide a systematic and credible interpretation of the iconography of ancient Peru. The art of ancient Peru is replete with recurring symbols, which suggest they possessed both coherence and meaning. To date, the meaning of the message inscribed on its textiles, ceramics and other artifacts has remained inaccessible.

It is asserted here that these symbols, though varying stylistically across various Peruvian cultures and persisting within those cultures over centuries, were designed to convey the same message. With some exceptions, the failure of earlier observers to see the symbolic unity among artistically different renderings hindered the search for a credible explanation of their meaning and purpose.

The source of the iconography of ancient Peru can be found in Chavín, a formative culture that shaped the iconographic statements of all subsequent neighboring cultures. It is hypothesized that Chavin combined some symbols of the North-Andean space with the representation of a supreme deity in a pictorial statement and spread this resulting divine imagery outward. The North-Andean symbolism was that of the step-wave which expressed the elements earth and water and thus gave expression to the earth goddess and the water god. It is further hypostasized that Chavín combined this symbolism with the

image of its own supreme deity to express both divine power and fertility.

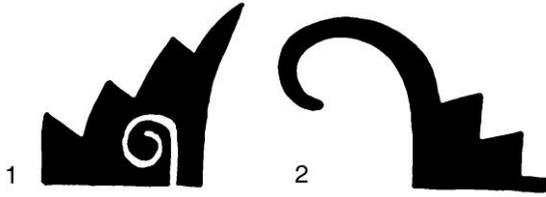
This symbolic triune combination of earth goddess, water god, and supreme deity were extremely helpful to the religious leaders in their contribution, over a period of 2500 years, to the preservation and development of the Peruvian culture. This basic symbolism of earth and water in its innumerable pictorial variants and the superior divine image in its several variations, were also subject to metamorphosis over time, making the interpretation of the overall symbolic structure even more challenging.

The present text deals with (1) the symbolism of Chavín and its influences on the cultures of Paracas and Nasca. It addresses how the religious leaders were able to employ the divine images in the impressive development of the cultural and economic foundations of the Andean region; and (2) the metamorphoses to which these divine images were subject as they influenced, and were in turn influenced by, the development of the cultures of Moche, Tiahuanaco, Huari, Chimú, Lambayeque, Chancay and others.

The divine images presented by Chavín, Paracas and Nasca are elementary and unique within their logical and consistent combinatorics. They thus provide insight into later cultures by providing clues to their identity.

Basics of the Divine Images of Chavin

It can be assumed that the religious leaders of Chavin intentionally combined two symbols already present in the northern and central Andean



Figs. 1 and 2: Step wave symbolism: Examples from the North-Andean region (ceramic motifs Tuncahuán and Chorrera) as symbols of the combination of earth goddess and water god.

spaces. In the northern Andes the motif of the step-wave was probably already widespread and served religious purposes (figs. 1 and 2). This motif consisted of the step symbol and the meander symbol. The step represented the Andean cultural terraces, and thus the earth, while the meander represented water*). These two images gave expression to the earth goddess and the water god which, when conjoined, symbolized fertility. This religious motif most probably antedated Chavin, but through the cultural and religious influence of Chavin it spread through the entire Andean area and its coasts, persisting into the time of the Incas.

The image of the feline as a divine image had also been used in other parts of the Andean region, both in relief and in sculptural form (Fig. 3). The triune picture of the deities that originated in Chavin in the 9th Century BC combined a supreme and invisible deity in the form of the feline with the more tangible earth goddess and water god. (fig. 4).

In the following 2500 years this divine trinity was subject to several metamorphoses. These changes to the original feline God and to the symbolism earth and water occurred because of the evolving theology of the religious leaders, the creativity of the artists, and the varied conditions and perceptions of more than 15 various and varied cultures.

Textiles were a practical medium for displaying and spreading symbolism. In relation to Chavin, however, textiles were destroyed by climatological conditions. But a few specimens from the area of the southern coast have survived. Furthermore the motifs can be found on ceramics and other objects, which have also turned up in the outskirts of Chavin. Here too, the divine image is expressed artistically in many variations and forms (Fig. 5).

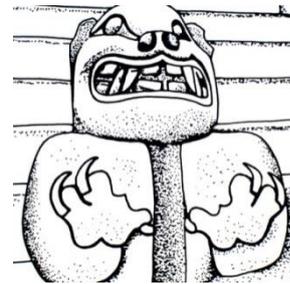


Fig.3: Reconstruction drawing of the feline god of Punkurí (clay statue), Nepeña valley

The most impressive examples of these images can be found on the stone reliefs of the temple in Chavín. Due to wind, rain, flooding and human defilement, the temple was badly defaced so that only a small number of religious and other works of art have survived. However, those that remain provide the basis for analyzing the images and making some tentative assertions about the nature of the community's religious life (cf. figs. 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13).

Here it is extremely important to note that, in the present context, the meaning of all pictorial representations is purely symbolic. Any interpretation that tries to depict these as literal representations will miss the point.

**) The Peruvian archaeologist Federico Kauffmann Doig had already argued around 1990 that the step symbols should symbolize the earth (symbol of agricultural terraces) and the meander symbols water (wave).*

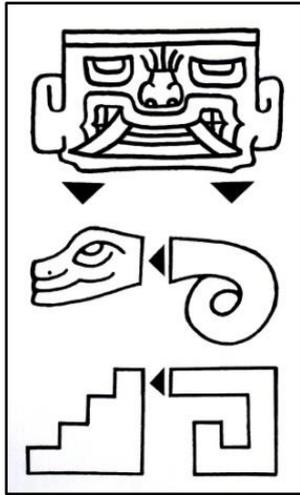


Fig.4: Combination of the image of the feline god with the symbolisms of the snake wave and the step wave, the components of which are thus the symbols of the earth goddess and the water god.

About 70 years ago, Julius C. Tello was able to collect evidence from the first excavations of Chavin, but was unable to continue his work due to unforeseen flooding. More than 60 years ago John Rowe's investigations of Chavin led him to conclude that the artwork should be understood as symbolic in nature. However, the time was not granted him to decipher the artifacts and his work remains unfinished. The archaeologists who in the following decades tried to continue his work were not able to unlock its secrets.

It can be asserted today that the culture of Chavin gave birth to the divine imagery that profoundly influenced all subsequent regional cultures. Stylistic and other adaptations were made over time, most likely by religious leaders and artists. Their adaptations affected the optical or stylistic appearance of the divine image, but not the message it conveyed. This message remained constant over the period of about 2500 years.

For the religious leaders the image of the supreme God in its different forms

was indispensable. Equally important, however, was the accompanying symbolism, which clearly expressed the central message "water to earth." And presuming the dedication of the religious hierarchy to the development of water controls and agriculture it can be seen how they laid the foundation for sound and prosperous communities. From today's point of view their achievements are part of the story of an important world culture. However, their actual evaluation is best understood in connection with the interpretation of their iconographic religious statements. These were, and still remain, logical and coherent.

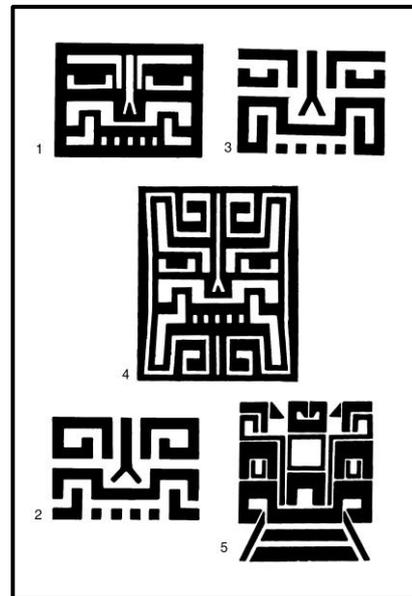


Fig. 5: Examples of chavinoid textile motifs of the southern coast, which consist of the physiognomy of the felids and the meander symbolism of the stepped meanders

Taken together, these images and symbols proclaimed that survival depended on the protection provided by a strong and powerful deity and the delicate balance of water and earth. The people of ancient Peru clearly understood their meaning and significance.

It may have been the intent of the religious leaders and artisans to show these representations in increasingly

complex and seemingly incomprehensible ways (fig. 7). This intention, however, provided a challenge for the viewers which must have created within them a combination of tension and wonder. Their reward was the successful interpretation of these pictorial works. A similar experience occurs in those who view these works today. That experience however is augmented by a keen appreciation of the quality of the production, especially the highly complex weaving designs that were produced without any of the tools which are commonplace today. It is a cause for wonder that craftsmanship and intellectual ability merged to create such extraordinary works of art.



Picture 6: Rolling of the relief of the Lanzón, the first relief image of the god in the old temple of Chavín. Feline physiognomy completed by the multiple symbolism of the snake-wave symbolism.

All Peruvian cultures have also left behind works of art in which both the earth goddess and/or the water god were depicted in separate pictures. These are clear proof that the general image of the divine appeared as a Trinity. In this context an important hint from the 16th century chroniclers relates that the ancient cultures worshipped a creator god who actually consisted of two god figures*). Today, it can be concluded that they were referring to the earth goddess and the water god.

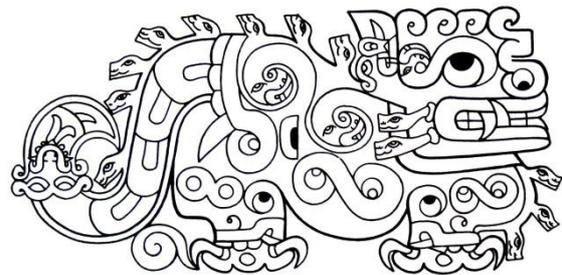


Fig. 7: Relief of the cornice of the new temple of Chavín. It shows the separate symbols earth (snake heads) and water (waves or meanders) on the body of the feline image of the God.

Both the symbolism of the step-wave (earth goddess and water god), as well as the image of the supreme deity, were already subject to changes at Chavín, which then continued with Paracas and Nasca, as well as with subsequent cultures. As shall be demonstrated in following sections, the representations of Paracas and Nasca show some most interesting variants.



Fig.8: Relief of the feline god of Chavín showing the snake-wave symbolism.

*) Please compare catalogue of Nasca exhibition 2017, Makowski, page 258.

The Sequence of the Presentations of the Divine Image at Chavín

Early objects, such as textiles and ceramics, show that Chavín used the attributive symbolism of the step-wave. Some textiles found on the southern coast in particular prove this (fig. 5).

These either came directly from Chavín or were made on the coast according to the Chavín model. It is clear from this that the divine image, which was influenced by the feline, was graphically depicted in addition to the step-wave symbolism. Analyses of ceramics suggest that the step-wave was used by Chavín until about 800 BC (fig. 9).



Fig.9: Early Chavín ceramic with the representation of the symbolism of the step-wave (meander).

With the progressive construction of the temple of Chavín in the first half of the first millennium BC, a symbolism deviating from the step-wave was used, just as had been the case with ceramics. This is very clearly expressed in the design of the Lanzón in the old temple of Chavín (Fig. 6). The physiognomy of the feline is supplemented here by a multitude of very short snakes, whose rounded bodies take the form of a meander. This leads to the assumption that the angular symbol of the step meander

was not suitable for the usual rounded representations in the reliefs of Chavín (e.g. fig. 7), and therefore a different symbolism was needed. The term snake-wave is obvious in comparison to the step-wave.

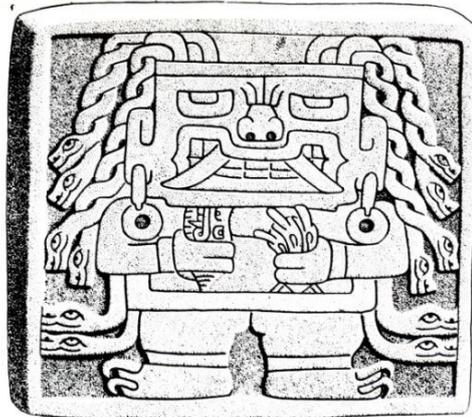
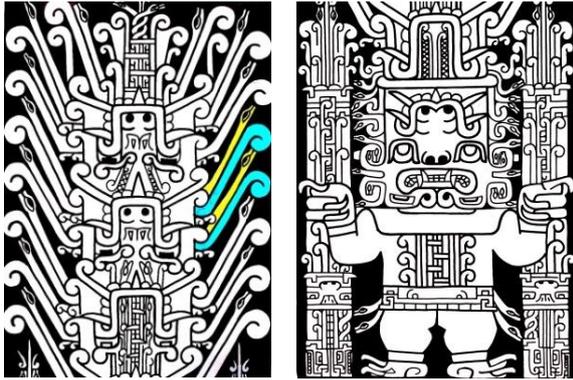


Fig.10: Relief plate of Chavín with the representation of the feline god image with snake-meanders at the head and at the hip, as well as Strombus and Spondylus, likewise as water and fertility symbols.

The snake-wave was used in all other representations that remained in Chavín after the losses due to natural disasters. This applies in particular to the well-known Raimondi stele (figs. 11 and 12). It represents a divine anthropomorphic image whose voluminous headdress is characterized by a repetition of, among others, a multitude of separate representations of the snake head and wave (meander). The well-known relief, which is sometimes incorrectly referred to as the "Head of Medusa", is also noteworthy. (Fig.10). Here the anthropomorphic feline wears eight snake-waves in the headdress, while four others rise from the hips. In both cases the feline god is clearly supplemented by multiple repetitions of the snake-wave fertility symbolism.



Figs. 11 and 12: Upper and lower part of the Raimondi stele. In the headdress the multiple symbols earth and water as components of the chavinoid snake-wave symbolism are shown. The picture also symbolizes the feliden god with the attributive symbolism earth and water, thus the symbolism of fertility.

This configuration is expressed in other reliefs and also in various ceramics of the Chavín period. There are also examples in which both symbols, snake head and wave (meander), are reproduced next to each other (Raimondi stele, fig. 11 / 12) or separately (see fig. 7). The separate reproductions may have intended to invite viewers mentally to merge the two and thus grasp the symbolic act of fertilization which is the spiritual message.

The new temple at Chavin was completed around 500 BCE and was joined to the old temple during several construction phases. The execution of the facade in dry masonry shows that a second floor was a later addition. Here the platform was made accessible by the final addition of two staircases, one on each side of the portal. Both the stairs and the portal are unanchored to the pre-existing temple building, which is proof that they were a later construction.

The new temple had been provided with a partially surrounding cornice, the western parts of which have been destroyed. The remaining relief shows the divine image in form of a feline depicted laterally with separate snake head symbols at the back and the meander on, among other things, the head. Additionally there is a meander-shaped tail with attached snake head symbolism! (fig.7).

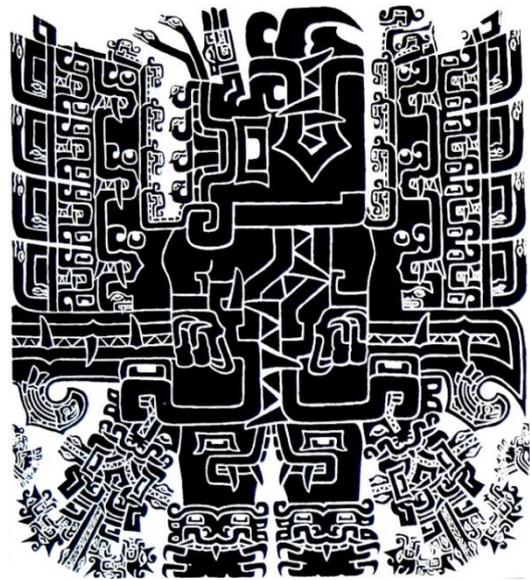


Fig. 13: Unrolling of the relief from the left column of the portal of the new temple of Chavín: hybrid image of the god as a combination of feline and harpy.

Surprisingly, the portal mentioned above shows divine images on the reliefs of the two round columns and also in the smaller reliefs of the stone slabs covering the portal. These no longer represent only felines but show a hybrid divine image. The head of the feline is supplemented by a very large bird of prey's beak and an anthropomorphic body which is provided with wings. These ornithomorphic beings with a feline's head and beaks (fig. 14) are later additions and represent a departure from earlier images of the deity.

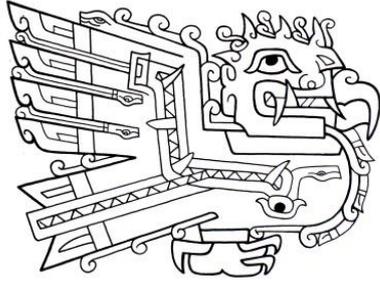


Fig.14: Relief from the top plate on the columns of the portal of Chavín new temple. Ornithomorph--feline designed divine image with snake-wave symbolism and expression of power (feline teeth and eye on the body).

The divine image is supplemented by the symbolism of snake wave in all the representations available here. In addition, the bodies are provided with the multiple symbolism of the feliden with outsized bird beak and dominant fangs (fig. 14). This can be interpreted as a symbol of power. Basically, it can be assumed that the religious leaders intended to strengthen the old divine image by replacing it with the one depicted here. This possibly was done following a series of El Niño-like climatic catastrophes which caused the people to have diminished confidence in the old feline-dominated divinity. This change must have occurred somewhere around 500 B.C.

The feline representation can also be seen in textiles, which were found, along with other artifacts, in the graves of Paracas-Cavernas on the southern coast. Here the feline is clearly visible in profile with the additional beak and accompanied by the symbolism of the snake/meander (fig. 21). There are also textile representations of anthropomorphic felines with snake-waves/meanders, which show the

divine image in the previous design (Fig. 20).

A stone slab recently found during further excavations in Chavín de Huantar shows a relief (fig. 15) presenting the hybrid feline with the attributes of step and snake-waves, the powerful predator jaw, and a Spondylus shell.



Fig. 15: Relief with depiction of the hybrid image of the god demonstrating step-wave and snake-wave symbolism (shown in front and behind the head) as well as a Spondylus shell in his hand.

A comparable picture can be found on a stone cup (Fig. 16), which shows the hybrid divine image supplemented by the images of step and snake wave/meander. Remarkably these two objects show both the step-wave and snake-wave.

The sequence of the divine images between about 1000 BC and 200 BC reveals three different forms of expression. First, the feline divine image with the attributive symbolism of the step- wave. Second, from about 800 BC, the feline divine image with the attributive symbolism of the snake-wave. This clearly demonstrates a variant, which shows the snake head, as

alternative to the step symbol, and the meander separated from each other. Third, from 500 BC the divine image changes to a hybrid representation, which unites the feline god with the harpy, and was used until the end of Chavín.

The wings in the reliefs on the columns of the portal of Chavín's new temple deserve special attention. They are not realistic, but stylized and serve only to represent the attributive symbolism.



Fig. 16: Motif of a chavinoid stone mug with the hybrid image of the god and the symbolisms of the step-wave (on the wing) and the snake-wave (in the hand).

These attributive representations show snake-waves/meanders, feline heads and power symbols, i .e. the feline jaw with particularly strong canines. This detail is dealt with in the section "The Adoption of the Divine Image by the Nasca Culture". The wings of this image can be marked as pure symbol bearers which resurface in the images of Nazca.

Adoption of the Chavinoid Image by Paracas

Chavín had created a striking and certainly useful divine image. This image spread both north and south. It is not possible to determine the period in which this took place. Textiles with chavinoid motifs were found in the tombs of Paracas Cavernas, but also in other places in such as Carhua, Callango and Ocucaje. The textiles may have been woven here or traded as far as the southern coast. Since all textile material in and around Chavín has been lost, these are the only evidence.



Figs. 17 and 18: Chavinoid textile with half physiognomies, which can be completed by second halves (mirror-image) to form complete images. See also fig. 5, detail 5.

Particularly striking are the abstract feline heads, which were complemented by the step-wave symbolism, thus expressing the perfect divine image. Figure 5 shows a number of traced motifs together. One of these motifs comes from a colored textile, the discovery location of which is unfortunately unknown. The small original textile shows repetitions a half-head motif with its symbolism. Only the combination of two halves, one of them mirror-inverted, shows the picture (fig.17 and 18). Obviously this was also an attempt to put observers to the test by letting them make the mental



Fig. 19: Detail of an embroidered chavinoid textile of the southern coast with a feline physiognomy, supplemented by eight (!) step-wave meander motifs.

connections required to interpret the picture. There are several other examples where these combinations create images with heads and symbolism. Another motif (fig. 19) clearly shows the feline physiognomy supplemented with step-wave symbolism.



Fig. 20: Painted chavinoid textile: Anthropomorphically depicted feline image of a god with the multiple symbolism of the snake-wave symbolism. Compare with fig.8.

It is generally assumed that the Paracas culture originated between 700 and 600 BC. The religious leadership will also have come upon the scene sometime during this period when Paracas was clearly influenced by Chavín. The textiles discovered at the aforementioned places indicate

that the divine image consisted of the feline supplemented by the step-wave symbolism. At this time Chavín had already reoriented itself and followed a divine image augmented by the snake-wave symbolism.

Figures 19 to 21 show the sequence of the stylistic development of the iconography of early Paracas as a direct consequence of the adoption of the chavinoid symbolism on the southern coast: felines with step wave, felines with snake waves, a hybrid god image with snake waves. This is the same sequence used by the Chavín culture.

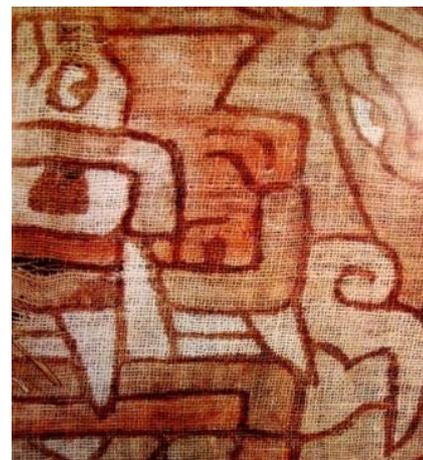


Fig. 21: Painted chavinoid textile (detail): Hybrid divine image with snake-wave symbolism (snake-head at the right side)..

The graves of Paracas-Cavernas date from between 500 and 400 BC. However, the textiles found in them do not provide a homogeneous impression. Here were found mostly textiles produced, or reproduced, after the manner of Chavin. On the other hand, textiles were also found that indicate a modification of the Chavin pattern and suggest the development by the Paracas artists of their own iconographic style. Some textiles

largely defy the pattern (Fig. 22); others employ the divine image with a representation that expressed both the step-wave and the snake-wave in a combination (Fig. 20). In all cases, however, strong chavinoid influences were found.



Fig.22: Drawing of a motif from painted textile: A very early design of the divine image of Paracas.

The two burial sites Paracas-Cavernas and Paracas-Necrópolis differ in the construction of the graves. The former are in caverns, as the name suggests. The first caverns were manmade and carved from the rocky ground. The tombs of Paracas-Necrópolis were located in the sandy soil by erecting underground adobe constructions. It is unclear what led to this change in tomb construction.

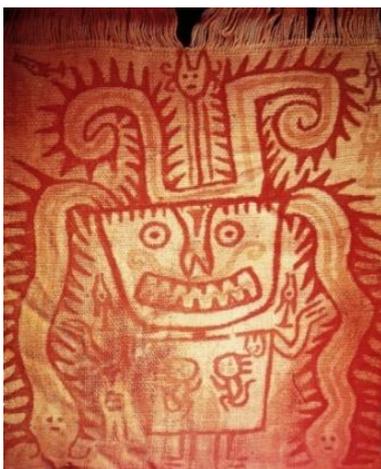


Fig. 23: A painted mummy cloth of the early Paracas Cavernas shows the divine image with the style of serrated details (alternative step symbol). Above: symbolism step-wave, below: snake-wave.

Both of these types of tombs were clearly reserved for the community's elite. This can be seen in the luxurious textiles and also in the rich number of mummy bundles moderately adorned with these textiles. These burial sites were in use for more than 600 years. An analysis of the mummy bundles over the period under consideration leads to the conclusion that the leading elite, though few in number, possessed significant influence.



Fig. 24: Unku of Paracas-Cavernas: Divine image with serrated meander on body and tail, combined symbolism of snake-wave and step-wave. Please compare with fig. 20.

The caverns of Paracas-Necropolis were in use until around 200 BC—50 AD, or until the transition to Nazca. In contrast to the more varied composition of the textiles in the mummy bundles of Paracas-Cavernas, the textiles of Paracas-Necrópolis represent a sequence in the same stylistic order as that of Chavín. In general, the Paracas-Necrópolis textiles are divided into two categories: geometric textiles and colored textiles. The geometric and colored textiles differ considerably both in appearance and their textile technology. In both cases they are embroidered motifs on a simple linen-bonded base.

Apart from a few exceptions, only the borders of these textiles were crafted with elaborate stitchery.

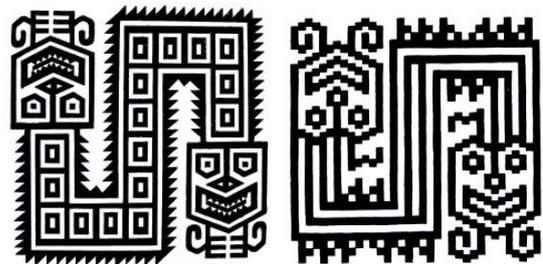
The textiles of the early Paracas were mostly three-colored: red basic fabric, with black and ochre embroidery. Additional colors were rare.. The patterns followed precise geometric motifs, the preparation and the finishing of which was certainly not easy for the craftsmen of the time to master. The final product presupposed a precise understanding of the geometry of the finished product, a daunting challenge in an age of primitive tools. The period in which these geometric textiles were produced can be roughly fixed at 400 to 200 BCE.



Fig. 25: Drawing of a motif of the divine image with tail symbolism comparable with fig. 24. See also fig. 7.

In the late phase of Paracas-Necrópolis completely different textiles were produced. They were free designs with rounded forms and other contents, which were modelled on those of late Chavin. The end of this phase passed over to Proto-Nasca. As the techniques were maintained for some time, it is difficult to date them with accuracy. Also, there is no exact temporal evidence when and how the geometric phase morphed into the colored phase. Any timeline for this

transition would at best be approximate and would only serve to provide a speculative framework.



Figs. 26 to 27 a/b: Dual divine image from god Paracas-Necrópolis (geometric), below identical and similar drawing. Very often this representation is wrongly called a double-headed snake. The meander between the heads symbolizes both the the step-wave and the snake-wave symbolism. Cf. fig. 23 - 25.

The geometric and colored phase of Paracas-Necropolis follows the entire Chavín sequence from the feline formed divine image with the step-wave symbolism to the divine hybrid image with snake-wave symbolism. Here it can be assumed that the religious leaders and textile artists deliberately chose the sequence of Chavín. Please compare the following figs. 28 – 51.

After all, there are several hundred years between the early Chavín style and the textiles of Paracas-Necropolis which bear their own style. Textiles in

the area of the southern coast were able to survive the centuries, which is why it is possible to find these intact designs there. There are similar examples with Chancay, when emblematic patterns from Moche were used for their own designs. But here there is a time difference of more or less 800 years.

The geometric textiles of Paracas-Necrópolis include the feline image of the divine being with step-wave symbolism, the feline divine image with snake-wave symbolism, the feline divine image with the combined symbolism of step-wave and snake-wave, and finally the hybrid feline with the combined step and snake-wave symbolism. When Paracas created the hybrid divine image, it also initiated the change from geometric to so-called colored textiles.

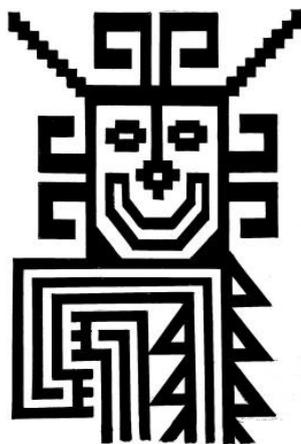


Fig. 28: Drawing of Paracas-Necrópolis (geometric): Feline's image of the god with step-wave symbolism.

The colored textiles represent the crowning glory of the Paracas textiles by presenting divine images which are detached from the images of feline and harpy and which only suggest the characteristics of these two models by

means of substitute representations, namely masks.

These developments are discussed in detail in the following two sections: "The Sequence of the Representations of the Geometric Image of Paracas" and "The Culmination of Iconography in the Colored Textiles of Paracas".

The Sequence of the Representations of the Geometric Divine Image of Paracas

To date, the textiles found in the burial grounds of Paracas-Necrópolis, have not all been dated. Still, it can be concluded from the Chavín sequence that there is a comparable temporal sequence in the production of these textiles. What motivated the religious leaders and weavers to choose this same stylistic sequence remains a mystery.



Fig. 29: Detail of a fabric with similar designs as in fig. 30. Step- and snake-waves united in the symbolism.

In contrast to the early chavinoid head pictures (figs. 5, 18 and 19), the textiles of the Early Paracas were not only effective by the dominant three

colors, but also by the large geometric designs, which are mostly repetitions of the motifs, and the open spaces used for additional motifs (fig. 29). Fig. 29 shows an outstanding example in which not only the feline's head is provided with the step wave symbolism, but below the head a larger design of the snake-wave motif is shown.



Fig. 30: Picture of the divine feline with four snake-meander symbolisms (with snake head after feline's model) which should also express the step-waves (meander with serrated trimming). Cf. fig. 26 and 27.

There are also representations showing the step wave designed in the form of a serrated "snake". Serrated meanders were later found in other cultures as well. The same principle underlies the representation of a dual divine image, which is often referred to in literature as a "double-headed snake". It is, however, the dual divine image, which is connected by a serrated meander form. In this representation simultaneously both step wave and snake wave symbolism are expressed (figs. 26 and 27 a/b).

The reproduction of a geometric feline also clearly shows the meander symbolism. The duplication of the motif is typical in designs with free surfaces (figs. 29 and 30).

There are not too many examples of geometric representations of the hybrid

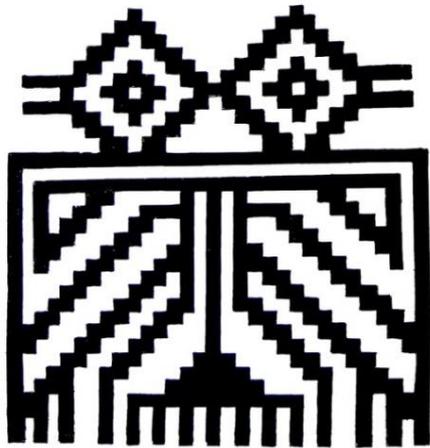
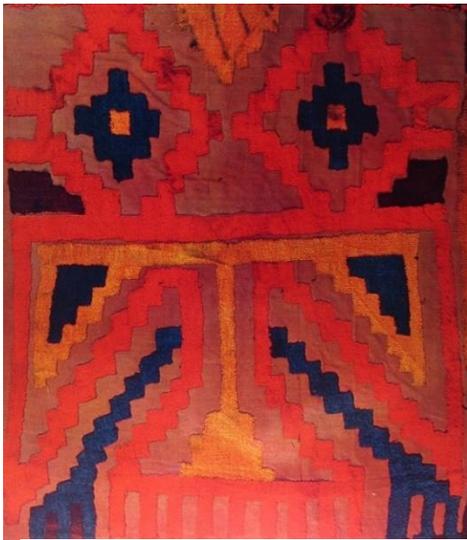


Fig. 31: Paracas-Necropolis textile (geometric): Combined hybrid divine image (felide and harpy) with repetition of the motif in the image design.

divine image. Indeed, the artists of Paracas found it difficult to depict this image, not only in the geometric phase, but also later in the so-called colored phase. Efforts must be made to identify the geometric hybrid divine image, which is hidden within a specific representation of birds. This is recognizable by two bird heads turned to each side. The pair of eyes presented in this way is also the pair of eyes of the feline in a hidden head view. Below this, wings can be identified. In the middle of the picture one can see that which can be identified in the broadest sense as its nose. A jagged line, indicating the feline's teeth, can be seen at the bottom of the image (figs. 31,32).

The most remarkable representation can be found in a textile in interlocking warp and weft technique in which the feline, though imbedded in the dominant motif, can be clearly identified (figs.32). The black-and-white reproduction (fig. 33) clearly illustrates both the geometry and the details.

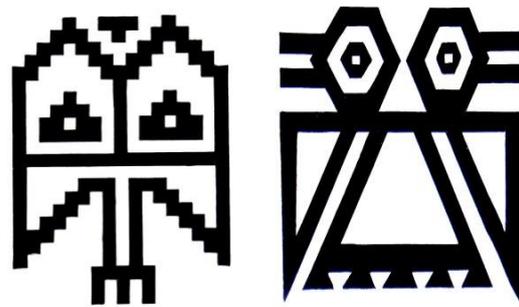
Another extremely interesting representation reveals a similar picture in which also the feline physiognomy is



Figs. 32 and 33: Similar motif to fig. 31, but here designed in a textile by discontinuous warp and weft. Also a hybrid divine image (feline and harpy). Fig. 33 shows the drawing of the same motif.

hidden. Amazingly, the representation is repeated, though incompletely, in an upside-down manner. At the very center a second repetition of this picture was reduced to a small format. It is even smaller on the right and left under the wings. This design (fig. 31) is not only an interesting geometric example, but also a masterpiece in its design, as it permits no free surfaces but decorates the entire textile with various representations.

The small reproduction (fig.35) also shows this detail. This textile with the triple divine hybrid image is almost a masterpiece. Here, too, it must be remembered that this artwork is purely symbolic.



Figs. 34 and 35: Left early interpretation of the motif shown in figs. 32 and 33. Right: Central detail from textile fig. 31.

However, it should be noted here that this design (figs. 31 and 32) is one of the few to dispense with the attributive step-wave or snake-wave fertility symbolism. It can be assumed that the viewer, possessing an awareness of the underlying message, has the preunderstanding to embrace it without further symbolic embellishment.



Figs. 36 and 37: The harpy in the photo and in the Paracas textile: Model with the vertically erected feathers on the head.

Such symbolism, however, can be found elsewhere. The section from an "unku" shows a bird picture, similar in style to the Hapsburg "double eagle" (figs. 38 and 39). The interpretation is not easy. The pair of eyes is to be identified with those of the feline. The jag design in the lower part of the bird picture could symbolize the teeth of the feline. Both wings contain a double serrated line in meander form, which is a variant of the step-wave symbolism. In addition, each of the two feet of the bird holds a snake-wave.

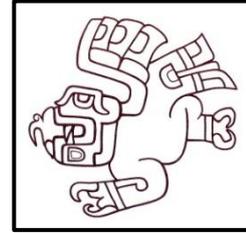
This symbolic representation is challenging. It cannot be identified at first sight and requires a practiced eye and an acquaintance with the symbolism to decode its varied artistic expressions.



Figs. 38 and 39: Paracas-Necrópolis: Part of an Unku and detail of a hybrid divine image with double fertility symbolism.

With its interesting geometric representation of the hybrid divine image Paracas succeeded in conveying what Chavin in its final phase had already achieved: an altered divine image. However, Paracas was not yet at the end of its development. The geometric phase was followed by the colored phase, which led to even more surprising results. Though the reasons for the stylistic change are not known, these textiles represent the pinnacle of textile artistic achievement in ancient Peru.

To date however not all of their contents have been deciphered. The following chapter will deal with these iconographic contents.



Figs. 40 and 41: The flying felino-ornithomorphic divine image of Chavín.

The Culmination of Iconography in the Colored Textiles of Paracas

In the final phase of the Paracas textiles, mainly represented by the finds of Paracas Necropolis, some genuine masterpieces were discovered. Technically, they were produced as embroidery on a plain-woven base fabric or as braids in three-dimensional embroidery.

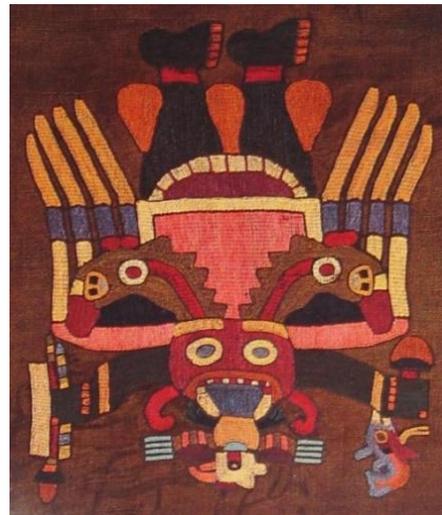


Fig. 42: Flying Paracas divine image, viewed from above, in combination with the image of a harpy.

In the first phase of the transition to the so-called colored textiles of Paracas-Necropolis, an attempt was made to express the hybrid divine image. Basically, the feline was depicted as a flying hybrid, but here the problem was to combine it with the harpy.

In fact, there are solutions where the feline was combined with the harpy. Both textiles (Figs. 43 and 44) show the flying feline viewed from above and with a physiognomy turned towards the observer. Figure 43 shows the image of the harpy in front of the head, possibly following the beak of Chavín's column relief.



Fig. 43: Flying divine image, seen from above, with bird attributes and forehead mask.

The divine images are equipped with clearly visible wings. Another picture (fig. 44) presents itself from the same perspective and is equipped with accompanying pairs of birds. These birds probably do not represent the harpy which was probably not known on the southern coast.

There is another picture in the literature, a copy of a textile showing the flying feline in profile where the harpy is sitting on its body. The harpy is clearly recognizable by the vertical head feathers (see figs.36/37).

A Paracas textile shows only motifs of the harpy, here the head feathers are also clearly expressed, as can be seen by comparison with the harpy in the photograph (fig.36).



Fig. 44: Drawing of the flying divine image with forehead mask seen from the side and with the addition of the picture of a harpy.

Examples of flying divine images have survived from Chavín in which the hybrid feline image with the attribute of the bird of prey's beak (fig. 21) emerges from the head. The artists/weavers of Paracas finally came up with a technique clearly evident in figure 45, to depict the two characters of their divine images.

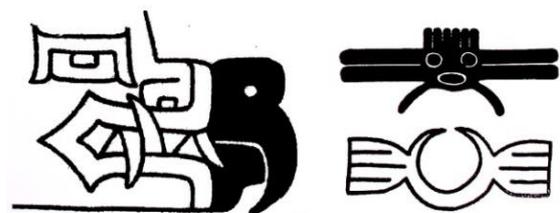


Fig. 45: Hybrid divine image from Chavín (combination feline/harpy), on the right replacement signs for Paracas: forehead and mouth mask, representing harpy's an feline's characteristics.

These are the two masks that are shown in all representations of the divine images of Late Paracas. The forehead mask unmistakably reproduces the image of the harpy. It can be recognized frontally with its

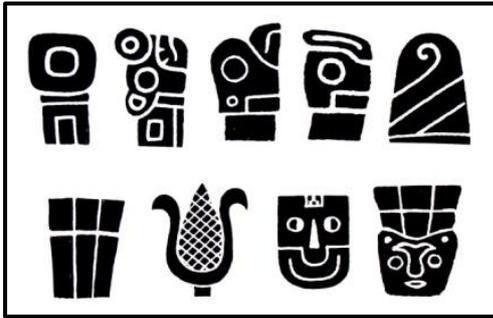


Fig.: 46 replacement characteristics of Tiahuanaco, from top left to bottom right: Neutral, feline, harpy, snake-wave, step-wave, alternatively harpy, alternatively step-wave, alternatively snake-wave and combination r feline/harpy.

wings and its of spread head feathers. In order to have the freedom of depicting the divine image with anthropomorphic features, a mouth mask was also used, which features feline whiskers. This is not to be found on every representation, but many of the divine images wear both the forehead and the mouth mask.



Fig. 47: God's image of the colored phase of Paracas-Necrópolis, view from above: forehead mask and mouth mask, snake-wave symbolism.



Fig. 48: Lateral view of the flying feline with forehead mask and snake-wave symbolism.

The left representation in Fig. 45 shows the juxtaposition of the feline and harpy images from the reliefs on the columns of the gate of the new temple at Chavin. To the right is the image of the harpy (black details) and, below it, the mask characterizing the feline (light details). Fig. 47 shows an excellent representation of the divine image with both masks. Here these masks are additionally decorated with small physiognomies. At the front, the snake-wave symbolism can be seen as a symbol of fertility.



Fig. 49: Feliden god with four snake-waves and forehead mask. The picture is deliberately positioned incorrectly (see forehead mask) to show the perfect effect also in this position.

Tiahuanaco also made use of "substitute pictures" (Fig. 46). The divine images of Tiahuanaco and Huari show details with a wreath (frontal view) or a crown (side view) in stone reliefs as well as in textiles. Both objects clearly express the accompanying symbolism as well as the characteristics of feline and harpy and thus demonstrate that, in both cultures, the divine image has its anthropomorphic style.



Fig. 50: Snake-waves meander in different design, below with the additional statement of the step-wave symbolism.

In the divine images of the Paracas textiles the representations of the snake-wave symbolism is clearly recognizable. Often there are several snake waves, which, as in Chavin, can be seen on the head, the hip or the mouth. It can also be clearly seen that these snake-waves, or meanders, bear serrations or rounded or curved symbols.

This can be interpreted as a combination of a snake-wave and a step-wave. In other words, the snake-shaped meander is complemented by a symbolic head and at the same time serrations derived from the step symbol. Here we refer to the example of the early geometric Paracas works (figs. 26 and 27). Interpretations which view these as worms are in error since

they overlook the fact that these representations are exclusively symbolic. Fig. 49 shows detailed examples from the rich Paracas textile treasure.



Fig. 51: Flying Felide in lateral view with forehead mask and three snake-meanders.

The Adoption of the Paracas Divine Image by the Nasca Culture.

In the period from 200 BC to 50 AD there is a smooth transition from Paracas to Nasca period called Proto-Nasca. Surprisingly, the textile art of Paracas does not continue in the same style at Nasca. Rather, the divine image is transposed directly onto colored painted ceramics. An excellent representation of this divine image of Nazca can be seen in fig. 51. In fig. 52 a reproduction of the entire image can be seen.



Fig.52: Feliden god on a Nasca ceramic with forehead and mouth mask. Cf. fig. 46.

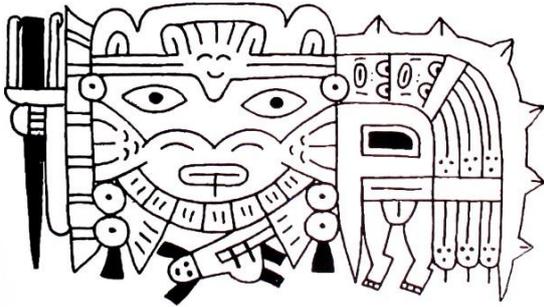


Fig. 53: Rolling of the motif of the divine image on the Nasca pottery from fig. 52.

Here one sees that head and body are not proportional. In addition, the small body is superimposed on a structure that can be interpreted as a stylized wing. On closer inspection it can be observed that this structure is composed of many symbols, notably the snake heads and a line originally with meanders (fig. 55).

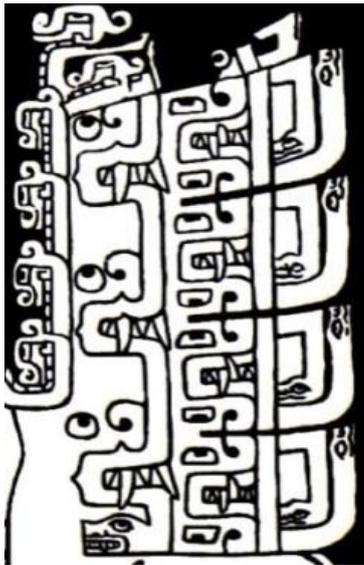


Fig. 54: Symbol wing in original position Chavín. It is determined by snake meanders and power symbols. See Figs. 52 and 54.

Clearly evident here is an artistic parallel to the symbols of the feline in the cornice of the new temple of Chavín (fig. 7). Even more interesting is the fact that these wing formations resemble the wings of the column relief of the new temple in Chavín (fig. 13 and detail fig. 54) which also consists essentially of snake-wave symbols. These similarities are

the basis for assuming that Chavín was the inspiration for what was created at Nasca. In the literature this symbol is called a "signifer" which comes close to the meaning of the term symbol bearer. So far, the existing literature does not provide plausible explanations for these intriguing similarities.



Fig. 55: Illustration comparable with fig. 53. Snake heads and meanders as a symbol of the snake-wave symbolism, while fig. 53 shows the complete snake-wave and additionally a serrated meander.

However, it is clearly understandable that, as a wing, this "symbol bearer" is both an expression of the hybrid feline (see figs. 42 and 43) and also a bearer of the ancillary snake meander symbolism. Figure 56 is provided as a visual aid. Not all variants of the Nasca images can be shown here. With many representations on ceramics, the stylistic liberties are obvious. However, almost all representations follow the same principle. They represent the image of the deity with the character symbolism and the symbolism of fertility.

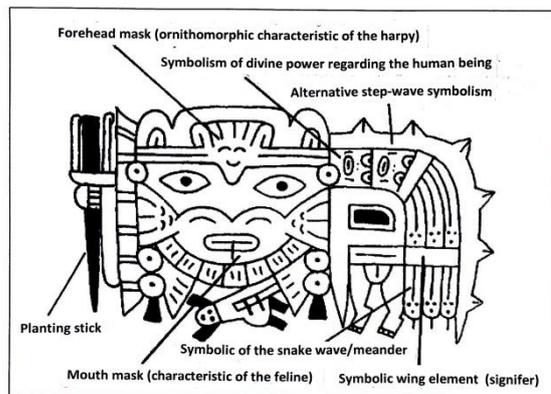
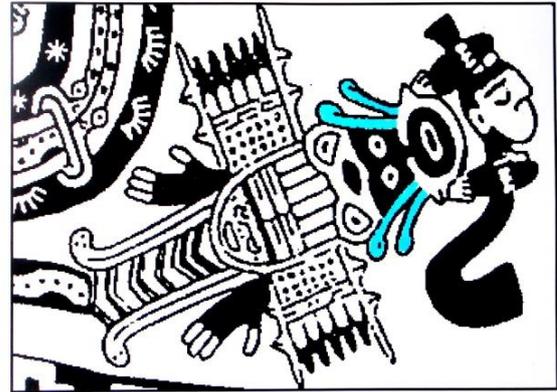
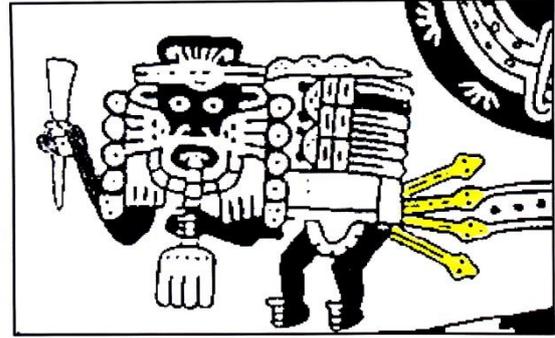


Fig.56: Feline's image from Nazca and respective details and symbolism.



Figs. 57 and 58: Nasca ceramic with depictions of three images of gods. Unrolling below: Supreme deity (center) as well as earth goddess (left) and water god (right). Cf. fig. 59 and 60

At this point it is worth mentioning a richly-painted type of pottery, (fig. 57) variations of which have found their way into museums. The depiction of the unrolling of the motif (fig. 58) provides an overview of the entire picture. In contrast to imaginative interpretations in literature, this depiction shows the divine image with a fundamentally feline character. This can be seen in the mouth mask as well as in the additional feline head below.

Fig. 59 and 60: Details of representation fig. 58: Above earth goddess (with symbols of snake heads), below water god (with symbols of meanders)

The two figures on the right and left below in fig. 58 (details in figs. 59 and 60) represent undoubtedly water god and earth goddess separately. This can be recognized as typical attributes to complement the dominant divine image. Separate representations of the two subordinate divine images are unusual. But similar patterns can be found again and again, as is the case with Moche. The clear meaning of the two figures right and left above the head of the feline remains unclear.

The divine images in Nasca textile art are completely different from those in Paracas and so also with Nasca ceramics. They are strongly reduced in their representations, sometimes suggesting affinity to the Moche emblematic. However, Nasca found its own unique designs to further transform the divine image.



Fig. 61: Dual divine image. In between the two heads the round meander. The feline heads also symbolize the snake heads (tongue!). Cf. fig. 26 and 27 with the same statement.

Late Nazca and Influences of Tiahuanaco



Fig. 62: Ceramic with a motif from the transition phase (transitional) from early to late Nazca, above the new style (proliferous).

The Late Nazca reveals entirely different representations of the divine image. Around 300 AD there is a transitional phase in which a flowing change from the style of Early to Late Nazca can be clearly observed (figs. 62 and 63).

While in Early Nazca the realism of the divine images handed down from Paracas, can still be seen, the divine image of Late Nazca morphed into more symbolic representations.

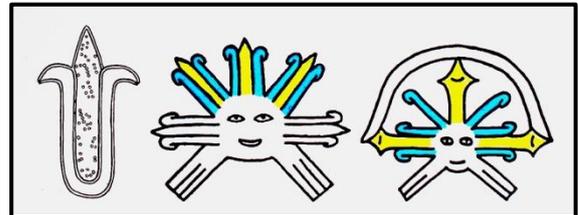


Fig. 63: Attributive symbolism of Tiahuanaco and its implementation in the late phase of Nazca.

Although Moche's earliest divine images had a formal style, here too the symbolic form of emblematics shows an intentional departure from this earlier style. The image of the late Nazca is usually called "proliferous". This refers to the symbols emanating from the body of the image or from its head as a reduced form. These consist of pointed objects which are surrounded by meanders and exist in shorter and longer form. This symbolism surrounds the body, or the physiognomy, in a new proliferating arrangement.

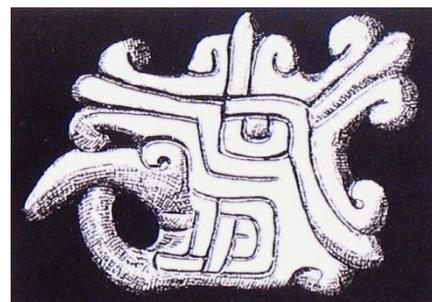
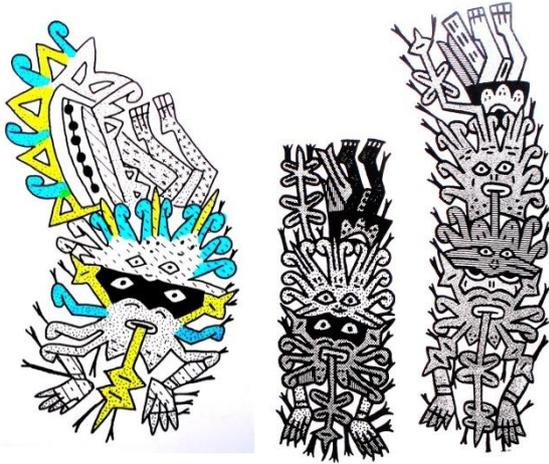


Fig. 64: Relief representation from the environment of Chavín with an alternative attributive symbolism, which was obviously adopted by Tiahuanaco.

Surprisingly, a similar symbolism can be detected in Tiahuanaco, where, if one examines closely, its origins in Chavin will be clearly evident (figs. 63 and 64). This symbolism obviously designed to express an alteration of



Figs. 65 to 67: Reproductions of the "proliferous motifs" from the late phase of Nazca. The repetition of the heads is similar to the representation of the Raimondi stele. Cf, fig. 11

Of the step-wave. With some imagination these symbols can also be called buds, as in new sprouts on a plant. They can also be found among the various marks that decorate the head dresses of the divine images of Tiahuanaco. In reduced form the symbolism is obvious. It is also used in the transition period from Early to Late Nazca, where it replaced the snake wave symbolism. One can see in all of this a change in the attribute of the divine image where the step wave symbolism is again dominant.



Fig. 68: Ceramic of the late Nazca with typical representation of the proliferous divine image.

However, here too an aspect of Chavín's divine image is intentionally expressed. Resemblance can be found in the repetition of the heads in the headdress of the Raimondi stele. There the heads are arranged on top of each other, which are completely surrounded by a comparable symbolism. Again this does not mean that the snake-wave symbolism disappeared completely. It was preserved and persisted in all subsequent cultures.

Outlook on Subsequent Cultures



Fig.69: Huari textile: Feline head with the body from the dual step-wave symbolism, at right another symbolism of fertility by steps incorporated in meander form

The subsequent cultures after Paracas and Nasca (Huari, Lambayeque, Chimú, Chancay, Ica-Chincha, Chiribaya and others) showed the image of the supreme deity, whether in anthropomorphic or zoomorphic character (figs. 69 and 70), as mainly feline,. It can be observed that this image is augmented by the symbolism of the step-wave, the snake-wave and also of the step-wave and the snake-wave together. In the Chancay culture one finds, in addition to a surprising variety of these attributive symbols, the greatest deviation in the representation of the supreme deity. Obviously Chancay 's central location provided

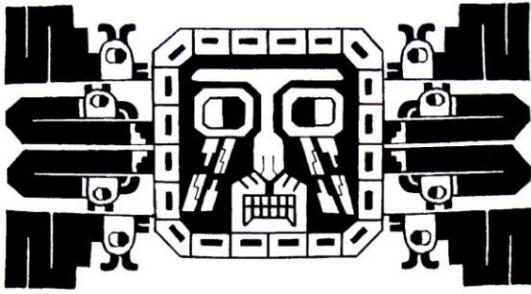


Fig. 70: Reproduction of Huari textile with central feline physiognomy and lateral representations of step-wave and snake-wave symbolism.

for easy access to the influences of earlier northern and southern cultures. Basically, the image of the supreme deity is always shown together with the fertility symbolism. Increasingly however the observer is called upon to draw on his or her own understanding in joining the deity and the fertility symbols into a single coherent message. In almost all other cultures one also finds patterns with variants of the step-wave symbolism.



Figs. 71 and 72 (right): Comparison of the two hybrid images of Chavín and Chancay. All essential details and attributes are repeated in the Chancay textile. Almost 2000 years lie between these two motifs.

Chancay expressed a particularly remarkable picture in a double weave. An interpretation is only possible with

the basic knowledge of the diverse connections handed down by Chavín. The original of the motif (fig. 71) measures only about 5 x 5 cm. In addition, there was the limitation of being bound to the strict right-angled weaving pattern. A winged feline appears which shows clear similarities with the relief on the columns of the new temple in Chavín (fig 72). The feline head corresponds to the frequent Chancay type in the representation of the feline. In the upper right and left corners of the picture it can be seen that the free space was also used for depictions, and that the motifs can also be identified. They are a snake meander and the abstract rendering of a bird's head. The wings show elements of the step wave.



Fig. 72: Drawing of the Chancay textile.

Thus, the hybrid divine image was depicted here along with the step and snake-wave. The similarity with the relief of the columns of the new temple in Chavín is probably not coincidental. But, whether coincidental or not, this picture best illustrates the continuity in content and design with those earlier divine images of Chavín. This continuity extended over almost 2500 years. At the time of late Paracas, early Chavín was in comparison less than 1000 years back in time.

Summary

This contribution to the ongoing study of Peruvian iconography seeks to demonstrate the decisive influence of the culture of Chavín on the iconography of Paracas. The two cultures were contemporaneous but Chavín was the more advanced. Despite geographical differences and the considerable distance between them, the influence of Chavín over Paracas is clear. In the process, Paracas profited from Chavín's achievement in the form of a trend-setting divine image.



Fig.73: Chavín: Hybrid divine image with the attributive symbolism of step-and snake-wave..

After an epoch of direct influence and the direct adoption of Chavín's images, Paracas began to create its own divine images. This involved a discordant "trial phase" out of which clear ideas can be recognized. These took the form of geometrically structured divine images in a narrow range of colors, with the reduced range of colors making the images particularly striking.

Intriguingly, the geometric and colored phase of "Paracas-Necropolis" followed exactly the same iconographic sequence that marked Chavín's earlier development. This occurred with a time lapse of about 300 years and continues to defy explanation. These impressive first creations of Paracas were based on the feline as the supreme deity and supplemented by the step-wave symbolism.



Fig. 74: Paracas: Hybrid divine image with the symbolism of step-and snake-meanders.

In immediate succession, representations of the snake-wave and combinations of both the step-wave and the snake-wave can be seen. Similar examples can be found in Chavín. The basic elements of the geometric phase are retained in form and color. Finally, the influence of Chavín's hybrid deity, which was occasioned by the complete rethinking of the divine image by the religious leaders and the artists of Chavín, also brought theological and artistic change to Paracas.

Now both characteristics, feline and harpy, had to be united in one picture. Even in the geometric phase this was achieved in an impressive way. Only with the knowledge of the given conditions is the viewer of today able to identify the coherence of these representations in a meaningful way.

This process demanded skill and imagination from both the religious leaders and the artists. The results speak for themselves.



Fig. 75: Hybrid divine image of early Nazca with the character masks harpy and feline.

Around 200 BC, the design of the divine image changed to realistic representations. After a phase of trying out the union of feline and harpy, an almost ingenious solution was found. The problematic representation of the characteristics of feline and harpy is achieved by means of specially designed attributes as substitutes to present these characteristics. These were the forehead mask, which symbolized the harpy, and the mouth mask, which symbolized the feline.

The depiction of the supreme deity was meanwhile done in a strongly anthropomorphic style. In this respect, the two mask representations were extremely meaningful. In addition, the two symbolic attributes step-wave and snake-wave succeeded in a kind of union. The representation of serrated-stepped meander in the form of a snake symbolized both variants equally.

The meander was the basis for the serrated variant of the step-wave symbolism. Sometimes feline heads take the place of snake heads, in the sense of the representations of earth goddess and water god as complementary deities. Nasca adopted this

image but returned to the solution of Chavin in the representation of the accompanying symbolism. Here in the hybrid image of the deity the symbols were embedded in the design of the wings. The wing was thus a “symbol carrier” (signifier), and Nasca applied it accordingly.



Fig. 76: Feline's divine image with dual symbolism of the step-wave symbolism.

The late Nazca was influenced by Tiahuanaco, whose iconographic details can also be traced back to Chavín. It is interesting to note that both Paracas and Tiahuanaco (and subsequently Huari) used a specific symbolism to give clarity to the characteristics of the divine image. Figures 73 to 76 show the comparable hybrid images of Chavín, Paracas and Nasca. On page 31, the sequences of the stylistic development of the image of Chavín and Paracas can be clearly followed.

In conclusion: The iconography of ancient Peru emanating from Chavin has a coherent message. As the thinking of the religious leaders changed to meet new challenges so also did the artistry. Though the symbols and images were modified over distance and through time, the message they conveyed remained amazingly constant. Happily it is still out there-- carved in stone, painted on pottery, and woven into textiles— so that we may study them further and gain new insights into their meaning.

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Pictures of the title page and back: Title illustrations as copies of pictures in acrylic technique by the author: Divine Chavín feline picture, divine Paracas picture (head) with separate symbolism of snake-waves/meanders and step-waves as well as mask characteristics (harpy and feline), Nasca divine picture with character masks harpy and feline. Back: Textile image of the god symbolizing the dual step-wave symbolism.

Note: The interpretations of the iconography Chavín, Paracas, Nasca come exclusively from the author of this text. They do not congruence with the interpretations made so far, which can be found in already existing books, catalogues and publications. The explanations on the decoding of the iconography of the three cultures mentioned were not intended to make comparisons with other interpretations and to discuss them respectively. The fundamental error of the numerous and different explanations lies essentially in the obvious fact that here the meaning of the iconographic pictorial works and their details were not recognized as symbols, but that references were made to their real statements. This means that any basis for finding even rudimentary solutions to deciphering is beyond question. For this reason, only the author's literature was given as literature, which deals with the general decoding of the iconography of ancient Peru, whereby the resolution of the riddle Paracas and Nasca can be regarded as a certain conclusion.

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIVINE IMAGE DURING CHAVIN-PARACAS (1000 BC – 50 AD)

From the beginning of the Chavín period several examples are known which demonstrate that the divine image in the form of the feline, or the head of the feline, was combined with the symbolism of the step-wave. It can be assumed that Chavín created this combination (feline/step-wave), although it may have been adopted from the northern Andean region.

Around 800 BC this accompanying symbolism was changed into the snake meander, probably for design reasons. Around 500 BC, possibly due to climatic catastrophes (El Niño) the religious leaders redesigned the divine image. They made it more powerful by reinforcing the feline with the harpy, the most powerful bird of prey in the Andean region. This new hybrid divine image existed until the end of the Chavín period around 200 BC and was also taken over by Paracas. Until about 400 BC Paracas still used the divine image modeled on that of the early Chavín period while simultaneously developing its own creations. From around 400 BC onwards Paracas created its own geometric textile designs in a limited color scale. The Paracas creations evolved in three stages. The first utilized the feline and the step-wave symbolism, followed by the feline with the combination of step and snake-wave symbolism and finally as a hybrid divine image.

The style changed around 200 BC when the textiles became more colorful and incorporated new designs and techniques. After initial realistic renditions of the combination of the feline and harpy, the introduction of substitute symbols (forehead and mouth masks) made possible a more convincing depiction of the powerful feline and ornithomorphic qualities. These magnificent creations mostly show the flying feline and are supplemented by the snake-wave or combined symbolism. The Early Nasca took over this divine image from Paracas in a transition period (Proto-Nasca). The Paracas culture came to an end around 50 AD. Chavín (1000 – 400 BC) and Paracas (600 BC – 50 AD) used the same sequences in their representations of the divine image.

