AN ANALYSIS OF THE FRIEZES AT HUACA DEL DRAGÓN

by

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A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in Art History

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2024

ABSTRACT

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The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2024
Under the Supervision of Professor David Pacifico

The archaeological site of Huaca del Dragón, located near modern Trujillo, Peru, was constructed by the Chimú civilization in the tenth or eleventh century CE. The site is named for the low-relief imagery that decorates its walls, the central motifs of which are interpreted as dragons and rainbows. These images diverge from much of the visual and material culture produced by the Chimú. Interpretations of the imagery at Huaca del Dragón have been debated by scholars for decades. While the relief decoration seems enigmatic, this analysis considers both iconography and style to argue that the friezes reflect on a visual tradition practiced throughout the North Coast of Peru and its surrounding regions for hundreds of years. This project illustrates the evolution of the motifs and asserts that they function as evidence of cultural continuity in the Andes. While a definite meaning of the relief decoration at Huaca del Dragón cannot be determined by modern scholars, this project connects specific concepts of pre-Hispanic Andean worldview to the frieze imagery in order to illuminate its possible conceptual motivations. This results in an exploration of what the relief imagery may have meant to its artists, patrons, and intended audiences, and an interpretation of the iconography as related to the conception of natural phenomena as mythical beings.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Dr. David Pacifico, my thesis advisor, who introduced me to the world of Latin American art history and archaeology. His unending guidance and support throughout not only this research process, but also my undergraduate and graduate degrees, has been invaluable.

Thank you to Dr. Derek Counts and Dr. Richard Leson for their comments and assistance with this project, as well as for being two of the kindest and most understanding professors I could have asked for.

Thank you, also, to my colleagues from the Sechín Archaeological Project, Mónica Suárez and Karen Meza, for their warm welcome to Peru and for assisting our team in visiting Huaca del Dragón during its closure to the public following the COVID-19 pandemic.

A special thanks goes to Mom, Madison, SG, and Lauren, who listened to me talk about Peruvian art and archaeology for two years. I would not be where I am today without their unconditional love and encouragement.

Images used are provided courtesy of Museo Larco, the El Brujo Archaeological Complex, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Princeton University Art Museum, the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum, the Berlin State Museums, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú.

Introduction

The frieze decoration at the pre-Hispanic Peruvian archaeological site of Huaca del Dragón (also known as Huaca Arco Irís or Cienpies) departs from the artistic vocabulary expressed in much of the material and visual culture produced by the Chimú (Figure 1). Huaca del Dragón is named for the dragon-like creatures and double-headed rainbows depicted in the once-colorful, low-relief sculptural imagery that decorates the walls of the site (Figure 2). The huaca is diminutive compared to the nearby Chimú capital city of Chan Chan, which consists of ten monumental palaces and spans eight square miles. The imagery at Huaca del Dragón also diverges from the explicit maritime themes that dominate not only the architectural ornamentation of Chan Chan, but also the visual and material culture that was produced and distributed throughout the Chimú empire. At an early consideration, the frieze decoration at Huaca del Dragón is enigmatic for these stark differences. However, the repeated dragon and rainbow friezes at the site lend to an iconographic tradition that was passed down, culture-to-culture, for hundreds of years. The imagery reflects the conception of natural phenomena as powerful mythical beings, which, at Huaca del Dragón, personify the dually life-giving and destructive forces of water and the sky.

In order to consider the continuity and cross-cultural evolution of the motifs at Huaca del Dragón, this thesis employs an analysis that considers both iconography and style. Rather than investigating a single corpus of imagery from the Chimú civilization alone, this project examines related artistic representations drawn from several pre-Hispanic Andean groups that span multiple time periods. This consideration of the artistic traditions underlying the frieze imagery at Huaca del Dragón aims to shed light on the general understanding of the friezes, which lack both textual reference and a consensus of their purpose. An art historical perspective on the study

Figure 1: Corner of Main Edifice at Huaca del Dragón. Photo by Author.

Figure 2: Representative Horizontal Panel with Framing Panel Above, Main Edifice. Photo by Author.

of Chimú visual culture adds another contour of analysis for the society and its beliefs, and on a broader scale, the sculptural relief and mural traditions of the Andes. In its consideration and stylistic comparison of the motifs at Huaca del Dragón, this project examines the motifs as evidence of cultural continuity while investigating the significance of the imagery to the site, the Chimú, and their ancestors. This thesis also raises the question of power structures in Chimú society and the way that ancestral imagery was used to proclaim authority outside of imperial Chan Chan.

The friezes at Huaca del Dragón have largely been investigated as data in context rather than an aesthetic and communicative medium. Although interpretations for the friezes have been presented by a few scholars, the symbolism of the dragon and rainbow imagery is understudied. The most comprehensive consideration of the frieze iconography was completed by Anne Marie Helsley in 1985. The nearly forty-year gap in the research on the frieze decoration at Huaca del Dragón prompts a more current study of the reliefs. This thesis examines recent scholarship relating to the site and its imagery, builds upon earlier scholars' suggestions for further research on the reliefs, and analyzes other sources of stylistic comparison that have been overlooked by earlier researchers.

The research questions for this thesis include: What visual precedents exist for the frieze motifs? Which pre-Hispanic Andean groups had the greatest influence on the style of motifs present in the friezes at Huaca del Dragón? What concepts did Chimú artists, likely under the patronage of an elite ruling class, intend to communicate to their contemporary audience through the frieze imagery? And lastly, based on an investigation of visual precedents for the imagery at Huaca del Dragón, what might the frieze motifs and their related concepts indicate about the function and significance of the site for the Chimú? These questions specifically consider the

cross-cultural evolution of pre-Hispanic Andean imagery in relation to the motifs at Huaca del Dragón -- aiming not to determine an authoritative or conventional meaning for the relief imagery at the site, but to trace lines of visual inspiration and examine the broad ideologies that relate to the iconography for their ability to illuminate conceptual motivations. The evidence presented lends to an interpretation of the friezes as related to beliefs involving supernatural beings and natural phenomena.

This project begins with background on Andean occupation in the Moche Valley, which includes pertinent information on the artistic, social, and political practices of the Moche and Chimú. An in-depth description of Huaca del Dragón follows, including an explanation of the architecture of the site, the history of its excavation and material findings, a description of the friezes and individual motifs, and lastly the existing scholarly interpretations of the relief imagery. This is followed by a section focusing on the theory and methodology of the iconographic and stylistic analysis portion of this thesis. Relevant research on North Coastal iconographic analyses is discussed and provides guiding methodological frameworks that inspire the original interpretive model developed in this project. The following section considers comparative architectural imagery from North Coastal archaeological sites. After this is a discussion of comparative non-architectural imagery, which analyzes an array of objects that are visually and stylistically comparable to the individual motifs present at Huaca del Dragón. Succeeding this analysis is a discussion of possible interpretations and conceptual connections for the relief imagery. These topics include the connection between serpents and water in the Andes, rainbow serpents in Andean cosmology, the commemoration of an El Niño-Southern Oscillation event, Chimú animal imagery as the embodiment of divine rulership, and the

aesthetics of repetition in sculptural relief. A conclusion summarizing the findings and contributions of this thesis is the final section.

Background on Moche Valley Occupation

The Andes is a mountain range that spans the western coast of South America. It runs through seven countries, including Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. It is the longest continental mountain range in the world and has a wide elevational range. These factors account for a great diversity in climates, ecological systems, and cultures. In Peru, evidence for the earliest monumental sites suggestive of complex society date to around 3,500 BCE.[1] The earliest complex societies are believed to have been based on a maritime economy, as coastal populations would have been supported by the rich biomass of the Humboldt Current.[2] There is debate over the established timeframes of pre-Hispanic Andean occupation, but archaeologists recognize a classification of "horizons" and "intermediate periods." A "horizon" signifies the widespread appearance of an art style which archaeologists believe pertained to a single unifying culture or political group. In contrast, an "intermediate period" is an era of more diverse regional developments across the Andes.[3]

Flanking the Pacific Ocean is the North Coast of Peru, which is characterized by its arid desert climate that has preserved thousands of years' worth of archaeological evidence. Many ancient Andean groups buried their dead along with hordes of precious objects in the belief that they would be sent to the afterlife with their possessions.[4] The ancient peoples who practiced this burial custom likely did not know of the preservative quality of the dry sand, which has

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[1] Such as that of Caral, which hypothetically emerged in the Late Archaic period.
[2] Joanne Pillsbury, "Sculpted Friezes of the Empire of Chimor" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1993), 278.
[3] Gabriel Ramón, "Periodificación en Arqueología Peruana: Genealogía y Aporía," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'études andines* 34, no. 1 (2005): 5-34.
[4] Rebecca R. Stone, *Art of the Andes: From Chavin to Inca* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995), 11.

conserved even the most fragile materials (such as camelid fiber, wood, feather, and adobe) from 3,000 BCE onwards.[5] The aridity of the North Coast is periodically interrupted by El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events, which intermittently bring high amounts of rainfall to the region.[6] Running down from the mountains and toward the coast are a number of river valleys, which served as optimal places for the development of communities for the arable land, access to freshwater, and construction of cliffside structures.

Moche Valley and the Moche Civilization

The Moche Valley, named for the Moche River, is located in the North-Central coast of Peru (Figure 3). The valley has a long history of occupation and is the valley from which the Moche culture emerged. The Moche flourished on the North Coast between ca. 200-800 CE.[7] In the periodization of Andean cultural development, this correlates to the Early Intermediate Period and Middle Horizon. At the height of its influence, Moche society dominated the valleys from Lambayeque to Nepeña, constituting roughly 150 miles north-to-south.[8] The major center of the principal polity in the lower valley was called Moche or Huacas de Moche.[9] The society is known in part for its monumental architecture -- especially the construction of massive structures like Huaca de la Luna and Huaca del Sol in the Moche Valley. These adobe structures mimic mountains in their scale and were decorated with vibrant relief and mural art. Like the other pre-

[5] Stone, *Art of the Andes,* 11.
[6] Joanne Pillsbury, "Reading Art Without Writing: Interpreting Chimú Architectural Sculpture," *Studies in the History of Art* 74 (2009): 74.
[7] Donna McClelland, Donald McClelland, and Christopher B. Donnan, *Moche Fineline Painting from San Jose de Moro* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA, 2007), 1.
[8] Christopher B. Donnan, *Moche Art and Iconography* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center, 1976), 2.
[9] Pillsbury, "Reading Art Without Writing," 74.

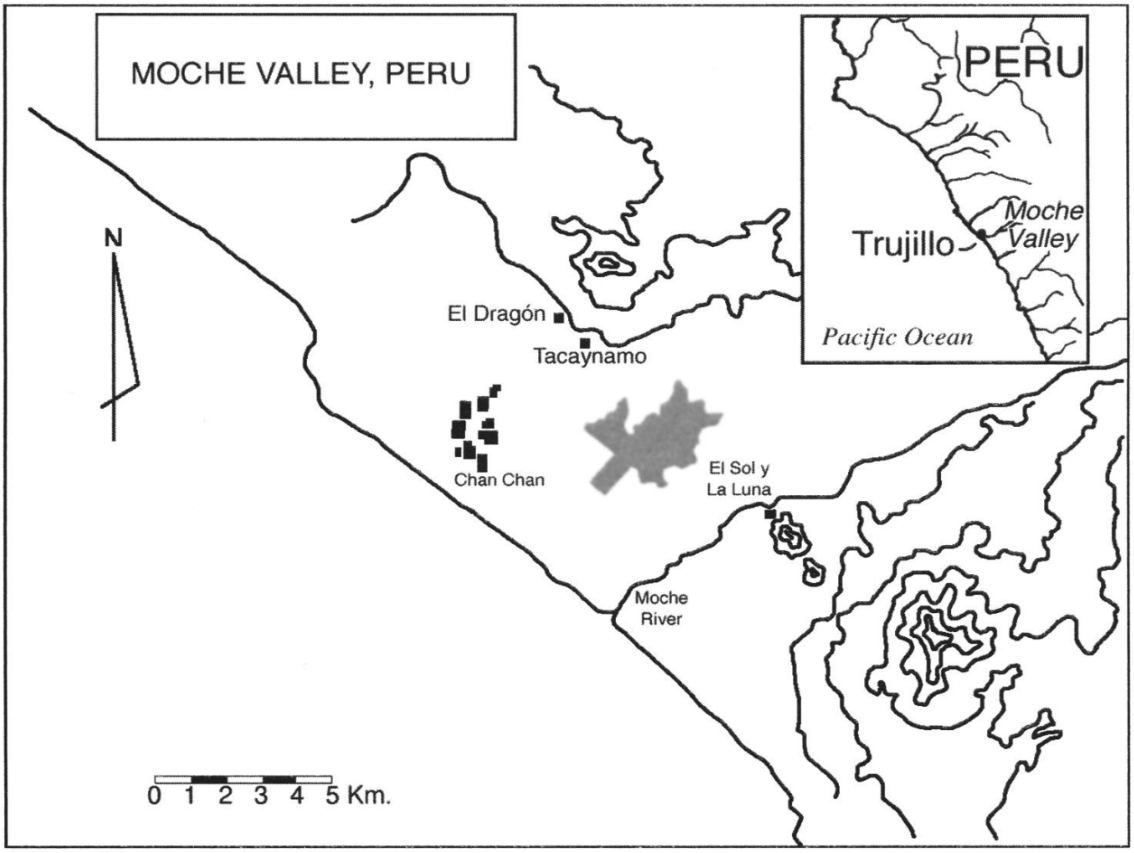

Figure 3: Map of Lower Moche Valley Archaeological Sites. In Jackson, "The Chimú Sculptures," 299.

Hispanic Andean civilizations, the Moche had no writing system and practiced oral history. The artistic record informs modern scholars of the organization of Moche society and their belief systems. A significant element of the Moche artistic record is their ceramic production, including pieces decorated with elaborate clay modeling and intricately painted scenes. The Moche also developed new systems of metallurgy and often combined multiple types of precious metals in their detailed metalworks.

Moche society is regarded not as a monolithic state but one consisting of related, allied polities that shared belief systems as well as cultural and artistic practices.[10] The first hint that the Moche were not a monolithic cultural entity was the recognition of two distinct Moche regions, the Northern and Southern Moche Regions, which were separated by a large expanse of desert that formed a natural geographic barrier.[11] Subtle variations exist in the artworks produced by the two regions, and these distinctions have aided archaeologists in understanding and reconstructing the Moche state. Likewise, Moche mural art is hypothesized to be separated into two chronological divisions. The earlier history occurred ca. 200-650 CE and emphasizes repeated images that were sculpted and painted, depicting processions of warriors, references to ancestral divinities, and interlocking aquatic designs traditional to communities of the North Coast.[12] The second history occurred ca. 650-850 CE and continued the depictions of certain subject matters, but is characterized by its use of painting as a medium rather than sculptural

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[10] Margaret A. Jackson, "The Chimú Sculptures of Huacas Tacaynamo and El Dragon, Moche Valley, Perú," *Latin American Antiquity* 15, no. 3 (2004): 298.
[11] McClelland, McClelland, and Donnan, *Moche Fineline Painting*, 1.
[12] Lisa Trever, *Image Encounters: Moche Murals and Archaeo Art History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2022), 182.

modeling.[13] This change may have been catalyzed by Huari (Wari) expansion[14] from the highlands in the seventh century CE, which inspired the inclusion of highland subjects and concepts and shifted attention away from coastal ideas and mediums in Moche mural art.[15] This period of cultural change also saw the introduction of pictorial narratives across murals and other media produced by the Moche, rather than the repetitious forms that were once favored.[16]

Archaeological evidence indicates significant changes to social institutions during the Middle Horizon, which temporally separates the proposed timeframes of the Moche and the Chimú. However, the notion of a total social collapse of the Moche, resulting in an absolute "social break" between the Moche and Chimú, is a subject of debate among scholars.[17] Archaeological findings are expanding the notion that a total collapse or "abrupt end" did not occur for the Moche -- instead, their "material culture, burial practices, and settlements" transformed into different social and political structures.[18] To the north, this transformation resulted in the emergence of Lambayeque (Sicán) ca. 750 CE. To the south, this resulted in the emergence of Casma, and was followed in the tenth century by the Chimú Empire or Kingdom of Chimor. It has been suggested that the Chimú constituted a "reestablishment of the hegemony of the descendants of the Moche," and that the polities of the North and North-Central Coast

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[13] Ibid., 183.
[14] Earlier scholars have suggested that this event was an invasion, but it is now known that the Huari never took territorial control of the North Coast. However, they may have exerted social and political influence on the coast in the seventh century CE, resulting in an era of cultural dynamism. This is according to Trever, *Image Encounters,* 15.
[15] Trever, *Image Encounters,* 183.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Jackson, "The Chimú Sculptures," 305.
[18] Trever, *Image Encounters*, 15.

were incorporated into the new state.[19] The Moche and the Chimú have been treated as two distinct civilizations. However, cultural continuity from the Moche to the Chimú is evident at many fundamental levels. Similarities include settlement patterns, societal structure, the supremacy of the elite, and the economic basis on agriculture. Similarities are equally discernible in the art and architecture of the two groups.

The Chimú and Chan Chan

The Chimú Empire emerged ca. 1000 CE during the Late Intermediate Period and flourished until ca. 1470 when it was conquered by the Inca.[20] The state spanned approximately 800 miles of the North and North-Central coasts of Peru, from the modern southern border of Ecuador to just north of Lima. Like the Moche, the Chimú centralized their authority in the Moche Valley and constructed the imperial capital city of Chan Chan across the river from the city of Moche. Today, Chan Chan is located outside of Trujillo, Peru. The location of Chan Chan in the Moche Valley, and the presence of Chimú burials within Moche, may indicate that the Chimú venerated Moche as a site of historical and ancestral power and prestige.[21] Construction of Chan Chan began around 850 CE and continued as the empire expanded.[22] In contrast to the centralized plan of most other Andean cities, Chan Chan spreads outward from a series of ten

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[19] Anne Marie Helsley, "The Friezes of Huaca el Dragón: An Interpretation" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1985), 46.
[20] The Inca were then conquered by the Spanish in 1532, ending the era of pre-Hispanic Andean occupation.
[21] Theresa Lange Topic, "The Early Intermediate Period and Its Legacy," in *Chan Chan: Andean Desert City*, eds. Michael Moseley and Kent C. Day (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 281.
[22] Seeing as this predates the hypothetical emergence of the Chimú culture in 900 CE, it is possible that the Chimú built Chan Chan over an existing Moche site.

monumental complexes called ciudadelas. These complexes functioned as palaces for the Chimor kings and their families, redistribution centers for luxury items, and eventually mausolea. The Chimú practiced split inheritance, so that the family of a deceased king would retain the palace but not the right to rule -- and each king therefore built his own palace when he came to power.[23]

Chan Chan is characterized by the high perimeter walls of each palace, which once reached a height between eight and ten meters.[24] These walls, built of sun-dried mud brick, restricted interior access and promoted social hierarchy. Chan Chan is also known for its poured adobe architecture and geometric relief decorations which depart from earlier traditions of architectural ornamentation in a few ways. Firstly, only the interior walls of Chan Chan were decorated with sculptural relief, indicating that the ornamentation and the messages purveyed were intended to be viewable only by the social elite. The friezes were also rarely painted -- contrasting the earlier Moche friezes which were vibrantly colored and decorated the interiors and exteriors of buildings.[25] The Chimú opted for repeated patterns in the reliefs at Chan Chan, lending more closely to the earlier friezes crafted by the Moche rather than the narrative sequences that were implemented in their later visual traditions. Some reliefs at Chan Chan approach the concept of narrative in their composition and visual complexity, but the narrative element of these reliefs is counteracted by their being repeated on several different walls, thereby "making the imagery more trope than narrative."[26]

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[23] Topic, "The Early Intermediate Period," 282.
[24] Pillsbury, "Reading Art Without Writing," 75.
[25] Ibid., 78.
[26] Ibid., 79.

The Tradition of Huaca-Making

The term "huaca" comes from Quechua and can refer to a variety of places and things. Huacas are not always man-made structures. For example, of the hundreds of huacas in the Cuzco area, the majority are boulders.[27] One notion that is inherent to the Andean concept of a huaca is the quality of its being special or unusual -- "such as a double-yolked egg, an extra finger, or a cleft rock."[28] For a man-made huaca, a rarity of the landscape may inspire its construction. An example of this is the Nasca city of Cahuachi, where the year-round presence of water led to its perception as sacred and inspired the construction of forty huacas in the form of adobe pyramid mounds.[29] Regardless of the form that a huaca takes, they are considered to be objects or spaces that create an emergence or transfer of energy, which allows for connections to be made between worlds.

On the Peruvian coast, the meaning of the term 'huaca' is narrower and principally describes pre-Hispanic man-made adobe structures that were revered as sites of religious potency.[30] The huacas constructed by the Moche were designed to be awe-inspiring in their monumentalism, as they were built to tower above the commoners who visited them as testaments to elite dominion.[31] In addition to their sequential construction of the capital city, the Chimú continued the pre-Hispanic Andean tradition of creating huacas. In comparison to those built by the Moche, the huacas built by the Chimú are diminutive in size. These huacas take the form of truncated pyramids and served ceremonial, mortuary, political, and redistributive

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[27] Stone, *Art of the Andes*, 17.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 85.
[30] Trever, *Image Encounters*, 194n4.
[31] Stone, *Art of the Andes*, 101.

functions. They also operated to solidify the control of the Chimú beyond the capital city. Many of these sites were decorated with murals and sculptural reliefs. Scholars have hypothesized that the complexity and intricacy of the mural programs at huacas constructed by the Chimú depended on their close proximity to Chan Chan.[32] Sculptural reliefs were high-status art forms to the Chimú, and an attention to detail in the murals indicates an intended elite presence at the sites they decorate.[33] Though the construction of the sites continues the long history of huaca-making, the Chimú clearly lent monumentalism to their capital city and its ciudadelas rather than huacas. The reasoning for this remains to be explored.

[32] Pillsbury, "Sculpted Friezes," 224.
[33] Ibid.

Description of Huaca del Dragón

Huaca del Dragón is a Chimú burial monument located in the Moche Valley, outside of the boundaries of Chan Chan. Today, the structure is located in La Esperanza, near Trujillo, Peru. Early assessments of the site suggest that the huaca was constructed during the Middle Horizon, which is considerably earlier than the hypothetical emergence of the Chimú. More recent findings based on architectural, archaeological, and artistic evidence indicate a construction date during the tenth or eleventh century CE.[34] Whether the structure was originally constructed by the Chimú has been debated, but the most recent research supports the notion that the huaca is of Chimú origin and was designed for the burial of high-status persons originating within the Moche Valley.[35] The main structure of Huaca del Dragón is built of adobe bricks and consists of a two-story truncated pyramid with ramps that allow access to the central platform (Figure 4). Surrounding three sides of the structure is a series of fourteen lower chambers or cells that are accessible from the first platform (Figure 5). A high perimeter wall encloses the structure and allows access from the west wall. The orientation of the structure to the west contrasts much of the architecture at Chan Chan, which is oriented to the north.[36]

The precise function of Huaca del Dragón is unknown. The earliest studies of the site suggest a primary funeral and secondary ceremonial function, but the separation of these two practices likely did not exist for the Chimú. Studies of Andean rituals and ancestral worship illustrate that the presence of the dead enhanced the sanctity and legitimacy of a site. The architectural design of Huaca del Dragón aligns with the funeral platform mounds constructed at

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[34] Jackson, "The Chimú Sculptures," 303.
[35] Ibid., 318.
[36] Pillsbury, "The Sculpted Friezes," 129.

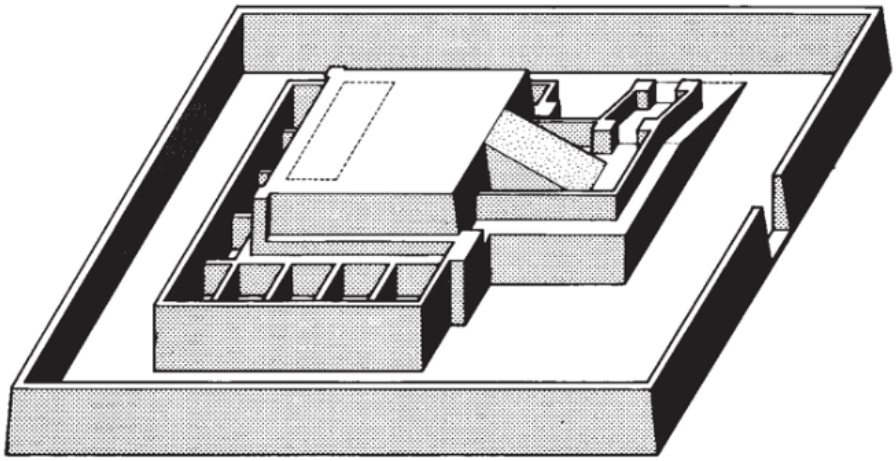

Figure 4: Three-Dimensional Drawing of Huaca del Dragón. In Donnan, *Chotuna and Chornancap*, 235.

Figure 5: Side of Main Edifice with View of Cells. Photo by Author.

Chan Chan, which are elevated, truncated pyramids enclosed by high walls and surrounded by multiple cells that are accessible from above and specifically designated for mortuary offerings or burials.[37] The royal burial monuments at Chan Chan contain a large central chamber that was intended for the monarch; it is possible that a similar central chamber existed at Huaca del Dragón and was destroyed in the looting of the site. At Chan Chan, the funerary structures are located within the royal palace complexes and were the mausolea of the Chimor kings.[38] Because the burial platforms of Chan Chan were the most prestigious funerary sites in the Chimor empire, Huaca del Dragón may have been a burial place for lesser Chimú nobility.[39] Under this assumption, the site was constructed to serve funerary, ceremonial, and religious functions simultaneously.[40]

Excavation and Contents

The earliest references to Huaca del Dragón consist of incorrect maps and measurements, and are largely disregarded by scholars for their brevity and inaccuracies. The first extensive excavation of the site took place between 1948 and 1950 under the direction of Richard P. Schaedel, the co-founder of the Institute of Anthropology of the University of Trujillo. Schaedel was aided by a group of students from the university. The findings of the excavation are discussed in Schaedel's 1966 article "The Huaca El Dragón." The author goes into great detail

[37] Geoffrey Conrad, "The Burial Platforms of Chan Chan: Some Social and Political Implications," in *Chan Chan: Andean Desert City*, eds. Michael Moseley and Kent C. Day (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 88.
[38] Conrad, "The Burial Platforms," 104.
[39] Jackson, "The Chimú Sculptures," 316.
[40] The religious function derives from the ancestral worship that would have occurred at the burial site.

regarding the architecture of the site and the state of preservation of its various divisions. Schaedel also notes the intensity of damage to the huaca from pillagings that left the ground littered with adobe debris. Tunnels had also been drilled into the walls and threatened the integrity of the structure. The process of clearing the site began with the removal of sand which had completely covered the external friezes. Because of fog moisture, the sand and adobe debris had hardened into a crust over the eight years between the looting of the site and its excavation. The current form of the monument is the result of a full restoration that took place in 1963. Most of the frieze decoration was restored with integrations, and the most damaged areas were recreated without decoration in an effort to not intervene.[41]

Numerous objects were discovered at Huaca del Dragón. Due to exposure to the elements and the amount of looting that had occurred at the site, the objects were almost entirely located in a disturbed context and were in various states of preservation. Schaedel suggests that the first looting of the site was a "large scale sacking" that occurred "either in Colonial or prehistoric times."[42] Two documented lootings occurred more closely to the time of excavation; one looting took place in 1942 and lasted for six months, and the second occurred intermittently sometime between 1942 and 1948.[43]

The fourteen chambers at the site were used as repositories for funerary goods and "perhaps the companions of the deceased."[44] Skeletal evidence from the cells of the structure is suggestive of eight burials, and the rest of the skeletal material at the site comprises an additional

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[41] Francesca Colosi et al., "Exploiting HBIM for Historical Mud Architecture: The Huaca Arco Iris in Chan Chan (Peru)," *Heritage* 5, no. 3 (2022), 2068.
[42] Richard P. Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* 55, no. 2 (1966), 423.
[43] Ibid., 424.
[44] Colosi et al., "Exploiting HBIM," 2068.

three burials. The only intact tomb was that of a child located in cell 11, which had been partially broken into but left undisturbed. Discovered along with the burial in this cell were deposits of spondylus and strombus shells, nectandra seeds, and fragments of a white and brown textile.[45] The rest of the material at Huaca del Dragón had been disturbed sometime between the end of the original occupation of the site and its excavation. Excavated objects from the original occupation and use of the site by the Chimú include a cache of wooden sculptures, a large quantity of bones, metal ornaments,[46] massive quantities of nectandra seeds,[47] whole and fragmentary shells, shell beads, shell-inlaid objects, utilitarian pottery fragments,[48] wooden tools, and textiles.[49] The textiles found at Huaca del Dragón were in a poor state of preservation, but Schaedel notes that several fragments of fine textiles were discovered at Huaca Tacaynamo and were decorated with designs that are stylistically similar to the friezes at the two sites. The author suggests that textiles were used as wall hangings, specifically decorating a blank wall to the west.

Description of the Friezes

The friezes at Huaca del Dragón depict the recurring "dragon" and "rainbow" imagery that gives the site its name. The images are low-relief and are made of modeled adobe and mud

[45] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 424.
[46] The metal ornaments were made of almost completely pure silver or a silver-copper alloy.
[47] Schaedel suggests that the nectandra seeds were accumulated, perforated, and strung as beads at the site. The presence of the seeds in the burial in cell 11 indicates that they were interred with the deceased. Schaedel proposes a possible supernatural significance for the seeds, as they were found buried as a wrapped offering beneath a frieze section.
[48] As utilitarian ceramics rather than grave goods, the majority of these ceramics bore no decoration.
[49] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 426.

plaster. The friezes cover the exterior walls of the main structure, the exterior of the perimeter wall, and the interior of the ramp and entrance platform. The friezes may have been topped by a roof, as evidenced by vertical frame supports that are found at points between the panels so as to not obstruct the view.[50] The perimeter wall endured the most damage over the centuries, and its friezes are the least restored today. The motifs and their general arrangement are the same in the reliefs of the main edifice and perimeter walls -- though on the perimeter walls, the horizontal panel was doubled vertically without separation. The presence of the friezes on the exterior of the perimeter wall departs from the emphasis on interiority that is favored in Chimú architecture -- with Chan Chan as a prime example of Chimú architectural imagery being reserved for elite audiences, for the construction of high walled-compounds to ensure the restriction of the images. Huaca del Dragón contrasts this architectural tradition as a person would not have to venture inside the structure to view the reliefs because the same motifs decorate the exterior as well. This suggests that the frieze imagery at Huaca del Dragón was intended to be viewed by a public audience.

The friezes of Huaca del Dragón were painted, and the external friezes retained their original colors at the time the huaca was abandoned.[51] This is indicated by one of the few undisturbed sections of the huaca at the time of its excavation, as sand drift accumulated before the subsequent El Niño phenomenon and protected the portions of the original condition of the friezes.[52] The base color of the friezes may have been red, and "yellow was used for the figures and arcs, with white for the eyes."[53] Fragments from the roof cornice suggest that it was painted

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[50] Ibid., 422.
[51] Ibid., 424.
[52] Ibid., 424.
[53] Pillsbury, "The Sculpted Friezes," 130.

red, green, and white. The original colors of the friezes are likely to have been maintained by caretakers while the huaca was in use, as is indicated by the discovery of fragments of containers with paint near the perimeter wall.[54]

Description of the Motifs

For the purposes of this thesis, the term "dragon" is used to describe serpentine figures with added appendages, such as limbs and claws. The dragons of the friezes at Huaca del Dragón have what Elizabeth Benson coins "fox-snake heads" for their snake tongue, canine ears, and large jaws with multiple pointed teeth.[55] The frieze decoration consists of individual panels which are classified as horizontal, vertical, and framing panels. Four motifs consistently decorate the horizontal panels, including a bicephalic arching serpent, paired dragons in both the center and corners of the panel, a bicephalic knife, and anthropomorphic figures. In the vertical panels there are three consistent motifs, including an upward-facing zoomorphic creature, a downward-facing zoomorphic creature, and a bicephalic serpent. There is one motif that is repeated throughout the framing panels along the edges of the structure.

Beginning with the horizontal panel (Figure 2), the largest motif is an arching bicephalic serpent. The body is divided lengthwise into three or four bands with an additional row of wave-like volutes at the uppermost extreme. The two heads have canine ears, crests along the muzzle area, and prominent jaws with pointed teeth. In the jaws of each head are clasped an anthropomorphic figure whose hair or cap rises into a point. The arching bicephalic serpent

[54] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 445-446.
[55] Elizabeth P. Benson, *The Worlds of the Moche on the North Coast of Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 62.

frames a pair of dragon figures with S-shaped bodies. These creatures also have crested heads, large jaws, and pointed teeth, and their claws reach toward each other without touching. The creature to the right has a finned tail, while the creature to the left has a second head at the end of its body.[56] What is between their mouths is unclear -- their tongues may be touching, or they may be emitting flames.[57] Each upper corner contains a small dragon figure similar to those in the center. Beneath the central dragons is what Schaedel describes as a "feather-enclosed knife."[58] This motif consists of two paired canine heads which clench a semicircular blade, or *tumi*, in their jaws and are connected by two crested, arching bands. The motif has a triangular base at the bottom and is placed above a rectangular block or pedestal. In some cases, a single-headed serpent appears between the knife and either of the anthropomorphic figures.

The vertical panels (Figure 6) contain greater stylistic variations than the horizontal panels, and the motifs occasionally appear in different sequences. The creatures in these panels have the same heads as those in the horizontal panels but are less serpentine in form. One zoomorphic creature faces upwards in all but one case and typically occupies the upper portion of the panel. A large canine ear extends back, a fin-like appendage extends to the viewer's right, and two tails or tentacles curl at the bottom. Another zoomorphic creature faces downward, with a body that curves to face the viewer's left. This motif is typically positioned in the middle of the panel. It has one arm that sometimes has a small head at the elbow, and a long tongue. The final

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[56] In the friezes of the eastern end on the west perimeter wall, these motifs are depicted on all fours. This appearance suggests that the artists were running out of space toward the bottom of the relief, and were unable to depict the figures as they are rendered on the other walls. This is seen in the illustrations Schaedel includes between pages 414 and 415 of "The Huaca El Dragón."
[57] Colosi et al., "Exploiting HBIM," 2068.
[58] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 406.

Figure 6: Representative Vertical Panel with Framing Panel Above, Main Edifice. Photo by Author.

motif of the vertical panel is a curved, double-headed serpent that alternately appears near the bottom or between the other two images. Schaedel identifies a large claw in the middle, though the form is analogous to Chimú representations of *spondylus* shells.[59]

The reliefs of the main edifice contain a framing panel (Figures 2 and 3) that runs along the uppermost part of the wall and down the outermost sides. The framing panel was found at the corners of each surviving perimeter wall as well. It contains a single repeating motif of a processional figure in profile. In a three-fingered hand, the figure holds a tapered ax-like weapon. It wears a trailing, feathered headdress and waistband, which may alternatively be appendages.[60]

Existing Interpretations of the Friezes

The majority of the research on Huaca del Dragón focuses on the archaeological site and its architecture rather than the frieze decoration and its iconography. A few hypotheses have been developed regarding the purpose and inspiration for the frieze imagery at Huaca del Dragón. The first hypotheses to be discussed associate the friezes with a marine or climatological theme. At the archaeological site itself, informational posters tell that the iconography alludes to the commemoration of a strong event of the El Niño phenomenon.[61] This notion is echoed in the research of Hugo Navarro, who identifies the iconographic elements of the rainbow, dragons, and bicephalic serpent devouring human figures as symbols of the destruction and disorder that

[59] Jackson, "The Chimú Sculptures," 312.
[60] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 412.
[61] The informational posters posit that the similar iconography at Huaca del Higo in Chan Chan and Chotuna-Chornancap in the Lambayeque Valley also commemorate an El Niño event.

occurs with heavy rainfall.[62] Based on the imagery and its connotations, Navarro argues that the friezes of Huaca del Dragón and the nearby site of Huaca Tacaynamo refer specifically to an El Niño event in 1100 CE.[63]

A marine theme has been suggested as a possible interpretation by Schaedel and Helsley in their assessments of the frieze iconography. Schaedel interprets the motifs of the vertical panels as either swimming or flying toward one another, and likens one motif to a dolphin and the other to a sea cow.[64] He writes that the objects held by the framing motif may be single- and double-barbed harpoon shafts.[65] Helsley suggests that the primary message of the Huaca del Dragón friezes is "the importance of water," both "within the theme of fertility" and "to the people of the North Coast."[66] She posits that the friezes of Huaca del Dragón and the copied imagery at Huaca Chotuna "are related to the exploitation of marine resources" as communicated by the "symbolism of water and fertility conveyed by the bicephalic arch."[67] Helsley suggests that the primary ceremonies performed at the site were likely in honor of the North Coastal sea deity, Ni.

Schaedel writes that the friezes are pervaded by a complex symbolism that pertains to cult activity at the site which was related to a group of air- or sea-dwelling deities.[68] He suggests that the deities were combined from various regions, representing cosmological symbols of the

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[62] Hugo Navarro Santander, "Tacaynamo: un Sitio Chimú en el Valle de Moche," in *Arquitectura y Arqueología: Pasado y Futuro de la Construcción en el Perú,* ed. Victor Rangel Flores (Chiclayo: Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 1988), 221.
[63] Ibid., 221.
[64] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 448.
[65] Ibid., 450.
[66] Helsley, "The Friezes," 146-147.
[67] Ibid., 146.
[68] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 450-451.

Chimú, Moche, Recuay, Lambayeque, and Tiahuanaco. He also posits that Huaca del Dragón "was somehow related to the founder of the Chimú dynasty," the ancestral figure Naymlap who is said to have sailed to the site of the Chimor empire from the north.[69] In his consideration of the friezes at Huaca del Dragón and Chotuna-Chornancap, Michael Moseley suggests that the imagery of Huaca del Dragón operates as an iconographic statement about the Chimú conquest of Lambayeque c. 1370 CE. He posits that Chotuna-Chornancap was a site important to the dynastic lineage of Naymlap, and that the Chimú relocated the main effigy of Huaca Chotuna to Huaca del Dragón which was built specifically to house the relic and commemorate the conquest.[70] He suggests that the friezes from Chotuna-Chornancap were copied at Huaca del Dragón, reflecting the tradition of "huaca hostage."[71] However, the archaeological and iconographic evidence collected and reviewed by Christopher Donnan chronologically places the construction of the two sites prior to the conquest of the Lambayeque Valley, and the construction of Huaca del Dragón before Chotuna-Chornancap, making Moseley's argument largely unsustainable.

Margaret Ann Hoyt and Michael Moseley posit that the "anthropomorphic and zoomorphic elements" of the reliefs at Huaca del Dragón "are so modified that they can probably be interpreted as mythical beings."[72] This effect contrasts the more naturalistic -- but still stylized -- relief imagery at Chan Chan. In her examination of the wood figures recovered from Huaca

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[69] Ibid., 458.
[70] Michael E. Moseley, "Structure and History in the Dynastic Lore of Chimor," in *The Northern Dynasties: Kingship and Statecraft in Chimor*, eds. Michael E. Moseley and Alana Cordy-Collins (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990), 30.
[71] Ibid., 29.
[72] Margaret Ann Hoyt and Michael Edward Moseley, "The Burr Frieze: A Rediscovery at Chan Chan," *Ñawpa Pacha: Journal of Andean Archaeology*, no. 7/8 (1969): 52.

del Dragón and Huaca Tacaynamo, Margaret Jackson suggests that the principal burial at the site was an important person "whose remains are now missing" and "whose social stature was in some way articulated by the motifs" that decorate the exterior walls.[73] Regarding the sculptures, Jackson argues that they may have operated as grave goods depicting and perhaps reenacting the venerative rituals of ancestral worship and interment that occurred at the site.

[73] Jackson, "The Chimú Sculptures," 318.

Theory and Methodology

Unity underlies pre-Hispanic Andean art, and researchers often encounter the issue of ignoring that an individual area of study is part of a much larger whole.[74] For a consideration of the friezes at Huaca del Dragón, it is necessary to implement a wide-ranging perspective due to the combination of artistic styles and iconographic elements from several regions. The concepts of iconography and style are closely related but are two separate studies. Iconography deals with subject matter and refers to what is being represented, while style refers to how a subject is represented by a certain group. There are stylistic and iconographic similarities found in the friezes at Huaca del Dragón and the art and architectural decoration produced by several other Andean groups.

Luminaries of Andean art historical and archaeological studies have utilized iconographic analysis as an important evidential strain in the reconstruction of ancient cultures. Written text was introduced in the Andes with the arrival of the Europeans, and the absence of textual documentation to explain pre-Hispanic Andean art has led scholars to seek other methods of analyzing ancient images. The visual record is a primary resource in understanding not only the lived realities of ancient peoples, but also the way in which they perceived the world. In their studies, some leading Andeanists -- like Alana Cordy-Collins and Donald Proulx -- have implemented Panofsky's approach to iconographic research. These scholars argue that Panofsky's first two steps (objective description and analysis) can be applied in studies of non-literate societies for their ability to identify patterns and variations among representations of

[74] Helsley, "The Friezes," 23.

individual motifs. Both scholars suggest that ancient Andean visual representation functions like a language for its communication of messages.[75]

In developing individual approaches to iconographic analysis, many leading researchers, like Elizabeth P. Benson, assert that Andean iconography speaks in a form of shorthand that communicates a complex core meaning.[76] Likewise, Christopher Donnan agrees that consistent correlations can partially elucidate the general theme of a specific image or motif.[77] Jeffrey Quilter agrees with the notion that rather than representing a complete picture of an artist's society, visual representations can communicate specific aspects and concepts.[78] These scholars maintain the idea that visual representation is an important evidential strain in understanding the ideological constructs and social systems of pre-Hispanic Andean societies. William Isbell remarks on the ability of imagery and decorative art to represent the materialization of cultural institutions and identities, which aids scholars in tracing cultural interactions.[79] The consistency of formal similarities and their contextual associations allow for the identification of stylistic variations, including antecedents and derivations. Tom Cummins similarly addresses the

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[75] Donald A. Proulx, "Nasca Iconography," in *Inca-Perú: 3000 Ans d'Histoire*, ed. Sergio Purin (Gent, Belgium: Imschoot, uitgevers, 1990), 15.
[76] Elizabeth P. Benson, "Iconography Meets Archaeology," in *The Art and Archaeology of the Moche: An Andean Society of the Peruvian North Coast*, eds. Steve Bourget and Kimberly L. Jones (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 4.
[77] Christopher B. Donnan, *Moche Art and Iconography* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center, 1976), 129.
[78] Jeffrey Quilter, "Art and Moche Martial Arts," in *The Art and Archaeology of the Moche: An Andean Society of the Peruvian North Coast*, eds. Steve Bourget and Kimberly L. Jones (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 225.
[79] William H. Isbell, "Introduction: Social Interactions in the Southern Andes," in *Images in Action: The Southern Andean Iconographic Series*, eds. William H. Isbell, Mauricio I. Uribe, Anne Tiballi, and Edward P. Zegarra (Los Angeles: UCLA, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, 2018), 3.

emulation and imitation of iconographic symbols across generations and pre-Hispanic cultures -- arguing for the ability of iconography to illustrate cultural continuity among Andean groups.[80]

In considering stylistic analyses of specifically Peruvian North Coastal images, Joanne Pillsbury's methodology in her research of the friezes at Chan Chan relate to this study of the friezes at Huaca del Dragón. Pillsbury acknowledges the methodological challenge that arises for those who study South American deep history[81] for which there are no contemporary texts.[82] Instead, histories were preserved by oral tradition and collective memory, and the tradition of alphabetic writing arrived with the Europeans in the sixteenth century. Pillsbury emphasizes that an absence of textual reference does not "foreclose interpretation," but "pushes us to explore other approaches for understanding the meanings embedded in materials and their forms."[83] She recognizes that the specific meaning of a work created by groups who predated Hispanic arrival may be impossible to completely determine, but suggests that this can lead researchers to concentrate more closely on other types of data in the absence of text.[84] In particular, this includes "a careful look at associations in the ethnohistoric record combined with archaeological data such as context," which she suggests can bring modern researchers "closer to an understanding of the use" and meaning of friezes created by Chimú artists.[85] Pillsbury's method

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[80] Tom Cummins, "La Investigación y la Interpretación de los Objetos Precolombinos Desde el Punto de Vista de la Historia del Arte," in *El Arte Antes de la Historia: Para una Historia del arte Andino Antiguo,* eds. Marco Curatola Petrocchi et al. (Lima, Peru: Fondo Editorial, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2020), 48.
[81] The term 'prehistory' has been deemed inappropriate for contemporary usage. Favored instead are the terms 'history without writing,' '*longue durée*,' and 'deep history,' according to Lisa Trever in *Image Encounters*, 9.
[82] Pillsbury, "Reading Art Without Writing," 73.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., 85.
[85] Pillsbury, "The Sculpted Friezes," 276.

of analysis, developed specifically for Late Intermediate Period relief and mural art, aids the generation of an interpretative model for this thesis.

In the study of pre-Hispanic imagery which lacks textual reference, only a small portion of meaning can be theorized by modern scholars because the full range of connotations and concepts cannot be assessed.[86] This is discussed in Ann H. Peters's study of double-headed serpents in Paracas textile imagery. Peters writes that for pre-Hispanic imagery, "a group of motifs with formal consistencies can be hypothesized as an icon."[87] From there, "aspects of the field of reference of an icon can be hypothesized based on their visual resemblance to" objects "that arguably formed part of the observable universe of the persons who created and interpreted this meaning."[88] While an authoritative meaning cannot be determined, "it is possible to posit thematic spheres of reference by examining consistent or recurrent features of an interrelated group of images."[89] For a consideration of the frieze imagery at Huaca del Dragón, these consistencies firstly provide insight regarding the evolution of the motifs over time. Consistencies also form the basis of hypotheses for general identifications of the imagery. More broadly, they highlight the continuation of practices and beliefs by North Coastal Peruvian cultures.

This methodology also connects to Lisa Trever's concept of archaeo art history, defined as the "critical-historical study of art, images, and their making as situated within coordinates of

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[86] Ann H. Peters, "Two-Headed Serpents and Rayed Heads: Precedents and Reinterpretations in Paracas Necropolis Imagery," *PreColumbian Textile Conference VIII*, eds. Lena Bjerregaard and Ann Peters (Lincoln, NE: Zea Books, 2020), 24.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

space, time, and social difference of the deep past."[90] Trever emphasizes the importance of both archaeology and art history in the study of South American deep history, as "modern researchers have come to rely on ancient images as points of access to the past."[91] Like Pillsbury's work, the methodology developed by Trever emphasizes the critical role of art history and archaeology in interpreting pre-Hispanic Peruvian art and architecture. Trever's discussion of Moche mural art recognizes the limitations of art history and archaeology, as they cannot produce a holistic understanding of a group's social and political history alone. An understanding of a lived social and political reality requires multiple lines of comparison. Trever argues that what these studies do inform, however, is the ability of monumental image-making to illustrate long-standing commonalities in North Coastal visual culture.[92]

Likewise, Blair Salt's study of the relief carvings at Cerro Sechín employs a systematic stylistic analysis to present new insights into the investigation of the site.[93] Salt discusses the paradox that exists between the concepts of iconography and style. Salt notes the dually separated yet intertwined nature of the concepts, as subject matter cannot be determined without an understanding of style, yet the definition of style requires a basic understanding of the subject matter.[94] In order to reconcile this paradox, Salt argues that subject matter can be understood at a basic level without being loaded with meaning.[95]

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[90] Trever, *Image Encounters,* 183.
[91] Ibid., 181.
[92] Ibid., 100.
[93] Salt follows the first step (visual analysis) of the model developed by Vernon Knight after Erwin Panofsky.
[94] Blair Salt, "The Graphic Scene at Cerro Sechín" (Master's thesis, The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2017), 4.
[95] Ibid., 5.

Inspired by these models, this thesis employs its own interpretative model to analyze the frieze imagery at Huaca del Dragón. The motifs at the site can be identified, broadly interpreted, and compared to other sources. However, the full range of meaning and symbolism underlying the individual images cannot be determined for certain by modern scholars. It is not the goal of this project to ascribe an authoritative meaning to the images at Huaca del Dragón, but to consider the concepts connected to the motifs and to trace the lines of visual inspiration for the imagery that transcend proposed cultural boundaries. For this project's interest in reviewing stylistically related motifs from different cultures and time periods for their ability to inform an understanding of the imagery at Huaca del Dragón, an analysis that considers iconography and style offers an open possibility of visual comparison.

Throughout the thousands of years of pre-Hispanic Andean occupation, the worldviews of individual groups undoubtedly changed and evolved. The objects to be reviewed in this thesis carry their own contexts and are capable of expressing specific meanings to certain peoples, places, and time periods. The individual contexts of the pieces function as archaeological data, and the style of the images reflect the practices, beliefs, and concepts of their individual communities of production.[96] In his writing on the use of style in archaeological studies, Timothy Earle explains that "iconographies unique to individual cultures serve to identify cultural traditions, but they do little to explain cultural processes and the evolutionary significance of ideology."[97] A consideration of specific motifs that were produced by *multiple* groups therefore

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[96] These communities may not be, for example, the Moche as an overarching group, but a subgroup of the Moche that emerged in a specific location and time period.
[97] Timothy Earle, "Style and Iconography as Legitimation in Complex Chiefdoms," in *The Uses of Style in Archaeology,* eds. Margaret Conkey and Christine Hastorf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 74.

informs intercultural exchange and a continuity of the motifs that permeates the delineations of time periods and proposed cultural boundaries. In this way, style functions as a critical aspect in cultural evolution for its ability to illustrate cultural continuity.[98] There is already a vast amount of archaeological and iconographic evidence that indicates the traditions of cultural continuity in the Andes, and illuminates the concepts that were (and in some cases, still are) shared throughout the region. This makes the Andean region an exemplary area to investigate a specific instance of intercultural stylistic evolution. An examination of the cultural continuity illustrated by the motifs at Huaca del Dragón contributes to the ongoing study of intercultural exchange in the Andes, while informing the concepts and ideologies that relate to (and possibly served as motivations for) the sculptural reliefs at the site.

[98] Ibid.

Comparative Imagery - Architectural

Similarities are identifiable in the relief decoration of Huaca del Dragón and a few other North Coastal archaeological sites. This includes the Moche structures of Huaca de la Luna (The Old Temple) and the shrine on Cerro Blanco; the Chimú sites of the ciudadela Ñing-an (formerly Velarde), Huaca del Higo, and Huaca Tacaynamo; and the Lambayeque archeological complex of Chotuna-Chornancap. The relief and mural imagery at each site are not identical, but present elements that closely relate to one or more of the motifs at Huaca del Dragón. Each site is in a different state of preservation and the reliefs of some structures have been completely destroyed. While the current state of each example of relief imagery may not allow for an in-depth stylistic comparison with the friezes at Huaca del Dragón, the connections made by earlier scholars warrant a discussion of the archaeological findings and visual similarities that were noted. This section focuses on the stylistic similarities that can be identified in the relief and mural art of other sites in order to illustrate the employment of similar motifs by different groups during different times. The continuation of these artistic traditions may have inspired the appearance of specific motifs at Huaca del Dragón. The following analysis is organized according to each site and its contribution to an understanding of the reliefs at Huaca del Dragón.

Old Temple of Huaca de la Luna

Motifs similar to those at Huaca del Dragón are found in the Old Temple of Huaca de la Luna. Huaca de la Luna was the religious core of the city of Moche (also called Huacas de Moche), which was established between the lower Moche River and the mountain of Cerro Blanco. Huaca de la Luna consisted of at least two temples: the Old Temple (ca. 200-700 CE)

and the New Temple (ca. 700-850 CE).[99] Variations of certain motifs found at Huaca del Dragón exist in the north facade of the Old Temple of Huaca de la Luna (Figures 7 and 8). The first/lowest register of the facade depicts a procession of prisoners who are bound together by a rope that is held at either end by a warrior. The clothing of the warriors is similar to the framing panel motif at Huaca del Dragón, namely their trailing headdresses and waistbands, which may be a form of armor called backflaps.

The fourth register is a frieze of fishermen with spiky black hair. The fishermen stand in profile and face the viewer's left. This image corresponds with the anthropomorphic motif in the horizontal panel at Huaca del Dragón and illuminates a critical aspect of the figure's identity. At Huaca del Dragón, the objects held in either hand of the figure are stepped, but otherwise ambiguous and undecipherable when considered on their own. A comparison with the motif at Huaca de la Luna illustrates that the anthropomorphic figures carry fish. One fish is held before the fisherman and dangles from a vertical rope that is vivified as a snake, while the other hangs behind him, held not by his other hand but by a second rope that is strung over the shoulder. At Huaca del Dragón, the arm that does not hold the rope before the fisherman disappears in the profile view. It would disappear at Huaca de la Luna as well were it not for the preserved pigmentation that accentuates its position crossed over the chest.

The fifth register of the facade depicts a repeating frieze of a scaly quadruped dragon in profile. The dragon has a second fox-serpent head at the end of its serrated tail and holds a human head in its claw. The style of this dragon suggests that it was derived from Recuay artistic traditions that were adopted into Moche iconography.[100] Each dragon in the frieze is separated

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[99] Trever, *Image Encounters*, 64.
[100] Ibid., 81.

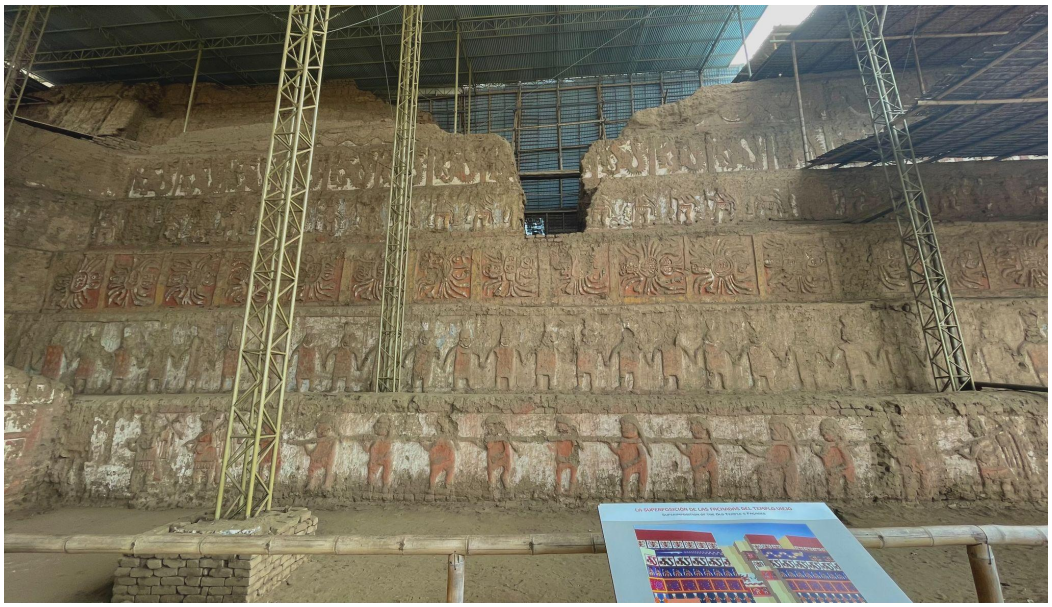

Figure 7: North Facade of the Old Temple at Huaca de La Luna. Photo by Author.

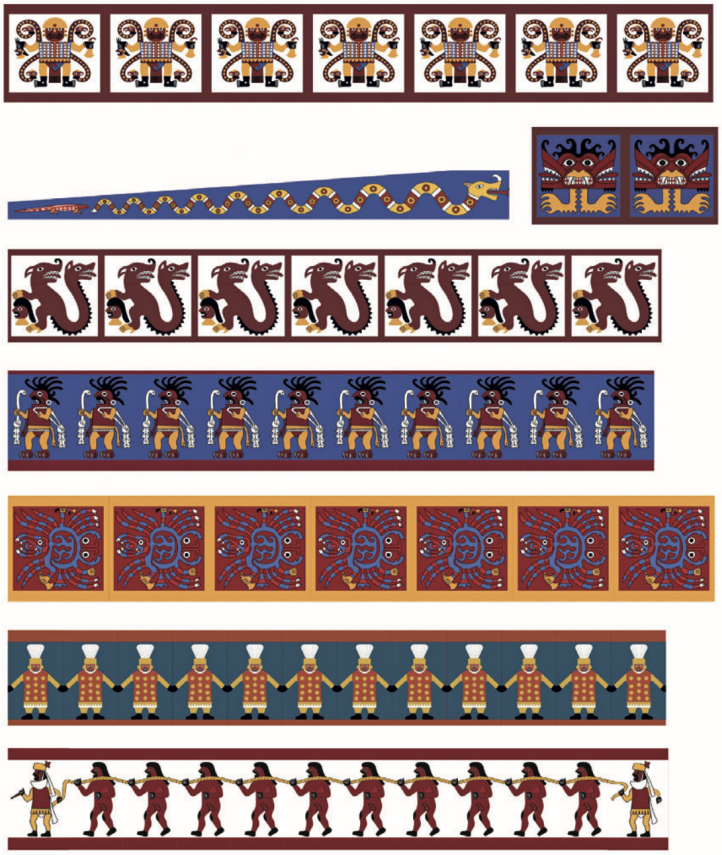

Figure 8: Reconstruction of the North Facade of the Old Temple at Huaca de La Luna. Trever, *Image Encounters*, 73.

into an individual square panel with red borders. The appearance of this image sets an architectural precedent for the dragon motifs at Huaca del Dragón, as most other depictions of dragon-like creatures occur on non-architectural examples.

Shrine on Cerro Blanco

The shrine on Cerro Blanco, of which little evidence survives today, once contained reliefs that were similar to those at Huaca del Dragón and fragments that are reported to have been nearly identical.[101] The fragments with an identifiable form depict fox-serpent heads that are similar to those of the dragon motifs. The creatures are shown in profile and have the same feline ears, circular eyes, protruding tongue, and prominent jaws with large teeth. Like the sculptural reliefs at Huaca del Dragón and Huaca Tacaynamo, the fragments found at this site display a range of pigments including white, blue, red, and yellow. Pillsbury argues that the fragments confirm a general relationship with Huaca del Dragón, but that the iconography and color of the fragments from Huaca Tacaynamo are more closely related.[102]

Ñing-an (Formerly Velarde)

Ñing-an, a ciudadela complex in Chan Chan, contains comparable relief imagery to Huaca del Dragón.[103] This palace complex dates to the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Schaedel writes that the stylistic differences between the reliefs at Ñing-an and Huaca del Dragón are "not

[101] Pillsbury, "The Sculpted Friezes," 128.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Arturo Paredes Núñez, "Complejo Arqueológico Chan Chan: Los Conjuntos Amurallados y sus Nominaciones," *Pueblo Continente: Revista Oficial de la Universidad Privada Antenor Orrego* vol. 21, 1 (2010), 56.

unlike that of the Rococo succeeding the Baroque."[104] Two friezes, known in scholarship as the Burr Frieze and Tule Boat Frieze, were both created by incising and are unpainted. The decoration of the Burr Frieze (Figure 9) is curvilinear, unlike many of the geometric or stepped forms of other sculptural reliefs at Chan Chan. The images are stylized, but not so abstracted that they are difficult to identify.[105] The Burr Frieze contains variations of some of the motifs present at Huaca del Dragón. Anthropomorphic figures with pointed caps or hair are scattered throughout the relief and hold what may be an oar, club, or spear. The second register from the top depicts a procession of seabirds, armed with spears, who wear crescent headdresses. Though different in form, this register recalls the framing panels at Huaca del Dragón. Catfish are also depicted throughout the frieze, and their curling barbels are comparable to the "tentacles" of the upward-facing zoomorphic motif. The Tule Boat Frieze (Figure 10) has additionally been considered by researchers for its stylistic similarities to Huaca del Dragón. The figures who sit in a reed boat have been compared to the paired dragons motif for their claws, finned tails, and S-shaped bodies.[106] At Chan Chan, the motifs appear in pairs, wear a crescent headdress, and catch fish from their boat.

Huaca del Higo

The current state of Huaca del Higo does not allow for a comparison with Huaca del Dragón, but it has been discussed in previous scholarship. Huaca del Higo is located near the center of Chan Chan and is one of the earliest structures of the capital city. The structure survives

[104] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 453.
[105] Hoyt and Moseley, "The Burr Frieze," 51.
[106] Helsley, "The Friezes," 113.

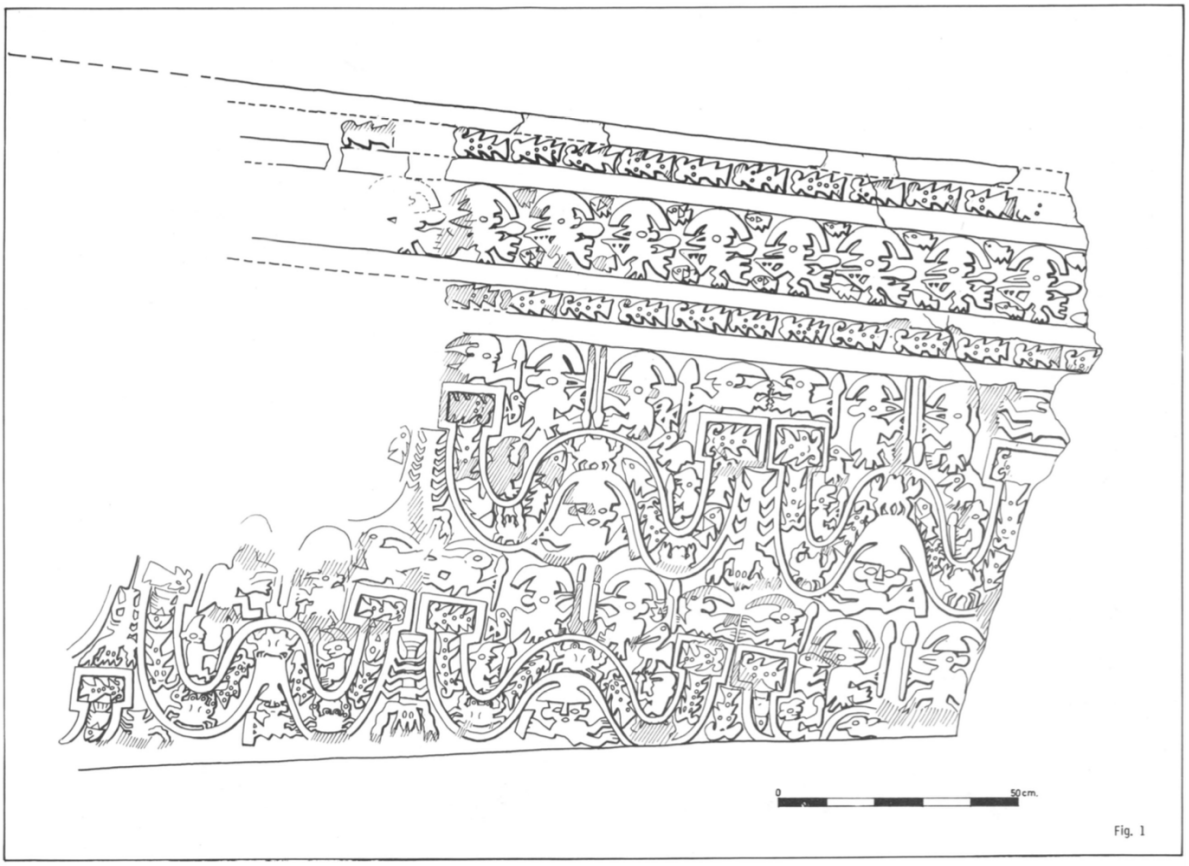

Figure 9: Drawing of the Burr Frieze, Ñing-an, Chan Chan. Hoyt and Moseley, "The Burr Frieze," plate XXVI.

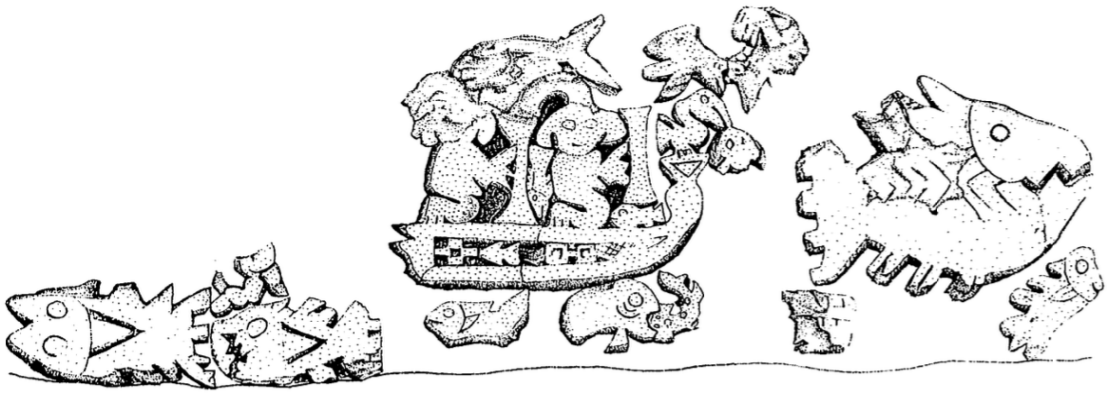

Figure 10: Drawing of a Section of the Tule Boat Frieze, Ñing-an, Chan Chan. Drawing by Galo Sisniegas, in Pillsbury, "The Sculpted Friezes," 494.

but is poorly preserved -- and may have had enclosing walls and several large compounds.[107] The site is reported to have had one or more sculptural reliefs, the only evidence of which are the photographs by Hans Horkheimer taken prior to the destruction of the friezes by looters in the early 1940s. The architectural ornamentation as described by Horkheimer consisted of a fifteen meter-long frieze with twenty-three panels depicting two creatures under a crescent headdress.[108] Horkheimer suggests that the creatures are monkeys or squirrels, though later scholars have noted the similarity of the creatures to the Moon Animal of the Moche for their similar position and shape of the body.[109]

Huaca Tacaynamo

Based on the close proximity, proposed functions, and similar architectural and decorative forms, some scholars suggest that Huaca Tacaynamo and Huaca del Dragón were integrally related for the Chimú.[110] Huaca Tacaynamo is located approximately 0.3 miles to the southeast of Huaca del Dragón. It was hypothetically constructed by the Chimú during the Late Intermediate Period. The name of the site was given by Richard Schaedel and does not necessarily connect the structure with the ancestral figure Tacaynamo. The site was decorated with low-relief friezes which were painted white, yellow, red, green, and blue. This is one of the most destroyed sites in the area. At the time of excavation, each relief was found in a fragmentary state and none of the reliefs remained adhered to the edifice. The complete fragmentation of the reliefs does not allow for a program to be determined.

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[107] Moseley, "Structure and History," 12.
[108] Pillsbury, "The Sculpted Friezes," 135.
[109] Ibid., 136.
[110] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 384.

Hugo Navarro provides a description of the site and its sculptural reliefs. The identifiable motifs of the relief fragments include serpents with feline characteristics, which Navarro describes as dragons that are comparable to those at Huaca del Dragón.[111] The dragon motifs are topped by wave-like volutes that stylistically link them to the sea.[112] Small dragons are also depicted, with physical variations like elongated bodies or limbs and a tail that are surrounded by stylized fish. Variations of anthropomorphic heads also appear. The motifs are believed to have been repeated across the walls, but with variations in the colors used for each image. Navarro connects the dragon motifs of Huaca Tacaynamo to the motifs of dragons, rainbows, and the bicephalic serpent devouring humans at Huaca del Dragón. He argues that these motifs are symbols of *amaru* and correspond with the concepts of rain-related disorder and destruction.[113] To Navarro, these iconographic elements suggest that the site and its reliefs were constructed after the El Niño phenomenon of c. 1100 CE.

Chotuna-Chornancap Archaeological Complex

Chotuna-Chornancap is located in the Lambayeque Valley, near the modern city of Chiclayo, Peru. The site is attributed to the Lambayeque (Sicán) civilization which flourished between c. 750 CE and 1370 CE until it was conquered by the Chimú. The construction of Chotuna-Chornancap is attributed to approximately 1100-1370 CE.[114] The complex encompasses a number of huacas, walled compounds, and royal palaces. The name of the site comes from two

[111] Navarro Santander, "Tacaynamo: un Sitio Chimú," 220.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid., 221.
[114] Christopher B. Donnan, *Chotuna and Chornancap: Excavating an Ancient Peruvian Legend* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 243.

of its most prominent huacas. Two walls in Courtyard A of Huaca Gloria (Figure 11) are decorated with friezes remarkably similar to those at Huaca del Dragón. This relief imagery is unique to Courtyard A, as excavations indicate that frieze decoration was rare at Chotuna-Chornancap and there is no other evidence of similar reliefs. The friezes adorn the interior walls at the southern end of a large courtyard, located on the northern side of the huaca. Two columns were also decorated with friezes, as well as a panel along the front of the raised platform. One way in which the friezes on the two walls at Huaca Gloria differ from those at Huaca del Dragón is that they lack separation into panels. Another is the amorphous appearance of the motifs in comparison to those at Huaca del Dragón. There is also a higher amount of stylistic variation within the panels than at Huaca del Dragón.

A connection between the sculptural reliefs at the two sites has been investigated by several scholars. Michael Moseley suggests that the imagery at Huaca Gloria was copied at Huaca del Dragón following the conquest of the Lambayeque Valley in a manipulation of power symbols.[115] However, the archaeological evidence discovered in Christopher Donnan's excavation counters this hypothesis. Donnan argues that the frieze imagery at Huaca del Dragón predates the site of Chotuna-Chornancap, which is evidenced in part by the unclear depiction of the motifs while their rendering at Huaca del Dragón is precise. Donnan also notes the chronological placement of the two sites and suggests that they both predate the Chimú conquest of the Lambayeque Valley.[116]

Donnan suggests that the motifs from Huaca del Dragón reached the frieze artists at Huaca Gloria through the distribution of painted textiles, which were commonly produced on the

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[115] Moseley, "Structure and History," 31.
[116] Donnan, *Chotuna and Chornancap*, 243.

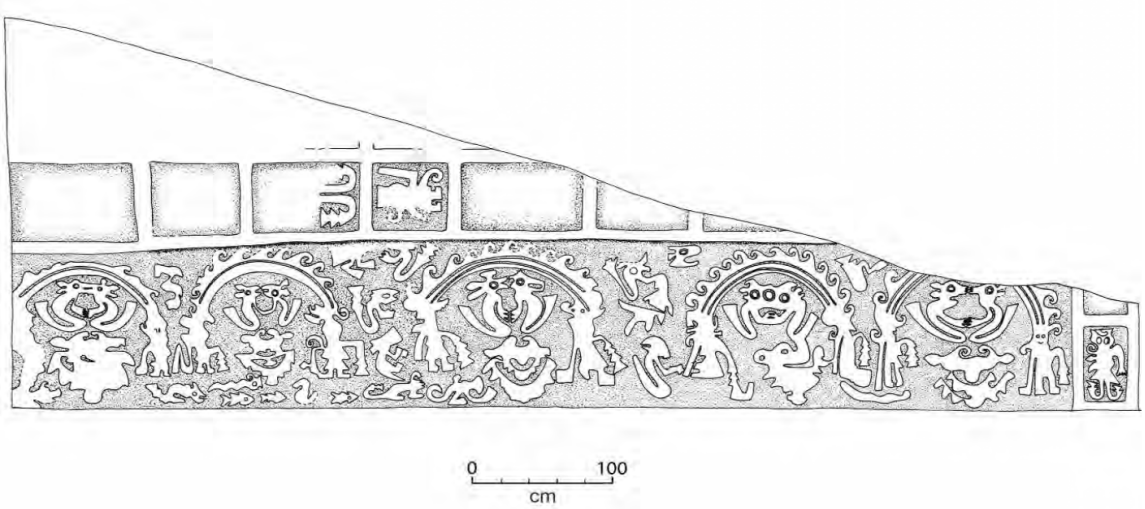

Figure 11: Frieze on the South Wall of Courtyard A at Huaca Gloria. Donnan, *Chotuna and Chornancap*, 57.

Figure 12: Figure #29 (Center) on the West Wall of Chornancap. Donnan, *Chotuna and Chornancap*, 107.

North Coast during the Middle Horizon and often depict bicephalic serpents framing human figures.[117] Textiles were used to diffuse iconography over great distances and many of these works contained complex iconography. The blurring of painted detail could account for the distortion of the frieze imagery. The frieze artists at Huaca Gloria appear to have been largely unfamiliar with the imagery they copied from the reliefs at Huaca del Dragón.

The painted murals of Chornancap also display stylistic similarities to the friezes at Huaca del Dragón, though these resemblances are not as pronounced as those at Huaca Gloria. The iconographic elements of the murals suggest that they are Lambayeque in origin and date to between 900 and 1300 CE. The west wall of a courtyard on the north side of Chornancap is decorated with a painted mural, with figures who stand with their feet facing the viewer's left. One figure in particular (Figure 12) is visually similar to the framing motif at Huaca del Dragón. The figure stands in profile and is reminiscent for the crests emanating from the head, the tail or back flap, three- or four-toed feet, prominent mouth, and the two items held vertically before the body which Donnan identifies as staffs or darts.[118]

[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., 108.

Comparative Imagery - Non-Architectural

The composition of the relief imagery at Huaca del Dragón is unique, and no object that presents each motif has been found. However, many of the motifs are found in works produced by groups that are indigenous to the North Coast and its surrounding areas. This suggests that the sculptural reliefs at Huaca del Dragón incorporate iconographic elements that have a long-standing tradition in the region, and that the Chimú artists who decorated the site introduced a new composition that combines several traditional motifs. As demonstrated through the discussion of existing interpretations for the friezes at Huaca del Dragón, a primary motivation or influence for the relief imagery is unclear but is likely to relate to the overall function of the huaca. This section examines individual appearances of the motifs in an assortment of different media as sources of comparison for the friezes, organized by each individual motif. This analysis elucidates potential reasonings that underlie the relief decoration at Huaca del Dragón, and supports a subsequent discussion of interpretations for the relief imagery.

The objects to be examined in this section come from several pre-Hispanic Andean groups that spanned multiple time periods. While strong stylistic analogies have not been found in sources from the earliest complex civilizations in the Andes, variations of certain motifs and visual themes exist and are indicative of the early origins of the imagery. For example, what can be viewed as "prototypes" of the imagery are present in pre-ceramic works from Huaca Prieta, a settlement in the Chicama Valley that emerged during the Preceramic period (ca. 3000-1800 BCE). Carved gourds and woven textiles from the site depict bicephalic S-shaped serpents.[119] Similarities are also evident in works produced by the Cupisnique, who occupied the North

[119] Junius B. Bird, "Pre-Ceramic Art from Huaca Prieta, Chicama Valley," *Ñawpa pacha* 1, no. 1 (1963), 34-37.

Coast in the Early Horizon (ca. 800-200 BCE). Cupisnique objects depict serpentine animals with canine heads (Figures 13 and 14) and bicephalic serpents (Figures 15 and 16). There are works displaying supernatural serpentine figures with added appendages in works by the Chavín as well (Figure 17). These thematic similarities suggest that the motifs at Huaca del Dragón reflect an artistic practice that was deep-rooted in the North Coast and its surrounding areas -- a tradition which spans thousands of years and may originate from the earliest complex societies of the region.

The most compelling visual similarities for the motifs at Huaca del Dragón are found in works produced by groups from the Early Intermediate Period (ca. 100 BCE-600 CE) and later. The earliest of these societies are the Moche, Recuay, and Tiahuanaco, who developed in the Early Intermediate Period in the North Coast, North Highlands, and Titicaca region, respectively. Moche and Tiahuanaco continued throughout the Middle Horizon (ca. 600-1000 CE). This is the time in which the Lambayeque (Sicán) and Casma are proposed to have emerged on the North Coast.[120] Huari developed in the Middle Horizon as well, and dominated the Central Coast and North, Central, and South Highlands. The highland territories held by the Huari were directly north of the Tiahuanaco. Huari expanded toward the North Coast sometime around the seventh century and may have exerted social and political influence, but never took territorial control.[121] By the beginning of the Late Intermediate Period (ca. 1000-1450 CE), Huari, Tiahuanaco, and Moche had waned. The Chimú developed on the North Coast at this time -- again, possibly as a

[120] Melissa A. Vogel, *The Casma City of El Purgatorio: Ancient Urbanism in the Andes* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2016), 58.
[121] Trever, *Image Encounters*, 15.

Figure 13: Stirrup Spout Vessel. Cupisnique. Early Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML010501.

Figure 14: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Cupisnique. 12th-5th century BCE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 1983.546.14.

Figure 15: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Cupisnique. Early Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML015294.

Figure 16: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Cupisnique. Early Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML010863.

Figure 17: Cylinder Stamp. Chavín. Early Horizon. Image courtesy of the Princeton University Art Museum. 2018-8.

Figure 18: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003156.

reestablishment of Moche hegemony -- and were contemporaneous with the Lambayeque until their territories were conquered and absorbed into the Chimú Empire.[122]

The analysis of comparative materials from the above groups is organized according to each panel type present at Huaca del Dragón (horizontal, vertical, and framing). It is unlikely that an individual object served as the sole inspiration for the relief imagery at the site. The following examples of visual and material culture from groups of and around the North Coast illustrate the consistent application of stylistically similar motifs by individual societies during different time periods and for a variety of usages. The contexts of these objects operate as archaeological data and support interpretations for the relief imagery at Huaca del Dragón.

Horizontal Panel Motif - Arching Bicephalic Serpent

The motif of a double-headed serpent (or dragon, when appendages are present) that arches over other motifs at Huaca del Dragón has a long tradition in the local iconography of the North Coast and is especially prevalent in the art of the Moche, Lambayeque, and Chimú.[123] In Moche ceramics, a common motif is a canine-headed bicephalic serpent with a serrated back that arches over an anthropomorphic figure. One painted stirrup spout vessel decorated with this scene on either side (Figure 18) shows the human figure (and the serpent itself) surrounded by dots that represent rain or stars.[124] Underneath the arch, the human figures are consistently shown in profile until ca. 1100 CE, when it was used to frame frontal human figures (Figure 19) and

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[122] Helsley, "The Friezes," 46.
[123] Donnan, *Chotuna and Chornancap*, 239.
[124] Santiago Uceda, "The Priests of the Bicephalus Arc: Tombs and Effigies Found in Huaca de la Luna and Their Relation to Moche Rituals," in *The Art and Archaeology of the Moche: An Ancient Andean Society of the Peruvian North Coast,* eds. Steve Bourget and Kimberly L. Jones (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 155.

Figure 19: Pitcher. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML002325.

Figure 20: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003148.

paired animals.[125] Frontal human figures placed beneath the arch consistently wear the crescent-shaped headdress, which is a signifier of supernatural status in Moche and Chimú works.[126] In one molded example (Figure 20) the human is identified as the Moche creator god Ai Apaec and holds a snake in either hand.

A painted Moche stirrup spout vessel (Figures 21ab) depicts the Presentation Theme,[127] in which the bicephalic serpent does not arch over the scene but stretches horizontally as a skyband that represents the separation of the earthly realm from the upper world. The skyband is typically portrayed with an elongated serpent-like body that is divided into at least two rows, and is sometimes decorated with the markings of a boa constrictor. The body of this particular canine-headed skyband is decorated with stepped and circular designs. It spans the entire vessel and reaches toward its opposite head with a clawed foreleg (Figure 21b). The skyband appears consistently in representations of the Presentation Theme and separates the "the gods above from the sacrificers and human victims below."[128]

An arching serpent skyband is also found in Moche metalworks. A striking comparison is found on one metal ornament (Figure 22), a copper disk gilded with silver and an inlay of shell and turquoise. The combination of multiple precious metals in a single object is one of the most distinctive characteristics of much of the art found at Loma Negra, a northern Moche outpost and

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[125] Donnan, *Chotuna and Chornancap*, 239.
[126] Karen Olsen Bruhns, "The Moon Animal in Northern Peruvian Art and Culture," *Ñawpa Pacha: Journal of Andean Archaeology* no. 14 (1976), 32.
[127] This scene is coined by Christopher Donnan and has also been called the Sacrifice Ceremony. It will be referred to as the Presentation Theme in this thesis because there is more than one common scene of Moche sacrifice. Also, as Elizabeth Benson points out (Benson, *Worlds of the Moche*, 73), this scene is more than ceremonial if the figures in the above register are supernatural rather than human.
[128] Benson, *Worlds of the Moche,* 73.

Figures 21a and 21b: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML010847.

Figure 22: Disk with Figure. Moche. 6th-7th century CE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 1987.394.54.

Figure 23: Nose Ornament. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. El Brujo Archaeological Complex, La Libertad, Peru. EBBME00000-23.

burial site in the Vicús region of the Piura Valley where this disk was discovered. Like the other Moche works reviewed thus far, the bicephalic serpent frames a frontal human figure -- but an addition is made in the form of the human figures who are clasped by the hair in the creature's jaws. This representation of the bicephalic serpent (and the human victims) is strongly reminiscent of the relief decoration at Huaca del Dragón. Its creation in the sixth or seventh century -- approximately four or five hundred years before the construction of Huaca del Dragón -- indicates that the relief artists closely adhered to the centuries-old representation of the motif in Moche works. The motif is also popular in the decoration of metal nose ornaments made by the Moche. Like its representation in ceramics, the serpent often frames a frontal human (Figure 23). The body of the serpent in this object is decorated with circular dangling elements, and in another example (Figure 24), the circles are recessed in the body. This object is also notable for the two standing zoomorphic figures the serpent arches over, rather than a single human. These figures are reminiscent of the Moche Moon Animal.

In Lambayeque ceramics, the motif commonly frames a central human figure with a split headdress (Figure 25) who is surrounded by raindrops. Instead of a staff, this figure holds an oar in each hand. Double-spouted Lambayeque ceramics (Figures 26 and 27) transform the crescent-shaped handle of the vessel into the body of the arching serpent. The modeled heads of the serpent emerge from either side of the vessel beneath the spouts and are incised with canine features. A molded anthropomorphic figure is attached at the apex of the handle rather than appearing below the body of the serpent. This location recalls the Moche Presentation Theme and its positioning of supernatural beings above the serpent skyband. The human figure atop

Figure 24: Crescent Ornament. Moche. 6-7th century CE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 1979.206.1287.

Figure 25: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Lambayeque. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML031770.

Figure 26. Double Spout Vessel with Tubular Bridge Handle. Lambayeque. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML023274.

Figure 27: Double Body Bottle with Bridge Handle. Lambayeque. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML023951.

the vessel is identifiable as supernatural or divine by the crescent headdress. This symbol of divine status may have originated as an iconographic device in the Lambayeque region.[129]

Variations of the arching bicephalic serpent motif are found in highland polities as well. A Recuay example is found on a silver scepter (Figure 28), where the double-headed serpent forms the crescent headdress of a zoomorphic figure. On one Huari pitcher (Figure 29) that recalls Moche and Lambayeque representations, the serpent arches over a frontal human who wears the crescent headdress and is surrounded by dots that represent rain or stars. This figure wears a double-headed serpent belt to communicate his status as a god.[130]

Some Chimú representations of the motif are very similar to those decorating Lambayeque works, such as a scene on either side of a double-spout vessel (Figure 30). It is possible that this object was created after the Lambayeque were conquered and incorporated into the Chimú Empire, as Lambayeque artisans introduced their visual traditions to the production of Chimú wares. The bicephalic serpent arch is also worn as a headdress, as in this whistling vessel (Figure 31) where a molded anthropomorphic figure sits with crossed legs. He wears a headdress designed like a cob of corn, with the bicephalic serpent atop it. The decoration of a ceramic vessel (Figure 32) may represent the closest analogy to the composition of the reliefs. On this pot, the serpent frames a frontal human divinity and multiple dragons depicted in profile. Sea creatures appear above the arch, while land and sky creatures appear below. Large dragon-like creatures flank the scene, and multiple fox heads emerge as crests from their bodies.

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[129] Bruhns, "The Moon Animal," 32.
[130] Benson, *Worlds of the Moche,* 62.

Figure 28: Scepter. Recuay. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML100981.

Figure 29: Pitcher. Huari. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML031922.

Figure 30: Double Spout Bottle. Chimú. Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML023234.

Figure 31: Whistling Vessel. Chimú. Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML021706.

Figure 32: Clay Pot. Chimú. Middle Horizon or Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Berlin State Museums, Ethnological Museum / Sylvie Voláková. VA 4721.

Horizontal Panel Motif - Paired Dragons

In the friezes at Huaca del Dragón, paired dragons appear centrally beneath the bicephalic serpent motif. Additional, smaller dragons appear in the upper corners and mimic the appearance of the larger motif. Because of their visual similarities, the two types of dragon motifs will be considered together in this analysis. The bodies of these motifs are serpent-like, the heads are reminiscent of canines, the noses curl outward, and crests emerge from the head. At least one of the dragons in the center is typically shown with a second head at the end of its tail, as is the case for one of the corner dragons. In some instances, one central dragon has a finned tail. The serpentine body with a single claw diverges from the majority of similar motifs from works by the Chimú and other Andean groups; the creature is typically depicted as either a quadruped or a serpent rather than a medium between the two. Regarding similar representations of serpents, a Huari jar (Figure 33) is decorated with a pair of single-headed serpents and a canteen (Figure 34) depicts two bicephalic serpents. A common motif decorating Moche ceramics is a single-headed serpent with canine features (Figures 35b and 36b) which often appears alongside a quadruped that has an extra head at the end of its tail, like that in the façade of the Old Temple at Huaca de la Luna.

In considering quadruped similarities for the paired dragon motifs at Huaca del Dragón, the Recuay feline motif is comparable for its claws, circular eye, and large jaws with pointed teeth. This motif originated in the first century BCE and was continued and adapted in Andean iconography for centuries afterward. The feline has a crest emerging from its head, which may be a signifier of supernatural status that originates in Recuay representations of animals.[131] The

[131] Bruhns, "The Moon Animal," 29.

Figure 33: Face Neck Jar. Huari. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML019095.

Figure 34: Canteen with Representations of Animals. Huari. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML019715.

Figures 35a and 35b: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003649.

Figures 36a and 36b: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003652.

motif is often painted in pairs on ceramics (Figure 37). The feline motif appears in Huari works as well and is located beneath a serrated bicephalic serpent on a ceramic bottle (Figure 38). The Recuay feline motif was adopted by coastal societies and adaptations of the motif are evident in works from the beginning of the Moche cultural tradition.[132] On a nose ornament from Loma Negra (Figure 39), each feline has an extra head at the end of its tail and holds a trophy head in its claws. Repeated stylized versions of these animals appear on another nose ornament (Figure 40).

A silver nose ornament (Figure 41) presents what may be a pair of Moon Animals,[133] which are crested dragon-like quadrupeds.[134] Like the Recuay feline motif, the form of a Moon Animal appears as a composite creature that blends the features of a fox, dog, and serpent.[135] The addition of lunar or astral symbols distinguishes the motif from other composite zoomorphic images. The first representations of the motif emerged in Moche III and are typically shown either surrounded by stars or standing within a crescent moon. The silver nose ornament portrays the felines within a crescent that is defined by a double-headed serpent with circles (that are interpretable as stars) along its body -- perhaps as a variation of the usual motif, which is visible in Figure 42 where paired Moon Animals rest atop a crescent moon. Many sources that write of the friezes at Huaca del Dragón compare the dragon images to Moon Animals for their composite zoomorphic form and appearance in pairs.

The astral association of this motif is not always established in Chimú depictions, but the addition of a crested headdress is often made to characterize the creature as supernatural. In some

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[132] Bruhns, "The Moon Animal," 35.
[133] Also called the Crested Animal, Lunar Dog, or Moon Monster.
[134] Bruhns, "The Moon Animal," 21.
[135] Benson, *The Worlds of the Moche,* 62.

Figure 37: Double Body Bottle. Santa-Recuay. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML031713.

Figure 38: Pitcher. Northern Huari. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML025174.

Figure 39: Nose Ornament. Moche. 6th-7th century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 1979.206.1239.

Figure 40: Nose Ornament. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML100752.

Figure 41: Nose Ornament. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. El Brujo Archaeological Complex, La Libertad, Peru. EBBME00000-10.

Figure 42: Nose Ornament. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. El Brujo Archaeological Complex, La Libertad, Peru. EBBME00000-110.

instances, the dragon-like quadruped holds a human figure (Figures 43 and 44). The dragon appears repeatedly on a silver libation bowl (Figure 45), where it forms the central image and alternates with divine human figures. On one Lambayeque vessel (Figure 46), the dragon is surrounded by waves and circles and sits on a serpent shaped like a crescent moon, possibly representing a vivified boat.

Horizontal Panel Motif - Bicephalic Knife

The motif of the *tumi* knife supported between the heads of a bicephalic serpent may be unique to Huaca del Dragón, as no similar representations of the image have been found. Materiality is communicated through the flat "pedestal" at the bottom of the serpent and the rectangular object beneath it -- suggesting both inanimacy and animacy for the motif. *Tumis* are ceremonial knives with a semicircular blade. They were found in the graves of high-status burials on the North Coast and were used to cut the throats of sacrificial victims. The representation of the knife in the frieze decoration likely relates to the burials that occurred at Huaca del Dragón, and its appearance in the relief imagery implies an element of sacrifice. Representations of crested, double-headed serpents that arch upward are considerably common in and around the North Coast. A Huari vessel (Figure 47) is painted with a canine-headed bicephalic serpent with feather-like appendages. Additionally, a Moche stirrup spout bottle (Figure 48) is suggestive of a connection between serpents and sacrifice. The vessel presents a molded deity who holds a *tumi* above a decapitated body, and the sides of the vessel are decorated with crested serpent heads.

Figure 43: Ear Ornament. Chimú. Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML100427.

Figure 44: Canteen. Chimú. Late Intermediate Period. Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú, Lima. 0000003704.

Figure 45: Libation Bowl. Chimú. 1350-1470 CE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 1987.394.335.

Figure 46: Double Body Bottle. Lambayeque. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML013159.

Figure 47: Flask of Brown Ware with Lugs. Coastal Huari. Early Intermediate Period or Middle Horizon. Gift of Alfred M. Tozzer, Philip A. Means, Thomas Barbour, and Anonymous Donor, 1932. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 32-30-30/84.

Figure 48: Stirrup-Spout Bottle with Decapitation Scene. Moche. 200-500 CE. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 1987.394.630.

Horizontal Panel Motif - Anthropomorphic Figures

In the relief decoration at Huaca del Dragón, the anthropomorphic figures are clasped in the jaws of the arching bicephalic serpent. These figures are best described as anthropomorphic or humanoid because of the variations of their appearance throughout the relief decoration; in some instances, they have a human head and a pointed cap -- while in others they appear more bird-like and wear a rounded cap.[136] Humans engage with dragons in Chimú works, such as the libation bowl (Figure 45) where dragons alternate with anthropomorphic deities. On a Tiahuanaco ceramic jar (Figure 49), one head of a bicephalic serpent is shown eating a man. Strong resemblances to the anthropomorphic figures are found in Moche works, such as a nose ornament (Figure 50) from Huaca Cao Viejo that depicts two warriors holding staffs.

Another example of similar anthropomorphic motifs occurs in the Moche metal disk (Figure 22) from Loma Negra, where the humans are held in the bicephalic serpent's mouth by their caps. There is a trailing element from the head of these figures that runs down the back; the identical inlay to the "cap" indicates that these humans are being grasped by their hair. This is comparable to the curl that emerges from the back of the anthropomorphic figures' heads at Huaca del Dragón -- an aspect that opens the analysis to a discussion of trophy heads in Moche iconography, which are commonly seized by the hair. A human trophy head is held in this way by an anthropomorphic dragon in multiple Moche works (Figures 36a and 51), and sometimes appears as a full human who is about to be sacrificed by the dragon (Figure 52). The stylistic similarities to images of trophy heads and humans who are about to be sacrificed imply that the anthropomorphic motifs at Huaca del Dragón are victims of the supernatural bicephalic dragon.

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[136] As in panel 16 of the west wall (Schaedel, *The Huaca El Dragón*, plate 16a).

Figure 49: Ceramic Jar. Tiahuanaco. Middle Horizon. Courtesy of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology and the Regents of the University of California. 4-2540.

Figure 50: Nose Ornament. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. El Brujo Archaeological Complex, La Libertad, Peru. EBBME00000-108.

Figure 51: Pendant. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. El Brujo Archaeological Complex, La Libertad, Peru. EBBME00000-63.

Figure 52: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003441.

The identification of these figures as fishermen based on the similar motifs at Huaca de la Luna is compelling. A comparable image is found on a Chimú ear ornament (Figure 53) where the extremities of a supernatural figure end with fish. At Huaca del Dragón, the ambiguity of the object's form prompts a consideration of other possibilities. Each object in the relief typically has one straight end, like the hilt of a sword, and one end consisting of spiked tiers. This is similar to an object located beneath a bicephalic dragon on a Recuay bowl (Figure 54), the rim of which is decorated with repeated human heads. Colorful, stacked triangles also appear beneath the outstretched hands of a supernatural figure on a Chimú textile (Figure 55), who stands above a row of waves and is flanked by stylized seabirds. While identifications for these motifs are undetermined, these representations suggest an affiliation with water and the supernatural.

Vertical Panel Motif - Upward-Facing Zoomorphic Creature

The upward-facing zoomorphic motif usually occupies the uppermost area of the vertical panel at Huaca del Dragón. This composite creature has a fox-serpent head, a triangular body, an extended "fin," and two curling "tentacles." A close source of visual comparison for this motif overall is the Moche demon fish -- a crested, canine-headed fish with anthropomorphic limbs. In many painted representations on ceramic vessels, the fish is portrayed with two triangular fins on either side of its body (Figures 56 and 57). Based on these representations of the demon fish, it is reasonable to suggest that the body of this particular zoomorphic motif at Huaca del Dragón is influenced by the appearance of the Moche demon fish, and is intended to appear as a canine-headed fish with fins shaped like right triangles and a split tail that curls in either direction. It is possible that the fins are not differentiated from the body in the sculptural relief, resulting in its triangular appearance. Another notable aspect of each Moche vessel is that the demon fish

Figure 53: Ear Ornament. Chimú. Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML101527.

Figure 54: Bowl. Santa-Recuay. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML029589.

Figure 55: Tapestry Fragment with Plumed Figure. Chimú. 12th-15th century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 28.64.28.

Figure 56: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003666.

Figure 57: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003693.

Figure 58: Ceramic Bottle with Sculptural Side. Moche. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003121.

carries a *tumi* in its human hand. Though the upward-facing zoomorphic motif at Huaca del Dragón does not carry a *tumi*, the image (through its potential stylistic predecessor) may be conceptually correlated with the notion of sacrifice that is similarly evoked in other motifs in the frieze decoration.

Schaedel likens the upward-facing zoomorphic motif to a dolphin,[137] and Helsley compares it to Recuay and Moche representations of manta rays for the form of the body and the two curling tentacles.[138] Many Moche and Chimú ceramics (Figure 58) typically depict manta rays with one long tail rather than two and are more naturalistic in their representation. However, a Tiahuanaco ceramic bowl (Figure 59) depicts a stylized manta ray with a double tail. The barbels of catfish are depicted in a similar manner on a Moche jar (Figure 60) and an ear ornament made of bone (Figure 61). Based on the prevalence of stylized manta rays and catfish in Moche works, this stylistic component may be a borrowed feature that intends to help the motif "read" as a marine animal at Huaca del Dragón.

Vertical Panel Motif - Downward-Facing Zoomorphic Creature

The downward-facing zoomorphic creature at Huaca del Dragón is another example of a composite being, and similar features are found in a variety of North Coastal objects. Schaedel compares this motif to a sea cow,[139] while Helsley likens it to Moche representations of sea lions and the demon fish.[140] Similarities are found in ceramic Moche sea lion vessels (Figures 62 and 63), especially for the orientation to the side with bent legs. Moche dragons (Figure 64) are also

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[137] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 410.
[138] Helsley, "The Friezes," 91.
[139] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 411.
[140] Helsley, "The Friezes," 91.

Figure 59: Plate or Bowl. Tiahuanaco. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML039457.

Figure 60: Red and White Florero with Catfish. Moche. Early Intermediate Period. Gift of Alfred M. Tozzer and Donald Scott, 1946. Courtesy of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, 46-77-30/4933.

Figure 61: Ear Ornament. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML500017.

Figure 62: Sculpted Bowl. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML008422.

Figure 63: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003135.

Figure 64: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003449.

comparable for their fox-serpent heads and twisted bodies. The motif at Huaca del Dragón has three-toed feet that more closely align with those of the anthropomorphic figures than zoomorphic motifs. A painted vessel (Figure 65) shows an anthropomorphic dragon in a similar position to the motif at Huaca del Dragón, with a *tumi* in hand. On ceramic Chimú vessels, a repeated motif is a combat scene between an anthropomorphic dragon and an upright fish (Figure 66). The fish throttles a double-headed serpent belt that is held by the dragon. The fish also has two triangular fins on either side of its body, possibly in correlation with the upward-facing zoomorphic motif. This scene may relate to the appearance of the two creatures together on the vertical relief panel.

Vertical Panel Motif - Bicephalic Serpent

The curving, bicephalic serpent motif in the vertical panels of Huaca del Dragón is commonly found in the art of the North Coast and its surrounding areas. Painted Huari vessels (Figure 67) commonly depict an S-shaped bicephalic serpent with dots along the body. In a Moche stirrup spout vessel (Figure 68), the snake bends in a manner similar to the relief imagery. The bicephalic serpent frames the bottom of a divine or elite human head on a Chimú ear ornament (Figure 69), suggesting that it is incorporated as a symbol of status. The entire scene is surrounded by a circular register of waves, which ideologically connects it to the ocean. On a metal ornament (Figure 70), the canine heads twist to face each other in a representation similar to the Huari vessel, which indicates the pervasiveness of the image in the highlands and on the coast.

Figure 65: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML003444.

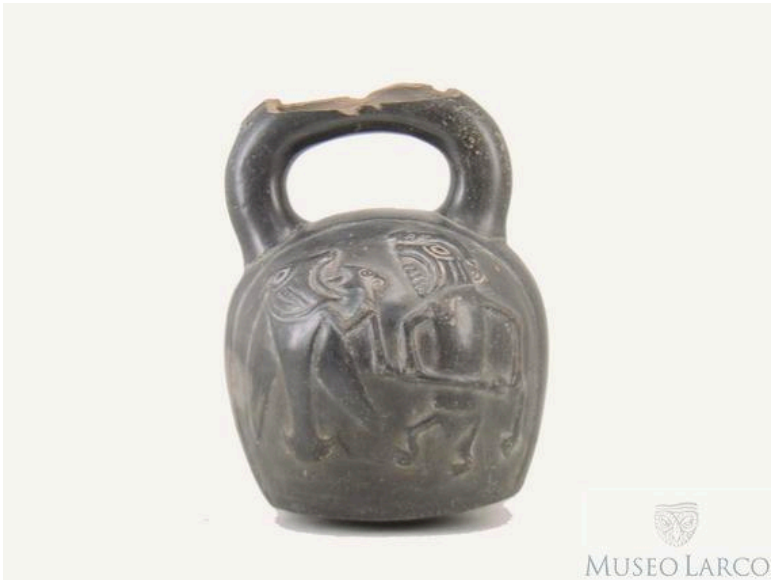

Figure 66: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Chimú Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML021624.

Figure 67: Pitcher with Two-Headed Snakes. Huari. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML018855.

Figure 68: Stirrup Spout Bottle. Mochica. Early Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML001708.

Figure 69: Circular Ear Ornament. Chimú. Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML101421.

Figure 70: Bodily Ornament. Chimú. Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML101591.

At Huaca del Dragón, this motif features a three-pronged object beneath the serpent's body. Schaedel identifies this element as a large claw.[141] If it is a claw, its placement is awkward and it lacks an adjoining arm that the other clawed motifs possess. The object is also distinguished from the body of the serpent. Instead of a claw, the form of this visual element strongly resembles Chimú depictions of *spondylus* shells. The form is analogous to those decorating the bodies of a few wooden figures excavated at the site. A similar representation is also visible on a Lambayeque ceremonial cup (Figure 71) depicting a scene of *spondylus* collection. In the reliefs at Huaca del Dragón, the shell may be oriented upside-down to conform to the curving body of the bicephalic serpent. This echoes the orientation of the shells in sculptural reliefs at Chan Chan, especially within the *Los Buceadores* relief of Xllangchic (formerly ciudadela Uhle) where the shells are placed along the winding cords attached to divers.

Framing Panel Motif

The sole framing panel motif depicts an anthropomorphic figure that is repeated in a procession. The mouth of each figure curls outward, and they wear what may be a feathered headdress and waistband or, alternatively, a head crest and tail. Based on their pointed caps and the weapons held vertically before them, these figures appear to be warriors. Helmets are often adorned with crests or feathers in Moche artworks that depict warrior clothing.[142] The trailing waistband may be a back flap, a type of armor suspended from the waist. The weapon held by the framing panel motif is visually similar to the ax wielded by a Huari dragon warrior figurine (Figure 72) who stands behind a severed head, associating the object with decapitation. At Huaca

[141] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 411.
[142] Quilter, "Art and Moche," 217.

Figure 71: Ceremonial Cup. Lambayeque. Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML100755.

Figure 72: Sculptural Figurine. Huari. Middle Horizon. Image courtesy of Museo Larco – Lima, Perú. ML100262.

Figure 73: Tapestry Fragment with Plumed Figure. Lambayeque. 9th-13th century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 28.64.18.

del Dragón, these weapons are plumed on top like those found in either hand of a deity on a Lambayeque textile (Figure 73), suggesting its usage by supernatural figures. The upper entrance of Huaca del Dragón was originally flanked by a panel of prostrate figures with rope around their necks and claws above their bodies.[143] These figures are the same type of being as the processional warriors, suggesting that this motif was used to alternately depict warriors and prisoners at Huaca del Dragón.

[143] Schaedel, "The Huaca El Dragón," 405.

Interpretations of the Reliefs

An important concept to preface the interpretations that follow is the idea of art as relational in the pre-Hispanic Andean world. Iconography functioned as a tool for societies to express ideologies in a compressed way, serving as a shorthand that communicates a core meaning rather than describing scenes or images in detail.[144] In pre-Hispanic Andean art, objects and figures can be viewed as actors that are useful in piecing together the worldviews of the society in which they were made.[145] Even when subject matter appears to be purely naturalistic, works can be understood as probably possessing a "symbolic, ritual, and/or mythic significance."[146] In architectural relief art, the communicative function of Andean iconography closely relates to the connotations of the space itself. An example of this is the north facade of the Old Temple at Huaca de la Luna, where the lowest registers of the facade depict humans and the highest friezes portray supernatural monsters and divinities. This placement is likely not a statement regarding a "low" hierarchical position that humans occupy in the universe compared to supernatural forces. Instead, the human images are located nearest the lived spaces of actual human presence. The mural program therefore communicates the ideal use of the space by the living, which may have been in an effort to "invoke or appease… the powerful beings above."[147] In this way, art in the Andes relates to the lived experiences of the people who created and used objects and architectural spaces and reflects the ideologies they possessed.

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[144] Benson, "Iconography Meets Archaeology," 4-6.
[145] Jeffrey Quilter, "The Narrative Approach to Moche Iconography," in *Latin American Antiquity* 8 no. 2 (June 1997), 113.
[146] Benson, "Iconography Meets Archaeology," 1.
[147] Trever, *Image Encounters*, 84.

With an understanding of the relational aspect of pre-Hispanic Andean art, this section explores ideological concepts that relate to the imagery at Huaca del Dragón. While the precise meaning of the relief decoration at the site cannot be ascertained, broad concepts can be connected to the frieze imagery in order to illuminate its possible conceptual motivations as well as what the relief imagery may have meant to its makers and intended audience. This discussion introduces interpretations of the motifs as related to water, natural phenomena, and rulership. The replication of the imagery throughout the site is also investigated as a device for achieving visual potency.

Serpents as Andean Symbols of Water

A concept that underlies the interpretations that follow is the connection between serpents and water in Andean cosmology. This identification is illustrated by research on the modern belief systems of Quechua-speaking communities as well as the ethnohistoric records that explain Inca astronomy, which both can be utilized in reconstructing the belief systems of pre-Hispanic Andean civilizations.[148] The relation of serpents and water is rooted in ethological observations. Snakes represent regeneration for the ability to shed their skin, and serve as symbols of the "life-giving energy of the earth that produces new growth."[149] Additionally, the bodily form of a serpent is compared to a river and is often used to depict flowing water in Andean art. Rivers are significant for their integral role in the continuous cosmic cycle of water, which is understood as flowing through terrestrial rivers, off the edge of the earth, and into the

[148] Gary Urton, *At the Crossroads of the Earth and the Sky: An Andean Cosmology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 4.
[149] Elizabeth Benson, *Birds and Beasts of Ancient Latin America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 108.

cosmos where it is carried by the Milky Way before it returns to the earth as rain.[150] Water is also believed to be the dwelling place of the ancestors and the source of the vital life force, which is called *camay*. A relationship is therefore established between serpents, the circulation of water, and the vital life force.

Some of the borrowed motifs at Huaca del Dragón are adapted to specifically relate to a marine environment. This includes the arching bicephalic serpent motif, which features wave-like volutes along its upper extreme where most representations depict a repeating triangular pattern (one example is Figure 19). Another example is the central paired dragon with a finned tail, while the sources of comparison presented feature a serpentine (Figure 36b) or feline (Figure 37) tail. Likewise, the "tentacles" of the upward-facing zoomorphic motif suggest that the composite animal lives in water for its similarity to images of catfish and manta rays (Figures 59, 60, and 61), and the inclusion of the *spondylus* shell in the vertical panel further relates the imagery to the ocean. These visual elements indicate that the communication of marine themes through the relief decoration was intentional and significant to the artists and patrons of the site.

Rainbow Serpents in Andean Cosmology

There are two terms commonly used to refer to snakes in Quechua: *mach'ácuay* and *amaru*. In modern Quechua-speaking communities, rainbows are thought of as giant two-headed serpents called *amarus*.[151] These serpents rise out of subterranean springs when it begins to rain and arch through the sky before burying one head in another spring.[152] This correlates with a

[150] Urton, *At the Crossroads*, 172.
[151] Ibid., 89.
[152] Ibid., 88.

constellation recognized in Quechua meteorology, the Serpent (*Mach'ácuay*). There are two types of constellations in this system of astronomy: "starry" constellations, in which the stars themselves form the constellation; and "dark cloud" constellations, which consist of dark areas that are outlined by stars along the center of the Milky Way.[153] The *Mach'ácuay* is a dark cloud constellation that takes the form of a zig-zag line and appears headfirst in the sky. Like the other dark cloud constellations, it is visible during the rainy season and is believed to dwell below ground during the dry season.[154] The appearance of these two celestial serpents parallels the behavior of terrestrial snakes in the Andes, which emerge from their subterranean hibernation at the beginning of the rainy season. They are both also inherently linked to water for reasons that extend beyond their conceptualization as serpents. For the *amaru*, this is seen in its appearance following rain and its emergence from (and re-emergence into) springs. For the *Mach'ácuay* constellation, this connection is rooted in its location within the Milky Way, which is thought of as the river of the night sky.

For centuries, the river has been venerated by Andeans for the belief that it returns the life force of all that it carries to the sea, which is the origin of water.[155] Astronomical serpents represent the circulation of the vital life force that animates and sustains the Andean world, which flows in both terrestrial and heavenly rivers. For its potential to rid someone of their *camay*, the river was feared -- and this association existed for rainbows and the Milky Way as the

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[153] Mary Strong, *Art, Nature, and Religion in the Central Andes: Themes and Variations from Prehistory to Present* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), 75.
[154] Gary Urton, "Animals and Astronomy in the Quechua Universe." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 125, no. 2 (1981), 111.
[155] Anne Marie Hocquenghem, "Sacrifices and Ceremonial Calendars in Societies of the Central Andes. A Reconsideration," in *The Art and Archaeology of the Moche: An Andean Society of the Peruvian North Coast*, eds. Steve Bourget and Kimberly L. Jones (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 30.

diurnal and nocturnal celestial rivers.[156] Pre-Hispanic Andean populations were terrified of the rainbow for the belief that it could enter a person's body and bring them misfortune or disease, and the natural phenomenon was therefore considered catastrophic.[157] The way in which these natural phenomena were respected for their supportive, life-giving elements while also feared illustrates the complex duality of the Andean perception of the natural world. It also leads some scholars to conclude that in Andean systems of cosmology, meteorological phenomena reflect the presence of powerful natural forces that are associated with water -- the source of fertility.[158] Additionally, objects reviewed in this project illustrate the utilization of bicephalic serpents as skybands that "mark off the space between two worlds," representing either the Milky Way or the separation between the earth and the sky.[159] This is seen in Figures 21a and 21b, where the Presentation Theme may be one of the clearest visual scenes for non-Andean audiences to understand the concept of bicephalic snakes functioning as indicators of sacred space and metaphors for the cosmos. Some scholars have therefore interpreted Andean images of double-headed serpents or dragons as celestial symbols that are related to "rainbows, water, the Milky Way, and the yearly cycles of fertility."[160]

Rainbow serpents are found in the mythologies of several pre-Hispanic Andean civilizations. The name Amaru is also applied to a Peruvian rainbow divinity who appears in a serpentine form, often with a feline head.[161] The Moche recognized a double-headed mythic boa

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[156] Ibid.
[157] María del Carmen García Escudero, "El Arco Iris en la Cosmovisión Prehispánica Centroandina," *Gazeta de Antropología* 23, 15 (2007).
[158] Urton, *At the Crossroads*, 93.
[159] Benson, *Birds and Beasts,* 106.
[160] John B. Carlson, "The Double-Headed Dragon and the Sky: A Pervasive Cosmological Symbol," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 385, no. 1 (1982), 159.
[161] Strong, *Art, Nature, and Religion*, 90.

that was the predecessor of the rainbow god *Cuichu* who was venerated by the Inca.[162] In the Amazon basin, the Arecuna and Arawak recognize Keyemen, who personifies the rainbow in the form of a giant water-snake.[163] There is a Vilela myth that involves a human-turned-monstrous snake who becomes a rainbow upon his death.[164] One myth that comes from the Ucayali region of Peru describes two supernatural snakes that live underground, in the *uku pacha* or world below. The recounted version tells of a large single-headed snake that is associated with the river, who is called Yacu Mama and is the mother of water. This snake is accompanied by a two-headed serpent called Sacha Mama, who is associated with vegetation and is the mother of the mountain. The two snakes ascend to the sky, where Yacu Mama becomes lightning and Sacha Mama becomes a rainbow. The indigenous peoples of this region ask Yacu Mama for rain, and Sacha Mama for the fertilization of the earth.[165] Mythical beings like these contribute to scholarly interpretations of Andean bicephalic serpent imagery as distinctly related to water and agrarian cults.[166]

Commemoration of an El Niño-Southern Oscillation Event

Among the most compelling arguments for the inspiration underlying the relief decoration at Huaca del Dragón are the connections made between the imagery and El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events. ENSO events are environmental upheavals caused by wind

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[162] Hocquenghem, "Sacrifices and Ceremonial Calendars," 30.
[163] Peter G. Roe, *The Cosmic Zygote: Cosmology in the Amazon Basin* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 183.
[164] Ibid., 182.
[165] Anne Marie Hocquenghem, "Los Colmillos y las Serpientes: la Autoridad Absoluta de los Ancestros," in *Cosmos, Hombre y Sacralidad. Cuadernos de Antropología* 2, 2nd ed., eds. Marco V. Rueda and Segundo E. Moreno (Quito: Abya Yala, 1997), 247.
[166] Uceda, "The Priests," 155.

shifts that cause the normally cold currents of the central and eastern areas of the Pacific Ocean to grow unusually warm. This climatological change brings torrential rainfall and can cause flooding, erosion, drought, destruction to irrigation systems, disruption to the availability of marine resources, famine, and epidemic. ENSO events are believed to have influenced the rise and downfall of several civilizations. The unpredictability of ENSO events and their catastrophic results constitute "one of the many ways in which the Andean environment challenges human existence… lending a sense of tenuousness and a concomitant desire for stable natural fertility."[167]

Between Phase IV and V of Moche occupation,[168] there was an abrupt increase in the production of marine iconography. This is evidenced by the elevated amount of "marine-related drawings, the introduction of marine elements into previously nonmarine themes, the expanded roles of the marine deities, and new marine deities" in Phase V artworks.[169] The sudden prevalence of marine imagery may have been a direct response to the destruction wrought by climatological disruption.[170] This claim is supported by corresponding archaeological evidence that indicates severe flooding on the North Coast at the time, as well as the partial attribution of the decline of the Moche to the strong El Niño events that occurred between 450-750 CE.[171] This period of intense weather saw the reorientation of the role of the ocean, which gained significance in Moche religion and mythology as sea deities and their supplication gained

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[167] Stone, *Art of the Andes*, 12.
[168] Phase V is the final stage of Moche occupation.
[169] Donna McClelland, "A Maritime Passage from Moche to Chimu," in *The Northern Dynasties: Kingship and Statecraft in Chimor*, eds. by Michael E. Moseley and Alana Cordy-Collins (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990), 102.
[170] Ibid., 92.
[171] Benson, *The Worlds of the Moche*, 2.

prominence.[172] The shift to maritime iconography by the Moche was then continued in the visual traditions of the Chimú.

A link between marine imagery in pre-Hispanic Andean artwork and ENSO events is indeterminate. However, a connection between images of bicephalic serpents and rain may be visualized in scenes where circles -- which are interpreted as either stars or raindrops[173] -- surround the serpent (Figures 18, 25, and 29) or decorate the serpent's body (Figures 22, 23, and 24). The production of visual and material culture that projects a sense of orderliness may have functioned to counteract the chaotic tendencies of the natural world.[174] In this vein, some scholars suggest that marine images operated as a symbol of abundance which would have been of a heightened interest for pre-Hispanic indigenous communities during the upheaval of El Niño periods. Marine themes in the reliefs at Chan Chan may have been a method of supplicating and appeasing ocean deities -- especially the god who represented the sea itself, Ni.[175] The depiction of marine abundance may have served as a message of stability.[176]

On the other hand, the reliefs decorating Huaca del Dragón can be interpreted as explicitly communicating destruction and disorder. Hugo Navarro claims that the visual elements are symbols of *amaru* and rain-related devastation.[177] Hocquenghem writes that "every so often, the *amaru* emerges with extraordinary violence" and "destroys everything in its path, thereby recording in the landscape the sign of its passage."[178] The appearance of the *amaru* announced

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[172] McClelland, "A Maritime Passage," 103.
[173] Uceda, "The Priests," 155.
[174] Stone, *Art of the Andes*, 12.
[175] Pillsbury, "The Sculpted Friezes," 284.
[176] Pillsbury, "Reading Art Without Writing," 84.
[177] Navarro Santander, "Tacaynamo: un Sitio Chimú," 221.
[178] Hocquenghem, "Sacrifices and Ceremonial Calendars," 35.

ancestral wrath which was "occasioned by lack of respect for ritual obligations," for which the consequences are "natural and social disasters."[179] This illustrates the duality of supernatural serpents in Andean worldview as symbols of life-giving energy and, conversely, aggressive and dangerous beings.

Following this identification of the relief imagery at Huaca del Dragón as violent, the position of the anthropomorphic figures in the jaws of the bicephalic dragon can be interpreted as a sacrifice. This representation is not unique to Huaca del Dragón, as it is visible in Figures 22 and 49 which are of Moche and Tiahuanaco origin, respectively. Sacrifice in the Andes can be understood "as an act of submission and homage, which humans perform to obtain favors from or divert the wrath of powerful immortals."[180] The notion of a sculptural sacrifice in the friezes at Huaca del Dragón is contoured by the customs and depictions of sacrifice in other Andean groups. For example, at Huaca de la Luna, archaeological evidence indicates that the sacrificial victims in Plaza 3a were not enemies or outsiders, but Moche warriors who had participated in ritual combat before their sacrifice. Sediment layers of the plaza imply that the victims fell in thick mud, likely following a strong El Niño event. Based on this evidence, scholars believe the human sacrifice was "intended to calm the wrath of those who animated and sustained the Moche world," who manifested as torrential, destructive rains.[181]

Paramount to the discussion of sacrifice at Huaca del Dragón, however, are the clay effigies of naked male prisoners that were found at Huaca de la Luna. These effigies had been smashed and were discovered alongside the skeletal remains of the human victims. The clay

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[179] Ibid., 35-37.
[180] Ibid., 24.
[181] Ibid., 40.

bodies were subjected to the same violence and sacrifice as the living, likely during a period of catastrophic flooding from El Niño.[182] The tradition of human sculptures operating as surrogates for the living was passed from the Moche to the Chimú, and is evidenced in part through the wooden figures recovered from Huaca del Dragón and Huaca Tacaynamo. Several of the figures are identifiable as human prisoners for their nudity and the positioning of the limbs as though they are bound; one figure was found with rope still around the neck and ankles. Most of the prisoner effigies were mutilated, either with limbs broken off or with red-painted holes penetrating the chest. Jackson argues that these figures directly relate to the socially-prescribed ritual activities that occurred at the two huacas, which would have included the consecration of religious and funerary ceremonies through the sacrifice of prisoners.[183] Just as the wooden figures that were buried with the deceased at the site reenact interment rituals, the sculptural reliefs can be interpreted as depictions of a perpetual human sacrifice to the divinities who govern the natural world, from whom the creators of the huaca sought benevolence.

The role of the bicephalic dragon as a cosmic divinity in the reliefs is compounded by the motifs of other zoomorphic creatures. If these motifs are intended to be mythical figures, they further establish the setting as the realm of the supernatural. If they are meant to depict marine life, the images relate the friezes to the ocean, which would be of increased importance during ENSO events. The possibilities are not mutually exclusive -- especially considering the belief of the ocean's being the realm of the ancestors and therefore otherworldly forces. Because of that particular association, a distinction between the ocean and supernatural realm may not have existed for the Chimú artists, patrons, and audiences at Huaca del Dragón. The relief

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[182] Trever, *Image Encounters*, 59.
[183] Jackson, "The Chimú Sculptures," 298.

composition incorporates motifs that are understood as belonging to the sea, land, or sky, and positions them alongside and interacting with one another. This may communicate the blending between realms that would have been perceived during a period of climatological upheaval.

Chimú Animal Imagery and Divine Rulership

The system of divine kingship utilized in Chimú society identifies "the ruling elite with the supernatural" in order to legitimize a system of inherent inequality.[184] Associations with the divine may have been a method for Chimor kings to establish themselves as mediators or influencers of the natural environment. One way in which the concept of divine kingship is illustrated is through the seabird reliefs at Chan Chan. In many representations of seabirds that are produced by Chimú artists, the birds wear the crescent-shaped headdresses associated with Chimor nobility (Figure 74). Additionally, seabirds often appear riding imperial litters in Chimú textiles.[185] Some works depict the transformation from a seabird to a Chimor king and vice versa (Figure 75). The veneration of seabirds that is communicated through the art and architecture of the Chimú is due in part to their close association with agricultural fertility in the Chimú religion. This is because of the precision and proficiency of seabirds when fishing, as well as their production of guano which was used by the ancient farmers of coastal valleys as fertilizer.

Another contributing factor for the comparison of seabirds with kings is that the Chimú associated the sea with the world of the ancestors, and the ability of seabirds to easily dive between worlds led to their being considered a nexus between the physical and spiritual worlds.

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[184] Pillsbury, "The Sculpted Friezes," 287.
[185] Elizabeth P. Benson, "Art, Agriculture, Warfare and the Guano Islands," in *Andean Art: Visual Expression and Its Relation to Andean Beliefs and Values*, ed. Penny Dransart (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995), 249.

Figure 74: Bird. Chimú. Late Intermediate Period. Image courtesy of the Princeton University Art Museum. Y1968-50.

Figure 75: Band Fragments. Chimú. 12th-15th century. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. 28.171.8.

Figure 76: Seabird Friezes at Chan Chan. Photo by Author.

Just as the Chimor king was viewed as the provider of abundance for his people, and the nexus of worldly and supernatural control, so too was the seabird.[186] The Chimú artisans at Chan Chan sculpted repeating patterns of seabirds (Figure 76) as a motif or trope that contemporary visitors of the palace complex would have understood as a symbol of the power of their king. This is seen in the Burr Frieze at Chan Chan, as well as the walls of the *audiencias* which are U-shaped structures that functioned as administrative spaces for the Chimú elite. In friezes where seabirds lack direct references to kingship, it may be assumed that the intended audience understands the comparison of a seabird to the king -- and that the artisans (under the instruction of the Chimor elite) created a more simple and streamlined image of the seabirds to decorate the space.

The ideological, political, and iconographic significance of seabirds illustrates the utilization of animal imagery "as the embodiment of imperial power" by Chimú artists, who largely rejected the anthropomorphic imagery favored by the Moche.[187] The message of divine rulership was visually communicated at Chan Chan through marine imagery and representations of animals capable of traversing the land, sea, and sky. With an understanding of the significance of these visual elements depicted at the heart of the Chimú empire, it is likely that the theme was echoed in the Chimú huacas constructed nearest the capital city as well. The depiction of marine imagery at the peripheral huacas may have served as a testament to the power possessed by the high-status persons who were interred at the structures who, like the Chimor king, may have been believed to influence the natural environment and provide the people with abundance. In comparison to the sculptural reliefs at Chan Chan, the motifs at Huaca del Dragón are not as

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[186] Joanne Pillsbury, "The Thorny Oyster and the Origins of Empire: Implications of Recently Uncovered Spondylus Imagery from Chan Chan, Peru," *Latin American Antiquity* 7, no. 4 (1996), 335.
[187] Pillsbury, "The Sculpted Friezes," 274.

readily perceived as marine in nature for modern viewers. However, Chimú audiences likely understood the dragon and rainbow imagery at Huaca del Dragón as distinctly related to water. Additionally, serpentine and canine features were used by the Moche to represent imperial authority and immortal power, and are likely to have held the same significance for the Chimú.[188] The motif of the bicephalic dragon can be interpreted as a representation of supernatural cosmic forces, as well as the dually destructive and life-giving powers of the natural world. The combination of these visual elements may communicate the divine legitimacy and authority of the high-status persons who were buried at the site.

The Aesthetics of Repetition in Sculptural Relief

At Huaca del Dragón, the walls are completely covered with repeated panels of sculptural relief. Some scholars suggest that in pre-Hispanic Andean built environments with highly repetitive decoration, the meaning and impact of the imagery derives from its repetition rather than from the individual motifs themselves. An example of this is the frieze decoration at Chan Chan, which can be described as wallpaper-like for the vast expanses of wall space that are covered with repetitive patterns.[189] The friezes at Chan Chan are dominated by stylized seabirds, fish, crustaceans, and mollusks, and relate to the idea of material abundance through their imagery of plentiful marine life. When humans appear in the decoration, they are not lent prominence through scale or central placement. The individual motifs can be understood as less important than the overall wallpaper-like effect of the friezes. While prominence is clearly lent to the arching bicephalic serpent at Huaca del Dragón, the repetition of the imagery throughout the

[188] Hocquenghem, "Sacrifices and Ceremonial Calendars," 30.
[189] Pillsbury, "Reading Art Without Writing," 82-83.

space can be seen as turning the symbol into a visual trope. Rather than portraying narrative sequences or unique imagery, the main emphasis lies in the "great expanse of relief sculpture in the interior space" and the "potent visual experience" that is created.[190]

Despite the malleability of the mud plaster from which they are crafted, the motifs at Chan Chan adhere to the rigidity of their representation in woven textiles. This is seen in the seabird reliefs of Figure 76, where the birds are "stepped" as though they were designed on a grid. This visual technique was not new or unique at Chan Chan but appears at an unprecedented level given the expansiveness of the site and its ornamentation.[191] Woven textiles are considered the first art form in the Andes and were highly valued for centuries for their elaborate designs and time-intensive production process. Intricately decorated textiles were given as imperial gifts, used in ritual sacrifice, and displayed as hangings in architectural interiors. Sculptural reliefs that borrow the iconography and composition of textiles provided the Chimú kings with a method of quickly and inexpensively embellishing their structures while achieving the visual effect of luxurious textile designs.[192]

This connects to Lisa Trever's concept of the aesthetics of replication, which refers to "the effects of highly repetitious programs of imagery that had the capacity to inspire awe in their monumental creation and in their deliberate re-creations over centuries."[193] Trever applies this concept to a discussion of Moche mural art at sites like Huaca de la Luna and Huaca Cao Viejo, where multiplicity was used to amplify visual potency and encompass the luxury of

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[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid., 83.
[192] Ibid., 84.
[193] Trever, *Image Encounters*, 64.

exquisite textile designs in a more durable and lasting form.[194] The deliberate resemblance to textile arts, and the cross-cultural affiliations accomplished through the stylized marine imagery, are dually significant to a reading of the friezes. These allusions communicate the importance of ancestry, coastal identity, and the high value of textiles to the Moche artists and intended audiences of the imagery -- allusions that are interpretable in the repetitive decoration of Chan Chan and Huaca del Dragón as well.

Beyond ornamentation, textiles "may have served a votive or even protective purpose" as they were used to contain sacrifices and precious objects -- and those properties were instilled into the architecture at Chan Chan through the stylistic allusion to the medium.[195] In particular, the royal funerary platforms of the city were immensely decorated with architectural sculpture. This metaphoric "wrapping" of the rulers with a sacred layer evocative of valuable material is not unlike the Andean funerary tradition of forming mummy bundles that are swaddled in layers of precious cloth. As textiles and organic matter do not preserve as well on the North Coast as in the more arid regions of the Andes, the sculptural depiction of woven patterns may seek to lend a permanence to the designs and their presence at Chan Chan. This idea is likely emulated at Huaca del Dragón, where, like the funerary structures within Chan Chan, the repetitive decoration can be understood as evoking woven textile traditions. The motifs at Huaca del Dragón are curvilinear and unrestricted to the rigidity of woven designs. Instead, the individual panels function as an alternative that still organizes the composition in place of a grid of warp and weft. The bicephalic arching serpent is further used as a framing device for the other motifs

[194] Ibid.
[195] Pillsbury, "Reading Art Without Writing," 84.

and operates as an organizational device that is borrowed from the artistic traditions of earlier North Coastal societies and implemented in the sculptural relief at Huaca del Dragón.

Conclusion

This analysis of the sculptural reliefs at Huaca del Dragón and comparable visual materials illustrates the depth and longevity of the North Coastal artistic conventions that were borrowed and adapted by the Chimú artists of the site. While the strongest visual analogies to the relief imagery at Huaca del Dragón are found in works dating to the Middle Horizon and later, similar visual themes -- such as double-headed serpents and snakes with canine heads -- are found in objects produced by the earliest complex societies of the North Coast. This suggests that the sculptural reliefs reflect a visual tradition that was already hundreds of years old at the time of the site's creation. From this study, it can be proposed that the imagery at Huaca del Dragón depicts mythical beings that personify natural phenomena associated with water. The motifs of dragons and composite creatures establish the scene as supernatural, incorporate features of marine life, and lend to longstanding local iconographic traditions. The iconography of the friezes is likely motivated by strong El Niño events and the importance of the ocean to Chimú society.

The visual record analyzed in this project indicates that the Chimú artists of the huaca introduced a new composition for the motifs they incorporated. The composition of the relief panels blends elements of the sea, sky, and cosmos -- and the supernatural beings in the reliefs are composites of animals that would have been observed in the artists' natural environment. Some of the motifs were altered, and these purposeful changes aid in the communication of the themes underlying the mural program. Earlier scholars have interpreted a marine or sky theme for the iconography, but this thesis suggests that the two may have been interrelated both in the friezes and in Chimú worldview. The inspiration for this novel composition of traditional motifs likely stems from an impactful El Niño event, as the reliefs can be interpreted as emphasizing the

dually life-giving and destructive powers of natural phenomena which are conceived throughout the Andes as supernatural beings. In comparison to the sculptural reliefs at Chan Chan, modern viewers may not readily perceive the relief decoration of Huaca del Dragón as associated with water and marine life. However, the concepts of Andean cosmology analyzed in this thesis correlate the imagery at Huaca del Dragón with water-related mythological and natural phenomena, including rainbows, rain, and the conception of the Milky Way as a celestial river.

As a funerary structure, the reliefs' depictions of powerful supernatural forces, borrowed from ancestral artistic traditions, likely functioned to profess the social and political status of those who were interred at the site. The close proximity to Chan Chan and adhesion to the architectural form of its royal burial structures suggests that the principal burials at Huaca del Dragón were of lesser nobility in the Chimú Empire. The imagery of supernatural marine life throughout the reliefs likely reinforced the divine legitimacy of those buried at the site. Additionally, the presence of the dead would have amplified the religious potency of the site in its ceremonial usage following the initial burials. The imagery also appears to incorporate the Andean practice of human sacrifice, perhaps as supplication from the supernatural forces depicted, and portrays the perpetual sacrifice of earthen human figures in place of human lives. The earthen medium also allows for the visual emulation of precious woven textiles. The repetitive imagery amplifies visual potency and imbues the site with the protective properties inherent to the woven medium, all while embellishing the structure to resemble the material most valuable among ancient Andeans.

Regarding the ongoing study of cultural continuity in the pre-Hispanic Andes, this project supports the notion that aspects of Chimú culture are heavily indebted to their predecessors, especially the Moche. This study prompts further research on the power structure of the Chimú

empire as the evidence presented is suggestive of a second-tier elite in the society. This calls into question alternative sources of power in the empire, and the way that lesser nobility used local ancestral imagery to proclaim authority. The way that ancestral imagery is used to communicate distinction rather than affinity with Chan Chan is also significant. Another question raised by this project is the contradictory nature of access and viewership at Huaca del Dragón. The high perimeter walls, which provide only one point of access, depict the same imagery as the interior edifice. The reason behind the limited access to the site and simultaneous exterior display of its decoration is unclear.

This thesis demonstrates the degree to which the Andean tradition of cultural and ideological continuity informed the sculptural relief program at Huaca del Dragón, in adopting iconography not only from the Moche Valley but the larger North Coast and its surrounding regions as well. The meanings of these pervasive symbols likely differed depending on the time and space in which they were created, but in this project's delineation of the evolution and long-lasting usage of the motifs, their larger significance to the region as ancestral symbols is made clear. The implementation of the motifs spanned multiple time periods, crossed cultural boundaries, and continues to demonstrate the unity that underlies ancient Andean art.

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