

AN ASSOCIATION OF MIDDLE HORIZON EPOCH 2A SPECIMENS
FROM THE CHICAMA VALLEY, PERU

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In July, 1968 three ceramic specimens and one gold object which date to Epoch 2A of the Middle Horizon were noted in a private collection on the north coast of Peru. These objects are believed to have been associated, and to have come from a site in the Chicama Valley. As such, they represent the first associated set of Middle Horizon 2A specimens found this far north on the Peruvian coast.¹

Evidence of Association

The four specimens are part of the Gerardo Nieman Collection at the Hacienda Casa Grande in the Chicama Valley. Mr. Nieman said that all four of the specimens had come from the site of Sausal, where they had recently been uncovered by two huaqueros living at the Hacienda Sausal. We visited the home of one of the huaqueros, where we obtained an additional fragment of the cup with composite form (figs. 1a, b and 5a, b). Later, at the site of Sausal, the huaquero indicated the pit where he claimed to have found the specimens. This pit had an irregular conical shape, narrowing toward the bottom, and a maximum depth of about 3.5 meters. The huaquero claimed to have found all of the polychrome vessels near the bottom of the pit, in an area less than 1 meter in diameter. The vessels were said to have been broken when found, and the sherds scattered. While examining the backdirt adjacent to the pit, an additional sherd from the cup with composite form was found.

The soil at the site of Sausal consists of hard packed alluvial clays, with sands mixed with varying amounts of rounded cobbles. There is no evidence of habitation refuse in the form of organic material or artificial stratigraphy, nor were there any noticeable architectural remains. Burials at the site have yielded ceramics of the Moche style. Other styles may also be represented at the site.

Ceramic Specimens

Cup With Composite Form (figs. 1a, b and 5a, b). This specimen consists of a rounded cup with a handle modeled in the form of a standing human figure. It is made of a fine, cream colored paste with small amounts of very fine sand temper. The body of the figure forming the handle is hollow, and there is a non-constricted passageway between the interior of the cup and the interior of the figure. The specimen is carefully smoothed on all exterior surfaces and on the interior of the cup.

The standing figure forming the handle is modeled in the full round. The figure is shown with the hands tied behind the back. Details

of the hair style, fingers, and toes are provided by shallow pre-fire incision. Most of the detail, however, derives from the very skillful polychrome slip painting. This includes the elaborate face paint around the eyes and on the cheeks, the circles on the shirt (presumably depicting a tie-dyed garment), details of the breechcloth, headdress, and earspools, as well as a spot of white and black slip to define each fingernail and toenail. The entire surface of the figure is polished to a high gloss.

The upper part of the cup with composite form is very evenly made. The walls are approximately 0.4 centimeters thick, and taper slightly toward the rounded lip. The exterior surface is carefully painted with a polychrome slip decoration as shown in fig. 1c. This decoration consists of a series of chevrons of alternating colors around the upper part of the chamber, and three profile griffin figures below. Each of the griffin figures is within a rigidly defined rectangular design panel, and has a distinct color scheme. The exterior surface is well polished, and those areas with slip paint have a high gloss.

Head Cup (fig. 2 and 6a-c). This vessel is modeled in the form of a human head with a large headdress. The face is sculptured, and the hair is shown as a slightly raised panel extending around the sides and back of the head. The vessel is made of reddish paste with very fine sand temper. It is well smoothed on the interior and exterior surfaces, and has a flat bottom. The walls are approximately 0.5 centimeters thick, and are rounded at the lip.

The entire interior surface of the head cup is painted with red slip. The exterior has a complex polychrome slip decoration consisting of elaborate designs around the eyes and on the cheeks of the sculptured face. A goatee and a mustache are painted with black slip, as is the hair along the back and sides of the head. The headdress is painted to depict five human heads shown in profile, each wearing a colorful, trapezoidal headdress. All of the profile heads are painted with the same color scheme. The surface of this specimen is well polished, but not to a high gloss.

Symmetrical Cup (fig. 3a, b). This vessel has straight, nearly vertical sides, which curve sharply at the base to join a flat bottom. It is made of fine reddish paste with very fine sand temper. The walls of the vessel measure approximately 0.5 centimeters in thickness, and are rounded at the lip. The vessel is very evenly made, and the interior and exterior surfaces are well smoothed.

The entire interior and exterior surfaces are painted with a red slip. The exterior also has a polychrome slip decoration in the form of an animal with its body shown in profile, and a forked, top-view head.² Only a fragment of this vessel was found, and it is not known whether or not this motif is repeated around the exterior. The surface of this specimen is well polished, but not to a high gloss.

Gold Object

One object of gold is said to have been associated with the three ceramic specimens described above. The object (fig. 4a, b) is a bead or spindle whorl with a complex profile, and a circular hole passing through the center. The upper surface is decorated with a series of three bird heads defined by chiseled incisions. The incisions consist of a series of short contiguous lines which appear to have been made by placing the sharp end of a chisel against the surface of the object and then striking the other end of the chisel with a hammer.³ Ten additional chisel strokes on the flat top of the object resulted in lines radiating out from the hole passing through the center (fig. 4b). The incisions have traces of red pigment in them, which serve to emphasize the incised designs.

NOTES

¹I would like to express my appreciation to Gerardo Nieman for his kindness in allowing his collection to be studied. Thanks are also due to Joel W. Grossman who helped record the collection, to Dorothy Menzel who helped to place this associated set of specimens in terms of the sequence for the Middle Horizon, and to Catherine Brandel, Leonard Foote, and Candace Rice for their help with the illustrations. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the Center for Overseas Operations at U.C.L.A., and the Research Committee of the Academic Senate at U.C.L.A. for the generous support which made possible the fieldwork on which this study is based.

²There is some difficulty in defining the correct color for the eye, the teeth, and the two circular filler elements in the design on this specimen. The teeth may be either grey or white, the eyes and circular filler elements are either white or cream. In the illustration (fig. 3b) all are shown as white.

³The rather unusual effect of this technique of incising gold is similar to that found on several other gold objects which are believed to be Huari style, and date to Epoch 2A of the Middle Horizon. Included among these are four gold objects in the Lord Rothschild Collection in England, and a large gold plaque located at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University. These gold objects appear to have been incised by "walking" a chisel shaped point along the surface of the gold, thus producing a zig-zag line. Although this technique is not identical to that found on the gold object in this associated lot from the Chicama Valley, the two techniques of incision may be related to one another with regard to the type of chisel shaped instrument used, as well as the desired visual effect of a broken rather than continuous line.

KEY TO ILLUSTRATIONS

Plates XII - XIII

A centimeter scale is included in the photographs. All specimens are to the same scale with the exception of figs. 4a, b. The dimensions of this specimen are: ca. 1.4 cm. high, ca. 1.8 cm. diameter.

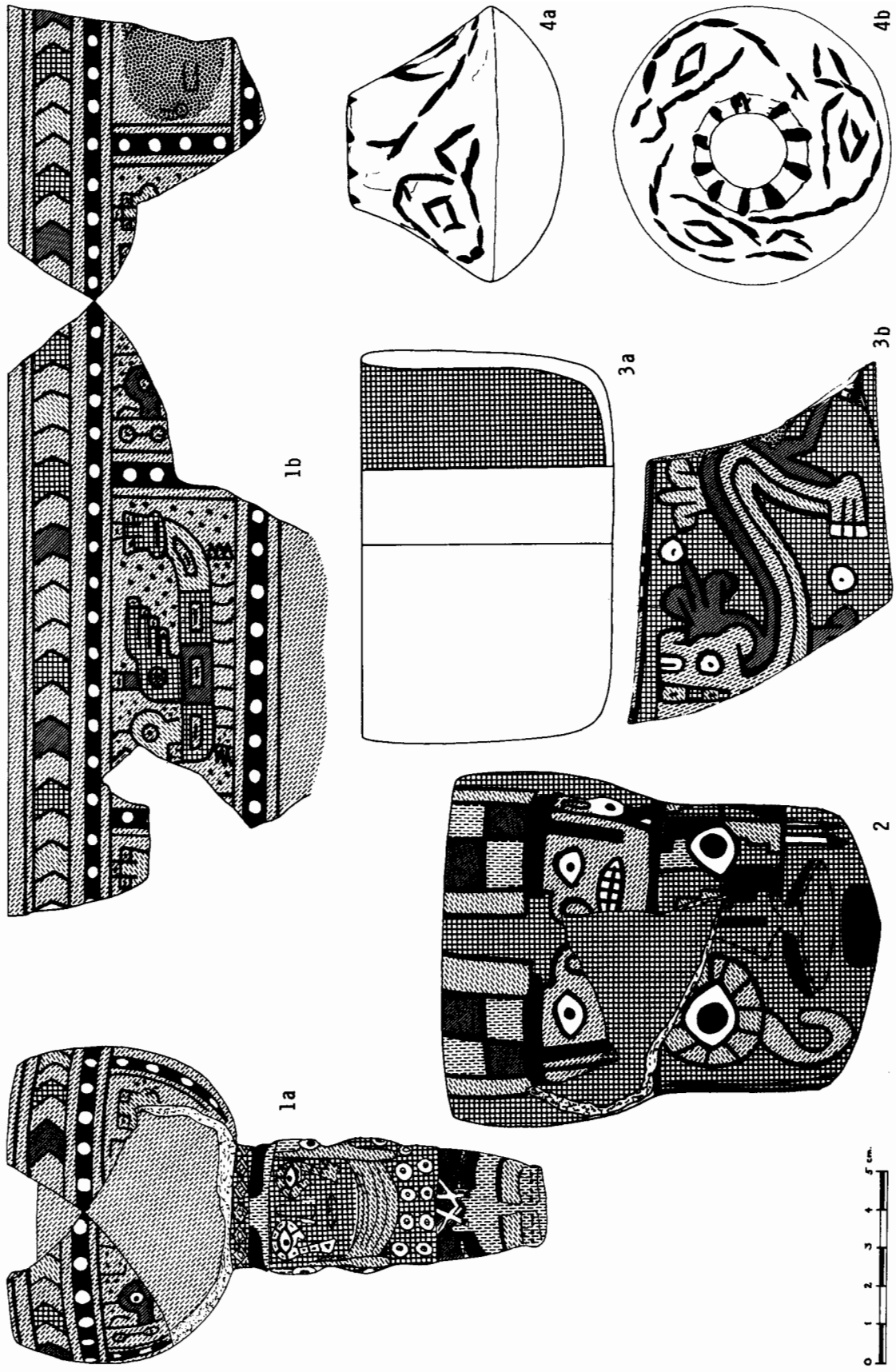


Plate XII.



5a



5b



6a



6b



6c

Plate XIII.