

THE BURR FRIEZE; A REDISCOVERY AT CHAN CHAN

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The north coast of Peru is an area rich in pre-Conquest friezes, and within this region, the site most famous for decorated walls is Chan Chan, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Chimor. This site in the Moche Valley has long attracted attention because of its size and complexity and its many elaborate friezes. The latter were a source of interest for early travelers and remain a tourist attraction today. The adobe wall decorations at Chan Chan have suffered periodic obliteration by heavy rains that fall at long-separated intervals on the otherwise arid coast; the last of these storms was in 1925. Although each downpour partially or totally destroyed the friezes exposed at the time, the site has never lacked decorated walls exposed for admiration, since three-hundred years of continuous grave-robbing and treasure-hunting have assured a continuing exposure of new friezes. It is possible that, in the period following the 1925 rain, the number of exposed friezes at Chan Chan has dropped considerably, due to governmental efforts to curtail looting.

In the course of archaeological investigations conducted at the site by the Chan Chan-Moche Valley Project in the summer of 1969, a portion of a very elaborate adobe frieze was uncovered by Samuel H. Burr, a member of the Project crew.¹ The frieze is located in the Velarde ciudadela, on the western side of the site, and decorated the side of a series of ramps on a structure which will be described subsequently. The section uncovered consists of a series of horizontal decorative bands depicting fish, crustaceans, ornithomorphic and anthropomorphic figures (fig. 1). The frieze is of particular significance because some of the motifs used resemble decorative elements on Chimú pottery and thus can be correlated with the Chimú ceramic sequence. This fact makes it possible to place the Burr Frieze in temporal and stylistic context, and analysis of the panel carries important implications for the later history of the occupation of Chan Chan.

Initially this frieze was thought to be a heretofore unknown wall decoration, but information provided by Dr. Francisco Iriarte Brenner, and further investigation in the library of the Archaeological Museum of the National University of Trujillo proved it to be a previously unexposed section of an extensive panel which had been uncovered much earlier by the then Prefect of the area, Don Carlos Aureo Velarde. As Prefect of the Department of La Libertad, Velarde, who was an avid antiquarian and treasure-hunter, commanded sufficient resources to loot extensively at Chan Chan. Sometime between 1904 and 1908 he uncovered most of this frieze in the compound which now bears his name.² The panel was never described or analyzed in any detail, but it was photographed several times after the conclusion of Velarde's excavations.³ After the frieze was destroyed by the heavy rains of 1925, these photographs were thought to be the only surviving record of this elaborate construction.

The frieze decorated at least two of the exterior walls of a rectangular adobe brick platform, which was the principal structure of a semi-isolated walled complex of courts, corridors and small rooms. As is typical of much of the monumental architecture at Chan Chan, the platform was a product of multiple stages of building. In the course of his looting, Velarde broke through several walls and exposed most of the interior of the structure. Systematic examination of these cuts revealed four major construction stages. During the first two, the building was a walled structure with internal open rooms, corridors, and walls with friezes, an example of which may be seen on the checkered wall visible in the background of Ubbelohde-Doering's Plate 152b and Wright's photograph on page 27. In the following stage, all but the eastern end of the structure was filled in, and this modification created a solid platform measuring 23.6 meters (north-south) by 28.9 meters (east-west). Two ramps running along and incorporated into the south face provided access to the summit; one of these ramps sloped up from the western corner of the platform, and the other ascended from the eastern corner; it was in the area of this second ramp that Burr discovered the new section of the frieze. Originally the frieze covered the south and east faces of the platform; the north side was undecorated, and it remains unclear whether or not the west side was also decorated with a frieze. During the fourth and final construction stage, the platform was enlarged to 28.4 meters (north-south) by 43.6 meters (east-west); this expansion was made by adding fill, principally along the south and east faces; thus the frieze was covered and protected until it was exposed by Velarde.

The Prefect had cut away the fourth-stage fill and uncovered the panel along the entire east face of the platform, as well as in the area of the western ramp along the south face of the structure, but he did not clear in the immediate area of the eastern ramp. In the fill remaining against the south side of the platform, Burr opened a narrow trench (2.5 by 1.5 meters) against the face of the east ramp, thereby exposing a segment of frieze 2 meters long, 1.5 meters high at the west end, and 1.1 meters high at the east end. This trapezoidal shape was due to the down-slope (west to east) of the ramp surface along the top of the panel, and a slight rise from west to east in the plastered floor running along the base of the section.

Design Layout

For convenience of description, the section of the frieze exposed by Burr has been arbitrarily divided into nine bands. Numbering from the top down, bands one, three, five and seven are plain raised strips of undecorated plaster. Bands two and six are rows of catfish with circular cane-stamped eyes and body spots. Band four contains a row of standing or running birds wearing crescent headdresses and carrying spears; small fish are used as space fillers between the heads and feet of the avian figures. Bands eight and nine are two parallel, approximately horizontal rows of repeated complex design blocks. These

blocks have been numbered from right to left; band eight contains two blocks, and band nine has three (fig. 2). The basic design block consists of a principal anthropomorphic figure surmounted by a W-shaped serpentine belt with square end blocks. This principal figure is a small flying man who wears a crescent headdress that is connected at the top to the underside of the serpentine belt; these figures have triangular appliqué noses that protrude beyond the rest of the frieze, and each figure carries a short rod or staff in one hand. It is possible that the whole serpentine belt and attendant figures may be intended as part of the paraphernalia of the central figure, since they all sprout from his head. Within the serpentine belt are catfish in the end blocks and diagonal portions of the belt, crabs in the lower and upper angles, and small fish occasionally interspersed as filler elements between the crabs and catfish. Above each end block is a small flying anthropomorphic figure wearing a long trailing hat and carrying an upward-pointing spear; these figures face inward toward the central rise of the serpentine. Sitting in each of the two dips of the W-shaped belt is a small, squatting human figure who carries an upward-pointing spear and also faces inward. On top of the central rise of the serpentine is a facing pair of avian figures wearing crescent headdresses and carrying down-pointing spears. Between these and the square ends of the belt, small birds are used as space fillers; the number and form of these birds varies from one design block to another, depending on the space available. Between the rising ends of each pair of serpentine in the same horizontal band appears a multi-legged crustacean with pincers, probably a shrimp or crayfish.

The frieze layout was influenced by the shape of the wall space to be decorated. Where Burr excavated, the converging slopes of the ramp floor and the floor at the base of the panel produced a trapezoidal surface that necessitated some modifications in the basic design block. Diminishing space at the eastern end of the panel left insufficient room for the principal figure to be placed beneath the serpentine of block one, band nine, and consequently the artisans substituted a duck for the flying man. At the other end of the section, with the expansion of space available for decoration because of the increasing divergence between ramp and floor, the artisans began to add a third row of motif blocks at the base of the frieze, as may be seen by the offset between block three in band nine and the two serpentine fragments to the left of it. Early photographs of the platform as excavated by Velarde indicate that where the friezed wall reached its greatest height, there were four horizontal bands of design blocks.⁴

In terms of layout, the Burr Frieze shares several general similarities with other decorated walls at Chan Chan and other sites in the vicinity. If the design blocks of bands eight and nine are interpreted as the principal decorative elements of the frieze, bands one through seven would constitute a border for the panel. These first seven bands not only edged the top of the panel, but were also

used vertically at the corners of the frieze-decorated portion of the east wall; there was no comparable border at the base of the frieze.⁵ Similar use of a three-sided border to frame rows of repeated complex design blocks appears in a frieze in the Gran Chimú ciudadela at Chan Chan.⁶ Such a border was also used in the Uhle compound to edge diagonal motif bands.⁷ Another three-sided border is present at the Huaca El Dragón, a platform several kilometers north of Chan Chan; there, however, it did not frame a panel but separated individual design blocks of large size.⁸ Although the present sample of friezes is relatively small, this sort of border may prove to have been a frequent element in Chimú decorated walls.

Another common usage is that of continuous bands of a single repeated motif, usually a fish or bird. This seems to have been a basic canon of Chimú design and is represented in bands two, four and six of the Burr Frieze, and in most of the other ornamented walls at Chan Chan. The bands are not always horizontal; they may be diagonal, as in the Uhle compound at Chan Chan;⁹ or stepped, as in the Tschudi compound at the site, or may join ends in a diamond shape, as at the Huaca Esmeralda.¹⁰ Similar bands of repeated single figures were also used frequently to decorate Chimú ceramics.

Construction Techniques

The Burr Frieze was the product of a complex set of construction techniques involving excision, incision, cane-stamping, appliqué and the use of two distinct plaster surfaces. The first step in making the frieze was to plaster the adobe brick platform face to produce a smooth surface. After this surface had dried, and had been remoistened, or perhaps before it had dried completely, a second layer of plaster 2 cm. thick was applied and smoothed. While the second coat was still damp enough to work with, the frieze motifs were fashioned by excising the damp plaster between them, down to the level of the first plastered face. A narrow, sharp chisel was used, and bit-marks may be seen on the first plaster surface where it appears between the motifs. Where design elements were widely spaced, there was apparently little difficulty in excising the unwanted material down to the base plaster. However, in areas of greater density of motifs, the cuts sometimes tapered and did not reach the base plaster because the space between motifs was too narrow to permit complete excision.

The use of two levels of plaster had two advantages. First, it was undoubtedly easier to work with a damp coat of plaster than to attempt to carve hard adobe. By using a moist layer, sharp angles and smooth surfaces could be produced. Second, by excising to the primary plaster layer, the artisans were assured that the resulting frieze motifs would be of uniform elevation. Maintaining a standard depth of relief would have been much more difficult if carving a single layer of plaster or if simple modeling had been used.

Once the frieze motifs had been outlined by excision, such details as eyes, mouth, fins and body markings were added by incision or by cane-stamped circles. The appliqué noses used on the principal figures in the motif blocks of bands eight and nine were small triangular wedges of clay, added to the second plastered surface, between the incised eyes of the figures.

It is possible that some of the smaller motifs, such as the catfish in bands two and six or filler elements in bands eight and nine, may have been simple plaster cutouts applied to the base surface where excision left large open spaces. A certain amount of evidence for this suggestion is provided by the fact that one catfish, on a large segment of fallen frieze from the fill cleared away in exposing the panel, broke away neatly from its background to reveal that it had been outlined with a faint incised dotted line, possibly to indicate placement of the figure. This technique may have been used in cases where an artisan made such a large mistake in excising around a figure that it was more efficient to remove the whole ruined figure down to the primary plaster and to replace it with a cut-out equivalent. However, the method would have been difficult and time-consuming, and it would probably have been used for a very small portion of the frieze at most. It does not appear that a template was used for cutting out the catfish and other small motifs in an attempt to make them uniform, as they vary in body proportions, thickness of fins and other shape features.

Because the frieze had to be completely excised while the second plaster layer was still workable, it was presumably constructed in sections. A segment of wall would be plastered from top to bottom, the frieze executed, and then a new, contiguous segment of wall would be plastered. Within each section, the frieze was constructed by working from the top downward, since bands one through seven are relatively uniform along the whole panel, while bands eight and nine are not fully symmetrical and sometimes appear to reflect spatial miscalculations on the part of the artisans. Block two in band nine is squeezed vertically, and part of the serpentine is cut off by the floor. Block one in the same band lacks even more of the serpentine, and a duck has been substituted for the principal figure because of insufficient space. Similar crowding and possible miscalculation at the base of the frieze is apparent in early photos of other sections of the panel.

It seems probable that the motif blocks in bands eight and nine were executed by different artisans, apparently following some sort of basic plan which left them free to improvise somewhat with minor details of the decoration. The basic design would have included the serpentine belt, its catfish and crabs, the principal anthropomorphic figure, and all of the larger avian and human representations, as well as the shrimp or crayfish between the motif blocks. This master-plan technique would account for the differences between the blocks in minor details and in small space-filling elements, such as birds and fish.

In terms of construction techniques, specifically the use of excision and two layers of plaster, the Burr Frieze has counterparts at Chan Chan in the ciudadelas of Rivero, Tschudi and Gran Chimú, and in the Uhle compound.

Motifs

The Burr Frieze uses only curvilinear motifs; the panel includes no geometric or rectilinear figures, although such motifs are relatively common in other friezes at Chan Chan. It has been suggested that the latter derive from textile motifs and perhaps differ culturally and temporally from curvilinear design elements. However, both types of motif can appear on a single frieze, as in the ciudadelas of Gran Chimú¹¹ and Rivero at Chan Chan, and both types of motif can ornament the same structure, as in the Tschudi ciudadela. These associations indicate that curvilinear and geometric motifs must be considered at least partly contemporaneous.

Although many of the motifs of the Burr Frieze have counterparts on other friezes at Chan Chan and in the vicinity and on smaller objects from the north coast, the whole complex of motifs is not repeated elsewhere. Correspondences between the zoomorphic and anthropomorphic figures of the Burr Frieze and similar figures elsewhere will be noted in the course of describing the individual frieze motifs.

Fish

Two types of fish are depicted on the frieze, and the most frequent of these is the catfish, known locally as bagre and in the highlands as suche (fig. 3). From the depiction on the frieze, it is not possible to determine whether these are marine catfish, of which there are four genera off the Peruvian coast, including Galeichthys,¹² or river catfish of the genus Pygidium.¹³ These fish appear in bands two and six, and within the serpentine belts in bands eight and nine. The figure is portrayed in a dorsal view, and is represented with curling whiskers, a triangular head, projecting fins, and a triangular tail. Slight differences in the execution of the catfish in different parts of the panel may indicate the work of at least two artisans. The catfish in bands two, six and eight have cane-stamped circles indicating eyes and body spots, usually with only two or three circles used for body decoration. However, in band nine, the fish frequently have almond-shaped eyes or irregularly-drawn circular eyes instead of neatly-stamped circles. Variation is also evident in blocks two and three of band nine, where some figures have as many as seven stamped or drawn circles for body decoration.

To date the only other known depictions of catfish in Peru come from Pucara stone sculpture of the southern sierra, Inca painted plates,¹⁴ Inca textiles of the central coast,¹⁵ Moche ceramics,¹⁶ and

Chimú Inca ceramics (fig. 4). Catfish strictly comparable to those of the frieze are rare in Chimú Inca pottery; more common is a spade-headed fish, resembling the catfish in body outline, but lacking their curling whiskers.

The second kind of fish appearing on the frieze is smaller than the catfish; it is depicted from a lateral perspective, has a blunt nose, usually a single long dorsal fin, one or two ventral fins, and a triangular tail; a back-pointing triangle is frequently incised on the body, possibly to indicate a pectoral fin (see fig. 5). These figures occur in band four, as space-fillers between the spear-carrying birds, and within the serpentines in bands eight and nine. The frequency with which they appear in bands eight and nine and the details of their depiction are variable and were apparently left to the discretion of the individual artisan executing each motif block. In band eight, block one contains two of these fish, and block two has four, while in band nine, the incomplete block one contains one such fish, block two none, and block three has two. In terms of specific details, such as the number of fins, placement of the mouth, and the presence of an incised pectoral fin, there is also considerable variation from one figure to the next.

This type of fish is a relatively common design element on Chimú Inca pottery, usually depicted in low relief on press-molded blackware, like the catfish, but occasionally appearing as a painted design on oxidized ware. Similar fish occur in a continuous stepped band on the side of a building in the Tschudi ciudadela, and also in the diamond-shaped figures at Huaca Esmeralda.

Crustaceans

Crabs and shrimp are used as motifs in bands eight and nine. Within each serpentine are three crabs, occupying the central high point and the two low points of each belt. Viewed dorsally, these crustaceans have oval bodies, upward-pointing eye stems and pincers, and four downward-pointing posterior legs (see fig. 5). Although the figures are basically similar, some minor variation occurs. Some crabs have cane-stamped circles on the eye stems, and two specimens in block three of band nine have circular stamps on their pincers. In block two of band eight, the crabs in the lower parts of the serpentine belt are misshapen, either because of exigencies of space or from carelessness in their execution.

On the north coast crabs were employed as ceramic motifs on Moche pottery, and in at least the last half of the Chimú sequence, from about 1,000 A.D. until the Spanish conquest. On the south coast, the motif appears on Inca-influenced pottery from the Ica Valley. Crabs do not appear on any other friezes that have been uncovered to date.

The second type of crustacean that appears is a shrimp or crayfish; it is unclear whether these figures represent a river species or a marine form.¹⁷ They occur in bands eight and nine, in the area between the ends of adjacent serpentines. They are depicted dorsally, and are represented with multiple lateral legs, anterior pincers, and short antennae (see fig. 5). Variation exists in the amount of incised body detail and the number of legs that different specimens have. The fact that these crustaceans were given six, eight or twelve lateral legs may reflect some confusion on the part of different artisans as to how many appendages shrimp or crayfish actually have. Representations of the motif were also affected by spatial exigencies. In the lower left end of the panel, between block three of band nine and the initial block of what would have been band ten, a crustacean was bent sideways and squeezed into a smaller space than was usually allowed. Just below this figure is another shrimp or crayfish that was truncated by the floor. A catfish was substituted for a crustacean between blocks one and two of band nine, presumably because of lack of space.

Like the crab, the shrimp or crayfish motif is found on Moche ceramics and on Chimú pottery from at least the last half of the ceramic sequence. No other representations on friezes are yet known.

Ornithomorphic figures

Two types of avian figures appear on the panel. The first consists of three varieties of small birds used as space fillers in bands eight and nine: type a, a long-beaked bird with long legs, large feet and a humped back (see fig. 9); type b, a figure with a long beak, protruding breast, spread tail and long legs; type c, a stylized bird with excised triangles in the wing and tail areas and without legs or feet (see fig. 5). All three types are represented in profile and all have eyes indicated by cane-stamped circles or incised ovals. There are four examples of type a: two in block one of band eight, one in block two of the same band, and one in block one of band nine. Type b is represented by one specimen in the right side of block two in band nine. Three examples of the type c bird are present on this section of the frieze; two in block two of band eight and one in block two of band nine. All of these birds appear to have been used as space-fillers, since the placement of them is not consistent in the different design blocks; some are squeezed or positioned at angles, according to the amount of space available.

All three types of small bird motifs have similarities to figures on Chimú ceramics dating from the phase immediately before the Inca conquest of the north coast, and from the Chimú Inca phase. That is, similar pottery motifs appear about 1200 or 1300 A.D. and last until about 1532. Figures similar to the type c birds appear at Chan Chan on a frieze in the Tschudi ciudadela.

The second group of ornithomorphic figures consists of two

varieties of larger spear-carrying birds which seem to be two versions of the same figure; they appear running or standing in band four, and seated in facing pairs above the central rise of the design block serpentine in bands eight and nine. Each wears a crescent headdress and has a long beak (usually with an excised triangle or an incised line indicating the beak opening), an ear or earspool protruding behind the head, a three-pronged tail, some indication of a pointed wing protruding behind the body, a three-toed foot-like appendage, a three-digit hand-like appendage that holds a spear, and a round or oval incised eye. The running figures in band four carry a spear pointing backwards over their shoulders (fig. 6). The pose of these bird figures is similar to that of spear-carrying birds on a frieze in the Uhle compound at Chan Chan.¹⁸ There are also counterparts on Chimú ceramic pieces that date between 1200 or 1300 A.D. and the time of the Spanish conquest.¹⁹ Schmidt illustrates the head of a wooden staff, said to be from Trujillo, which bears a carved representation of two spear-carrying birds wearing crescent headdresses and a "moon creature" without a headdress.²⁰ The crescent headdresses of the birds on the frieze and on the staff bear some resemblance to those of representations of the "moon creature" that appear on Chimú ceramics from the last two pre-conquest phases. The "moon creature" is an animal representation that first appeared on Recuay pottery, and that continued, with variations, to be used into the Colonial Period; in the last phases of the Chimú sequence, it began to be depicted wearing a crescent headdress, which seems to have had mythical or divine connotations for north coast peoples at that time.²¹

The facing pairs of ornithomorphic figures in bands eight and nine are similar to the band four birds, except that they are seated and carry their spears pointing downward (fig. 7). As with the running birds, some variation in depiction occurs, chiefly in that some figures have the beak opening represented by an excised triangle, and others by a straight or curving incised line; also there are differences in the depiction of the wing. The only resemblance between these figures and any Chimú ceramic motif is a similarity to the crescent headdresses of the "moon creatures" mentioned with reference to the avian figures in band four. In terms of their profile position and the spear held in front of the body, these figures have a general similarity to the Angel A and Angel B staff bearing figures of the Middle Horizon styles.²²

Anthropomorphic figures

Three types of anthropomorphic figures appear on the frieze, all in bands eight and nine. The first type is a flying spear-bearer that occurs immediately above the end blocks of each serpentine; this individual is in an extended prone position and faces inward toward the center of the serpentine. Each of these figures wears a long headdress, part of which trails backward above the extended body and a small portion of which projects forward over the face. Their faces are prognathous, with the mouth and an oval eye delineated by incision, and

a single round ear or earspool at the rear of the head; both legs extend out behind the body, and an arm and hand reach forward to carry a spear in a vertical position, pointing upward (fig. 8). In some cases the spear shaft extends down beside the end block of the serpentine, and in others it ends at the upper edge of the end block. Although there are minor variations in depiction, all of these figures are relatively similar. The major exception is the example on the right side of block one of band eight, which faces outward instead of in toward the center of the serpentine.

This motif has no close counterpart on other local friezes or in the Chimú ceramic style. There are some slight similarities between its position and that of the flying Huari style figures, Angel C and Angel D.²³

The second type of supporting anthropomorphic figure is a small being seated in the low points of each serpentine. These are depicted from the side, face inward toward the center of the serpentine, and wear forward-drooping headgear (see fig. 5). The face has a pointed nose, incised oval eye and mouth, and an ear or earspool projecting behind the head. Each figure has one leg flexed under or in front of him, and has one arm and hand extended forward to hold a spear vertically, point upward. These beings are generally similar, although some are more compressed or elongated than others, depending on the available space within the serpentine curve.

This figure has no similarity to any known from Chimú ceramics. The pointed caps worn by these figures have some resemblance to the headgear worn by the homunculus figures, motives IV and V from the Huaca El Dragón frieze.²⁴ The motif more closely resembles small anthropomorphic figures on a shell-inlaid wooden plaque, probably part of a litter, which was recently excavated at Huaca Tacaynamo, near the Huaca El Dragón.

The anthropomorphic figures beneath the centers of the design block serpentes are considered the principal figures of the frieze for several reasons. The manner in which the crescent headdress of each of these figures is joined to the underside of the accompanying serpentine suggests that the whole motif block may have been intended as an ornament or appendage of this central figure. This impression is augmented by the fact that the projecting appliqué noses of these figures distinguish them from all other representations on the panel. Also, these figures tend to be larger than most of the other motifs on the panel.

The body of this principal figure is depicted in profile, while the head is viewed face-on; the mouth and oval eyes are indicated by incision, and the nose is an appliqué triangle; on each side of the head is a round ear or earspool. The figures are depicted with three limbs visible: an arm with a three-fingered hand extends in front of the body and grasps a short staff or rod; two legs, or possibly an arm

and a leg, project on the opposite side of the body and touch the inner side of the serpentine (fig. 9). If these two limbs represent legs, as seems most probable, the position of these figures is analogous to that of the smaller anthropomorphic figures above the end blocks of the serpentine. The principal figures exhibit considerable variation. Those in band eight fly with their heads toward the right, while those in band nine have their heads toward the left. The major differences probably represent artisans' modifications because of problems of space available. The two examples in band eight are alike in size and form. However, the figures in band nine are smaller and vary in their proportions; the block three personage is compressed into a shorter space than that of block two, and the block one example has been replaced by a duck.

The crescent headdresses of these principal figures are similar to that of the "moon creature" and to those of a series of anthropomorphic deity figures that appear on Chimú ceramics from the beginning of the Late Intermediate Period until the Chimú Inca phase or the Colonial phase. Their flying position, like that of the flying spear-bearers above the end blocks of the serpentine, has faint similarities to that of the Huari style motifs, Angel C and Angel D.²⁵

The closest counterpart of these principal figures, and indeed of the Burr Frieze as a whole, is found in the engraved design on a silver bowl illustrated by Baessler, said to be from Trujillo.²⁶ The design band on this bowl represents a continuous serpentine double line with seated human or avian figures in the low points of the serpentine; flying anthropomorphic figures wearing crescent headdresses and carrying short staffs, and also smaller prognathous animal figures wearing crescent headdresses, both under the high points of the serpentine; and small bird, serpent, human, monkey and circular figures used as space-fillers throughout the band. The general similarity between this design and that of the motif blocks of the Burr Frieze is obvious, as are the differences in detail. Since no data exist on the associations of the bowl, it is not possible to assign it to any time period.

Interpretation

The motifs of the Burr Frieze are largely realistic representations; crustaceans, fish and the small birds are depicted in a recognizable form. The anthropomorphic figures are clearly human and are not endowed with animal characteristics; the crescent headdress of the principal figures is the only attribute that can definitely be considered to have had mythical connotations. The larger avian figures are recognizably bird shapes, but with the addition of a mythical attribute in the crescent headdress, and of non-avian characteristics in their spears and possible earspools. This realism contrasts with some of the other known friezes in the Moche Valley. Elsewhere the motifs are frequently modified to such a point that the animal or figure depicted is difficult to recognize. This effect is most apparent

at the Huaca El Dragón, where anthropomorphic and zoomorphic elements are so modified that they can probably be interpreted as mythical beings.

It is possible that the Burr Frieze had mythical connotations for its makers. Evidence from the Chimú ceramic sequence seems to indicate that the crescent headdress in Chimú contexts was worn only by deities and supernatural characters, not by mere humans. If the serpentine band above the principal figures is considered as an elaboration of or appendage to the crescent headdresses of these personages, it may indicate a super-human status. If the analogies between the positions of several of the Burr Frieze motifs and those of the Huari style Angel figures, which initially appeared only in sacred contexts, are correct, additional support is given to the idea of a mythical significance for the Burr Frieze. The fact that so many of the frieze motifs depict water dwellers may indicate that the principal personage is intended to be some sort of marine or river deity, and as such his position might be interpreted as swimming rather than flying. Perhaps the spear-bearing figures above the serpentine may be interpreted as guardians of the deity or as representations of predators on the water creatures.

Implications

The Burr Frieze is unique in several respects. First, it is composed of a large number of differing motifs, and there are few other friezes of similar complexity. Second, many of these motifs can be related to phases of the Chimú ceramic sequence. The most definite connections are with the Chimú Inca phase and with the phase just prior to the Inca conquest of Chan Chan; thus the similarities are to pottery design elements thought to date from 1200 or 1300 A.D. to about 1532. One motif in particular, that of the catfish, seems to be limited to ceramics of the Chimú Inca phase; the other types of water dwellers do occur on pre-Inca Chimú pottery, but catfish do not reappear as a ceramic motif until Inca influence reaches the north coast. The reappearance of the catfish on north coast ceramics at this time may perhaps be considered as a reaction by Chimú potters to seeing catfish depicted on Cuzco Inca plates. By extrapolation from the ceramic sequence, the frieze may date to the period immediately before the Inca conquest of the Kingdom of Chimor, or, more probably, it may have been constructed in the period of Inca rule that began sometime between 1462 and 1470.²⁷ Because this is the first frieze for which a date can be suggested, it is not possible to say whether there was any continuity in marine motifs on friezes constructed on the north coast between the Middle Horizon and the Late Horizon; other than the catfish, the only marine motif that occurs on other friezes is a fish like the second type of fish depicted on the Burr frieze. The sample of complex friezes from the area is still limited, and future excavations may uncover other friezes that can be assigned to earlier Chimú phases because of correlations with ceramic motifs.

If the interpretation dating the construction of the frieze to just after the Inca conquest of Chan Chan is correct, and since the frieze seems to belong to the penultimate building stage of the platform and was superseded by another major phase of building activity, then the Incas must have maintained and added to the Velarde ciudadela for some time after gaining control of Chan Chan. Since few highland Inca sherds are to be found in surface collections made on the site, a substantial Inca occupation of Chan Chan does not seem to be indicated. This is not surprising, since if the occupation involved mainly administrative officials living in the center of the site, and if there was systematic refuse disposal in these areas, as our survey indicates was likely, ceramic indications of Inca presence would be rare.

Although this evidence is somewhat tenuous, the Burr Frieze and architectural factors seem to indicate that the Inca conquest of the city did not presage destruction or abandonment. Rather Chan Chan, or at least some parts of the site, apparently continued to function as an important center of activity. However, the later history of the site is complicated by the fact that many compounds and ciudadelas, including Velarde, show signs of a late occupation that did not include maintenance. It was typified by such activities as dismantling earlier buildings for construction materials, deposition of domestic refuse within the confines of monumental structures, and agricultural cultivation in former plazas and courtyards. In other words, the earlier standards of upkeep were abandoned. It is not known whether this neglect was brought about by a change in Inca policy or by the impact of Spanish contact; if the former, it may be that later local governors during the period of Inca rule may have been more concerned with the tribute the area was producing than with the appearance of the city.

NOTES

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²Anonymous, 1956, p. 2; Rivadeneira, 1935, p. 29.

³The best examples of these photographs are published in Ubbelohde-Doering, 1967, p. 152-153; Wright, 1908, pp. 27-29. See Holstein, 1927, p. 46, for photographs of the portion of the frieze uncovered by Velarde, before and after the 1925 rain. After the Burr Frieze had been drawn and photographed, it was reburied to prevent damage by possible rain and vandalism.

⁴Wright, 1908, pp. 27-29.

⁵Wright, 1908, pp. 28-29.

⁶Squier, 1877, pp. 137-138; Wright, 1908, p. 30.

⁷Bushnell, 1957, fig. 52.

⁸Schaedel, 1966.

⁹Bushnell, 1957, figs. 52, 53.

¹⁰Horkheimer, 1944, fig. 68.

¹¹Squier, 1877, p. 137.

¹²Schweigger, 1914, pp. 238-239.

¹³Koepcke and Koepcke, 1968, p. 21.

¹⁴Carrión Cachot, 1955, Lám. XIII.

¹⁵Arturo Jimenez Borja, personal communication.

¹⁶Larco Hoyle, 1938, pp. 103, 126-127.

¹⁷Larco Hoyle, 1938, pp. 110, 113.

¹⁸Mason, 1957, Pl. 4.

- ¹⁹Fuhrmann, 1922a, Pl. 7.
- ²⁰Schmidt, 1929, fig. 423-3.
- ²¹Fuhrmann, 1922b, Pl. 83.
- ²²Menzel, 1964, p. 20.
- ²³Menzel, 1964, pp. 20-21.
- ²⁴Schaedel, 1966, p. 408.
- ²⁵Menzel, 1964, pp. 20-21.
- ²⁶Baessler, 1902-03, vol. 4, Pl. 162, figs. 440, 441.
- ²⁷Rowe, 1948, p. 40.

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KEY TO ILLUSTRATIONS

Plate XXVI

Fig. 1. Drawing of the Burr Frieze.

Plate XXVII

Fig. 2. Detail of block one of band eight of the Burr Frieze.

Fig. 3. Catfish from band two.

Plate XXVIII

Fig. 4. Blackware Chimú Inca double-chambered vessel, said to be from Pacasmayo. Height to top of spout, 15.8 cm. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, no. 54799, purchased by S.S. Bucklin in about 1876.

Fig. 5. Detail of end sections of blocks two and three of band nine of the Burr Frieze containing shrimp, crab, two kinds of fish, the type c bird, and small seated spear-carrying men.

Plate XXIX

Fig. 6. Spear-carrying birds from band four.

Fig. 7. Seated spear-carrying birds from block one of band eight.

Plate XXX

Fig. 8. Flying spear bearers from the end blocks of blocks one and two of band eight.

Fig. 9. The principal figure from block one of band eight; small type a birds are also shown.

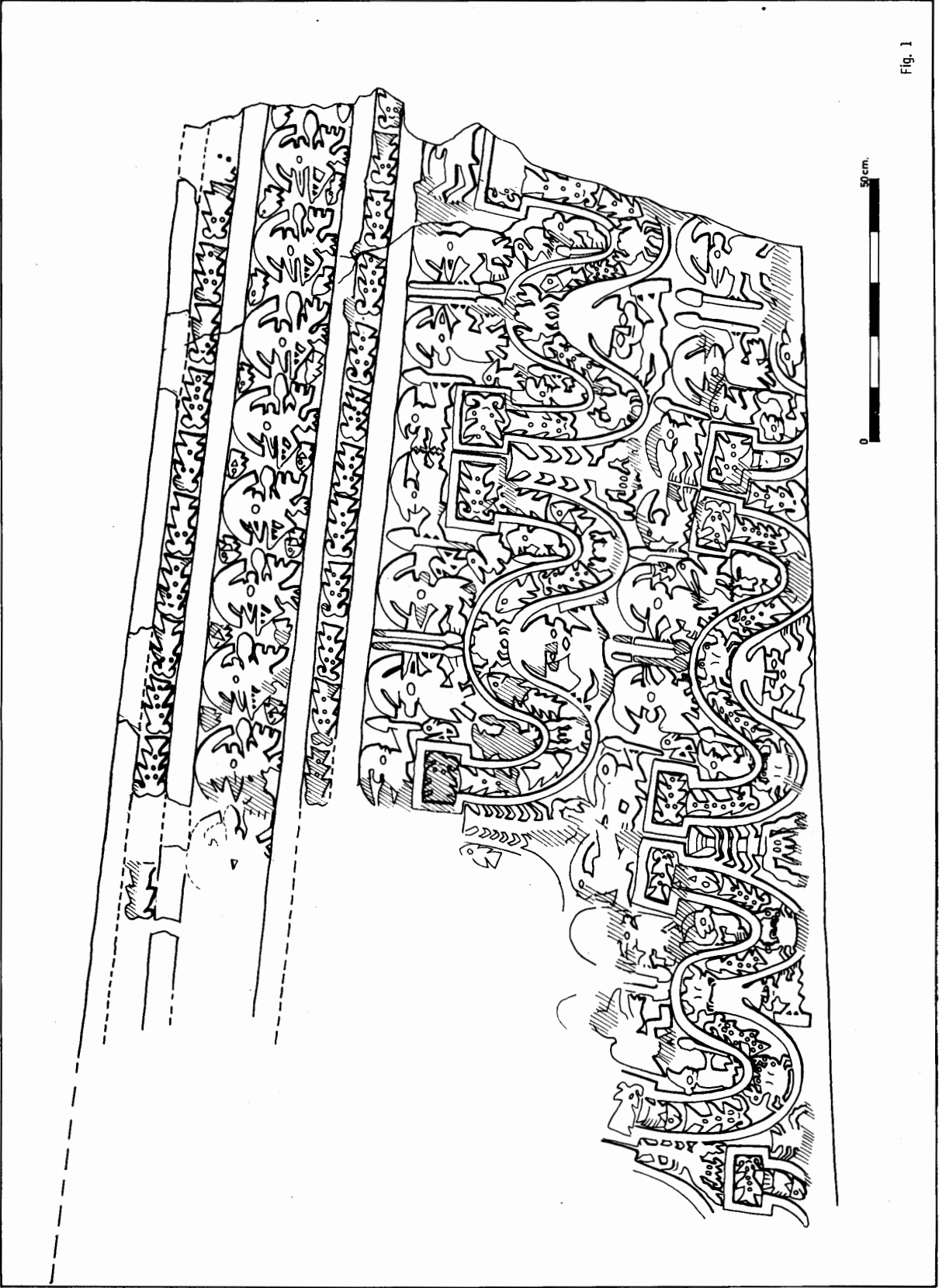


Fig. 1

Plate XXVI. Drawing of the Burr Frieze.



Plate XXVII. Details; fig. 2, block one of band eight; fig. 3, catfish from band two.

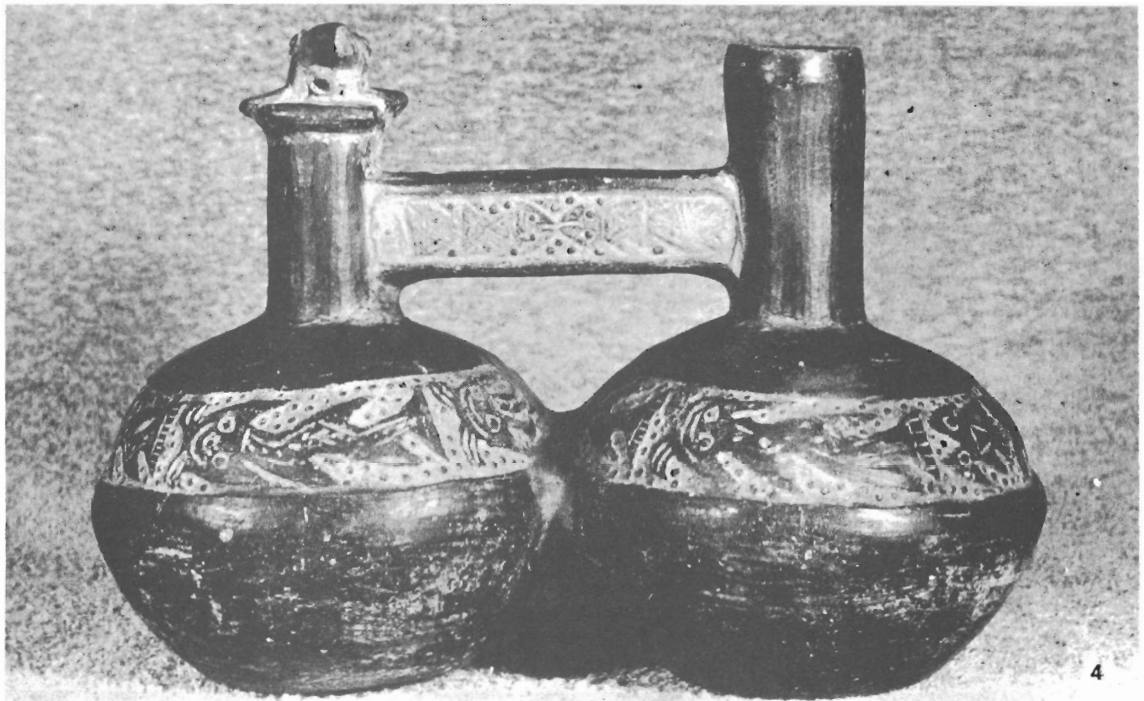


Plate XXVIII, Chimú Inca vessel, and end sections of blocks two and three of band nine of the frieze. See Key to Illustrations.

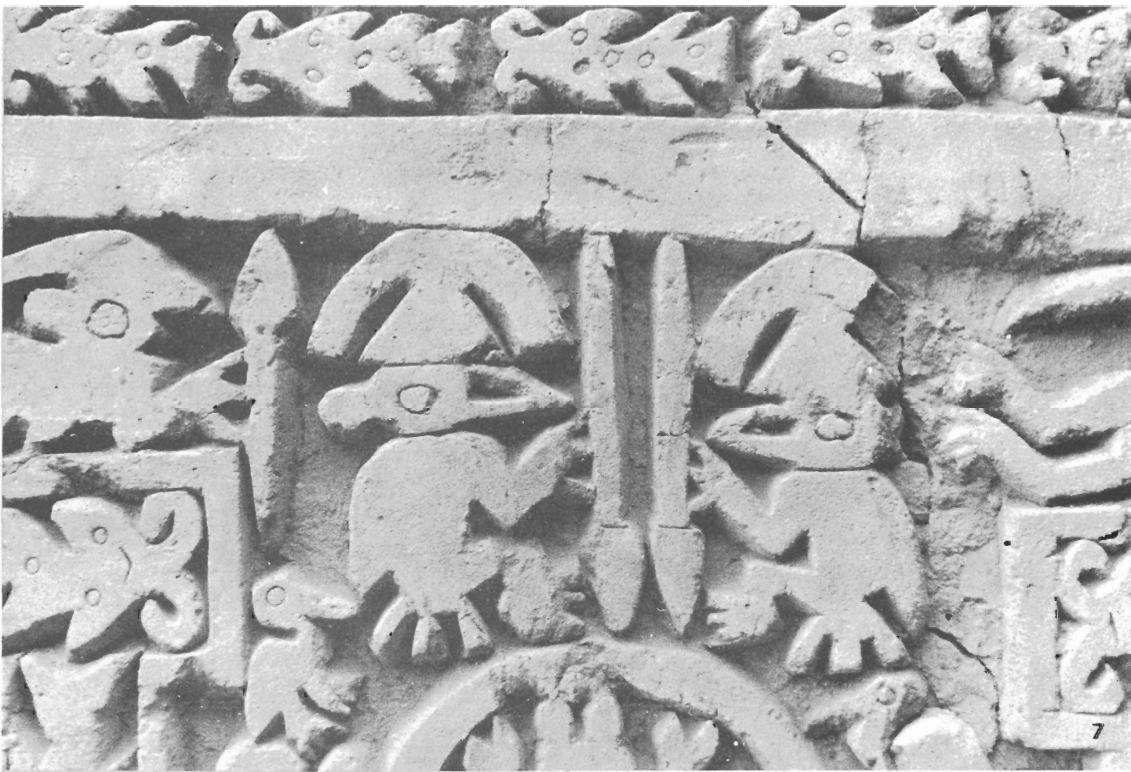
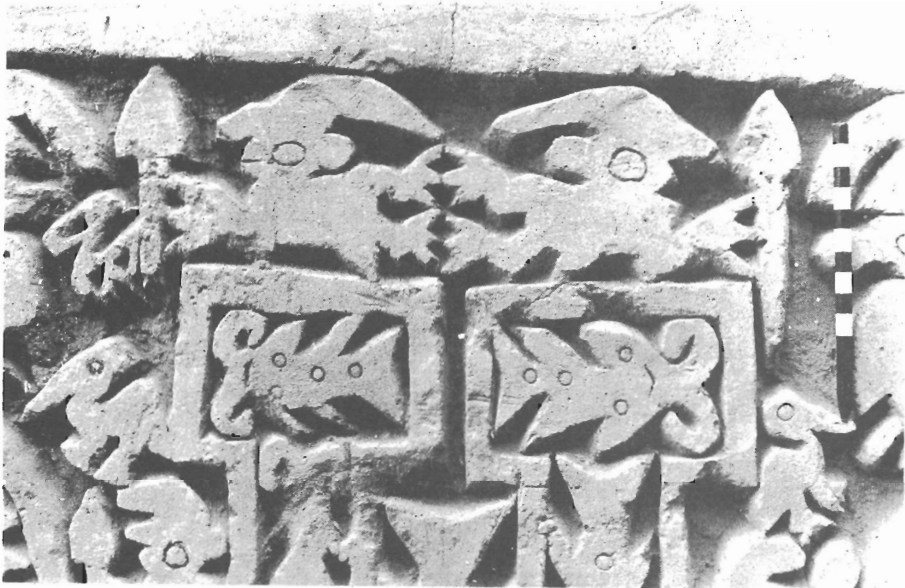


Plate XXIX. Spear-carrying birds. See Key to Illustrations.



8



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Plate XXX. Details of the frieze. See Key to Illustrations.