

## THE MOCHE SOURCES OF ARCHAISM IN CHIMU CERAMICS

Richard L. Burger

Archaism played an important role in the development of new ceramic styles and motifs in the Late Intermediate Period. In Ica, a new ceramic style was developed by imitation of motifs which had been popular in the same area in the first two epochs of the Middle Horizon.<sup>1</sup> The Chimú ceramic style of the north coast has long been suspected of drawing upon earlier local styles for its inspiration. For example, several Chimú vessels have been recognized as imitations of Cupisnique pieces.<sup>2</sup> The main source of features incorporated archaistically into Chimú ceramics was the Moche style. However, no previous study of this occurrence of archaism has been made.

In this article four examples of Chimú imitation of Moche iconographic themes will be presented. In one case the existence of definite Moche prototypes and a large sample of derivative Chimú vessels makes it possible to trace the process by which an earlier and alien theme is copied, modified, and finally transformed according to the aesthetic taste of the later culture.

## Mythical Fishing Scene

Moche prototype

The most impressive example of the force of archaism in Chimú ceramics is a mythical scene depicted on no less than 23 known Chimú vessels.<sup>3</sup> This scene shows an anthropomorphic figure catching a fish monster. Based on the current understanding of north coast chronology, the Chimú vessels were produced in the late Late Intermediate Period and Late Horizon.<sup>4</sup> The prototypes of the Chimú pieces are of Moche III style and were made during the Early Intermediate Period. Approximately one thousand years passed between the production of the original pieces and the imitations.

The mythical fishing scene in question was relatively rare in Moche art. Only four pieces from the enormous corpus of known Moche art show this scene. All are Moche III stirrup spout bottles. Three of them are smoked blackware and one is painted. All four pieces are very similar, except for a few details. On two of these pieces, the fish monster and the shirt of the anthropomorphic figure are striped (fig. 1). The other two vessels do not show these stripes (fig. 2). The Chimú potters based their imitations on the Moche vessels which do not use striping. Apparently, these Chimú artisans were extremely successful in terms of their own culture, since the theme seems to have achieved much greater popularity in Chimú times than it had during Moche times.

On the Moche III prototypes, the mythical human wears a bird headdress,<sup>5</sup> a shirt, a bracelet on each arm, a belt, and a loincloth. On his cheeks are two prominent vertical wrinkles and his lips are

spread to show his teeth. The teeth of the anthropomorphic figure are crossed fangs, used in the Moche style to identify mythical characters. His knees are flexed. In both hands, he grasps a fishing line with hook and float (or weight) which is hooked through his opponent's lower jaw. Opposing him is a huge fish monster whose single human arm also grasps the fishing line. The fish monster's arm bears a bracelet. He, too, has crossed fangs. Clearly the fish monster is also mythical.<sup>6</sup> The fish has a caudal fin, anal and dorsal fins, gill openings and what appear to be superorbital cirri. Both ends of the fishing line terminate in animal heads. The fishhook is shown as the outstretched tongue of one of these heads.

#### Direct imitation

Each of these details is useful in tracing the transformation of the scene. This Moche scene was carefully copied on several Chimú pieces. One of these is illustrated in fig. 3. This piece is so similar to the Moche original that it was incorrectly identified as contemporary with Moche when it was published.<sup>7</sup> Three Chimú bottles with nearly identical iconography can be found in the Museo Rafael Larco Herrera, Museo del Arte (Lima), and the Miranda Collection (Trujillo). All four vessels have monkey and bird adornments that are diagnostically Chimú. The Chimú copies do not replicate the Moche iconography in all details. In the Chimú imitations, the bracelets are missing and the fishing line has been straightened so that it runs parallel to the belt of the mythical human. The crossed fangs of both figures have been reinterpreted. The anthropomorphic figure is now shown with two fangs and four teeth. The fish monster has a toothless lower jaw. From his upper jaw come four teeth and a large back fang. Apparently, the convention of crossed fangs was no longer understood. Other minor changes in detail occur. The side fins of the fish monster are more widely spread apart and the shape of the caudal fin is modified. The anthropomorphic figure has six fingers on his left hand. The facial wrinkles are enlarged and curved. Despite these changes, the Chimú pieces are excellent copies of the Moche model. They reproduce small details such as the superorbital cirri on the fish's head and an animal's tongue serving as the fishhook. Even the Moche canons of leaving the background plain, not framing the scene on the bottom, and having high shoulders on the body of the vessel are maintained.

#### Subsequent Chimú versions

Following the initial accurate imitation, the Moche theme undergoes modification within the Chimú artistic tradition. It is possible to distinguish four subsequent stages of modification, each less like the initial imitation. It is doubtful that any of the subsequent Chimú vessels were directly copied from Moche pieces.

#### Slightly modified

Four Chimú vessels appear to be slightly modified versions of direct imitations.<sup>8</sup> The bodies of the stirrup spout bottles lack the high shoulders found in the direct imitations and the mythical scene seems more static. The shape and style are more Chimú in character.

New changes in detail are noticeable. On two of the bottles, the fish-hook touches but does not penetrate the lower jaw of the fish monster. On one piece the positions of the fish monster and the mythical human are reversed. Finally, there seems to be confusion concerning the mouth of the mythical human. On some of these vessels, fangs of any sort are omitted.

#### Highly modified

Five vessels represent a third stage in which the direct imitations are highly modified (figs. 4-6). These pieces are quite varied in their iconography. The scene is even depicted differently on two sides of the same vessel (fig. 5). Two of the most obvious changes are the introduction of background stippling and the framing of scenes on the bottom; both are characteristic Chimú decorative techniques. Equally major changes have been wrought in the mythical scene. The number of facial wrinkles has been increased from two to three and they are grossly exaggerated. Smaller wrinkles are found in the mythical human's nose which begins to be no longer recognizable as a human nose. The problems noted earlier with the dentition of the mythical human figure are resolved on one vessel (fig. 5) by showing the mouth closed. On two other illustrated pieces (figs. 4, 6) and on a vessel in the Museo Rafael Larco Herrera, the mouth appears open but without teeth or fangs. The space filled previously by the dentition is conceptually empty. In fig. 4 it is filled by stippling. The mouth is shown as a deep arc closed at the front. In two of the pieces short lines are incised across the narrow band which closes the vacant mouth (fig. 6); these can be explained as remnants of the teeth.

Comparable changes occur in the presentation of the fish monster. The tips of the dorsal and anal fins are rounded off and the caudal fin is distorted in a haphazard manner. No back fang is shown in the mouth of the fish monster and on two vessels (figs. 5, 6) the animal head on the end of the fishing line, the hook, and the teeth of the fish are hopelessly combined and confused. The original metaphorical use of an animal's tongue as a hook has been lost; instead, the snout of the animal is extended. Moreover, it does not pass through the lower jaw of the fish, so that its original meaning is obscured. It is difficult to see what happens to the animal head at the other extreme of the line.

Another notable change is the omission of a clearly defined line weight or float. The hands of the two figures originally gripped the fishing line in a highly realistic manner; the thumb and fingers were shown wrapped around the line. In this third stage of modification, the hands are shown crudely with circular indentations. Patricia Lyon has suggested that these marks may be stylized representations of the depression shown on earlier pieces between the fingers and the palm (e.g., fig. 3). In four of the five pieces, the figures are shown in the "reversed" position (man on the left, fish on the right). It is interesting that for the first time the mythical scene appears on a vessel form other than a stirrup spout bottle.

### Stylized

A fourth stage of the transformation of the theme is seen in figs. 7 and 8. In these, and in three other known pieces, the scene is even more stylized.<sup>9</sup> It has also become standardized. The iconography on all five of the vessels is nearly identical. The scene bears little resemblance to the Moche prototypes or the direct imitations. The mythical human has been deprived of his headdress, nose, and ear. A new age line has been added to his cheek. His eye has been expanded to compensate for the missing ear and headdress. The end result has a thoroughly nonhuman character. The legs, which were originally flexed and in profile to show the strain of pulling the fishing line, are now bent meaninglessly in opposite directions. The fish monster also has lost some of its identifying details, the superorbital cirri and teeth. The shape of its body has become more distorted and less fishlike. The eye of the fish monster is greatly enlarged, and his gill openings resemble two strands of a necklace. The fishhook no longer reaches the fish's lower jaw. It floats in the fish's mouth. This may be a simplification of the depiction of the hook in fig. 4, or a confusion between the depiction of the hook and the depiction of the striped element shown in figs. 5 and 6. In all five of the vessels, the figures are in the reversed position. Only three of the five vessels are stirrup spout bottles. One vessel (fig. 8) shows this scene on a completely foreign form, a face-neck jar with decorative trimming reminiscent of a spondylus shell.

### Highly stylized

The final transformation of the fishing scene in Chimu art occurs on a single-handled jar which is housed in the American Museum of Natural History, New York (fig. 9). Several more of the few remaining details have been omitted. These are the mythical "human" figure's belt, the fish's gill openings, the curve of the fishhook, and the animal head on the opposite end of the fishing line. The mythical human's legs have been straightened and the feet are shown by incision on the legs. These changes eliminate any sense of motion. Neither of the figures' hands touch the fishing line, further removing the sense of conflict.

The radical changes which have been described are probably due, in part, to the loss of the original meaning of the scene in the minds of the Chimu artisans and the ascendancy of Chimu artistic canons of static simplicity, as well as to the usual drift of style. The way in which the changes can be broken into sequential stages suggests that the more stylized Chimu pieces were based on the less stylized Chimu pieces, rather than on the original Moche vessel itself. It would be very interesting to know how long this process took. Such questions, however, must await the publication of a detailed Chimu ceramic chronology.

### Mythical Battle with Crab

A second example of Chimu imitation of a Moche theme is the depiction of a mythical figure battling an enormous naturalistic crab. This theme appears on two Chimu vessels: a double spout and bridge vessel in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago (fig. 11) and a

stirrup spout bottle illustrated as number 53 in the catalogue of the Wassermann-San Blas Collection. The main difference between the two Chimú vessels is that the crab on the unillustrated piece is depicted with three legs on each side and with two indentations in the carapace (like those in fig. 10).

The battle scene between the mythical figure and the crab occurs on Moche vessels from Phase II to Phase V (the author is aware of 23 Moche vessels which depict this scene). However, the crab is shown naturalistically only on vessels of Phases II and III (fig. 10). In subsequent phases it is always shown with an anthropomorphic head. It is also in Phases II and III that the scene appears on Moche blackware vessels decorated in low relief. This type of decoration particularly lends itself to Chimú imitation. Furthermore, in Moche II and III vessels, the mythical figure grasps the crab's claws holding it on its side; this stance is similar to that on the Chimú vessels. In the later Moche pieces, the anthropomorphic crab is usually grasped by its hair. Thus it is apparent that, although the tradition of a supernatural battle between a mythological character and a giant crab persisted through Moche times, the Chimú artisans were deriving their inspiration from a Moche II or III vessel. Another feature in fig. 11 which suggests an archaistic basis is the taillike appendage connected to the hip of the mythical figure. This can be interpreted as a confused imitation of the Moche breechcloths which hang from the hip and end in an animal head (fig. 10). Although there are differences between figs. 10 and 11, they are not greater than differences between figs. 1 and 9. In both cases the basic similarity in theme and presentation remain intact.

#### Mythical Battle with Anthropomorphic Fish

Another clearcut example of a Chimú imitation of a complex Moche battle scene occurs on a Chimú double spout and bridge, blackware vessel with downturned stylized bird head adorns, in the collection of the Museo Rafael Larco Herrera. This piece very closely resembles a Moche III stirrup spout bottle illustrated as number 50 in the Wassermann-San Blas Collection. On both vessels, an anthropomorphized fish with a short, thick, snakelike headdress holds a knife in one hand and his opponent's hair in the other hand. The opponent has a long, snakelike headdress and grasps the fish's wrist. The two figures are shown kicking vigorously at each other.

#### Geometric Painted

Not all Chimú archaistic pieces imitate Moche low relief scenes of mythical conflict. A painted Chimú vessel (fig. 13) appears to be an archaized version of a Moche V stirrup spout bottle in the genre of fig. 12.<sup>10</sup> The Chimú piece was collected by Max Uhle at Site B in the Moche Valley. It was probably made during the Late Horizon.

The body of the Chimú vessel, like those of many Moche V geometrically decorated bottles, is divided into three horizontal panels. The bottom and top panels are identical. The main geometric motif, in

figs. 12 and 13, is very similar. There are Moche V vessels in which the diagonal axis of the geometric motif alternates as it does in the Chimu piece. Finally, the use of a band on the stirrup, like that of the Chimu piece, is a diagnostic feature of the Moche V style, although the Moche bands are usually solid.

The four examples of Moche themes imitated in Chimu ceramics which have been presented here demonstrate the existence of Chimu archaism, but they do not fully define its extent or historical significance. The unravelling of this problem must await the results of basic research now being done on Chimu chronology, style and iconography by Margaret A. Hoyt and others.

#### Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Margaret A. Hoyt for bringing two archaistic vessels to my attention and to John H. Rowe for providing me with photographs of relevant vessels from the Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología, Lima. I also wish to thank Patricia J. Lyon for many helpful suggestions and Vianne Ramirez-Burger for everything.

June 4, 1974  
revised May 6, 1975

#### SPECIMENS STUDIED

Listed below are all the Chimu pieces studied in the preparation of this paper. Only selected Moche pieces, however, are included in this list. The listing is by theme as presented in the body of the text, starting with the Moche prototype and followed by Chimu specimens in order of closeness to the original model. All specimens which have been previously illustrated are accompanied by the reference to the published illustrations. When it was possible to determine, the present location and catalog number of each specimen is provided. The following abbreviations are used:

MNAA, Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología, Lima.  
MRLH, Museo Rafael Larco Herrera, Lima.  
RLMA, Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley.

#### Mythical fishing scene

##### Moche prototypes

Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (fig. 1; Bushnell, 1957, pl. 25).  
MNAA, 1/457 (fig. 2).  
MNAA, 1/453.  
MRLH, no catalog number available.

Chimu direct imitations

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 63.226.2 (fig. 3; Wassermann-San Blas, 1938, fig. 55, p. 36; Sawyer, 1966, no. 81, p. 59).  
 Miranda Collection, Trujillo, Peru.  
 Museo de Arte, Lima.  
 MRLH.

Chimu slightly modified

MRLH, three vessels (Larco Hoyle, 1948, p. 51, second from right is one of these three).  
 MNAA, 1/452.

Chimu highly modified

Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna (fig. 4; Fuhrmann, 1922b, p. 78).  
 MNAA, JQ/61 (fig. 5).  
 MNAA, JQ/368 (fig. 6).  
 MRLH, two vessels.

Chimu stylized

Peabody Museum, Harvard University, 7557 (fig. 7; Bennett, 1954, fig. 96, p. 85).  
 Present location unknown (fig. 8; Fuhrmann, 1922a, p. 9).  
 Present location unknown (Wassermann-San Blas, 1938, fig. 56, p. 36).  
 MNAA, 2/356.  
 MNAA, 2/2789.

Chimu highly stylized

American Museum of Natural History, New York, 41.0/5052 (fig. 9).

Others

MRLH, four vessels which certainly portray this scene but which were displayed in such a way that categorization is not possible.

Mythical battle with crabApproximate Moche prototype

Private collection, Trujillo, Peru (fig. 10).

Chimu imitations

Art Institute of Chicago, 1958.620 (fig. 11; Wassermann-San Blas, 1938, fig. 54, p. 35).  
 Present location unknown (Wassermann-San Blas, 1938, fig. 53, p. 35).

Mythical battle with anthropomorphic fishApproximate Moche prototype

Present location unknown (Wassermann-San Blas, 1938, fig. 50, p. 33).

Chimu imitation  
MRLH.

Geometric painted design

Approximate Moche prototype

RLMA, 16-13806 (fig. 12).

Present location unknown (Wassermann-San Blas, 1938, fig. 116, p. 70).

Chimu imitation

RLMA, 4-11 (fig. 13; Kroeber, 1925, pl. 60f).

Present location unknown (Larco Hoyle, 1963, fig. 161).

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lyon, 1967 and 1969.

<sup>2</sup>Rowe, 1971, pp. 112-116.

<sup>3</sup>In a note to the editors dated 24/X/76, the author stated, "Several other examples of the archaized fishing theme have been found in the collections of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. While they do not necessitate any major modifications in the analysis presented in this article, these pieces do serve to underline the importance of the mythical Moche fishing theme in its resurrected Chimu form."

<sup>4</sup>This estimate is based on the chronology presented in Scheele and Patterson, 1967, and discussion with Margaret A. Hoyt.

<sup>5</sup>The precise nature of the headdress is ambiguous. It is shown in most detail on the painted Moche III piece (fig. 1). The interpretation of it as a bird headdress is based on the white tapered beak which adjoins the red head, and the distinction made between the body, thickened and vertically striped, and the tailfeathers, tapered and horizontally striped.

<sup>6</sup>Dr. W.I. Follett, Curator of Ichthyology at the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco, believes that the fish represented does not correspond to an actual species.

<sup>7</sup>Sawyer, 1966, p. 59.

<sup>8</sup>One of these vessels is illustrated in Larco Hoyle, 1948, p. 51.

<sup>9</sup>One of these vessels is illustrated in Wassermann-San Blas, 1938, fig. 56, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup>See also Larco Hoyle, 1963, fig. 94, for a Moche V vessel with a design on the body very similar to that on our fig. 12 but on a different shape, as well as fig. 161 for a vessel very similar to our fig. 13 and identified by Larco Hoyle as Chimú-Inca from Chicama.



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## KEY TO ILLUSTRATIONS

For abbreviations see list of specimens studied.

## Plate XXX

- Fig. 1. Moche III red on white, stirrup spout bottle, 9 inches (22.9 cm.) high. Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.  
 Fig. 2. Moche III blackware, stirrup spout bottle, 25 cm. high. MNAA, 1/457. Photograph courtesy of John H. Rowe.  
 Fig. 3. Chimu blackware, stirrup spout bottle, 9 3/8 inches (23.8 cm.) high. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Nathan Cummings, 1963, specimen no. 63.226.2. Photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, negative no. 179223.

## Plate XXXI

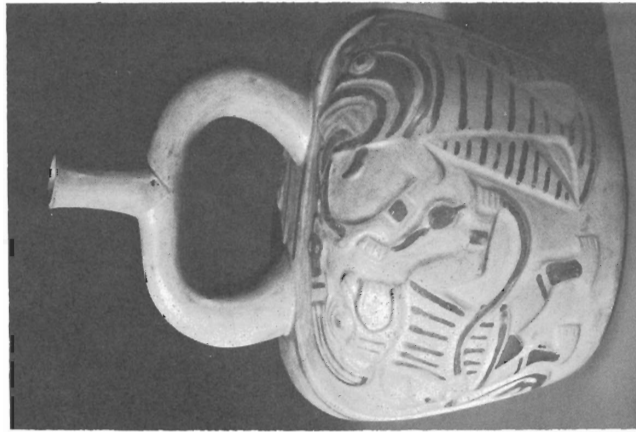
- Fig. 4. Chimu blackware, stirrup spout bottle. Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna. Photographed from Fuhrmann, 1922b, p. 78.  
 Fig. 5. Chimu blackware, stirrup spout bottle, 21.5 cm. high. MNAA, JQ/61. Photograph courtesy of John H. Rowe.  
 Fig. 6. Chimu blackware, single-handled jar, 18 cm. high. MNAA, JQ/368. Photograph courtesy of John H. Rowe.

## Plate XXXII

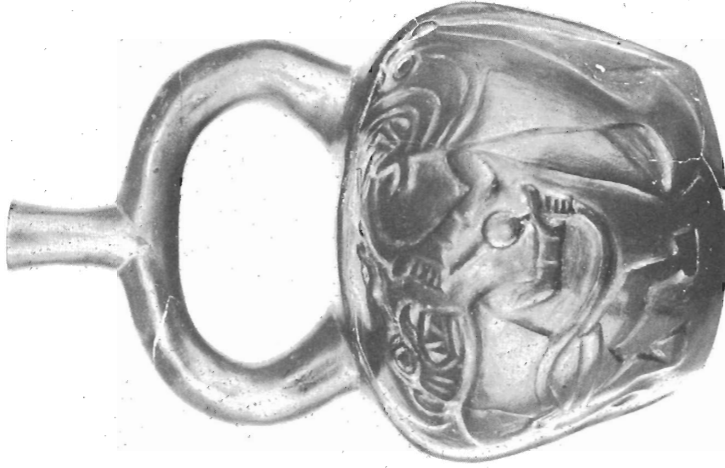
- Fig. 7. Chimu blackware, stirrup spout bottle, 23.6 cm. high, Lambayeque. Peabody Museum, Harvard University, catalog no. 75577. Photograph courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Harvard University.  
 Fig. 8. Chimu blackware, face-neck jar, Chiclayo. Photographed from Fuhrmann, 1922a, p. 9.  
 Fig. 9. Chimu blackware, single-handled jar, 18.4 cm. high. American Museum of Natural History, 41.0/5052. Drawn from a photograph provided by Margaret A. Hoyt.

## Plate XXXIII

- Fig. 10. Moche III blackware, stirrup spout bottle, spout repaired, 22.5 cm. high. Private collection, Trujillo, Peru. Photograph courtesy of Christopher B. Donnan.  
 Fig. 11. Chimu blackware, double spout and bridge bottle, 18.9 cm. high. Art Institute of Chicago, 1958.620. Photograph courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago.  
 Fig. 12. Moche V red on white, stirrup spout bottle, 22.7 cm. high, said to come from Huaca Esmeralda near Chan Chan, Moche Valley. RLMA, 16-13806.  
 Fig. 13. Chimu red on white, stirrup spout bottle, 18.7 cm. high, Site B, Moche Valley. RLMA, 4-11, Uhle Collection. Photograph courtesy of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley, negative no. 15-2245.



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Plate XXX. Mythical fishing scene. Figs. 1, 2, Moche prototypes; fig. 3, Chimu direct imitation. See Key to Illustrations. Fig. 3, courtesy the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Nathan Cummings, 1963.



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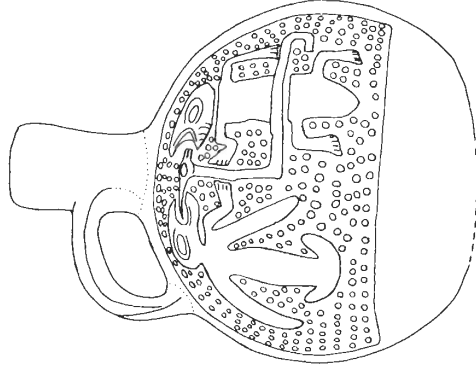
Plate XXXI. Mythical fishing scene. Highly modified Chimu versions. See Key to Illustrations.



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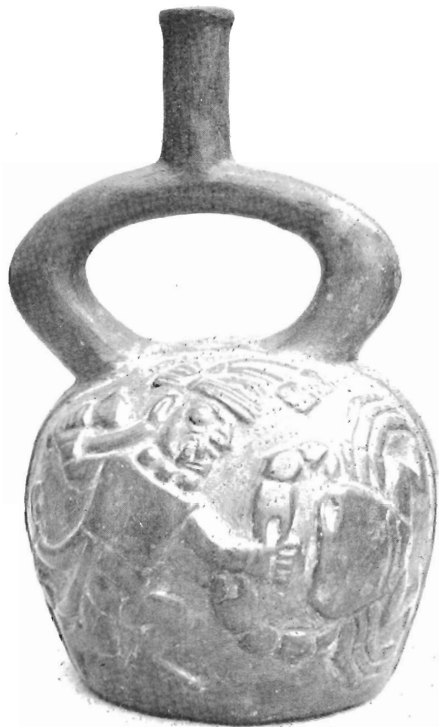


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Plate XXXII. Mythical fishing scene. Figs. 7, 8, stylized Chimú versions; fig. 9, highly stylized Chimú version. See Key to Illustrations.



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11



12



13

Plate XXXIII. Figs. 10, 11, mythical battle with crab; figs. 12, 13, geometric painted. Figs. 10, 12, Moche style; figs. 11, 13, Chimu style. See Key to Illustrations.