

## A GROUP OF GRAVE TABLETS AND SHIRT FRAGMENTS FROM PACHACAMAC

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The American Museum of Natural History holds in its collection of archaeological looms a three-heddled backstrap loom (cat. no. 41.2/5602) from the central coast of Peru. It was described in detail by Milica D. Skinner (1975, pp. 67-68). A fabric, 26 × 5.6 cm., still on the loom, is in the technique that Bennett and Bird proposed calling "reinforced tapestry" (1960, p. 278), a technique well known in Middle Horizon textiles, especially those from the Nasca-Ica area.

Technically, reinforced tapestry is a slit tapestry, generally on a cotton warp with camelid-fiber weft in various colors forming the pattern. An extra cotton weft, running from selvage to selvage and inserted every second, third, or fourth pick, stabilizes or reinforces the fabric (fig. 1), but is not noticeable because of the weft-faced structure of the weaving.

The fabric on the above-mentioned loom is woven in a variation of this technique, as the colored wefts cover only the area of the pattern, leaving the background in a 1/1 cotton plain weave, while the camelid-fiber wefts are woven over paired warps or three or more warp yarns (fig. 2). Two picks of camelid-fiber yarn alternate with one pick of the reinforcing cotton weft. Since one could properly classify the fabric as a simple brocade, this variation of reinforced tapestry could preferably be called tapestrylike brocading. When this technique is woven in direct continuation of slit tapestry, the warp yarns in the tapestry will be paired or tripled just like those in brocading.

There is a small textile fragment from the secondary cemetery at the site of Garagay on the outskirts of Lima (fig. 3; Ravines and others, 1984) that is exactly like the one on the loom as regards width, quality, technique, and the number of warp yarns. Moreover, there are four other fragments in the same technique from Garagay (figs. 4, 5, and Ravines and others no. 3001/128), as well as several fragments from Pachacamac published by Uhle (1903, fig. 30, pl. 6), by Van Stan (1967, pp. 79-82, figs. 70b-c, 71a-e), and by Eisleb and Strelow (1980, Abb. 360-368, 386). Furthermore, two such pieces without provenance were also published by Eisleb and Strelow (1980, Abb. 359, 369). There are four further pieces from Pachacamac, all deriving from the Gretzer Collection: one in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hanover (no. 13444) and three in the Etnografiska Museet in Göteborg. Finally, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London owns the largest of all the specimens (fig. 9) from a cemetery in the neighborhood of Lima.

Most likely, the entire group represents a more or less organized home craft production woven on backstrap looms in the valleys of Rimac and Lurin. The textiles may also come from workshops established at the temples as early as the Middle Horizon, but more evidence on this question is needed.

I do not hesitate to date this group of textiles to Middle Horizon 2-3 on the basis of style, decorative elements, materials, and technique. Uhle (1903, p. 30) suggested that the tapestrylike brocaded textiles are

exclusively from this period, which he named "Epigone," but he may not have been entirely correct as there seem to be some of later date as well in the Gretzer Collection.

There would be no reason for further discussion of these special weavings were it not for the five unpublished pieces in Göteborg, Hanover, and London. They obviously can provide some information on burial practices, religion, and special fashions in costume.

### GRAVE TABLETS

Uhle mentions that the small, rectangular textiles with a frontal, staff-bearing human being, surrounded by a geometric border or borders with birds' or snakes' heads, could have been cut out of larger pieces (1903, p. 30). They were sacred objects, possibly with magical power, and were placed upon the head of the corpse or fastened to the shroud of the mummies. He illustrates one such specimen representing a divinity, standing front face, holding a scepter or staff in each hand (Uhle 1903, fig. 30). The branching, forked headdress, the geometric design on the shirt front, the snake belt, and the clumsy, turned out feet are iconographic details that remove this divinity somewhat from the Wari and Tiahuanaco god as we know him from, among other places, the Monolithic Gateway at Tiahuanaco. The impression is strengthened when we look at the two textile squares from Pachacamac in the ethnographic museums of Göteborg (fig. 6) and Hanover (Museum für Völkerkunde, no. 13444, 28 × 34 cm.).

Apart from the borders, one with birds the other with snake heads, the two fragments are identical. Both have a large frontal figure in the center. In his hands are solid, crowned staffs with rounded bases and a row of animal heads attached along the outer side. The headdress, which is best seen in the Hanover fragment, is divided into two serpentines falling to either side and ending in animal heads. The center of this crown cannot be distinguished. The nose is rectangular, the eyes are crosses, and the wide mouth contains square teeth. The shirt is decorated with interlocking step frets, and the snake belt ends in the same way as the headdress, in animal heads. The feet are clumsy and broad, with protruding heels and only four large toes. The composition fills the whole rectangle, and the motifs are decorated with small crosses, circles, and squares, as is the rule in most Middle Horizon 2-3 art.

The base is cotton plain weave, 28/33 cm., 2 ply Z-S spun. The camelid-fiber wefts, 2 ply Z-S spun, are woven around 3 warp yarns, and are yellow, brown, two reds, green, and blue.

The style and composition bring to mind the many painted fabrics that are preserved from the central coast. In the most imposing such piece (Uhle, 1903, pl. 1), the central figure is a sacrificing priest; in

others, illustrated by Bird (1973, e.g., Reynaldo Luza Collection no. 4) and Albers (1963, fig. 65), it seems to be the divinity himself. Animal heads are inserted wherever there is an open space in the composition.

There is also a series of tapestry-woven rectangles, mostly from Pachacamac (the Gretzer Collection), but also from many other places on the central coast. In the center they have a frontal figure with lifted hands, often surrounded by fish and framed by a geometric pattern (e.g., fret keys). They clearly date to the Late Intermediate Period, but show a living tradition in the grave furniture. The same is true of a great number of painted grave tablets from Pachacamac, Ancon, and the whole central coast that, together with other artefacts, belong to mummy bundles, which, for the most part, have false heads (Reiss and Stübel, 1880-87, Bd. III, pls. 21 and 31 ff.; Fung Pineda, 1960; Banco de Crédito, 1979, pp. 162-163; Engelstad, ms., fig. 22). Dorothy Menzel dates a similar specimen to Middle Horizon 3 or 4 (Menzel, 1977, fig. 115). There can be no doubt that these objects are sacred and, in their design, a direct continuation of our fragments from Göteborg and Hanover.

#### FRAGMENTS THAT ARE PROBABLY PARTS OF SHIRTS

This group contains four pieces.

##### I. Shoulder part of a shirt? (fig. 7)

The specimen consists of three horizontal design bands. The center band is 15.5 cm. wide, in slit tapestry, with two masks in the middle and rows of swastikalike figures on both sides. In direct continuation of this middle band and woven on the same warp is cotton plain weave which, along the borders, is patterned in 3-stepped elements, each step composed of small squares (3, 2, and 1) woven in tapestrylike brocading. In each square is a small figure with big eyes, large mouth, and wings, which could be a bat or a bird. There are remnants of 5 such stepped patterns, but only 2 are complete, 5.8-6.0 × 10.5 cm. All the edges are defective.

Materials. Plain weave: warp-faced, 32/12 cm. in 2 ply Z-S spun off-white cotton.

Tapestrylike brocading in camelid fiber and cotton. The camelid fiber: 2 ply Z-S spun, brocaded around 3 warp yarns.

Slit tapestry: 3 warp yarns in the plain weave are used for 1 in the tapestry. The weft: camelid fiber, 2 ply Z-S spun, in bluish-black, brown, light-brown, and green.

##### II. Shoulder part of a shirt? (fig. 8)

The fragment consists of four horizontal design bands, the two middle ones in slit tapestry. This central area is flanked by cotton plain weave patterned in stepped elements. The same arrangement in technique and pattern as in textile I, but there are only two steps in the tapestrylike brocading. The slit tapestry contains one band of reversed swastikalike figures and another of two lozenges with hooks, each enclosing a cross of four snake heads. There are two unenclosed crosses of four snake heads at the end of the enclosed ones. There are selvages on one side; the other is covered with a border of cross-knit loop stitches that may have been at the neck slit.

Materials. Warp-faced plain weave: 20/10 cm., 2 ply Z-S spun. Two warp yarns become one in the slit tapestry, and the brocading goes over two warp yarns.

Slit tapestry: the camelid-fiber weft is 2 ply, Z-S spun, blue-black, dark brown, red-brown, yellowish-white and green-blue.

##### III. Fragment of a shirt? (fig. 9)

The fragment comprises three web widths sewn together. In the center of the middle web, which is 48 cm. wide, is a horizontal band of slit tapestry decorated with key frets flanked by plain weave containing tapestrylike-brocaded stepped elements. Arrangements, technique, and pattern are as in the two preceding fragments. The center part is divided vertically to form a neck slit (?), finished in cross-knit loop stitches. This central portion is in turn flanked by slit-tapestry-woven rectangles, one of which is very fragmentary. The other rectangle, however, appears to be identical in pattern, and is complete. It contains three rows of three squared patterns, each containing a cross of four snake heads. Below the patterned portion is 23 cm. of cotton plain weave ending in two cords.

Of the two webs at the sides, the left one is incomplete in its width, about 15 cm. remaining. The righthand one has parts of all 4 selvages complete, giving an approximate size of 35.5 cm. wide and 108 cm. long. In both side webs, in the part corresponding to the center portion of the middle web, are horizontal bands with slit tapestry in the key fret pattern bordered by stepped elements containing bats or birds. The righthand web seems to have been partly bordered in cross-knit loop stitch across the patterned part where the arm opening would have been.

Materials. The plain weave is of red-brown cotton. Three warp yarns become one in the tapestry, and the brocading is over three warps. All wefts are camelid fiber.

##### IV. Fragment of a slit tapestry rectangle (Van Stan, 1967, fig. 70a).

The University Museum, Philadelphia, cat. no. 29. 683, excavated by Uhle at Pachacamac in 1896-97, width of weft 39 cm. The size and pattern elements of this fragment strongly suggest that it belongs to the same group of garments as the preceding three pieces, and was the front or back part of a shirt.

If fragment III really was a shirt, its total width would have been about 35+48+35=118 cm. The size of pieces I and II does not permit such definite conclusions. Number I is very incomplete, but there could well have been a neck slit, while II could represent a half of the central width, for a total width of 39 cm., the same as number IV. In both ethnographic and European folk textile art, the size of the web width for a garment must generally have been determined by the size of the person who was going to wear it.

The main characteristics of this group of textiles are the pattern elements, ones found in quantity on the coast. The borders contain birds and snakes. The hooked lozenges around a cross of four snake heads are found in Ancon, Garagay, and Pachacamac, but also in the Ica Valley (Uhle, 1913, p. 350), and is to

be expected along the coast at Wari strongholds. Of special interest is the swastikalike motif, which may have been a sign of status or have had religious value. It is seen in MH 2A Atarco style ceramics of the Nasca drainage, e.g., in a vase that Menzel illustrated (1969, p. 71 and fig. 19), where it is shown both on the front of the shirt and around the hat of a person of rank. There are several other textiles from Pachacamac that also show this motif (Schmidt, 1929, p. 497, fig. 1; Gay y Forner, 1925, p. 130). Furthermore, some influence from late Nasca styles may be noted in the big masks with hooked hair (compare Kandt, 1974, pl. 35).

It is likely that the decorative elements of textiles have a long lifetime, longer than that of breakable ceramics. To make a textile design one must be familiar with all the technical details and possibilities of the loom. Lines forming a 45° angle to the warp give the best and clearest design. Lozenges and oblique lines are therefore favorites, especially since it is a question of counting yarns to repeat exactly the same form. For a skilled weaver, a design once drilled into the fingers remains for a lifetime. Variation on a theme is easily made directly on the loom, but a brand new design must be created by a very skilled weaver, alone or in cooperation with a designer. Even though the designer may work in other media (e.g., ceramics, wood, soft stone) or in paint on plain cotton cloth, in creating the design he must understand weaving technique.

The search for new and original designs is a way to find networks for communication and cultural impulses. None of the designs in our group of textiles is really new. All stem from the Wari-Nasca culture. What seems to be different is the dominant use of the locally grown cotton or cotton imported along the coast from the north. Camelid fiber had to be imported from the highlands along the trade routes and exchanged for other goods, such as dried fish or shells. Camelid fiber was expensive but highly valued because in dyeing it takes a much greater range of colors than cotton and, therefore, fulfilled the requirements of the special polychromy of the Wari styles.

In the textile realm, there are at least three indications of the breakdown of the Wari empire or its dominance:

1. The disappearance from graves of the official Wari tunics of camelid fiber woven on big, upright looms at the larger workshops. They were woven on a warp horizontal to the design and use of the shirt. Tunics of this type, but of the latest and most stylized variants were found at Pachacamac by both Uhle and Gretzer (Uhle, 1903; Eisleb and Strelow, 1980). They belong to the same time and place as our group.
2. The disappearance of the special Wari insignia, such as the swastikalike motif and the masks, but retention of the minor geometric design elements: step frets and key frets; stylized snake and animal heads; fish or snake heads seen from above but with the mouth in profile; and a great number of small, filler designs, such as squares, triangles, crosses, and dots. All of these elements may be purely decorative, but they may also belong to a pan-Andean world where the gods from time immemorial have

manifested themselves through metaphors (Duviols, 1974).

3. The exclusive use of the backstrap loom, limiting the width of the web to the length of the arms that operate it. The maximum width, ca. 70 cm., is generally used only for plain weaves, while decorated textiles are seldom more than about 50 cm. wide. Truman Bailey (1946, p. 37 and fig. on p. 38) maintains that three or more people could work together on backstrap looms to produce wide weavings. It is obvious that very wide and long fabrics were produced in pre-Columbian Peru (e.g., O'Neale, 1936, p. 218; Strong, 1957, p. 16; Hald, 1962, p. 46). Whether the Middle Horizon workshops at Pachacamac undertook such tasks, and what sorts of looms they may have used are open questions that would be well worth investigation by expert weavers.

The shirts had to be sewn together of different webs, and warp direction was then vertical to the design and use. The decoration of the costume is centered around the neck and shoulders and woven with a camelid-fiber weft while the rest of the garment is in cotton plain weave.

It is an art to use different weaving techniques, woven together on the same warp, and the group of shirts we are discussing here are not alone in displaying this working method. To study the transition from one weaving technique to another is important because workshops or weaving centers may reveal themselves in such details.

The group of textiles that is presented in this paper still belongs to the period of Wari influence, but it also displays new trends in manufacture that may indicate a new *modus vivendi* and new methods of production.

May 19, 1983

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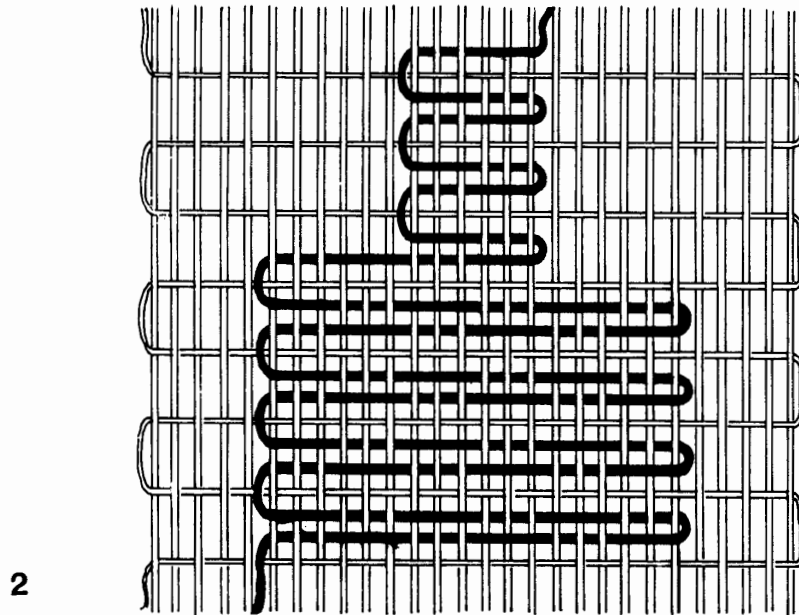
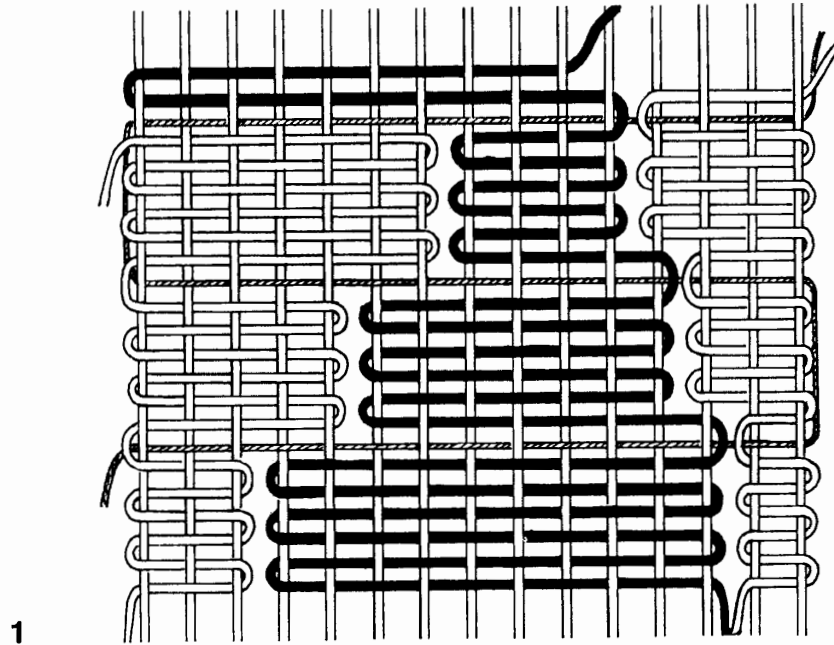
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#### KEY TO ILLUSTRATIONS

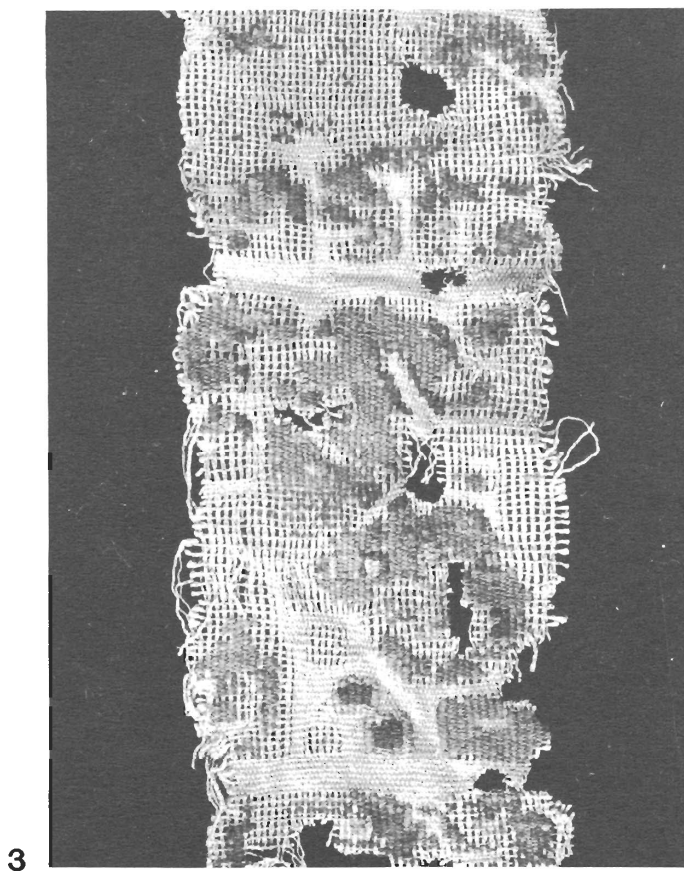
The photographs in figs. 6-8 are by the author. The drawings in figs. 4c, 5b, 6b, 7b, and 8b are by Eli Moen.

#### Page 72

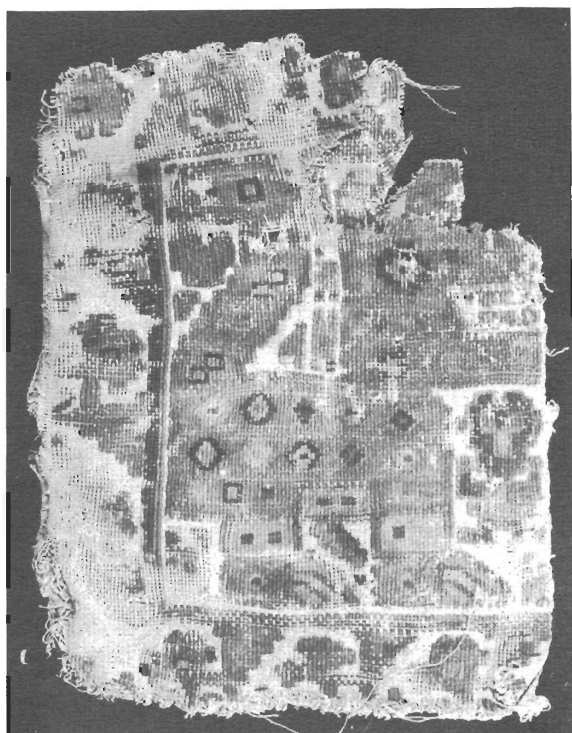
Fig. 9. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, specimen no. 1844-1898. Width of wefts: 15 cm. on the left side, 35.5 cm. on the right side, and 48 cm. in the center web. A second textile, not discussed in this paper, overlays the shirt(?) fragment to the right of the central decorated portion of the shirt. This second textile has been blocked out of the photograph for this article to avoid confusion.



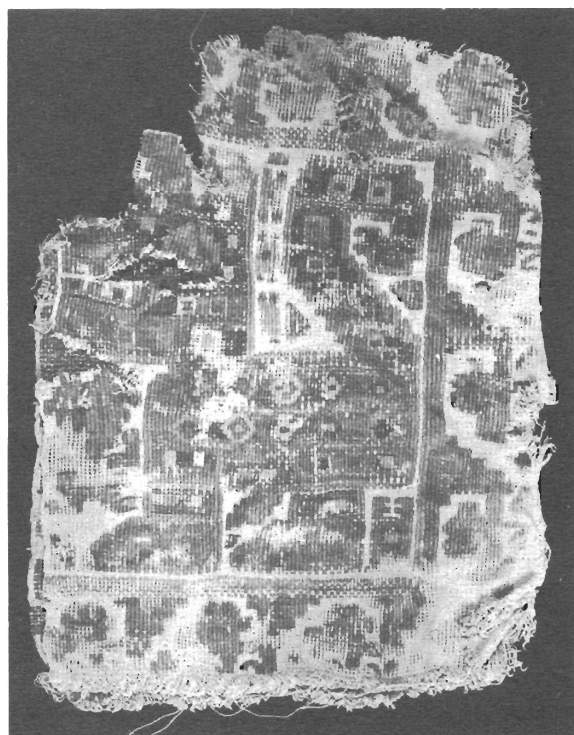
**Fig. 1.** Principle of reinforced tapestry. **Fig. 2.** Principle of tapestrylike brocading. Drawings courtesy of Maria Brekke Koppen and the Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.



3



4a



4b

Fragments in tapestrylike brocading from Garagay. **Fig. 3.** No. 073/128. **Fig. 4a.** No. 355b/128; **fig. 4b,** no. 355a/128. Photos courtesy of Rogger Ravines.

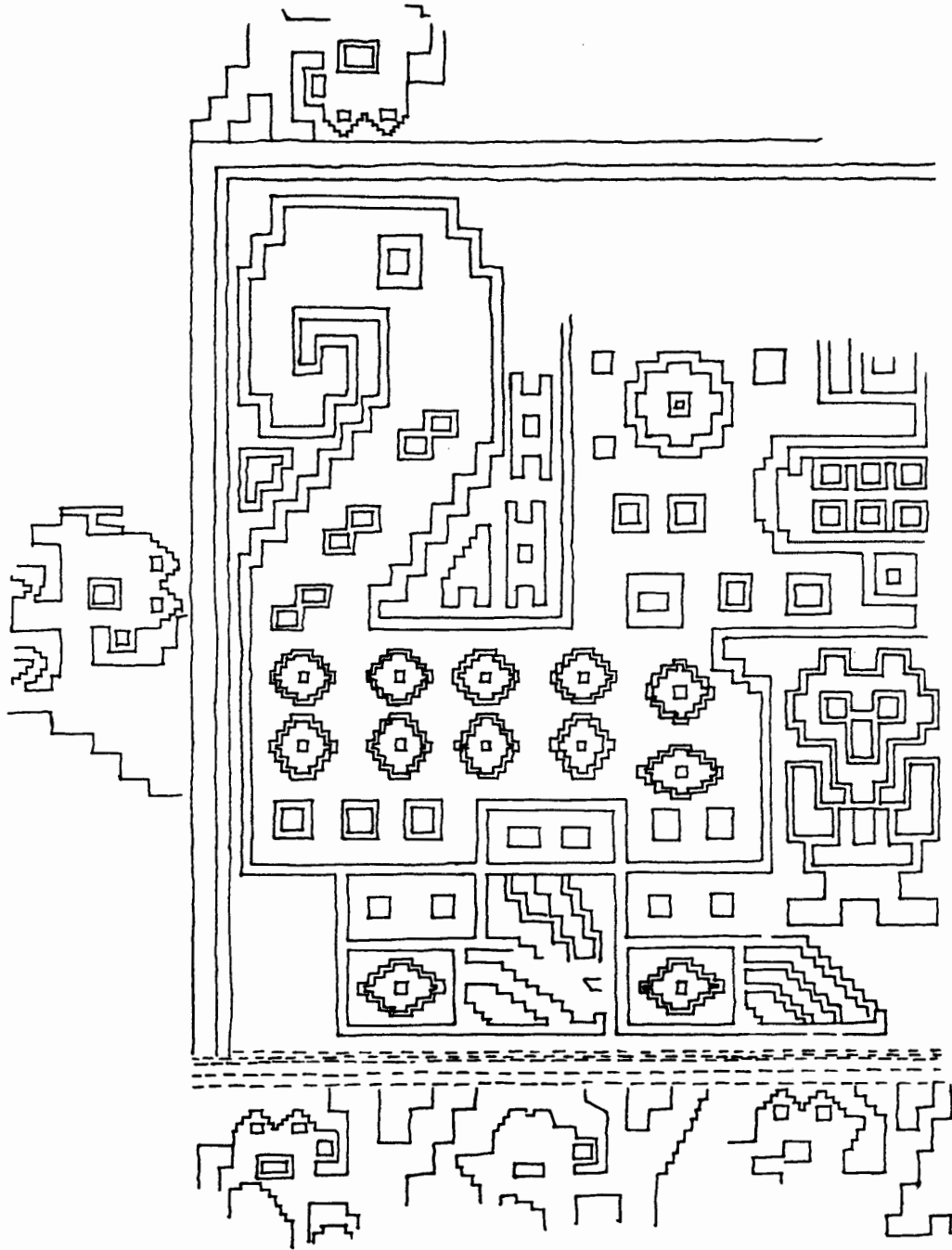
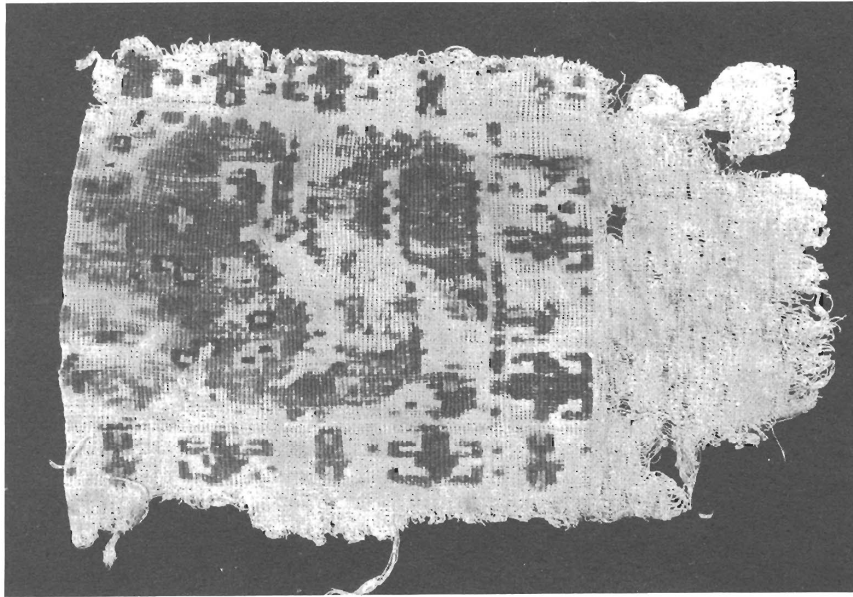
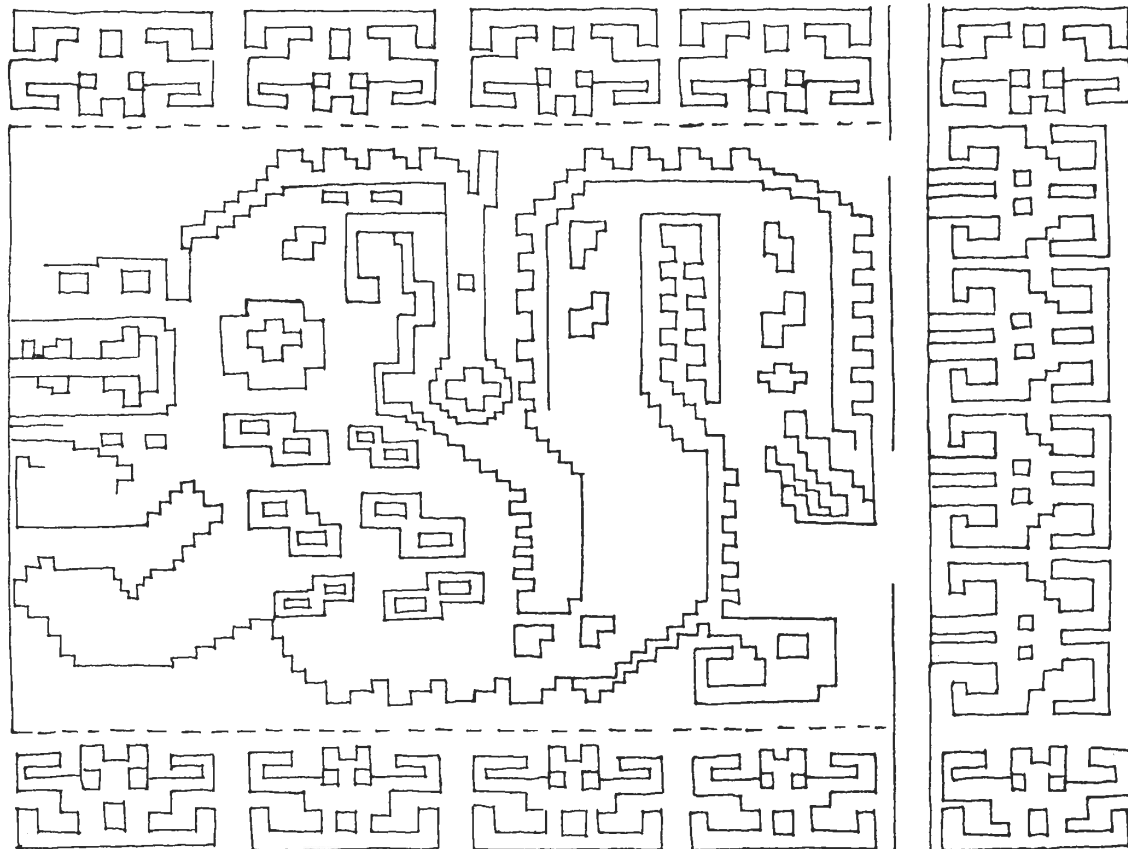


Fig. 4c. Design from fragment shown in fig. 4a. See Key to Illustrations.



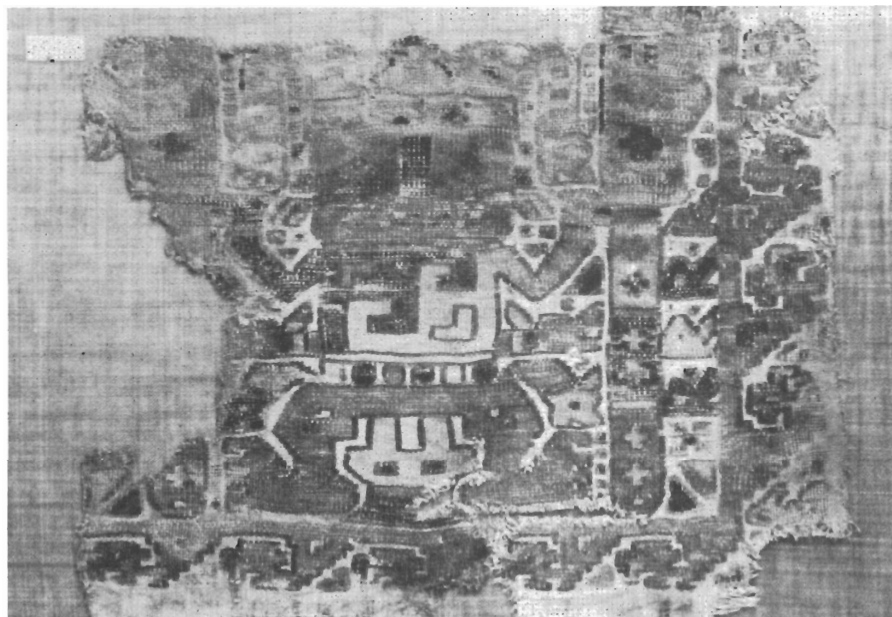
5a



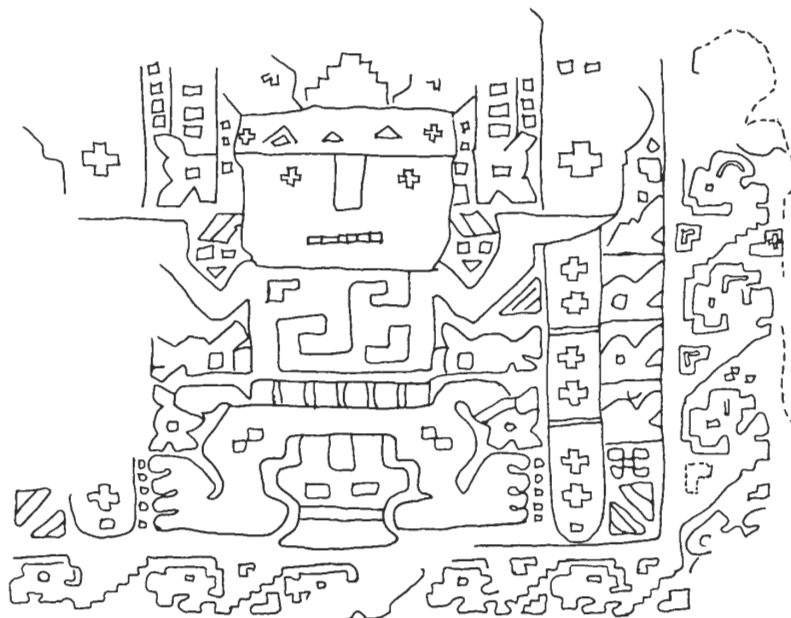
5b

**Fig. 5.** Fragment in tapestrylike brocading from Garagay, no. 1348/128. Photo courtesy of Rogger Ravines. See Key to Illustrations.





6a

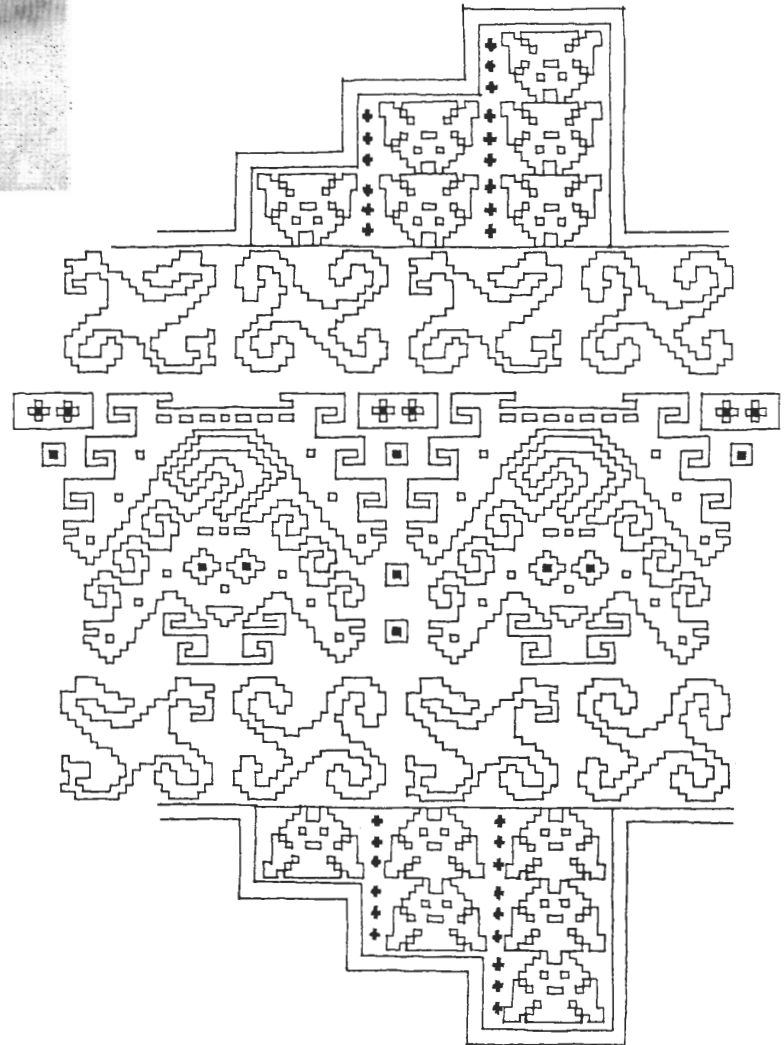


6b

**Fig. 6.** Fragment in tapestrylike brocade from Pachacamac. Gretzer Collection, Göteborg Etnografiska Museet, no. 29.26.42. See Key to Illustrations.



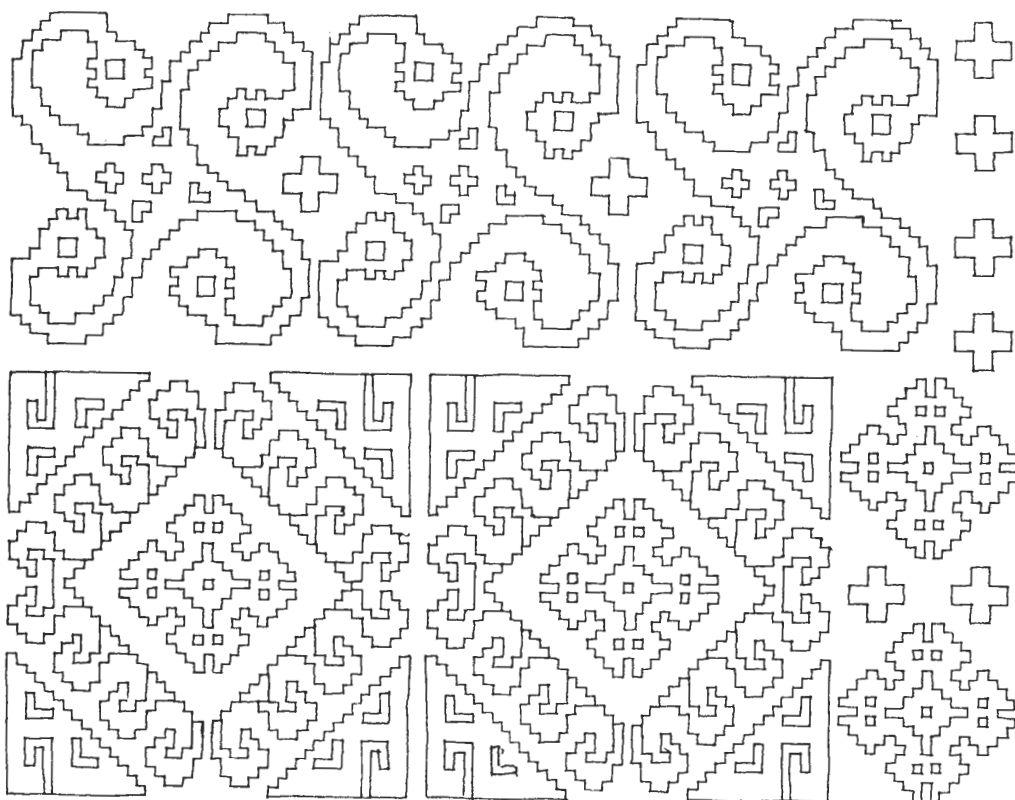
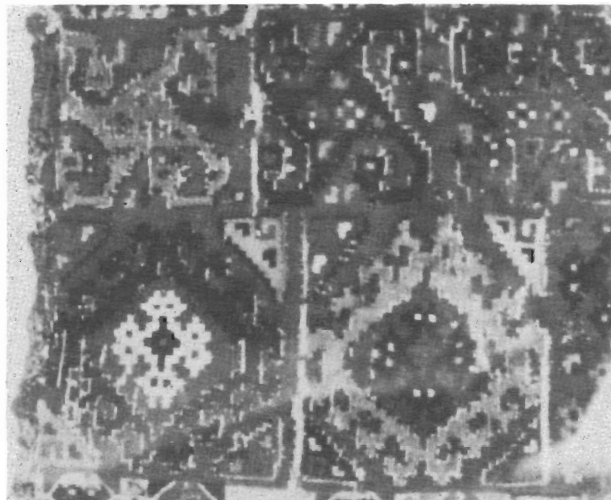
7a



7b

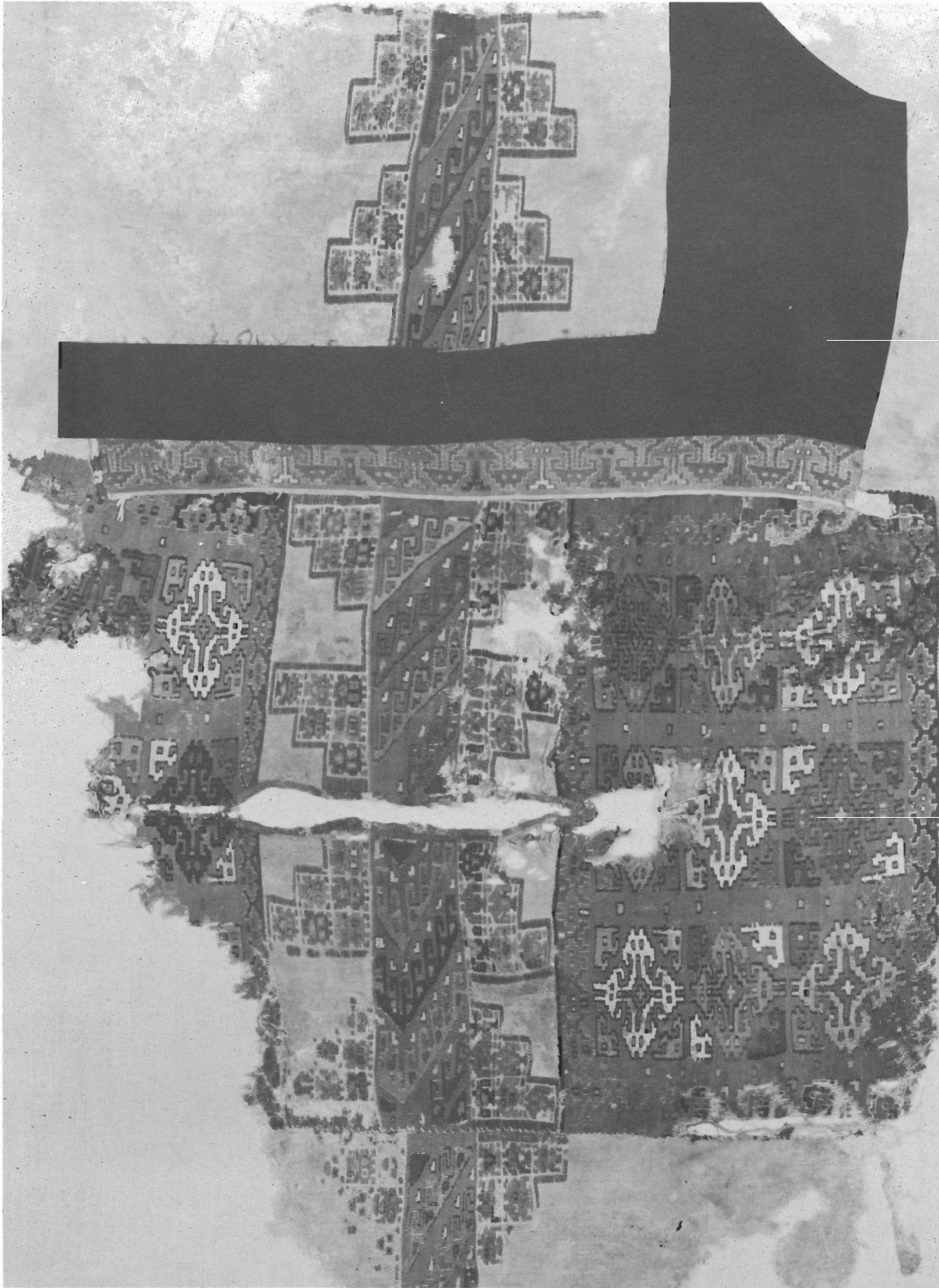
**Fig. 7.** Shoulder part of a shirt? Tapestrylike brocading and slit tapestry from Pachacamac. Gretzer Collection, Göteborg Etnografiska Museet, no. 21.6.191, acquired 1921. 31 × 34 cm. See Key to Illustrations.

8a



8b

**Fig. 8.** Shoulder part of a shirt? Tapestrylike brocading and slit tapestry from Pachacamac. Gretzer Collection, Göteborg Ethnografiska Museet, no. 21.6.124, acquired 1921. 27.3 × 19.6 cm. See Key to Illustrations.



**Fig. 9.** Fragment of a shirt(?) in tapestrylike brocading and slit tapestry. "From a burying ground in the neighbourhood of Lima." Photo (# 56395) courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum. See Key to Illustrations.