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Pottery Vessels from South America in the Form of Double-Headed Human Figures

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Having been for some time interested in representations of the human figure with two heads, as they occur in the traditional arts of peoples in various parts of the world,¹ I was recently able to extend my investigation of this subject by a series of visits to museums in the western part of South America. Among examples of double-headed human effigies which thus came to my attention, I noticed especially a number of *pottery vessels* which were, more or less clearly conceived in the form of such representations. As I came across an increasing number of such double-headed vessels in distinct ceramic traditions, it became clear to me that, despite their wide separation in space and often in time, at least some of these vessels must be regarded as being manifestations of a homogeneous and continuous tradition. Though it seems impossible, at least for the moment, to explain these correspondences in historical terms, it may serve a useful purpose to present the material as such, with a few comments, for the eventual consideration of others; and I welcome this opportunity to do so here in honor of my esteemed Danish colleague, Dr. Yde.

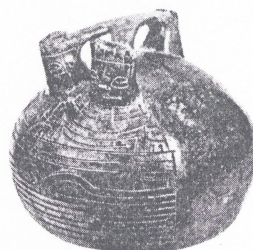
Among examples of double-headed vessels assembled on the two accompanying plates, by far the earliest is the Early Paracas vessel reproduced in Figure 3, dating from the latter half of the first pre-Christian millennium, and possibly as early as 600 B. C.² It seems that it was the intention of the potter to indicate a sexual differentiation between the two heads, that on the left being male and that on the right, female.³ A noteworthy feature of this vessel is the Y-shaped strap-handle connecting the two heads to a (broken) spout at the back; and also noteworthy, for comparison with other vessels now to be considered, is the fact that one of the two heads has an aperture at the top, to serve as either an air-vent or a secondary spout, while the other head is completely closed off and thus has no function. Although the double heads and the Y-shaped strap-handle of this vessel seem to be unique among known examples of Early Paracas pottery, other features of this vessel, such as the incised decoration (here limited to a square area on the front of the vessel and showing a mask of Chavinoid reminiscence), with surfaces between



1. N-W. Argentina.
Candelaria.



2. Central Chile.
Diaguita.



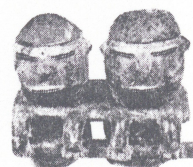
3. Peru.
Early Paracas.



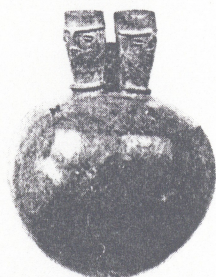
4. Bolivia.
Rio Beni.



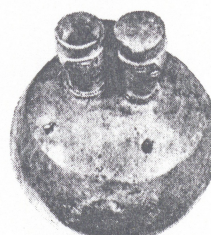
5. Ecuador.
Azuay.



6. Colombia.
Quimbaya.



7a. Colombia.
Chibcha.



7b. Colombia.
Chibcha.

Plate I. Pottery Vessels from South America in the Form of Double-Headed Human Figures.

Fig. 1.

Pottery vessel with incised and modelled decoration from Tafi, Tucumán Province, north-western Argentina. After the original in La Plata, Argentina, Museo de La Plata, 2777, collection Carlos Bruch. Height, 13.8 cm. A closely similar specimen, but with only one head and modelled feet, is illustrated by Serrano, 1958 and 1966, plate XX, 1, as "Condorhuasi negro grabado;" and in the latter publication on plate XXXVI are illustrated two specimens (figs. 1 and 2) of Candelaria ware which (according to a personal communication of the author) are especially comparable to the vessel of our Figure 1.

As a matter of fact, it seems that the two traditions of Candelaria and Condorhuasi are very close to each other, not only geographically and chronologically but also typologically, having many vessel shapes as well as decorative motifs in common; the chief difference between them being that Candelaria vessels have almost exclusively incised decoration and Condorhuasi vessels essentially the same designs carried out in paint. According to information kindly supplied by Dr. Alberto Rex González, the lowest level of the mound of El Mollar at Tafi yielded sherds of the Candelaria tradition and also material from which a radio-carbon dating of 0 to A.D. 100 was obtained; whereas Condorhuasi was dated at El Alamito as between A.D. 200 and 300. Presumably the vessel of our Figure 1 was made within the latter time-span, thus at some time within the second century.

Fig. 2.

Pottery vessel (so-called "jarro pato" or "duck-jar" because of its squat shape) with modelled and painted decoration in black and red (the latter on lips and eyes of the heads only), recovered in the course of salvage excavations conducted in 1966 at the site of a new municipal stadium at Ovalle, central Chile (grave 9, specimen 9). Classical phase of the Chilean Diaguita Culture, period of Incaic acculturation (1465-1541). After the original in the Archaeological Museum of Ovalle, Chile, with the kind help of Don Julio Broussain of the Ovalle Archaeological Society and of Mr. Gonzalo Ampuero of the Museum of La Serena, to whom I am also indebted for this information about the specimen.

Fig. 3.

Pottery vessel of burnished grey ware with modelled and incised decoration, originally painted after firing, from the Pisco peninsula, south central Peruvian coast. Type "Early Paracas" ("Paracas Cavernas"). After the original in Lima, Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología, 2/4319, collection Julio C. Tello, 1925. Height, ca. 15.2 cm. Published: Tello, 1929, fig. 114: "Wako de la Caverna II de Cerro Colorado con ornamentaciones de estilo Chavín;" also Bennett, 1946, pl. 21, d. On the Paracas style in general (but not with reference to this particular vessel) see, *inter alia*, Sawyer, 1966, especially pp. 72, 91, 102; and Menzel, Rowe & Dawson, 1964.

Fig. 4.

Fragmentary pottery vessel found in a burial unearthed by a road-crew while levelling a hill at El Sapecho, near Suapi on the upper Río Beni, Province of Nor Yungas, Department of La Paz, Bolivia. Altitude, between 800 and 1200 meters. After the original in La Paz, Museo Nacional de Arqueología, 5315, here reproduced by kind permission of the director, Prof. Gregorio Cordero M., who plans a thorough investigation of the area of El Sapecho and an exhaustive publication of its archaeology.

Several earlier finds of pottery on or near the upper Río Beni in Bolivia show characteristics reminiscent of this vessel from El Sapecho. Thus Nordenskiöld, 1924, fig. 7, reproduces a vessel from Chimay with a quasi-human "adorno" having a somewhat similar "button-face" (but single, not double); and Nordenskiöld, 1912-13, p. 219, figs. 47-50, shows rim-sherds from "Mound Velarde" with protruding "adornos" evidently in the form of human heads, two of which (figs. 47 and 50) are evidently in pairs. (I have not been able to examine the originals, which are in the State Ethnographical Museum in Stockholm). Finally, Nordenskiöld, 1930, pl. XLIV, *b*, reproduces another, fairly complete, bowl from the upper Beni with a pair of prosopomorphic "adornos" on the rim. (Illustration *c* on the same plate is the same specimen cited above from the author's publication of 1924). In all these instances it seems that the heads face inward rather than outward from the rims of the vessels: they are thus quite different in position and aspect than the faces in the bowl of our Figure 4.

Much closer to the arrangement of our Figure 4 is, strangely enough, a fragment of a bowl from coastal Ecuador, reproduced in our Figure 9. As can be seen, the "button-head" in low relief is here accompanied by an incised double zigzag line, which is at least remotely reminiscent of the incised "W" on the Río Beni vessel. Though it is impossible to go into the matter here, I may just say that I believe this combination of salient faces (or personages) with incised zigzag bands to be a very old, widespread and basic type of pottery decoration. The precise nature of the relationship between this Ecuadorian sherd and the Río Beni vessel (if they are indeed related) I must leave to others to determine.

Fig. 5.

Pottery vessel with modelled and impressed decoration of the two spouts, excavated by Max Uhle at Talcashapa, Azuay Province, Ecuador. Date uncertain. After the original in Quito. Museo Arqueológico de la Universidad Católica (formerly Museo Jijón y Caamaño), 5277, Height, ca. 14.5 cm. A very similar, though larger (height, 39 cm.) double-headed vessel, now in the Museo Arqueológico del Banco Central, Quito, was published by Collier & Murra, 1943, plate 8, 1.

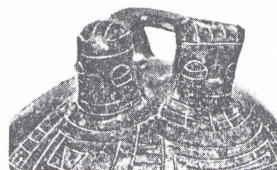
Fig. 6.

Broken-off neck of a Quimbaya vessel from Montenegro, Department of Caldas, Colombia. After the original in Bogotá, Museo Nacional, 39-I-2169. Dimensions of the fragment: height, about 12.5 cm.; width, ca. 15 cm. There is red paint on the headdresses and yellow paint on the faces. Published: Nachtigall, 1961, fig. 277.

It may be mentioned that there is also a double-headed figurine of pottery (but not a vessel) of the Quimbaya Culture in the National Museum of Bogotá (Nachtigall, fig. 239), which I hope to discuss on a later occasion.

Fig. 7.

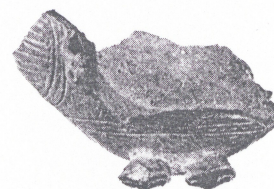
Pottery vessel of the Muisca (Chibcha) Culture; exact provenience unknown. After the original in Bogotá, Museo Nacional, 38-I-64. Height, ca. 29 cm. Reddish ware, with painted decoration still visible on the spout-faces. Published: Nachtigall, 1961, fig. 38.



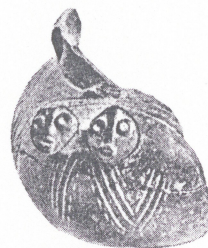
3a. Peru.
Early Paracas.



2a. Central Chile
Diaguita.



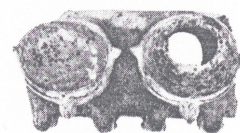
4b. Bolivia.
Río Beni.



4a. Bolivia. Río Beni.



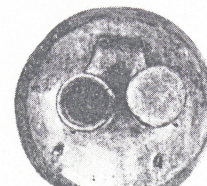
4c. Bolivia. Río Beni.



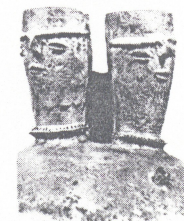
6a. Colombia. Quimbaya.



7c. Colombia. Chibcha.



7d. Colombia. Chibcha.



7e. Colombia. Chibcha.

the incisions left unburnished and slightly rough for the application of pigments after firing—a feature typical of the Early Paracas style.

Certain elements of the incised decoration of this vessel are, however, of special interest from the point of view of our investigation. Thus the “female” head at the right is distinguished from the “male” head at the left not only by a difference in headdress, as suggested by Sawyer,⁴ but by a different treatment of the neck: only the “female” head is provided with a kind of “necklace.” Also interesting to us is the incised representation of the “arms” and the “hands” evidently conceived as belonging to the figure (or figures) represented by the two heads: these members are three in number, rather than two or four as one might expect—a central arm serving both heads. If any conclusion is to be drawn from this ambiguity, it is, I think, that the potter was more influenced by considerations of space than by anatomical logic. At any rate, it seems to me that the intention was most probably to represent a two-headed figure with one body rather than two distinct but united figures. Though I do not know of any pottery vessel representing a human figure with two heads dating from a period earlier than this one in the New World, it should be remembered that the conception of a double-headed figure as such was already manifested in South America very much earlier, namely at about 2000 B.C., when double-headed figurines of pottery appeared in the Valdivia Culture of coastal Ecuador.⁵ Whatever the Paracas potter may have meant by combining a male and a female head on this vessel can only be guessed: the idea is, in a sense, natural enough, though we do not encounter such a clear sexual differentiation of the two heads again in the later vessels now to be considered.

Figure 1 represents a vessel of the so-called Candelaria ware from Tafi in the northwest Argentine province of Tucumán. The intention to represent a single human figure with two heads is here unmistakable, for this figure has but two arms; and the two slightly projecting stumps below the prominent knees are evidently rudimentary representations of its two legs. The two distinctly modelled breasts show that this deciphalous figure was conceived as female. On a level with the breasts but near the outside of the vessel two additional lumps evidently represent the shoulders, corresponding to the similarly emphasized knees. The incised body-decoration has its exact counterpart in the painted decoration of anthropomorphic vessels in a closely related tradition, that of Condorhuasi—though I do not know of any double-headed effigies among Condorhuasi vessels. Since the upper part of the head at the right of our specimen is broken, we do not know whether it ended in an open spout like the head at the left; but presumably it did so. Apart from the fact that this vessel represents a double-headed human figure, it shows little in common with the Early Paracas vessel of Figure 3: the heads of the Argentine vessel are free-standing and have no attached handle as in Paracas; and the Paracas vessel of course has no lateral loops for suspension. Chronologically, the Argentine vessel might be as much as a thousand years later than the Paracas vessel. The Condorhuasi-Candelaria tradition is known to have affinities

with the El Molle Culture which flourished in the early centuries of the Christian era on the corresponding western slopes of the Andes in Chile. In fact, one would expect to find a double-headed vessel very much like the Candelaria one in the El Molle Culture; but at least so far it seems that none is known.

For this reason it is all the more surprising to encounter at a very much later date in north central Chile a double-headed vessel which shows much closer similarities to the Early Paracas vessel of Figure 3, from which it is separated by a timespan perhaps double that separating the Paracas vessel from that of Tafi in northwestern Argentina. In Figure 2 is reproduced a two-headed vessel from a very late phase of the Chilean Diaguita Culture, when this culture came under strong Incaic influence—specifically between the years 1465 and 1541. Though this might be some two thousand years after the Paracas vessel of Figure 3 was made, this late Diaguita vessel yet shows, at least in its structure, a most remarkable degree of resemblance to the far earlier vessel. This is immediately apparent in the Y-shaped strap-handle connecting the two modeled heads with a spout at the back. Indeed, the only appreciable structural difference between this Diaguita vessel and the Paracas one is in the diameter of its spout, which is so ample that there was no need to provide a vent in one of the heads, as was done in the small-spouted Paracas vessel: both heads in the Diaguita vessel are closed at the top. Apart from the characteristically poor quality of the Diaguita pottery, it is of course easy to point out *stylistic* differences between this vessel and the Paracas one; but these differences are, I think, overshadowed by the structural resemblance. It must be added that the Diaguita vessel, however obviously related in structure to the Paracas one, was nevertheless conceived by the potter as representing two distinct human figures, since their bodies, each with two arms, are separately represented in the painted decoration on the body of the vessel under the two respective heads. (The “negative” effect of this painting does not indicate the use of a resist technique, but results simply from the fact that an original black pigment has flaked away from the relatively light-colored surface which it had for a time covered and protected against darkening). There is no clear indication of sex, unless the elaborate painted necklaces may be taken to indicate that both heads are female.

The persistence of what we might here call the Early Paracas type of double-human-headed pottery vessel in a very much later ceramic tradition to the south is, as I already indicated, extremely puzzling. One inevitably seeks for missing links; and the Argentine vessel of Figure 1, though evidently not in the direct line of descent, strongly suggests that the type must have been known in the intervening period on Chilean soil, most probably in the ambiance of the El Molle Culture which flourished in what later became the Diaguita area at about the same time that the Condorhuasi Culture flourished on the opposite side of the Andes. If a double-headed vessel existed in the El Molle Culture, it would, as already indicated, represent a period about half way between the dates of our Paracas and Diaguita specimens. Unfortunately it seems that double-headed ves-

sels are of relatively rare occurrence in most ceramic traditions; but perhaps one will yet come to light in a context of the El Molle Culture.

Of an entirely different character and yet again, evidently, inspired by the idea of a double-headed human figure is the decoration on a fragmentary vessel, Figure 4, recently found on the upper Río Beni in the tropical lowlands of eastern Bolivia and here reproduced by kind permission of the authorities of the National Museum of Archaeology in La Paz, in advance of their own projected publication of the archaeology of the region from which it comes. As can be appreciated from the photographs, the two heads are here rendered as button-like protuberances on the globular body of the vessel, with features primitively rendered in flat relief—"doughnut" eyes and mouth, and a simple vertical rod for the nose. Moreover, part of the incised decoration of the body of the vessel, which consists everywhere of series of parallel grooves flanked by rows of jab-marks, is isolated in the form of a letter W to serve as, or at least to suggest, the flexed arms of the figure underneath its two salient heads.

Whatever may be the ancestry of this vessel and its decoration, I venture to point out what seems to me a considerable degree of resemblance between its button-like double heads and those of a ceremonial wooden snuff-tray of recent manufacture (perhaps 19th century) from northwestern Brazil, as reproduced in Figure 8. Here the "doughnut" eyes of the Río Beni pot have their obvious counterpart in shell beads forming the eyes of the wooden heads; and these heads have similar noses, a similar outline and saliency, and above all the same duplication as on the Río Beni pot. The incised and lime-filled decoration of the snuff-tray, moreover, even though it is somewhat different in character from the incised decoration of the Bolivian vessel, may be regarded as generically related to it. However great the distance separating the upper Beni from the upper Uaupés (Wassén attributes the snuff-tray to the Tucano of the Brazil-Columbia border region: see the list of illustrations), this resemblance at least suffices to indicate the Amazonian lowland affinities of the Bolivian vessel. Whatever other elements may have contributed to its inspiration I shall not attempt to say.

For some reason the idea of a pottery vessel in the form of a double-headed human figure seems to have caught on especially well in Ecuador: at least the type recurs more frequently in archaeological collections from the Ecuadorian highlands than it seems to do from other parts of South America. The idea finds expression in various forms: for reproduction here as Figure 5 I have chosen a vessel from the province of Azuay. The two heads are modified spouts, both open at the top, and there is no attempt to show details of a human body on the body of the vessel, which has the lentoid shape of a canteen. (Another specialty of Ecuadorian highland potters is the *three-headed* vessel with, generally, a large central head dominating two smaller ancillary ones at its sides; there are also two-headed vessels with one head larger than the other, suggesting, perhaps, derivation from the image of a mother and child. In so far as these varieties seem to be



Fig. 8.

Ceremonial wooden snuff-tray from the Amazon basin, Brazil. After a museum photograph of the original in Oslo, Universitetets Etnografiske Museum, 1169. Height, 20 cm. For additional views of the specimen and a discussion of its cultural significance and relationships, see Wassén, 1965, pp. 68-74.

limited to Ecuador, I am inclined to regard them as aberrations from the basic two-headed figure, which has a much wider geographical distribution and demonstrably a very long history).

With the last two examples of this series, Figure 6 from the Quimbaya and Figure 7 from the Chibcha, both of Colombia, we return to the problem which confronted us when considering the Diaguita pot from Chile, Figure 2. For here again, at the opposite extreme of western South America, we have to do with specimens of evidently late traditions showing strong indications of relationship to an early Peruvian specimen, the Paracas vessel of Figure 3.

The Quimbaya specimen, Figure 6, is not a complete vessel but only the broken-off neck, or necks, of one. In so far as it has two spouts, one functional, the other closed off at the top, this specimen may be described as belonging to the Paracas type. Both spouts are here anthropomorphic in the proper sense, rather than prosopomorphic like all the other specimens under consideration; for they represent complete human figures rather than faces: hence the lost body of the vessel can hardly have been conceived as the body of a double-headed human figure. In this respect, as also in its lack of a Y-shaped strap-handle, the Quimbaya vessel might be regarded as aberrant from the Paracas-Diaguaita "norm" or "axis." However, in the Chibcha vessel of Figure 7 we again find most of the structural features of the Paracas vessel combined: a pair of prosopomorphic spouts, one open and the other closed, connected to the body by a Y-shaped strap-handle. Apart from expectable stylistic differences, the only major structural difference from the Paracas vessel is here the absence of another spout at the back: in practical terms the absence of such a spout can be accounted for by the adequate diameter of the spout formed by one of the heads. "Necklaces" suggest that both heads were conceived as female. That the body of the vessel was regarded as the body of a human figure may be inferred from the two curious protuberances on its shoulder, which presumably represent rudimentary limbs—perhaps arms, or even legs. (Compare the rudimentary "legs" of the Candelaria vessel, Figure 1).

Finally, if it be agreed that structural resemblances outweigh stylistic differences, we can, I think, only conclude that the total picture is, or may at least be tentatively presented as, one of slow diffusion from a central point, represented roughly by the Early Paracas vessel of the Peruvian coast, Figure 3, both southward (Figures 1 and 2) and northward (Figures 6 and 7), with the earliest forms surviving at the remotest points, diametrically opposite the center. This is, of course, an hypothesis. It goes without saying that there are enormous temporal and spatial gaps which it would be nice to have filled with factual evidence; but in the mean time and in the hope that additional bits of evidence may come to light, the hypothesis is here presented as such.



NOTES

1. A preliminary report on this theme was the subject of my communication at the 37th International Congress of Americanists in Mar del Plata, Argentina, on September 30th, 1966. It was after this congress that I made the South American trip which brought to my attention the materials presented in this article.
2. This date is suggested by Alan Sawyer in a recent letter regarding the vessel here reproduced as Figure 3. Sawyer points out that the form of the eyes in the two heads of this vessel is "quite Chavinoid and is limited to the earlier part of the Early Paracas period." (Letter of January 31, 1967, addressed to Junius Bird).
3. Thus Sawyer, in the letter just cited, says: "I interpret the rounded head form with peaked cap (at left of this vessel and Fig. 149, my book) as male, the square headdress at right as female. Both are fairly common Early Paracas types, but this is the only pot I know of where they are shown together."
4. See note 3.
5. See Meggers, Evans and Estrada, 1965, plate 123, *cc-ee*. Actually, not all the double-headed figurines so far recovered from the Valdivia Culture have been published. There are several complete ones and several more fragments than are illustrated by these authors.

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Fig. 9.
Rim-sherd of a bowl found at a depth of 80 cm. in a "tola" or mound at Palmar, between San Pablo and Valdivia on the Guayas coast of Ecuador. Date uncertain; perhaps Guangala Phase? After the original in Amsterdam, Tropenmuseum, 2908/84. Width, 14.4 cm. Published: Feriz, 1960, fig. 54 (drawing).

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Report on Ethnographic Procedures¹

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I.

In the spring of 1964 a group of anthropologists gathered in San Cristóbal Las Casas, Chiapas (Mexico) to form a team the efforts of which were directed at the exploration of the ranges and types of drinking patterns among the Highland Mayas and Spanish speaking Ladinos.²

The project represented the realization of plans which Gerald E. Williams and Duane G. Metzger had been developing during their own investigation of native categories and the method by which these can most profitably be subject to classification and analysis (Metzger and Williams 1962, 1963a, 1963b). What they had in mind was a comprehensive testing of propositions about some specifiable techniques of data collecting, based on the formalized recording of verbal interaction between informant and investigator.

This new approach to ethnography, which is the outcome of collaboration between linguists and social anthropologists, emerged with the studies of "cognitive systems" (Frake 1961, 1962 and Conklin 1955, 1962a, 1962b), but is also clearly related to "componential analysis" (Goodenough 1956) and the various works subsumed under the heading of "ethnography of communication" (Hymes 1962, 1964; Gumperz & Hymes 1964).

The point of view adopted for the study of cognitive systems, is that "not even the most concrete, objectively apparent physical object can be identified apart from some culturally defined system of concepts."³ Actually this thought has constituted the underlying notion of kinship studies since the days of Morgan. Only recently has it been recognized that the methodological rigor of kinship analysis may be applied to phenomena other than genealogical relations, i.e. we introduce in our investigation of cognitive systems, as a matter of course, that the denotative range of native categories must be determined empirically in each case (cf. Frake 1962).—But to undertake such a task we need a general technique of eliciting of data which produces stability of pattern and replicability of the steps that led to formulation of such a pattern.

Stability and *replicability*, then, constitute the key concepts in the thinking characteristic of the collaborators in Chiapas 1964. In the following I shall try to delimit and explicate these concepts and related ideas. Portions of my own