

“Rhinoceroses” in a Mochica Vessel

What is the Origin of These pre-Hispanic Images?



The extraordinary pre-Hispanic Mochica vessel with the representation of *Rhinocerotidae* (Photograph by Rafael Videla Eissmann, 2021).

A Representation That Should Not Be

An extraordinary vessel of the Mochicas has representations of what at first glance are two rhinoceroses.

The lavish Mochica or Moche Culture (Ca. 2nd – Ca. 7th century), developed in the valley of the Moche River –in the current Province of Trujillo, in the Department of La Libertad in Peru–, extending towards the valleys of the northern coast North.

Among its wonders, the pyramidal constructions, a rich jewelry and ceramics that, as a whole, reflect its worldview stand out.

The mentioned vessel is made up of the upper half of a concave lenticular base on which another figure, also lenticular, is found. Two perspectives are fundamental in the observation of this piece: In the first –horizontal– two stylized cones are observed that project in the opposite direction and are joined by an arch or handle that has triangular incisions –eleven on one side and fourteen on the other–. Meanwhile, the zoomorphic representations –the “rhinoceroses”– are located under the two cones. Only one of these representations has the typical κερως –*keros* or “horn”– of the *Rhinocerotidae*.

The vertical perspective, secondly, allows the observation in the upper part –or pole– of the lenticular body of a circle in relief and a line in its contour –the Sun?– from which four equidistant anthropomorphic figures *descend* that are characterized by the prominence of their heads –which are remarkably similar to certain representations of Mesoamerican *gods* such as that of Quetzalcóatl under the epithet of Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, that is, *Lord of the House of Dawn* (Venus)–.

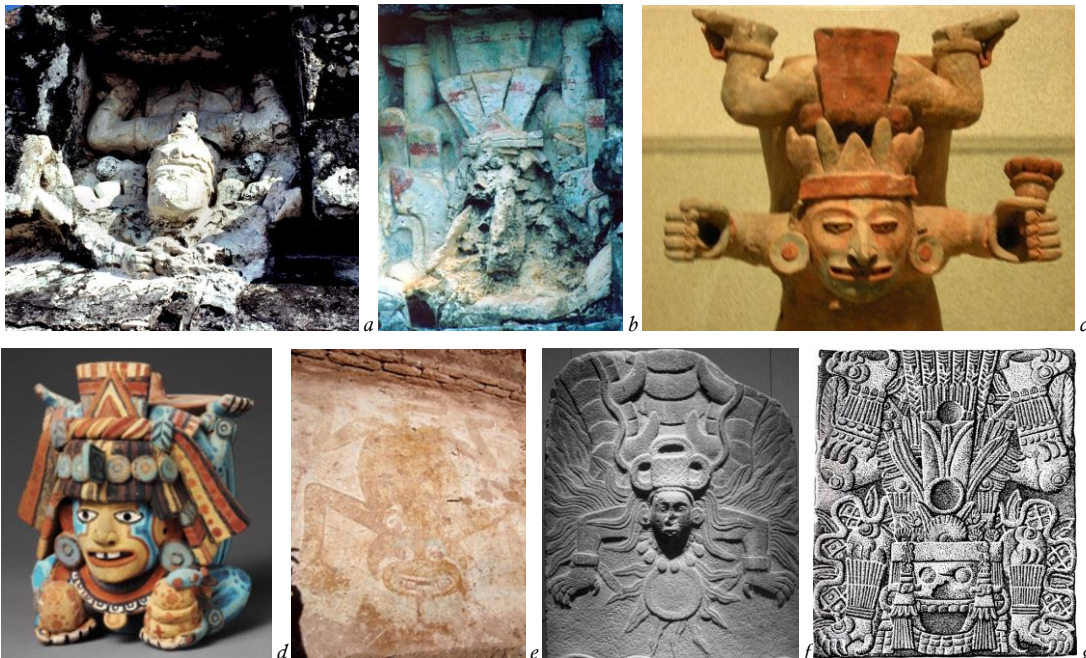
These figures have four fingers on their hands.



Detail of the four anthropomorphic figures descending from the “circle” or “disc”
 (Photographs by Rafael Videla Eissmann, 2021).



Left: The circle in relief from which the anthropomorphic figures descend. *Right:* Detail of an anthropomorphic figure: His hands have four fingers (Photographs by Rafael Videla Eissmann, 2021).



Mesoamerican representations of god-men descending from the firmament. a, b. Tulum (Mexico). *c.* Mayan figure (Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia de Ciudad de México). *d.* Post-classic Maya figure (Princeton University Art Museum). *e.* Representation on one of the walls of the pyramidal platform that is located on the top of Cerro Colorado, near Coxcatlán, in Puebla, Mexico. *f.* Aztec relief (Mexico). *g.* Illustration of god descending from heaven.

The stylized cones have holes at their upper ends, a fact that allows us to presume that the piece originally constituted a liquid container and, due to the figures depicted, it can be deduced that it had a magical-religious nature.

The height of the vessel reaches 18.4 cm. The width of the base is 10 cm. The width of the lenticular body, meanwhile, is 12 cm. The greatest width –from cone to cone– is 22.6 cm.

The dimensions of the anthropomorphic figures range from 5 to 5.8 cm and their width –from arm to arm– between 4 and 4.5 cm.

The cones reach about 10.8 cm. The circle in relief is 3.1 cm and the line in its contour 4 cm.



Detail of both sides of the bow or handle with triangular inscriptions
(Photographs by Rafael Videla Eissmann, 2021).

Now, obviously, these representations contravene all the postulates of the prevailing archeology and historiography, since they undermine the foundations of the historical notion.

This, because in the pre-Hispanic world there were no *Rhinocerotidae*. But then, how can these representations be explained? The first thing skeptics will say is that it is a subjective observation –*you see what you want to see*– and that it is simply a stylization of some native species or the result of the artist's fertile imagination...

However, the representations of rhinoceroses are there –the characteristics are unmistakable–, a fact that raises some essential questions: How did the artist come to capture the distinctive features of a real species, existing on other continents? Could it be ventured that there was an incursion of pre-Hispanic adventurers to Africa or Southeast Asia in periods not covered by orthodox historiography and that it was sought to preserve, ultimately, the knowledge of this species through an artistic manifestation? Or, was there an incursion of African or Asian adventurers who arrived in pre-Hispanic Peru and who were able not only to establish adequate communication with the locals but also gave a description of an animal unimaginable in South America and that would have been perpetuated through the iconography that we observe today?

But can there be another explanation? Yes. And it goes further, far beyond the difficult transoceanic incursions –which should not be ruled out, by the way– since it goes back to the pre-Hispanic chronology to a distant past that does not fit with the archaeological and historiographical reconstruction.



A wonderful ideographic set in the ceremonial plaza of the Huaca de la Luna, a Mochica pyramidal structure that allows to glimpse the vastness of this pre-Hispanic civilization.



Left: A stunning Mochica mask carved in gold and belonging to the trousseau of the Lord of Sipán. Note the blue color of the eyes in this representation. *Right:* Geographic location of the Moche culture in Peru.

A Very Distant Remembrance

The modern rhinoceros family –*Rhinocerotidae*– first appeared in the **Late Eocene** in Eurasia. There were about twenty-six genera in Eurasia and North America –of small dimensions– that began to become extinct in the **Middle Oligocene**, with various independent lineages. In chronological terms, the rhinos known today have a truly impressive ancestry: Their first relatives walked the planet some 50 million years ago! Among them are the *Paraceratherium* (34 m. y. a. - 23 m. y. a.), the *Menoceras* (23 m. y. a. - 5 m. y. a.), the *Teleoceras* (5.33 m. y. a. - 2.59 m. y. a.), the *Elasmotherium* (2.5 m. y. a. - 26,000 years) and the *Coelodonta antiquitatis* or woolly rhinoceros (2.5 m. y. a. - 11,700 years).

The short-legged, stocky-bodied *Teleoceras* of North America became

extinct in the **Pliocene**.

Very significantly, the study by geologist and paleontologist Donald R. Prothero entitled *The Evolution of North American Rhinoceroses* (2005) establishes their appearance in the north of the American continent around 40 million years ago and that it diversified into an incredible variety of taxa, with a variety of ecologies that bear no resemblance to those of the five surviving species.

A known fact is that African rhinoceroses have two horns while Asian rhinoceroses may have one, none or only the males.

Then? The answers raise more questions.

The Mochica vessel with the representations of the *Rhinocerotidae* would be a late memory of an extinct species –which species is impossible to determine– but there was direct knowledge to the point of having captured its form through art. And this art obeyed at the same time scientific knowledge –it is a naturalistic register whose origin, development and functions we do not know–. Has the Mochica vessel the representation of the *Floridaceras whitei* whose fossil records have been discovered between Florida and Panama? Or, could it correspond to a representation of the Eurasian *Coelodonta antiquitatis* known to the Ice Age shaman-hunters who arrived in America?



Left: Rhinoceroses in the Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc cave, in the Ardèche Department, southern France (La Grotte Chauvet-Pont d'Arc-Ardèche). *Right:* Skeleton of a woolly rhinoceros (*Coelodonta antiquitatis*) at the Yuka Exhibition in Yokohaman (Photograph by Joel Abroad, July 2013).



Indian, Sumatran, and Javan rhinoceroses, respectively.



Detail of the “rhinoceros” in the Mochica vessel
(Photographs by Rafael Videla Eissmann, 2021).



Detail of the hornless zoomorphic figure in the Mochica vessel
(Photographs by Rafael Videla Eissmann, 2021).

Another History

Certainly, historiography does not repair –it cannot do it– in a piece of this nature. The reason? It does not fit in the historical reconstruction. However, connoisseurs of the archaeological remains, of the human groups and of the landscape, glimpsed distant transcontinental relationships. This is the case of Percy Harrison Fawcett, who in his exploration notes in the Amazon wrote: [Édouard Louis] *Trovessart was right in deducing that at the end of the Tertiary Period the two Americas were not united and that Brazil was a gigantic island. Further to the west was another island, now the Pacific coast, which –if anything can be inferred from the area of comparatively shallow soundings– extended to Easter Island in the south. To the north of the current Amazon River there may have been another island, extending north into the Caribbean Sea. Between these islands there were arms of the ocean, and the Caribbean joined the Atlantic with the Pacific.*

It is not too much to infer that a great continent or an archipelago of enormous islands was disintegrating in the Pacific, simultaneously with the changes that formed the current physiognomies of the Americas. The remains that can be found on the Marquesas and Sandwich Islands, in the Carolinas, Tahiti, Pitcairn and dozens of other islands, form

*a convincing argument for this theory. According to [Joseph Dalton] Hooker, there are seventy-seven species of plants common to New Zealand, Tasmania, and South America*¹.

That *great continent or an archipelago of enormous islands* that disintegrated in the Pacific Ocean would have been the transit space from one continent to another since the end of the Tertiary.

Subsequently, this continental mass or archipelago was covered by the waters. The distant memory of lands beyond the horizon remained –on both continents– until this memory was perpetuated through *myth*.

This new orographic condition was not an impediment for transoceanic trips. In this sense, Professor Hugo Gunkel Lürer in *El origen del hombre americano según el naturalista chileno Juan Ignacio Molina* (“The Origin of the American Man According to the Chilean Naturalist Juan Ignacio Molina”, 1965) has synthesized the approaches and the validity of Molina’s studies, who in a memory presented approximately between 1818 and 1820 in the Pontifical Academy of Bologna entitled *Sulla propagazione succesiva del genero umano* (“On the Successive Propagation of the Human Race”), referring to the peopling of America, has pointed out that the first route *is through the strait discovered by Cook*². *The “Tschuski”, who occupied precisely the easternmost promontory of Asia, were probably the first to cross the nearby channel, and to spread out along the western coasts of America in search of game, which is abundant there, and finding a warmer climate that the own settled down. Their example was gradually followed by various hordes of the numerous tribes who with various languages and customs roam the deserts of Chinese Tartary. Little by little, these hordes took possession of the most populated regions of North America as far as the Gulf of Mexico, and specifically of those that currently enjoy an enviable peace under the domination of the United States. A few centuries later, the Mexicans arrived by the same road, coming undoubtedly from a more cultured nation, who pushed the barbarians who lived there northward; they extended to the Isthmus of Panama, and in those fertile provinces they founded the great elective empire of Mexico which in the year 1521, due to the misconduct of the penultimate emperor, was conquered by the Spaniards.*

The grandiose advances that remain of their buildings, the gardens of the people they cultivated, and their capital built like Venice, almost in the center of a great salt lake, more than fifty miles in circumference, with three streets of communication leading to the neighboring countryside, and provided on the sides with freshwater aqueducts to supply the city, give a great idea of its intelligence in the mechanical arts and its codes written with hieroglyphic characters and its perpetual calendar, explained by the learned American [Francisco Javier] Clavijero and our scholar [Giuseppe Gasparo] Mezzofanti, show that they were by no means ignorant in the useful sciences.

(...)

On the other hand, the primitive inhabitants of South America, of a much calmer and less superstitious nature than that of the northerners, resemble, insofar as it seems to me

¹ Fawcett, P. H. *Exploración Fawcett*. Page 367.

In his records Fawcett partially reconstructed the remote American geography by establishing an *island to the south, extending from what now forms the western coast of Guatemala beyond the Galápagos and southward at 20° below the equator. Eastern-central Brazil formed a fourth island from 9° to 25° south latitude, extending from the Paraguay River to about 5° beyond the present Atlantic coast* (Pages 368-369).

The naturalist and anthropologist José Imbelloni, for his part, determined the first isoglossematic chain between the islands of the Pacific Ocean and the American continent (See Dowling Desmadryl, J. *Religión, chamanismo y mitología mapuche*. Page 55 and 57).

² The *Cook Strait*, later known as *Bering Strait* (*Author’s note*).

that they did not have origins in the aforementioned Tartar races, nor that they arrived in America by the Cook Strait.

They are commonly said to originate from the West. **East India is precisely located to their west. Many of the customs of the Peruvians and Chileans, who are the most cultured peoples of this part of the New Continent, prove this descendency.** After the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope and the Strait of Magellan, the Europeans, crossing the immense Pacific Sea, that is to say the South, found and continue to find an incredible number of islands formed mostly by coral polyyps, not far from the one from the other and extended to the western coasts of America, among which are the vestiges of some habitable in other times, and now submerged either by the volcanoes that are common or by the erosion of the ocean. Through this group of islands, various indigenous tribes expelled by internecine wars or desirous of establishing themselves better, arrived either by swimming, or in small boats, to the still uncultivated coast of America. From there, spreading rapidly due to the kindness and fertility of the climate, they spread throughout the vast province, where, depending on the greater or better industry, they founded various societies that became savage over time, such as those of Brazil, the Amazon, Paraguay, or vast empires like that of Bogotá, which lasted so little, or that of Peru, which under the paternal government of its sovereign called Inca extended from Ecuador to the Tropic of Capricorn, and was preserved for more than four hundred years...

The time when the Peruvians and Chileans emigrated from India seems to be well after the time when other barbarian nations from the same region settled in the territories they still occupy in much of South America³. I believe that this emigration is contemporary with or shortly after Alexander's excursion to the mouth of the Indus. The knowledge that Chileans have had since ancient times, not to mention that of the Peruvians, of the art of weaving, of dyeing, of the melting of metals, of the cultivation of grasses, used in their fermented bread with yeast, of the tactics military, hydraulics, astronomy, chess games, tables and ball; and, above all, the construction of their language in which the dual, the aorist and the participle exist in all tenses, the existence of all composition genres; and one that is to be admired, **the large number of clearly Greek words and with the same meaning, leave no doubt about the Greek-Indo origin⁴.** It is true that all kinds of writing are lacking, but the Indians did not have at that time, according to Megastene, the use of alphabetic signs, which they learned after the Phoenicians or the Hebrews, transforming them in their own way.

At the same time or shortly after –continues Gunkel Lüer– the establishment of this Asian colony in America, northwestern Europe also contributed to forming its population long before Columbus' expedition. The Norwegians, constrained by the sterility of their country, had long since begun to travel the seas to procure their livelihood either by piracy, for which they were famous, or by whaling, in search of which they discovered the coasts of Labrador and of Greenland, where they left some colonies. Their descendants have occupied the northernmost part of America, analogous in its rigorous temperature to that of their homeland, up to the strait discovered by Cook. That is why their customs and peculiarities are observed there, quite different from those of other Americans. Indeed, in

³ The highlights are ours (Author's note).

Various authors and researchers such as Juan Ignacio Molina, Belisario Díaz Romero, Óscar Fonck Sieveking and Jorge Dowling Desmadryl, among others, established connections in ancient times between Hindustan and Chile.

⁴ Bernardino Martín Mínguez, at the IV International Congress of Americanists, determined that Egyptians and Greeks arrived in America in pre-Columbian times. See the *Actas del IV Congreso Internacional de Americanistas* ("Acts of the IV International Congress of Americanists". Madrid, 1881). (Pages 299-302).

other minor differences, and against the constant use of those, they pride themselves on having a longer, thicker beard. In addition, their language has a lot of affinity with that of Lapps and Norwegians.

Many centuries later, at the time of the establishment of the first foreigners in America, the Polynesia of the Pacific Ocean was entirely occupied by a numerous nation apparently from the southern regions of Asia. Divided into several tribes, it spread over New Zealand, through the archipelagos of the Friends of the Society or Sandwich. The physiognomy, character and language of all these tribes bear a strong resemblance to those of the "Malesi", who live in the peninsulas and islands of East India. It seems an insoluble problem, according to Cook, to explain how these inhabitants passed to America, considering the immense distance and the little or no practice of these peoples in long-distance navigation. However, there is no doubt that there is the same language and the same population in the islands located 1,600 leagues from east to west, and 1,200 leagues from north to south.

(...)

Professor Gunkel Lür has synthesized the postulates of Abbe Juan Ignacio Molina defining the emigration routes that populated America as follows:

- i) From Asia, passing to America through the Sea or Behring Strait;
- ii) From Polynesia, etc., arriving across the Pacific to the western shores of America; and
- iii) from boreal Europe that populated the eastern part of North America⁵.

The immigration from India to Peru and Chile outlined here –*the time when Peruvians and Chileans emigrated from India*– could at least partially explain the presence of the "rhinoceroses" in the Mochica vessel.

In his work entitled *Les Hommes Fossiles* ("The Fossil Men", 1923), Marcellin Boule stated a fundamental premise that continues to be valid: *The history of the New World does not begin until the sixteenth century. On the other hand, its prehistory is immense in time and space. It is expressed, apart from some traditions, by monuments of all kinds, scattered over formidable expanses. In the eyes of the wise, America remains as mysterious as it was at the time of the Conquistadores.*

The Glacial Cosmogony and the Tertiary Man

We intuit that the Mochica vessel belongs to a link in a long pre-Hispanic cognitive chain that sought to preserve its knowledge through the image –*imago*–. But –again–, what was the initial model?

Our knowledge is expressed in the *Glacial Cosmogony* (1913) by Hans Hörbiger and Philipp Fauth.

This, because according to the *Glacial Cosmogony* the presence of man is remote: Hörbiger conceives the possibility that man existed in the Primary or Paleozoic Era and from which different branches-species emerged with different degrees of *evolutions* and *involution*s in dissimilar directions and sequences⁶.

This Primary Man (*Primär-human*) became parallel to the development of

⁵ Gunkel Lür, H. *El origen del hombre americano según el naturalista chileno Juan Ignacio Molina*. Page 43 and following.

⁶ Hörbiger, H. & Fauth, Ph. *Hörbigers Glazial Kosmogonie. Eine neue Entwicklungsgeschichte des Weltalls und des Sonnensystems*. Page 510-527.

other species of hominids –*homo*– conditioned in and by the interregnums of the great catastrophes⁷.

A scheme of the antiquity of man according to the *Glacial Cosmogony*, presents the following chronology:

<i>Primary Man:</i>	Paleozoic Era: 542.0 ± 1.0 m. y. a. - 251.0 ± 0.4 m. y. a.
<i>Secondary Man:</i>	Mesozoic Era: 251.0 ± 0.4 m. y. a. - 65.5 ± 0.3 m. y. a.
<i>Tertiary Man:</i>	Cenozoic Era: 65.5 ± 0.3 m. y. a. - ± 500,000 years.
<i>Quaternary Man:</i>	Started ± 13,000 years ago, when the Moon was <i>captured</i> by the Earth ⁸ .

It is thus understood, then, that *Tertiary Man* (65.5 ± 0.3 m. y. a. - ± 500,000 years) was contemporary to the *Rhinocerotidae* family and/or to the ramifications of its species.

The Mochica vessel would correspond then, eventually, to a very late record of a species foreign to the pre-Hispanic world in terms of the prevailing archaeological and historiographical vision. But not so for the continent's remote dolichocephalic substratum, barely glimpsed by the *Glacial Cosmogony*⁹.

Consequently, the pre-Hispanic past continues to present the greatest questions regarding the antiquity of man on the continent, the development of its primordial civilization and its transcontinental relations.

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Santiago de Chile,
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⁷ See in this regard the work of Professor Edgar Dacqué, *Urwelt, Sage, Menschheit* ("Primordial World, Legend, Humanity") and the study of bioscientist Hans Wolfgang Behm *Schöpfung des Menschen: Revolution um Charles Darwin und sein Erbe* ("Creation of Man: Revolution Around Charles Darwin and His Legacy").

⁸ Hörbiger, H. & Fauth, Ph. *Hörbigers Glazial Kosmogonie. Eine neue Entwicklungsgeschichte des Weltalls und des Sonnensystems*. Page 496.

See also the chronological tables on pages 252-254 of Hans Fischer's *Rätsel der Tiefe. Die Entschleierung der Kohle, des Erdöls und des Salzes* ("Enigmas of the Deep. The Revelation of Coal, Oil and Salt").

⁹ Some of this was also glimpsed by Professor Arthur Posnansky in his article *Retratos y recuerdos de animales extinguidos en la cerámica de Sudamérica* ("Portraits and Memories of Extinct Animals in South American Ceramics") published in 1919.

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