

# Large print information



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## Living with land and sea

Peru and the  
Andean world

The British  
Museum



The Trustees of the British Museum acknowledge with gratitude the generosity of Madeleine Osterling Letts, Macarena Rojas Osterling, and Cristina Rojas Osterling, alongside the continued support of PROMPERÚ, in creating this display and promoting the Peru programme.

Map showing Peru and the Andean region.

The names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the British Museum.

Large panel in the centre of the  
Living with the land section:

## **Living with land and sea**

### Peru and the Andean world

**The Andean region in South America is one of the richest and most challenging environments on the planet, encompassing oceans, deserts, high mountains and tropical forests. People have adapted to thrive in this diverse landscape over thousands of years, developing specific ways of living and understanding the world around them. A series of societies have lived in this region over time, including Nasca, Wari, Chimu and Inca.**

The objects displayed here were produced in the territories of modern Peru and Bolivia. People living in these countries see many of the objects as living beings, playing an active role in special ceremonies of healing and securing balance in the world.

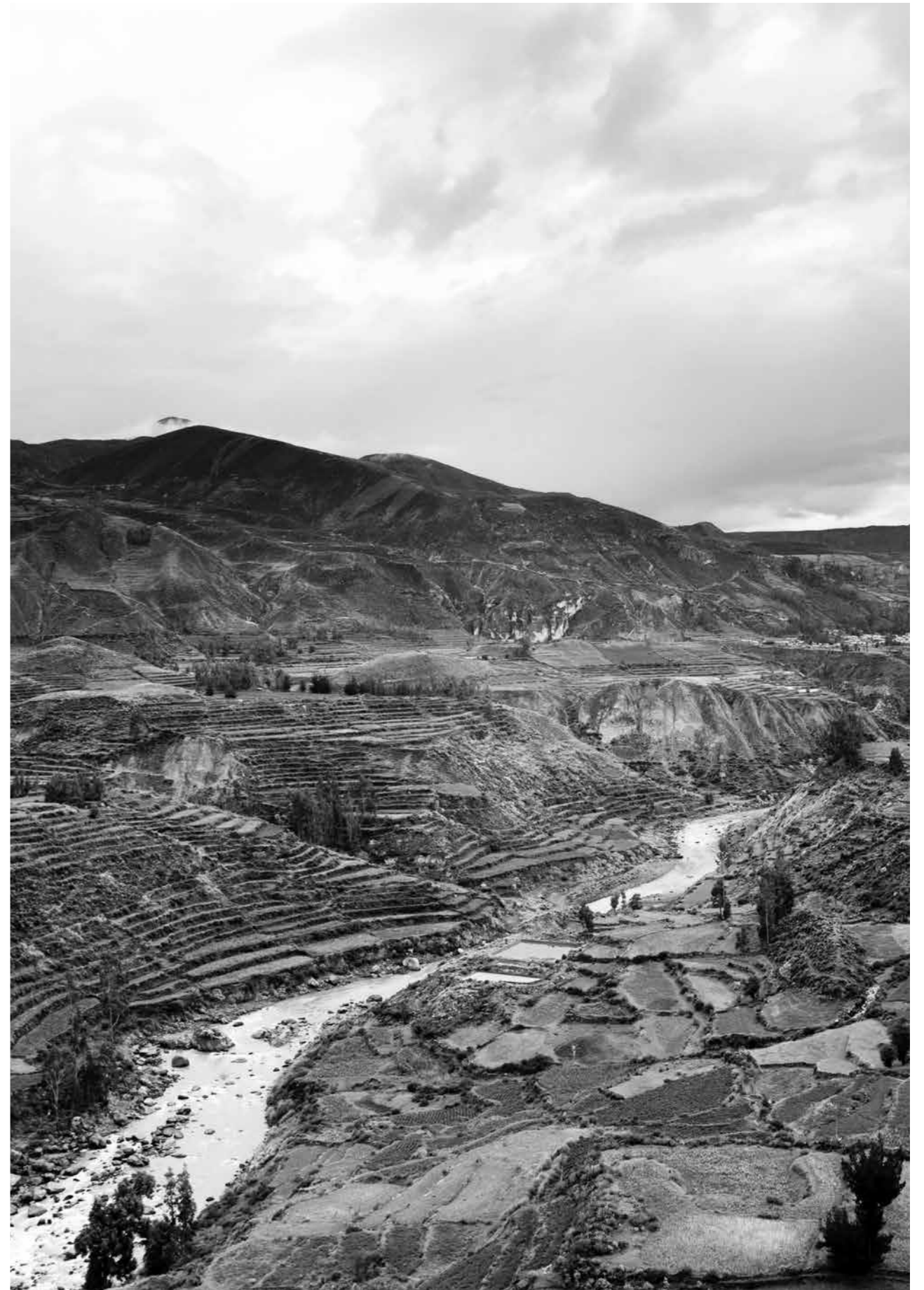


Photo: Gihan Tubbeh/PROMPERÚ



Lower panel on the far left of the Living with the land section:

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## **Textiles, repositories of memory**

Textile weaving is important to Peruvian identity and is a tradition that goes back more than 5000 years. People weave with materials that are connected to the land. The designs include motifs that communicate historical or symbolic meaning. Textile weaving adapts to changing circumstances, and the pieces produced display rich and complex stories.



### **Negrería dance cloaks**

The blue and yellow cloaks displayed here were produced for Peruvian **negrería** dances. The performances were created to celebrate the abolition of slavery in the country, which occurred in 1854. The dances are constantly reinvented and often include different topics of political or social resistance. The embroidery on these garments celebrates Peruvian heroes of the past.

Mantaro Valley, Central Highlands, Peru

Paper, textile and wax

Left: Blue cloak, late 1980s, Am1981,19.42

Right: Yellow cloak, 1960, Am1981,19.44

Image:

**Negrería** dancers wearing cloaks

Photo by Susana Navarro Hospinal

## Works by Nereida Apaza Mamani

Peruvian artist Apaza produced these works during a residency at the British Museum. Apaza uses the Andean tradition of telling stories with textiles. The pink cloak was directly inspired by the **negrería** dance garments in this case. Instead of displaying traditional symbols, the artist has incorporated references to literature that addresses political issues in Peru.

### **Mensaje presidencial**, 2019

Embroidered cloak with layers of newspapers  
2021,2023.10

Apaza's books mimic those distributed in state schools by the government. These pieces express the artist's criticism of national narratives taught to children. Apaza uses the ancient Wari and Inca knot technique (**Quipu**) throughout the book on the left, to address her personal memories and Peruvian history.

School exercise books from the series,

### **Cuadernos Patria**, 2020

Screen printing and embroidery on cloth,  
15 pages

2021,2023.5, 2021,2023.4

### **Bolivian lliclla and aguayo**

(top shelf, left)

Woven textiles decorated with geometric designs displayed on panels

1900s

Am 1981,28.59; Am 1981,28.230



## Winaypaq Qaytu (Threads of Time)

(top shelf, right)

Commissioned by the British Museum, this textile was produced by the highland weavers of Pitumarca. The four sections have been created using techniques from different periods of Peruvian history, Wari, Inca, Colonial and Republican. This piece highlights how textiles have endured and evolved through time.

Pitumarca, Cusco, 2021

Alpaca fibers, tapestry and discontinuous warps and wefts. Produced in collaboration with Nilda Callañaupa, founder of the Cusco Centre for Traditional Textiles.

Acquisition Fund, 2021,2020.1



Weavers of Pitumarca, Peru

Photo by Alfonso Casabonne

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## **Surviving in the desert**

The Nasca desert in southern Peru is one of the most arid places on the planet. Between 200 BC and AD 650, the Nasca people carried out religious practices to honour the gods and encourage good supplies of water for agriculture. The people drew massive lines and geoglyphs in the desert, extending across 500 km<sup>2</sup>. Geoglyphs were considered sacred sites where people performed rituals. There are hundreds of different types of geoglyphs, and they are best seen from the air.

### **Geoglyphs**

This film provides aerial views of a range of vast geoglyphs in the desert created by the Nasca people.

Duration: 1 minute and 42 seconds

This film is silent.

Film by Alfonso Casabonne

#### **Transcript:**

Vulture

Tree

Spiral

Hummingbird

Lizard

Monkey

Spider

Dog

Whale

## 1 Harvesters

Nasca harvesters depicted on these vessels carry plants or farm tools in their hands. The figures are symbols of agriculture and fertility, and they portray deceased ancestors and mythological beings. These objects were used during funerary rituals and ceremonial events. The vessels highlight the sacred nature attributed to agriculture by the Nasca people, who believed that the living realm was interconnected with that of their ancestors.

Female harvester, male harvester

Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650

Painted pottery

Am1941,04.51, Am1965,03.2

## 2 Andean crops

Maize, beans and chilli peppers are sources of a healthy diet in the Andes. The Nasca people painted images of these food types on their ceremonial vessels as a way of evoking fertility and wellbeing for their society. Objects like this were used at fertility events which took place at geoglyphs and as funerary offerings. Images featured in Nasca art were painted with plant and mineral pigments on clay before the vessel was fired in the oven.

Vessels depicting chilli peppers, beans and maize crops

Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650

Painted pottery

Am1954,05.65, Am1954,05.789,

Am1912,0717.34, Am1954,05.83





Maize, a vital Andean crop, is sold in markets throughout the region.

Photo: Janine Costa/PROMPERÚ

### 3,4 Hummingbirds in Nasca art

Peru is home to more than one hundred species of hummingbird, which play a vital role in pollination. Images of hummingbirds holding flowers or nectar in their long beaks feature on Nasca ceramics, textiles and in geoglyphs.

Hummingbird textile

Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650

Embroidered textile

Am 1933,1216.2

Vessels showing hummingbirds

Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650

Painted pottery

Am 1945,05.9, Am 1938,-.4

Lower panel on the far right of the Living with the land section:

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## **Honouring Mother Earth**

In the Andes, **Pachamama** is the goddess of fertility who nourishes crops and animals. Ceremonies take place to celebrate the deity and encourage the fertility of the land. These celebrations include the sacrifice of animals, the drinking of **chicha**, an alcoholic drink made from fermented purple maize, and the chewing of coca leaves. Soil is prepared for crops and special offerings are presented at these events.



Men using a **chaquitacla** (foot plough) in the Andes

Photo: Fernando López/PROMPERÚ

## **Ancient farming practices**

Manuel Choqqe discusses ancient farming practices that are still used in Peru. These methods highlight the deep-rooted relationship many Peruvians have with the land and **Pachamama**.

Duration: 2 minutes

This film is silent.

Film by Alfonso Casabonne

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### **Transcript:**

My name is Manuel Choqqe, I am the fourth generation of the Choqqe family.

I first got interested in growing native potatoes, as it's a practice I inherited from my parents and grandparents. There are more than 6,400 varieties of native potatoes.

Maize has a lot of culture, history and tradition. It has been cultivated here for over 6,700 years. So far we have identified 230 varieties of maize. Here we can see white, yellow and red maize, and we want to rescue and preserve even more varieties.

Potatoes and maize are very different, very complex crops. Potatoes usually grow at higher altitudes, maize needs more warmth and grows lower down.

In these terraces we grow different varieties of maize, with water from the higher mountains irrigating the crops at lower altitudes.

One Inca practice that has endured is crop rotation. For example, tarwi, a type of high-protein bean, is grown to restore nutrients to the soil after the potato harvest. This traditional way of farming potatoes and maize is being lost. Our job is to ensure that this ancient knowledge, these Andean treasures are preserved.



## 1 Manta (shawl)

**Mantas** are used in ceremonial dances where they re-enact historical moments. An agricultural scene is depicted on this **manta** with Inca people using a foot plough (**chaquitacla**). This textile highlights the importance of agriculture in the Andes.

Central Highlands, 1980s

Embroidered textile

Am 1982,14.13

## 2, 3 Water rituals

Water is often scarce in the Andes and rituals take place to try and ensure there is a good supply of it. A **paccha** is a vessel that people use to pour water onto the earth to evoke fertilisation. The plough, ear of maize and storage vessel represented in the **paccha** on the left (2) depict the agricultural cycle of maize.

**Paccha** depicting the agricultural

cycle of maize

Inca, 1400–1532

Painted pottery

Am 1947,10.39

**Paccha**

Colonial period, 1700s

Painted wood

Am 1997,Q.780

#### 4 Drink to negotiate

During Inca rule (1400–1532), wooden cups (**kero**) were used to drink **chicha** and seal alliances. Following the Spanish conquest (1532), artists continued to produce **kero** which displayed pre-colonial and European imagery.

##### **Kero**

Colonial period, 1700s

Carved and painted wood

AM1950,22.1, Am1923,0618.1

#### 5, 6 Amulets as living beings

Carved stones known as **conopa** were used during pre-colonial times to encourage healthy livestock and crop fertility (6). Hollows were carved into the figures and filled with animal fat. It was believed that the fat would give the stones a life force. Similar objects known as **lla** are used today (5).

**Lla** in the form of a sheep

Bolivia, 1900s

Carved stone

Am1985,32.119.b

**Conopa** in the form of a camelid

Inca, 1400–1532

Carved stone

Am1846,1217.28, Am1946,11.1,

Am1933,0315.38

## The importance of coca

Chewing coca leaves remains an essential part of Andean life. The alkaloids in the plant reduce altitude sickness and are a stimulant, which help people work better. The plant is also used as a ceremonial offering. Special bags are created to carry the leaves around.

Coca leaves

Brazil

Am1984,Q.25

Woven bag

Inca, 1400–1532

Am1921,0321.12



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## **Living with land and sea**

### Peru and the Andean world

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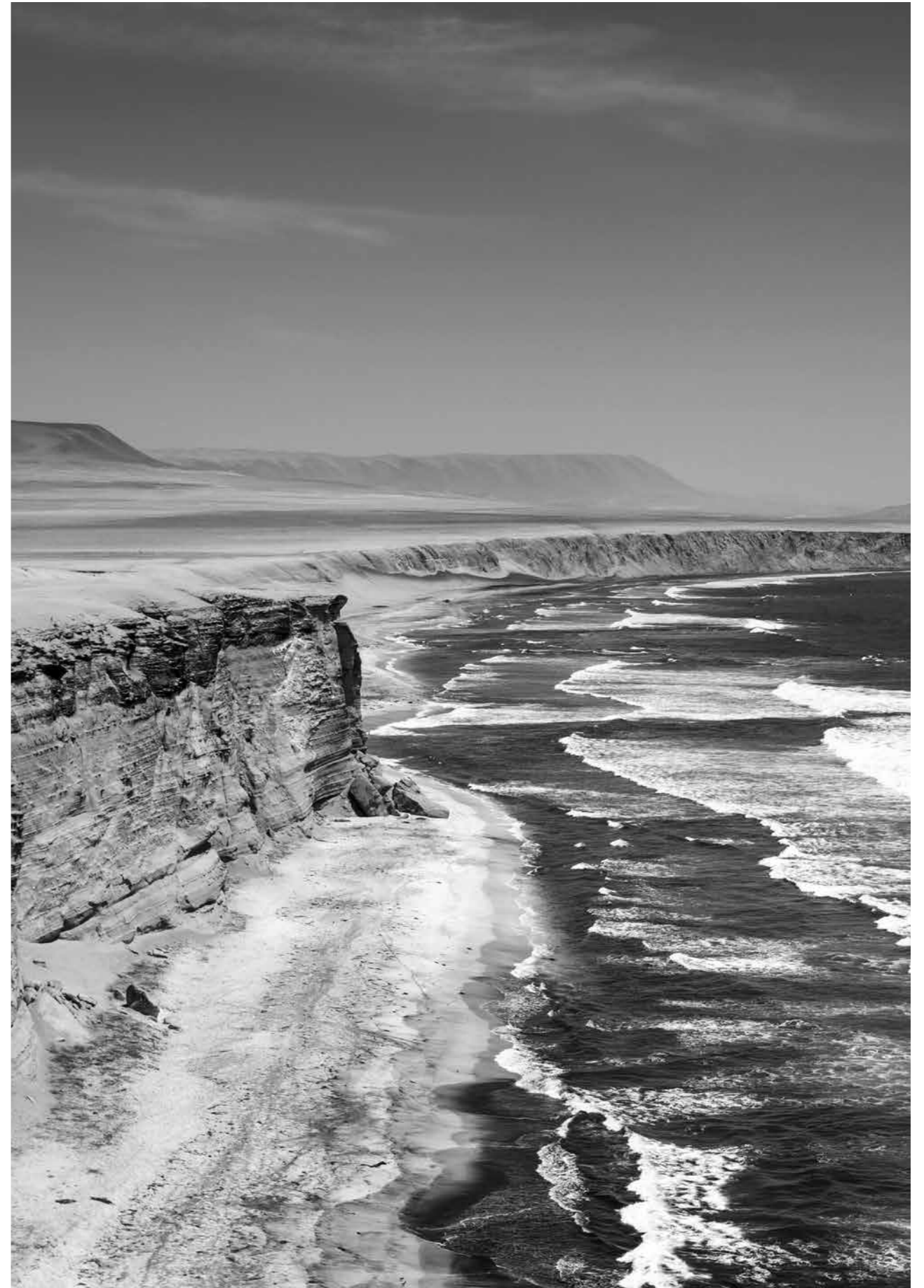


Photo © Anna Chaplygina/Dreamstime.com

Lower panel on the far left of the Living with the sea section

**Living with land and sea**

## **Totora reed boats**

Coastal societies have been using reed boats for transport and fishing for more than 3000 years. Victor Huamanchumo, a fisherman from the village of Huanchaco in northern Peru, identifies himself as a direct descendant of the Chimu civilisation (1000–1400). Huamanchumo says that his specialised skills and knowledge of reed boat making have been handed down by his ancestors through generations.

Victor Huamanchumo, a fisherman in northern Peru talks about the tradition of totora reed boat making and how they are manufactured and used today.

Duration: 2 minutes and 21 seconds

This film is silent.

Film by Alfonso Casabonne

© Trustees of the British Museum

### **Transcript:**

I became a fisherman when I was fourteen and learned how to build a boat using totora reeds by watching my father and grandfather. This tradition in my village was introduced by the Moche and Chimu. I carry that knowledge with me.

A reed boat lasts twenty to thirty days and can carry two people or 200 kilos. We work with bigger reeds to make the 'mother'. With the smaller reeds we create the 'son', which goes inside the mother. Each fisherman has two to three boats so they can use one while the others dry out.

There are four sections. The polystyrene foam block makes the reed boat lighter and easier to control. One mother and son section goes to the left, the other mother and son section to the right. When they are ready, they are tied together, and the final form of the reed boat begins to appear.

My surname Huamanchumo comes from the Chimu, and I feel proud that I am part of Moche and Chimu tradition. They have left us the reed boat as a legacy, and their knowledge has been passed down through the generations.

## 1-4 Reed boat sailors

Painted, modelled and woven images of figures steering reed boats are depicted on ceremonial objects produced by pre-Columbian Andean coastal societies. These images communicated and perpetuated narratives that helped the Andean people understand the world they lived in.

Vessel in the form of a reed boat  
Lambayeque, AD 900–1300  
Painted pottery  
Am 1921,1027.28

Vessel displaying two deities on a reed boat  
Chimu, 1000–1400  
Painted pottery  
Am 1858,0403.29



Vessel displaying Moche deity (Ai-Apaec)  
on a reed boat  
Moche, AD 500–750  
Fine-line painted pottery  
Am1909,1218.119

Textile with human figure on reed boat  
Chimu, 1000–1400  
Woven textile  
Am1986,Q.271



Image painted on object number 3,  
Moche deity (Ai-Apaec) on a reed boat  
Drawing by Donna McClelland. Moche archive,  
Dumbarton Oaks, Trustees for Harvard  
University, Washington, DC

## 5 Reed boats in the highlands

Lake Titicaca is in the highlands between Peru and Bolivia. **Balsas** (reed boats) used on the lake are made in a range of sizes: some larger ones can carry up to nine tonnes. The people also use totora reeds to maintain the floating Uros Islands on which they live. These miniature models, probably produced for the tourist market, highlight how important the boats and reeds are to those who live in the area.

Miniature totora reed boat models  
Titicaca Region, Puno, late 1900s  
Am1992,15.3.a, Am1992,15.2.a



Uros Islands and reed boats on Lake Titicaca.  
Photo © Maria Teresa Weinmann/  
Dreamstime.com

## Ceremonial oars (top shelf)

These ceremonial oars were used by the Chincha people of south coast Peru, who were great sailors, fishermen and merchants. The intricate carved motifs depicting human figures, fish, sea birds and geometrical patterns, relate to the importance of the sea for this society. Most surviving objects like this were found in tombs where they were placed for the deceased to use in the afterlife.

Oars

Ica-Chincha, 1000–1400

Am 1842,0624.3, Am 1938,1017.13,

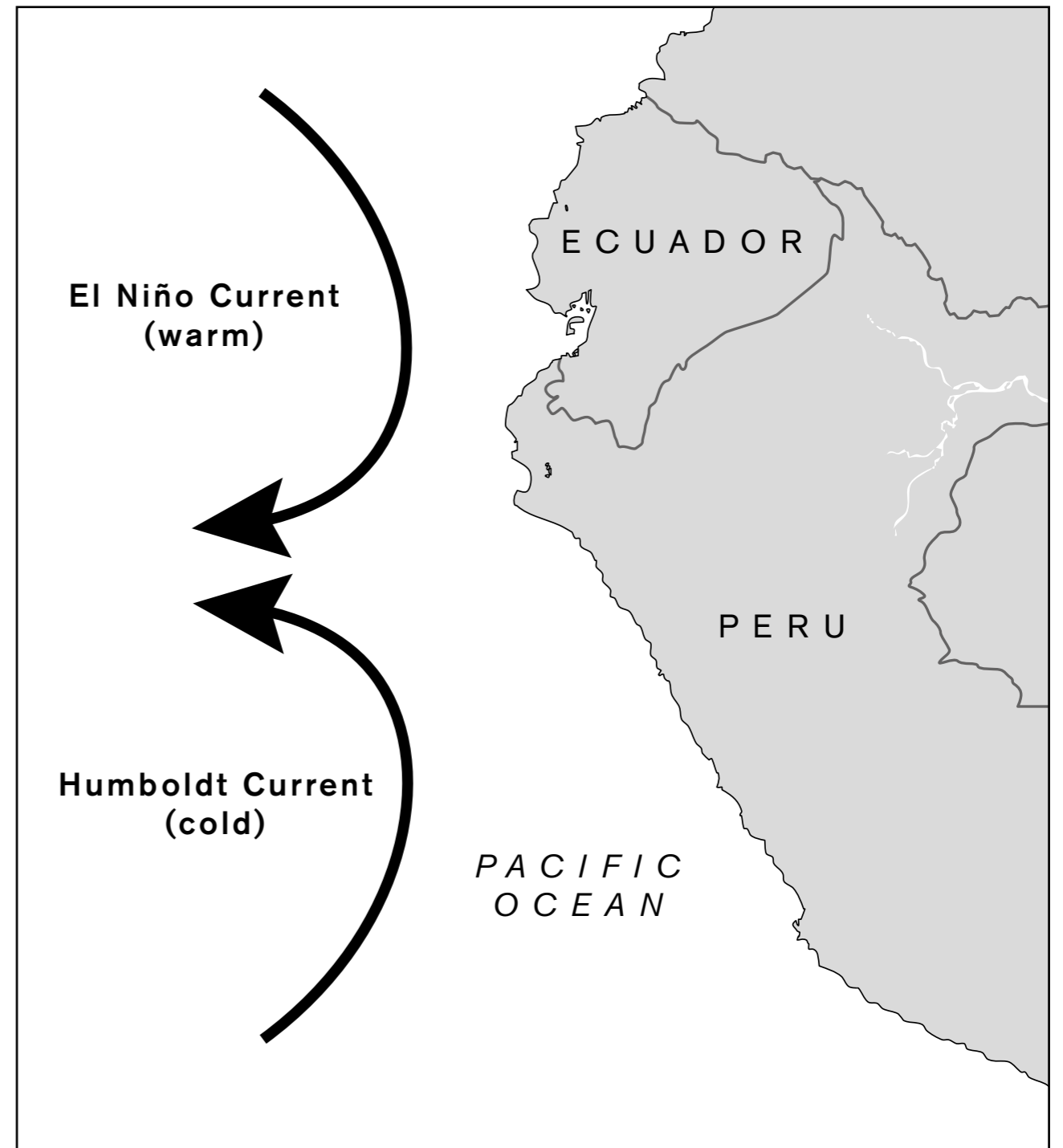
Am 1933,0713.164

Lower panel in the middle of the Living with the sea section:

## Living with land and sea

# A resourceful sea

The body of water next to the Peruvian coast is one of the richest marine ecosystems in the world, mainly due to the plankton brought by the cold waters of the Humboldt Current. This habitat hosts a concentration of species which eat the plankton. The marine life is used for food and medicine by Peruvians. Climate change and illegal fishing pose serious threats to this ecosystem. A respectful approach to the environment is key to the maintenance of the rich Peruvian sea.



Map of sea currents.

The names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the British Museum.



## 1 Marine beings

Nasca people lived on the southern desert coast in Peru between 200 BC and AD 650. The Nasca drew marine creatures onto objects as a way of calling on the forces associated with water to encourage fertility. A variety of species are shown on these objects, such as the speckled-bottom fish, a sea bird and possibly a **zarcillo** (Inca tern) catching an anchovy.

Dish with two fish  
Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650  
Painted pottery  
Am1939,24.3

Bowl with painted motif of whale  
Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650  
Painted pottery  
Am1941,04.41

Double spout and bridge bottle showing a bird catching a fish  
Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650  
Painted pottery  
Am1937,-.12

## 2 Fisherman

This Nasca bottle depicts a man fishing in the sea with his net. In modern Peru, around 80,000 small-scale fishermen live off what they catch. This industry accounts for 22% of the total production from fishing in the country and generates thousands of jobs.

Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650

Painted pottery

Am 1954,05.79



Fisherman casting his net in the coastal village of Cerro Azul, Peru.

Photo: Christian Vincés/Shutterstock.com

### 3,4 Mythical whales

Orcas are a key motif in Nasca art and mythology and can be recognised by their prominent jaws and two lobe tails. The Nasca people feared these mammals and in some images the whales are shown holding knives and trophy heads from ritual battles. The Nasca associated orcas with life, death and rebirth.

Vessel displaying mythical whale eating fish  
Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650  
Painted pottery  
Am 1954,05.76

Vessel with motif of a mythical whale  
Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650  
Painted pottery  
Am 1937,-.10

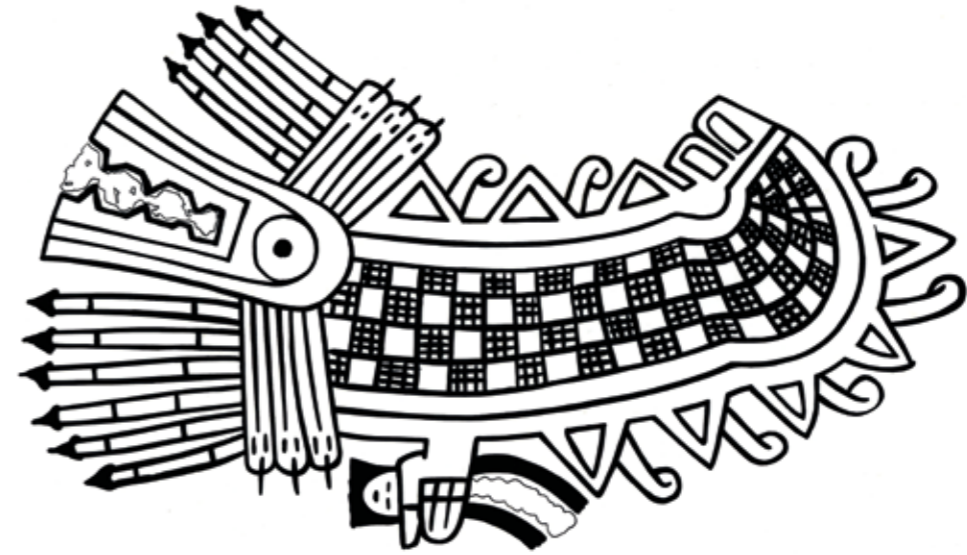


Image painted on object number 4,  
Mythical orca  
Photo © Trustees of the British Museum

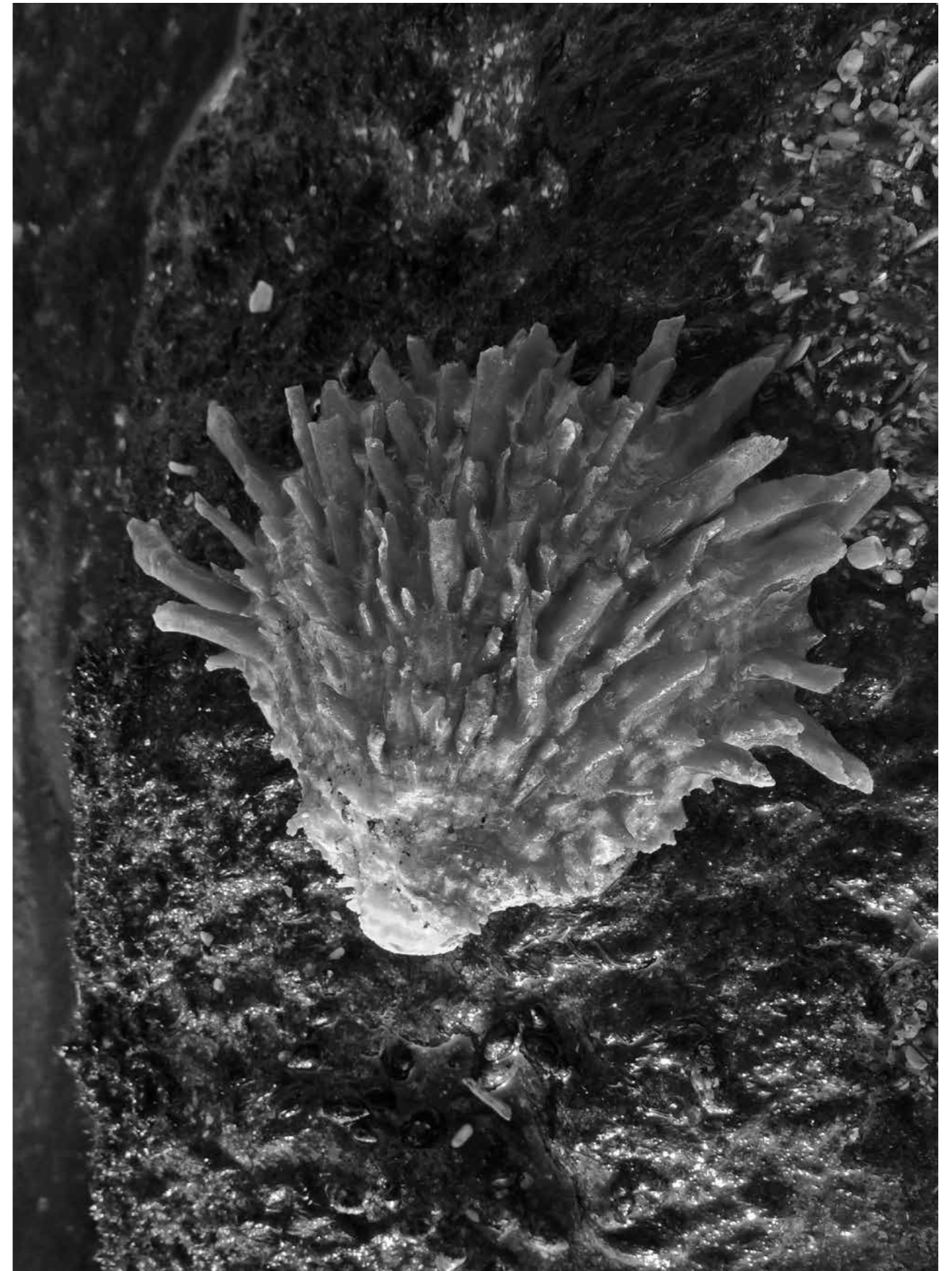


Lower panel on the far right of the Living with the sea section:

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## **Sacred offerings from the sea**

Spondylus and Strombus shells were valued in parts of the Andean region from about 2000 BC. The molluscs are found off the coast of Ecuador, in warm, deep waters. The organisms move southwards with the El Niño climate warming event, which increases rainfall in Peru. The shells were associated with the coming of the rains, fertility and the riches of the ocean.



Spondylus mollusc

Photo: Stefan Ziemendorff/Shutterstock.com

## 1 Shell with a woman's face

Spondylus shells were a symbol of fertility, not only because they were related to the coming of rains, but because of their resemblance to female genitalia and their red colour, which some scholars associate with menstruation. The link between these sacred objects and female gender is shown with this shell that is decorated with a woman's face using semi-precious stones.

Nasca, 200 BC – AD 650

Spondylus shell, mother of pearl and resin

Am1913,1020.1

## 2 Spondylus shells

These Spondylus shells were found at a sacrificial site on the Macabi Islands, located off the coast of northern Peru. The marine offerings had been placed alongside wooden sculptures of naked prisoners and mythical beings. The shells were preserved in layers of **guano** (bird excrement). They were discovered in the late 1880s by a British mining company when **guano** was in high demand as a fertiliser.

Macabi Islands

Am.7437, Am.7438.a



### 3, 4 Shells in Andean art

Double-body vessel with Spondylus and figure holding a bird

Lambayeque, AD 900–1400

Painted pottery

Am1921,1027.20

Black bottle with modelled images of Spondylus shells

Chimu, 1000–1400

Pottery

Am1956,+3

### 5 Strombus trumpet

This is a ceramic representation of a Strombus shell trumpet (**pututo**). The Strombus shell has been used as a ceremonial trumpet since pre-colonial times. The decorated instrument produces a long, deep sound. Strombus trumpets are used in ceremonies associated with the coming of the rains, as a symbol of life and as offerings to thank the gods.

Moche, AD 100–800

Painted pottery

Am1921,1027.48



Musician playing Strombus trumpet

Photo: Daniel Alvarez/Shutterstock.com



## 6 Child's tunic

The Chimu tunic has been decorated with finely carved fish appliqués that are made of Spondylus and Strombus shells. Although we do not know the exact use for this garment, its size and appearance suggest it may have been funerary clothing for a child.

Chimu, 1000–1400

Woven textile with figures made from carved

Spondylus and Strombus

Am1954,05.602

