

Woven From Nothing: Analysis of *Fiber Sculpture of Mother Teaching Daughter to Weave* and
the Role of Weaving in Chancay Culture

Tori Teague

ARH 3200: Ancient American Art and Architecture

Dr. Wingfield

December 6, 2018

Abstract

The Chancay culture of the Late Intermediate Period, spanning c. 1000-1476 CE, emphasized the importance of death and ritual through woven works, specifically their fiber sculptures. These sculptures often depicted the medium in which they were created, featuring figures commonly identified as female weaving with backstrap looms. My primary resources for this topic include digital images of woven Latin American indigenous artworks, information from the museums that house the works, scholarly journals, and my own observation. I noticed that, by focusing on weaving scenes, the Chancay people reassert their beliefs as well as the spiritual nature of this craft. Weaving's significance stems from its connection to creation, aligning with creation myths the majority of indigenous peoples in Latin America that often reference the world being woven out of nothing by the earth mother; however, its connection to the dead and the underworld comes through the layering of the fabrics, wrapping the thread to build up the figures in the fiber sculptures as one would wrap a body to prepare it for burial and the soul for rebirth. These fiber sculptures were buried in the tombs with the bodies and often found with sewing instruments, indicating the deceased's connection to weaving either as a profession or a spiritual connection. Utilizing comparanda pieces, I deduced that *Fiber Sculpture of Mother Teaching Daughter to Weave* gives insight on these rituals focused on life and death as well as the daily life of the Chancay people, according to what they valued in their society.