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The curious case of Sir Henry Wellcome's wooden statuette clad in tie-dyed Wari cloth

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Abstract

A wooden statuette clad in small-scale garments made from a Wari style tie-dyed textile joined the collections of the City of Liverpool Public Museum (now National Museums Liverpool) in 1951 along with other items distributed by the trustees of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum. This article discusses Wari style tie-dyed tunics as part of an ensemble of garments. It explores the character of the Wari period textile (c. AD 600-1000) used for dressing the statuette, its similarity to textiles in the Fowler Museum at the University of California, Los Angeles and the Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú, as well as the chronological mismatch between the style of the textile and that of the wooden figurine. Unless the statuette was made to order in recent times to be dressed in an ancient textile, it is perhaps Late Horizon (c. 1430 - 1532) in date. Sir Henry Wellcome acquired the statuette before his death in 1936, at a time when there was an emergent market in unprovenanced pre-Hispanic antiquities. The statuette is a composite figurine clad in bespoke garments made from an older textile. Its appearance bears witness to collecting practices which included modifying ancient artefacts to appeal to modern collectors and it destabilises simple understandings of what the dressed aspect of the statuette can convey to a museum visitor.

Keywords: Wari textiles, tie-dyed tunics, colour saturation, iconography, museums – collectors and collecting, artefact modification for the antiquities market

El curioso caso de la estatuilla de madera de Sir Henry Wellcome, vestida con paño Wari

Resumen

Una figurilla de madera vestida en prendas a escala reducida, fabricadas con un textil con teñido por amarre de estilo Wari se sumió a las colecciones del Museo Público de la Ciudad de Liverpool (actualmente Museos Nacionales Liverpool) en 1951, junto a otros objetos distribuidos por los fiduciarios del Museo Médico Histórico Wellcome. Este artículo considera las túnicas de estilo Wari teñidas por amarre como parte de un conjunto de indumentaria. Se explora el carácter del textil del período Wari (c. AD 600-1000) utilizada para vestir la figurilla, su similitud a los textiles en el Museo Fowler de la Universidad de California Los Angeles y el Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú, tanto como el desencuentro cronológico entre el estilo del textil y el de la figurilla de madera. Excepto que la figurilla haya sido fabricada a la medida en tiempos recientes para ser vestida en un textil antiguo, data posiblemente al Horizonte Tardío (c. 1430 - 1532). Sir Henry Wellcome adquirió la figurilla antes de su fallecimiento en 1936, en una época cuando había un mercado emergente de antigüedades pre-hispánicas sin procedencia. Se trata de una figurilla compuesta, vestida en prendas hecha a la medida de un textil más antiguo. Su apariencia es testigo a prácticas de coleccionar, las que incluyen modificar los artefactos antiguos para que sean más atractivos a los coleccionistas modernos y desestabiliza una comprensión simple de lo que el aspecto vestido de la figurilla pueda expresar a un visitante al museo.

Palabras clave: textiles Wari, túnicas, teñido por amarre, colores saturados, iconografía, museos – colectores y coleccionando, modificación de artefactos para el mercado de antigüedades

In a corner of the Americas gallery of the World Art Museum at the National Museums Liverpool, three human figures from different parts of the Americas attracted my attention. In the sombre lighting conditions, which are, of course, intended to preserve the wonderful colours of the artefacts on display, a sumptuously dressed Plains Indian doll and a naked Quimbaya style figurine from Colombia accompanied a wooden statuette, dressed in Wari style tie-dyed garments. All three of these figures were purchased by Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome (1853-1936) who, early in his career as a pharmaceutical entrepreneur, began to collect antiquities. The miniature-sized Wari garments, in particular, caught my eye because the hues are resonant and the design motifs delineated in white add a brilliant quality to the overall effect.¹

There is nevertheless something disquieting about the statuette (figure 1). Jane Feltham (1989: 12) described it as a talisman. Her choice of this term implies that people using the statuette, perhaps in ritual contexts, endowed its human form with divinely sanctioned, protective powers. The term 'talisman', Don Skemer (2006: 18) reminds us, 'should be reserved for powerful, sometimes apotropaic objects'. Yet the ensemble, consisting of a wooden figurine clad in textiles that are recognisably Wari in style, does not fully match my expectations concerning what a Wari potentate, robed in splendour, might have looked like.

Accompanying the statuette, a museum label identifies the wooden figure on stylistic grounds as Chancay (c. AD 1200 – 1470) and the garments as Wari (c. AD 550 – 900).² This alleged mismatch provides a focus for study because it destabilises simple understandings of what the dressed aspect of the statuette can convey to a museum visitor. To cast light on the murky history of the figure and its garments on their journey from Peru to London, where Wellcome helped establish a pharmaceutical company, before finally it arrived in Liverpool, I will investigate the character of the textile used to make the small-scale upper garment, breech cloth and headdress. An examination of the technical and colour characteristics of the Wari tie-dyed textile helps me to explore why it was susceptible to being repurposed in modern times. This discussion will also consider the dress of elite men as an ensemble including tunic, headdress and facial decoration, as revealed by Wari polychrome ceramics. In the

light of early twentieth-century collecting practices, these lines of enquiry provide a context for considering why the statuette and its dress raise fascinating questions about its unsettling appearance.

Elite male Wari attire

Effigy jars with a human face on the neck of the vessel occur in different Wari pottery styles, including a ceremonial style known as Robles Moqo (Menzel 1964: 24). The imposing presence of these vessels is heightened by the polychrome depiction of the woven and dyed designs of the effigies' garments. Some of these personages wear a tunic displaying diagonally placed circles, apparently based on designs inspired by the characteristic motifs formed by the tie-dyeing of textiles. Surviving examples of complete Wari tunics in museum collections are conventionally dated between the seventh and the ninth centuries, in Middle Horizon Epochs 1 and 2 of the chronology devised for the Central Andes (Rowe 1977: 31-2; 2012: 200, 203).

A study of Wari iconography led Anita Cook (1996) to identify high ranking personages depicted in the effigy vessels as 'rulers' or 'emperors'. These male figures are shown wearing either a tapestry or a tie-dyed tunic and, on the head, a four-cornered hat. One such effigy from Pacheco in the Nazca drainage wears a tie-dyed tunic, a hat and displays an elaborate facial design; Patricia Knobloch (2012: 129) referred to him as a 'paramount warrior'. Cook (1996: 88) argued that the combination of hat and tunic distinguished the political status or 'office' of the wearer, marking his incorporation into the ruling Wari elite and masking his own ethnic affiliation. The hats modelled and painted on the face neck jars are distinctive because the base band tends to be decorated with a row of rhombus shapes (Cook 1996: 90). Real examples of four-cornered hats in museum collections display both geometric and figurative designs. Some of them incorporate a band of repeated rhombuses in the designs, running round the middle of the sides of the hat (de Laval 1984: 111; Frame 1990: 13; Dransart and Wolfe 2011: 46-7) (figure 2). Since the tie-dyed tunics are associated in the ceramic depictions with hat-wearing persons of high rank, the simple head cloth on the Liverpool statuette is disconcerting.

1. The statuette's accession number at the National Museums Liverpool is 51.68.545.

2. The period of occupation of the type site named Huari or Wari in the central highlands of Peru is often dated c. AD 550 – c. 900 and the chronological period known as the Middle Horizon c. AD 600 – c. 1000 (for example, Rowe 1967; Jennings 2006, 2012). Some of the tie-dyed tunics discussed here were probably woven in valleys connecting the highlands with the coast in the Departments of Ica and Arequipa in the south of Peru as well as in other places, perhaps in the Huari capital itself. Ann P. Rowe (2012: 204 n.1) therefore reminds readers that the tunics are Wari in style rather than necessarily being emblematic of Huari as the capital of a political state.

Figure 1. Statuette dressed in small-scale garments made from a Wari style tie-dyed textile with camelid fibre warp and weft. Accession number 1951.68.545, National Museums of Liverpool, donated by Wellcome Historical Medical Museum. Photograph by the author.

Figure 2. Wari four-cornered hat, camelid fibre. Accession number 1994.35.151, Metropolitan Museum of Art, bequest of Arthur M. Bullowa, www.metmuseum.org

Another expectation derived from a study of Wari face neck jars is that the Wellcome statuette ought also to have had elaborate face painting or tattooing. On the jars, the face is often painted with an asymmetric design which is more complex on one side than the other. This design consists of four large triangles with the points meeting in an X-shaped configuration on the right side of the face (that is, on the viewer's left) and a repeat design consisting of small triangles with a stepped hypotenuse on the left (that is, on the viewer's right). The more complex half of the facial design undergoes variation on different effigy vessels (Cook 1996: 115, figure 5). While Cook (1996: 95) relates the diamond shapes of the face painting to the row of diamonds that are found round the base of the four-cornered hats, the patterning of the variant arrangements of the small triangles with a stepped hypotenuse presents the sorts of permutations that occur in some tie-dyed tunics dating from the Wari period. Hence the tunics, hats and facial designs painted on the effigy jars rely on a shared set of design principles. The Liverpool statuette instead has a broad, simple band painted beneath the eyes. This feature, however, is not characteristic in Chancay style. Alexandra Morgan's (1996) study of Peruvian pottery figurines demonstrates that Chancay face paint often emphasises the cheek line, running in a diagonal

from the side of the nose to the corner of the mouth on both sides of the face.

A third discrepancy is noticeable in the Wellcome figurine and it concerns the neck opening of the tunic. Sophie Desrosiers (1988: 29-33; 2010) observed a tendency in late pre-Hispanic times for men in the Central Andes to wear their tunics with the neck opening oriented vertically and women with the neck opening oriented horizontally. If this figure is male, one would expect the neck opening of the tunic to have a vertical neck slot. At first sight the tunic appears to depart from this gendered distinction. The treatment of the neck will form an important aspect of my discussion below.

The Liverpool statuette

Simply carved from wood, the figurine is 388 mm tall. It stands straight with long legs ending in feet that protrude backward at the heels as well as forward (figures 3 and 4). The torso is armless and is surmounted by a relatively large head, which is flat at the back (figures 5 and 6). Eyes and mouth are perfunctorily indicated, the former almost disappearing beneath the heavy, flat brow from which the nose protrudes. Karen Ayers (2000), who prepared a conservation treatment report on the statuette before it was placed in the display case, noted that the nose had been broken. It is therefore possible that the broad stripes of blackish paint under the eyes once continued over the nose. If the statuette is genuinely pre-Hispanic, rather than a carving made to order to be dressed in an ancient textile, a band passing over the cheeks and nose might mimic the banding in a similar position on a cast metal Inka figurine in the National Museum, Copenhagen. This female figurine also has a relatively large head compared to the rest of the body but otherwise is much more detailed in its conception and finish than the Liverpool statuette. Armless wooden figurines are known in museum collections, but they are difficult to date.³

The statuette is clothed in three garments made out of the same textile woven from camelid fibre yarns. Over a breechcloth-like undergarment, a larger fragment is worn poncho fashion with the sides of the garment unseamed. Another textile fragment covers the head. The statuette also sports a long cord plaited from dark brown yarns, probably also of camelid fibre. One end terminates in three faded red tassels, each emerging from a knop bound with dark yellow yarn, and the other is wrapped with a rawhide binding.

My discussion now turns to consider the particular character of the tie-dyed fabric.

3. In the collections of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, an undated carved human figure wrapped in net fabric has the torso and arms carved in one piece (Peabody number 32-25-30/35, searchable on the museum's online database at <http://pmem.unix.fas.harvard.edu:8080/peabody/>).

Figure 3. The frontal aspect of the statuette in 2000, prior to conservation. Accession number 1951.68.545, National Museums of Liverpool. Photograph by Vivien Chapman

Figure 4. The rear aspect of the statuette in 2000, prior to conservation. Accession number 1951.68.545, National Museums of Liverpool. Photograph by Vivien Chapman

Figure 5. The front of the statuette in 2000, during conservation, with the upper garment removed. Accession number 1951.68.545, National Museums of Liverpool. Photograph by Vivien Chapman

Figure 6. The statuette from behind, during conservation, with the upper garment removed. Accession number 1951.68.545, National Museums of Liverpool. Photograph by Vivien Chapman

Dot-in-a-diamond designs

Tie-dyeing has been used in different parts of the world to produce a design in which undyed rhombus- or circular-shaped motifs appear on a dyed background. The dyer grips the centre of the motif tightly and uses thread to bind the areas of fabric which will resist the dye. He or she then immerses the fabric in one or more dye baths in order to produce the desired intensity of colour forming the ground of the design. Frequently the centre of the motif is left unwrapped, resulting in a characteristic central dot. Woven fabrics tend to pull in a diagonal direction along the bias and the tension of the binding can result in a pattern of rhombus-shaped motifs (figure 7). The corners point in the direction of warp and weft, instead of the motif taking on the appearance of a square oriented vertically and horizontally along the warp and weft directions (Webster, Hays-Gilpin and Schaafsma 2006: 319-20), especially if the dyer folds the fabric twice and pinches the edges of these folds (Knobloch 2013: 49).

The use of distinctive designs based on circles or dot-in-a-diamond motifs were geographically widespread in the pre-Hispanic Americas. Where environmental conditions favour the preservation of organic materials, tie-dyed textiles have survived in the Central and South-Central Andes as well as in Mexico and in Southwestern USA.⁴

4. Two tie-dyed textiles found in a cave called Don Bonfilio, near Caltepec in the Tehuacán region of the state of Puebla, Mexico, were analysed by Alba Guadalupe Mastache de Escobar (1974). Photographs of thirteenth-century tie-dyed textiles from Lake Canyon, southern Utah, White House, in the Canyon de Chelly, Honanki Pueblo, in the Verde Valley, and Casa Grande, southern Arizona are included in Webster, Hays-Gilpin and Schaafsma (2006: 319, Figure 1a-e).

Figure 7. Detail of a fragment of a Chancay style tie-dyed textile, cotton warp and weft. Accession number 1964.313.3, National Museums of Liverpool. Photograph by the author.

As mentioned above, Wari potters depicted high status personages wearing tie-dyed garments in ceramic effigies. Other depictions occur in sculpture and rock art and, in Mesoamerica, in wall paintings and codices (Webster, Hays-Gilpin and Schaafsma 2006: 320-1). Patricia Anawalt, Virginia Davis and Pamela Scheinman used batik to reproduce small squares and tie-dye to reproduce small diamonds in the recreation of a step-fret design in the blue knotted cloak worn by Aztec rulers (Anawalt 1990; 2000: 218-27).

Studies of such visual representations have encouraged researchers to interpret the repeat patterns formed by dot-in-a-diamond motifs as the pelage of jaguars and the scale markings of serpents (Brugnoli and Hoces de la Guardia 1991: 15, 31). Indeed, dot-in-a-diamond motifs were painted in polychrome on the bodies of serpents in a composite Wari vessel in which a cup rests on a serpent

pedestal (Knobloch 2012: 137, figure 117).⁵ In Mesoamerica and Southwestern USA, the designs are associated with maize cultivation and serpents as related to the fertility brought by clouds, rain and lightning (Webster, Hays-Gilpin and Schaafsma 2006: 338-40).

Despite the widespread geographical distribution, the technique of tie-dyeing was not used consistently through time. During the Late Archaic and Formative periods (from c. 1500 BC to c. AD 500) in northern Chile and North-west Argentina, tie-dyed yarns were wrapped turban fashion round the head of the wearer or, alternatively, they served as fringed pubic coverings (Cases C. and Agüero P. 2004: 119, Table 1; López Campeny 2006: 293).

Early examples in Peru of resist-dyed textiles with dot-in-a-diamond designs are assigned to Siguan and Early Nasca styles. From the site of La Chimba in the Sihuas Valley, in

5. Denver Art Museum Collection 1996.37.

Figure 8. Southern Nasca style tie-dyed tunic, camelid fibre warp and weft. Accession number 1980.564.3, Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Arthur M. Bullowa, www.metmuseum.org.

the Department of Arequipa, Joerg Haeberli (2002: Figure 8) attributed a textile with a characteristic tie-dyed rhombus on a red ground to Siguas 1, dating from 543 BC to AD 121.⁶ Tie-dyeing occurs on different Siguas garment types: tunics, mantles, and rectangular cloths with ties attached to the four corners (Haeberli 2001: 94 and 96). Early Nasca pottery and textiles, dating from the first to third centuries AD, also occur in some of the Siguas burials, indicating that the two cultures must have been in contact. One of the occupants of a grave in a Nasca cemetery site known as Cabezas

Achatadas, in the Camaná Valley, wore a headdress consisting of three narrow bands wrapped round the head, the middle one a tie-dyed textile with a design of yellow rhombuses on a red ground (Biermann 2006: 233-4).

While tie-dyeing in cultures other than Wari was used in a range of different garment types, dyers and weavers working within Wari traditions seem to have restricted the technique to tunics alone. Ann Rowe suggests an antecedent. Textiles made from small tie-dyed rectangular units sewn together to make a tunic possibly represent what she calls

6. Joerg Haeberli (2001: 131, n. 3) uses the spelling Siguas to distinguish the name of the archaeological culture from Sihuas, the modern spelling of the name of a river.

a 'southern Nasca style' as a precursor to the Wari tie-dyed garments (figure 8).⁷ Tunics were also made by sewing together long strips of tie-dyed fabric.⁸ These tunics display comparatively desaturated colour combinations and they do not have a fringe at the lower edge.

Wari style tie-dyed tunics and their more or less contemporaneous counterparts from Chile are, in contrast, fringed at the bottom edge. The weaver formed this fringe by grouping warp ends at the bottom and head of the loom length after she or he had removed the loom bars, allowing the threads to twist back on themselves Z-fashion, in the opposite direction from the S-ply of the warp yarns (Hoces de la Guardia and Brugnoli 2006: 47-8, 96-7; Dransart and Wolfe 2011: 44).

Examples from the collections of the Universidad de Tarapaca in Arica, in the far north of Chile, include an incomplete fragment of a Wari style tie-dyed tunic (Ulloa 1985: 83, no 250; Sinclair Aguirre 1999: 39).⁹ Unfortunately, this piece is from an unknown findspot and it lacks archaeological associations to help explain why it was found so far from the geographical sphere of Wari influence. A second fragment in the same collections, from the site of Azapa 1, is more distinctively local in style and was recovered from a context which also contained local Cabuza style pottery (Santoro and Ulloa 1985: 77).¹⁰ Like the Wari style tunics, its rectangular modular units are executed in a discontinuous warp and weft technique and it, too, terminates in a fringe twisted from the turns of the warp. It differs from its Wari counterparts in that its modular units are arranged to be wider than tall and, given the fading of the garment, the dye technology might well have been different.

Tunics from cemeteries surrounding San Pedro de Atacama, Chile, were constructed from modular units that are somewhat larger than those found in Arica and further north. An example from the Coyo Oriente cemetery consists of eight such units, four at the front and four at the back, with two red and two blue units arranged in alternation on each side (Cases C. and Agüero P. 2004: 124).¹¹ Further examples of large tie-dyed garments were detected at

the Quitor-6 cemetery. In Ingeborg Lindberg's (1963: 198) description, the rectangular red and blue 'patches' (she used the term *parches*) were tie-dyed in small rhombuses or circles.¹² The larger scale of the modular units and the red and blue colour combination distinguish these textiles from Wari tunics. Another local Atacama trait is evident in the plain weave of the cloth, which relies on the use of a multiple weft (Cases C. and Agüero P. 2004: 124).

Characteristics such as the use of discontinuous warp and weft to create modular units as well as fringing at the lowermost edge of the tunic formed part of a repertoire of weaving practices that were transmitted south and north along the spine of the Andes (Dransart 2014: 228-30). Such traits do not in themselves articulate ethnic identities. Weavers and dyers instead used these cloth-making practices to express local ethnic affiliations which, in the case of the Atacama tie-dyed textiles, are unlikely to have derived from contact with the highland culture of Tiwanaku (Cases C. and Agüero P. 2004: 134).

Knowledge of dye technology and preferences for certain colour schemes therefore became the basis for communicating ethnic affiliation and perhaps, too, the office performed by the wearer in specific ceremonies. The main garment worn by the Liverpool statuette does not have a fringe round the bottom. It does, however, make use of a strongly coloured textile and my discussion now turns to consider the colours in a scheme that relied on white fleece to bring out the special quality of the dyed hues.

Dazzling hues

If one were to accept the view that the Liverpool statuette was a talisman – defined above as something 'powerful' and 'sometimes apotropaic' – the strong hues of its garments would contribute to such an identification. The making of the colourful textile depended on a complex series of processes. A series of modular units was woven from an all-white warp and weft of camelid fibre, held together with a temporary scaffold weft or a series of narrow loom bars (see

7. Ann P. Rowe (2012: 202, Figure 192) reported that one of these textiles, in a private collection, was C-14 dated and produced a calibrated result of AD 414 – 575 (95.4% probability).

8. For an example, see a tunic donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Arthur M. Bullowa, accession number 1980.564.1 (searchable on the online database at <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search>).

9. This textile has the accession number of masma-30581 in the online data base, which is searchable at www.uta.cl/masma/patri-edu/textiles.htm

10. This fragment has the accession number of masma AZ1-30526 in the online data base at www.uta.cl/masma/patri-edu/textiles.htm

11. This tunic is no. 3937, from Coyo Oriente, in the Instituto de Investigaciones Arqueológicas y Museo de la Universidad Católica del Norte. Another tie-dyed tunic (no 3945-1) was judged to be in too poor a condition for Cases C. and Agüero P. (2004: 124) to provide a complete description of its construction. Given the state of preservation of some garments, they note that it is not always possible to be certain whether the garment was a tunic or a mantle.

12. Garment no 2788, in the Instituto de Investigaciones Arqueológicas y Museo de la Universidad Católica del Norte (Cases and Agüero 2004: 125, n. 19).

images in Strelow 1996: 10-11, plates 1a-1c, and 125, figures 1 and 2). Then the units were disassembled and placed in different or repeated dye baths, using tie-dyeing and other forms of linear resist techniques. The next step was to re-assemble them, probably on a loom or under tension, by threading the temporary weft, which previously held the modular units in place, back through the turns of the warp, to dovetail the units back together. Long gaps between the selvages formed by the turns of the weft were stitched to the adjacent modular unit, sometimes (but not always) using a thread that matched one of the colours in the modular units (Burian n.d.). At this stage, the piece was ready to be converted into a full-sized tunic.

The effect in Wari style tie-dyed garments relies on contrasts of strong hues dominating the visual field: red, golden yellow, green, blue and dark violet. Some modular units were tied and dyed red in a straightforward operation to make an undyed white design on a red ground. White designs also appear on a blue ground. Indigo, sometimes dipped for longer or shorter periods of time in the dye bath, produced a lighter and a darker intensity of blue. Green usually appears with yellow tie-dyed rhombuses. D'Harcourt (1962: 159) explained the process: the dyer tied the modular units (or applied some other resist) for dyeing the fabric blue. After untying the bindings, he or she next dyed the unit yellow, which made a yellow design on a green ground. A number of the blue-dyed units had some of the binding removed and then were placed in a red bath. The result was a series of small red and white rhombuses on a violet ground.

Modular units dyed with a red design on a yellow ground are unusual because they have a darker motif on a lighter background. In tie-dyeing, the ground is not bound and is exposed to the dye; it is usually darker than the tied pattern motifs. Because she observed that the yarns have a slightly compact or felted appearance in the red-on-yellow modular units, Ina VanStan (1963: 169-72) suggested that another form of resist dyeing must have been used. She thought that the application of hot wax, as in batik, or a combination of such a method with tie-dyeing, could have been used for these units. These red motifs are also of a larger scale than the rhombuses and straight lines that appear on the units with a light design on a dark ground. In the Liverpool textile, the red-on-yellow designs are also larger in size than in the other units. Ann Rowe (2012: 194) describes the effect as an explosive one breaking up the repetition set up by the patterned flow of the little, open rhombuses.

Wari style tie-dyed tunics display unusual chromatic preferences when compared with the repertoire of other pre-Hispanic textiles. Because the construction of the textile relies on the use of a discontinuous warp and weft in a fabric that is warp predominant, both these elements combine to create an impression of relatively undiluted colours possessing a chromatic purity.¹³ The techniques used in constructing the fabric therefore enhanced the possibilities for choosing a particular spectrum of hues.

Prior to the Wari period, Andean fibre artists had sometimes employed colour sequencing to draw attention to the method of construction used in making the fabric. Anne Paul studied this phenomenon in relation to Paracas/Topará textiles. She observed that such textiles are normally embroidered on a plain woven cloth base; the complexity is not so much in the construction but in the design of the images (Paul 2004: 64). The use of colour, she argued, seems to have been intended to serve an 'esoteric function' in the logic encoded in the colour choices, as well as providing visually pleasing effects (Paul 2004: 75). In some cases, the weavers/embroiderers selected colour combinations to draw attention to methods of textile construction. For instance, Paul (2004: 60, Figure 5.7) demonstrated how the repetition of four colours in repeated blocks along the edges of a headcloth invokes 'an image of four-strand oblique interlacing'.

In the Wari style tie-dyed tunics, the colour schemes do not make such an explicit reference to the construction of the cloth. The use of a discontinuous warp and weft, however, enabled weavers to contain saturated hues within the individual modular units. Perhaps, as Rebecca Stone (1986: 140) suggested, the hues had 'become subject matter' in the visual arrangement of the tie-dyed units. These tunics are distinctively different from another tunic type commonly worn by Wari men of high status, which was woven in a tapestry technique. In these tapestry tunics spinners, dyers and weavers used a palette of darker and lighter shades of weft yarn, spun from undyed, naturally coloured camelid fleece, as well as a range of dyed colours (Stone 1986; Stone 1992; Bergh 2012a).

Compared to the tie-dyed tunics, the chromatic schemes of Wari tapestries are based on a greater modulation of contrasts between light and dark, as well as between unsaturated and saturated colours. To extend the tonal range of colours at their disposal, spinners and dyers producing yarns for the tapestry tunics relied on what was by then the ancient practice of selecting light brown and mid-brown camelid fleece to dye some of it red and blue as a complement

13. The hues are saturated, which means that they are not made pallid by being diluted with white (see 'saturation' in Merriam-Webster, *Dictionary*, available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/saturation> and consulted on 16 September 2014). In a warp predominant weave, the warp is more closely spaced than the weft, but both are visible in the finished cloth.

to undyed yarns. They reserved the white to keep it as such or to dye it light hues such as yellow or green or, in the case of an exceptional tapestry tunic in the Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino, light pink (Sinclair Aguirre 2010: 34). Three-thousand-year-old yarns from the site of Tulan 54, in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile, already relied on such a principle; white fleece was not abundant and yarns spun from naturally occurring brown fleece colours were dyed red to complement the range of natural colours from white to brown (Dransart 2002a: 213).

From surviving Siguan style textiles, it appears that weavers had begun to obtain greater supplies of yarns spun from white fleece than had been previously available, and they put it to good effect in tie-dyed textiles. Joerg Haeblerli (2002: 253) suggested that the slopes of Nevado Ampato, from where the Sihuas River rises, were the source of camelid fleece used in the textiles.

The pairing of areas of chromatically strong hues (as the background) with resist dyed patterns formed by narrow white lines and small rhombuses was an unusual aesthetic strategy in the Andes. Earlier Nasca period tapestry weavers and potters had surrounded bright colours with fine black outlines in a tradition Wari weavers and potters chose to continue (Knobloch 2012: 122, 125). White outlining on the face designs of Robles Moqo style effigy jars from Pacheco is significant, however, because these designs were clearly inspired by Wari tie-dyed tunics. Beginning c. AD 850, in Middle Horizon Epoch 2, Wari weavers developed further the trend for white outlines in tapestries (Dransart 2002a: 150–51, plates 6.4 to 6.6), as did potters in polychrome ceramics, including the style known as Viñaque (Knobloch 2012: 133, figure 110).

White camelid fleece, therefore, must have been esteemed for its brilliance in its own right while affording dyers with the means to create intensely colourful hues for the tie-dyed tunics. The dye pigments from which the saturated hues were produced relied paradoxically on the need for a ground formed from all-white fleece for the purity of the various hues to obtain their maximum effect. It is possible, moreover, the use of white camelid fleece conveyed complex symbolic meanings in a realm of cosmological associations that now are not fully accessible to people in the present. In Wari times, people might have regarded white fleece, for instance, as possessing some kind of meteorological significance, in reference to white clouds and thunder, as do llama

and alpaca herders today in Isluga (Dransart 2002a: 54). If spinners and weavers of the tie-dyed tunics made associations of a comparable character, the outrageously conspicuous consumption of white camelid fibre would have added to the awesome appearance of such garments.

For much of the twentieth century, theoreticians of colour have not held colour schemes in high regard when based simply on contrast of hue. Albert H. Munsell argued that the 'use of strongest colours only fatigues the eyes' (Munsell and Cleland 1921: 9). The hues of red, yellow, green, blue and violet used in the tie-dyed tunics are what Munsell called 'simple hues' (Munsell and Cleland 1921: 14). In the colour sphere he developed for measuring and standardising colours, these hues would be somewhere near the equator (whereas paler tones would be closer to the north pole and darker tones to the south pole). Because these hues are close to saturation, with only the violet providing the darkest tone, colour schemes of Wari tie-dyed textiles would surely have met with Munsell's disapproval.¹⁴

In Western-dominated art markets, shifts in purchasers' preferences have resulted in periodic reappraisals of what connoisseurs consider to be 'art' (Clifford 1988: 222–6). Ancient Andean tunics therefore became susceptible to changing tastes on the part of collectors. Reid's (1984: 62) appreciation for Wari tie-dyed tunics is symptomatic of the expansion of Western aesthetic horizons when he stated: 'The final result is a modern painting somewhat like the incessant movement of hundreds of atoms flying like darts in an immense space'.¹⁵

In order to appreciate these visual qualities to the full, dealers and collectors unstitched certain tunics in order to hang them in the manner of an abstract painting. In the next section I explore some aspects of the inherent structural weaknesses of Wari tie-dyed tunics that made them vulnerable to be put to uses that would not have been envisaged by the original makers and users of such garments.

Modular units and structural weaknesses

Wari style tie-dyed tunics achieved their dazzling appearance through the repetition of modular units in specific colour combinations, sometimes baffling the viewer by reversing some of the expected repetitions. Standard shapes were used as modular units, based on a rectangle, a triangle with a stepped hypotenuse, an L-shape, a hook, or a

14. The colour schemes of industrially woven carrying cloths currently used by people in Andean communities are also based on contrasting hues. In a study of different kinds of colour contrast employed in Isluga, northern Chile, I found that women, in their own weavings, eschewed contrasts based simply on hue (Dransart 2002b: 59 and plate 1).

15. My translation of the Spanish: 'El resultado final es una pintura moderna algo como el movimiento incesante de cientos de átomos volando como dardos en un espacio inmenso'.

Figure 9. The shape of modular units used in Wari style tie-dyed tunics (not to scale):

- ga. Modular unit in the form of a rectangle (Metropolitan Museum of Art 1980.564.3)
- gb. Modular unit in the form of a triangle with a stepped hypotenuse (Metropolitan Museum of Art 1986.488.3)
- gc. Modular unit in the form of an L-shape (Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin VA 29101)
- gd. Modular unit in the form of a hook (British Museum Am 1954.05.445; see also Metropolitan Museum of Art 33.149.46)
- ge. Modular unit in the form of a stepped block with twelve selvages (Fowler Museum at UCLA, X80-1122). The missing lower right hand corner is reconstructed.
- gf. Modular unit in the form of a stepped block with eight selvages (Fowler Museum at UCLA, X86.3953; see also National Museums Liverpool, 1951.68.545)

stepped block (figure 9). An isolated example of a nearly complete stepped block from the collections of the Fowler Museum originally had twelve selvages (figure 9e). The shape of the unit is in three steps, tie-dyed red, with two white rhombuses in each step (Phipps 2013: 63, No 65). More than one modular shape might be used in one fabric (figures 10 and 11). In the Liverpool textile, there are rectangular and stepped block modular units, the latter having eight selvages (figure 9f).

The dimensions of the individual modular units used in a tunic are not always constant. As a consequence, the fabric may not lie flat because weavers eased the fullness of the larger units to adjust them to fit against the smaller ones. Ann Rowe (2012: 193) commented that neighbouring units, which had been adjacent when originally woven, might not

be next to each other after dyeing and were destined for use in different tunics. Ana Lisa Hedstrom and Yoshiko Wari, as reported by Jane Rehl (2000: 15, n.9), conducted an experiment in an attempt to reconstruct the original conformation of strips of modular units by cutting out individual units from a photograph of a tie-dyed tunic in the Amano Museum. They were, however, unable to do so because some units were missing, having presumably made their way into other tunics.¹⁶

Some Wari style tunics are symmetrical in their design, being made from two similar loom lengths joined together longitudinally by overcast stitching at the side seams and along the front and back of the garment. Openings were left for the neck and arms, but there was no finishing treatment for these openings (Rowe 2012: 195). Other tunics were made from two different loom lengths using various modular units. One of the tunics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art has rectangular modular units on one side of the garment and triangles with a stepped hypotenuse on the other (figure 10). The dominant pattern is on the diagonal, which is strongly marked on the side of the tunic with the rectangular modular units, but a reversal of elements occurs on the other side with the stepped triangles (de Montebello 1980-1981: 73).

The Liverpool textile was patched from a larger piece of a type rarely represented in museum collections. A comparable textile, consisting of an almost complete tunic half, is in the collections of the Fowler Museum, Los Angeles (figure 11).¹⁷ It is possible that the garment it came from was originally asymmetrical because a complete, but opened up, tunic in the collections of the Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología e Historia del Perú, Lima, has different left and right sides. One half is like the Fowler textile in consisting of step block modular units (each with eight selvages) and rectangles. The other is composed from triangles with a stepped hypotenuse.¹⁸

The processes used for assembling, disassembling and re-assembling the modular units to compose the tunics resulted in the frequent occurrence of long vertical slits, which were closed by overcast stitching. This stitching proved to be a point of weakness, which collectors and dealers have been able to exploit when preparing tunics for sale on the art market. Most of the ancient Andean textiles in museum collections lack the contextual information that is available

16. The tunic is illustrated in Amano and Tsunoyama (1979: 23, No 8).

17. Fowler Museum accession number X86-3953. In photographs, the yellow ochre in the yellow-on-green units is similar in both the Fowler and the Liverpool textiles, but I have not yet had an opportunity to study the former in the real. Because the Liverpool piece has been patched from fragments, at this stage of my research it is difficult to confirm whether or not it might have once belonged to the Fowler Museum textile.

18. Museo Nacional de Antropología y Arqueología e Historia del Perú accession number 231344. The tunic was exhibited in an exhibition, from December 2013 to April 2014, entitled *Gold and the Incas: Lost Worlds of Peru*, at the National Gallery of Australia: <http://nga.gov.au/exhibition/INCAS/Default.cfm?IRN=231344&MnuID=3&ViewID=2> (accessed on 14 September 2016).

had they been obtained from archaeologically controlled excavations. Many Wari style tie-dye tunics held in museum collections came through what Michael D. Coe (1993: 273) called the 'art market as system' in the production, distribution and consumption of pre-Hispanic antiquities. At some point(s) along this system, anonymous persons evidently replaced the worn stitching between the textiles' modular units and, not knowing what the garment types were, sometimes sewed up the neck slot too. Their intervention resulted in tie-dyed textiles as flat works of art intended for the aesthetic appreciation of the collectors.

Rowe (2012) discussed specific instances where tunics have undergone modifications. Her most dramatic example is a textile consisting of tie-dyed rectangular units interspersed with long strips of solid colour.¹⁹ Once a tunic, it was opened up to make it look like a mantle. Someone cut the plain red stripe, which probably had been at the centre of the garment, into two along its length and then stitched together the two pieces, with the halves of the red stripe now forming the textile's outermost edges. Rowe (2012: 196–8) judged the stitching to be modern.

Another tunic considered by Rowe appears to be missing one of its horizontal rows.²⁰ She also observed that the dark violet units tie-dyed with small rhombuses in an X-formation were probably taken from another textile in order to replace deteriorated blue units. Describing the repair as being skilfully done, she noted that the fringing at the armholes is not a characteristic of Wari period garments (Rowe 2012: 196). The implication therefore is that this tunic was also reconstructed in recent times.

The conservation of the textile in Liverpool

Sometime in the past along the flow in the production, distribution and consumption of pre-Hispanic artefacts, the Liverpool statuette was provided with garments recuperated from an ancient tie-dyed textile. A careful record made in 2000 during the conservation of the statuette is highly revealing. Before and after slides provide information on

how, to judge from the use of modern threads, someone had modified the textile in recent times. There were other clues; the removal of the upper garment exposed a metal tack driven into the small of the figure's back to keep the undergarment in place. Such tacks were not used in pre-Hispanic times (figure 6).

When the upper garment was laid flat for inspection, a T-shaped slot was revealed, cut into the fabric (figure 12). This form of neck opening was also foreign to ancient Andean weavers. The person who made this modification selected a weak part of the fabric, which already had been in a poor condition due to moth damage.²¹ There was a further loss of fabric during the conservation process (figure 13). The person (or persons) who modified the textile to fit the statuette devised another neck opening by unstitching the join between two green modular units. They placed the opening horizontally, tight across the chest of the statuette, apparently not knowing that this horizontal arrangement would have been associated with women's tunics in the Central Andes.²²

The rawhide binding of the cord wrapped round the neck of the statuette is likewise an uncharacteristic feature of pre-Hispanic textiles (figure 14). Hence there are several reasons for suspecting that the statuette was dressed in recent times.

At least three sewing threads were noted during the conservation of the upper garment (Ayers 2000). Much of the overcast stitching in modern-looking thread is crudely done. There are, in addition, slight traces of a different red stitching underneath the overcast stitches between two green modular units at the base of the neck on the back of the upper garment as the textile was arranged on the statuette (figures 4 and 15). Two tunics in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art also have red stitching at the base of the neck opening, somewhat roughly done (figure 10).²³ A further stretch of stitching on the Liverpool upper garment, running horizontally across the front of the upper garment, may be pre-Hispanic. It is executed in *punto de forma de zeta* (Katterman 2006: 352), using a paired yarn in a yellow

19. The Textile Museum, Washington D.C., no 91.90.

20. The Textile Museum, Washington D.C., no 91.308.

21. It is worth noting that Fowler Museum textile X86-3953 has also suffered deterioration in the blue modular units (see again Figure 11).

22. The term 'tunic' is used here as a conventional term defined in dictionaries to refer to 'a simple slip-on garment made with or without sleeves and usually knee-length or longer' (Merriam-Webster dictionary, available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tunic>, and consulted on 3 March 2017). As an under or outer garment, it was worn in the ancient Classical world by men and women. In Wari and later periods in the Central Andes, slip-on garments were made of different fibres and were variable in length, expressing gender and ethnic distinctions. The slip-on garments of coastal peoples (men and women) and of highland men were seamed at the sides with openings for head, arms and legs, unlike the untailored Inka-style cloth, with which highland women wrapped themselves. The upper garment worn by the Liverpool statuette differs from tunics in this respect because the sides were not stitched, but were left open.

23. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Rosetta and Louis Slavitz, 1986.488.3 and Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Arthur M. Bullowa, 1980.564.2, available on the searchable data base at <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search>.

Figure 10. Wari style tie-dyed tunic, camelid fibre warp and weft. Accession number 1980.564.2, Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Arthur M. Bullowa, www.metmuseum.org

ochre or tan colour, and is visible in Figures 3, 12 and 14. After cleaning, the upper garment was attached to conservation net and replaced on the statuette (figures 14 and 15).

Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome, collector of antiquities

All three of the human figures currently on display in Liverpool entered the museum's collections in 1951 as a donation from the trustees of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum to what was then the City of Liverpool Public Museum. Wellcome's collecting activities had begun by 1878 when, employed as a travelling salesman by a New York company of druggists, he went to Ecuador to look for sources of Cinchona bark, from which quinine was extracted (James 1994: 68).

This expedition gave Wellcome the opportunity to indulge in some amateur archaeological digging. At least some of the artefacts he found seem to have accompanied him

when he moved to London in 1880 (Larson 2009: 9-10). An inventory of objects made later in his life indicates that certain items were 'excavated from the Inca tombs of Peru by Mr Wellcome'.²⁴ His antiquarian interests therefore were rooted in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period during which foreign explorers and traders had been developing their interests in collecting pre-Hispanic artefacts alongside the antiquarian activities of local South Americans (Boone 1993a: 323-5; Gänger 2014: 1-3). From the middle of the century, 'purposeful excavation' had been increasingly adopted as a strategy for obtaining antiquities rather than relying on accidental discoveries encountered during building works or agricultural activities (Gänger 2014: 54).

In London, Silas Burroughs and Wellcome set up a new pharmacy business (James 1994: 87-8). The business prospered and Wellcome soon developed an enthusiasm for purchasing antiquities in the salerooms. He made many of these

24. Harry Port, who was head of Wellcome's museum stores (Larson 2009: 108-9), drew up this inventory. It is undated. Mr Port, Inventories, Wellcome Library, London, WA/HMM/CM/Lis/2

Figure 11. One half of a Wari style tie-dyed tunic with stepped block and rectangular modular units, camelid fibre warp and weft. Accession number X86.3953, Fowler Museum at University of California, Los Angeles, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert L. Lucas Jr. <http://fowler.ucla.edu/collections/objects/x86-3953>

purchases under different assumed names (Wilkins or Wilton) to avoid revealing his identity and he also employed agents to make purchases on his behalf (Larson 2009: 81). In 1896 he appointed C.J.S. Thompson as a researcher and a collecting agent. Thompson's pseudonyms were Treve and Epworth (James 1994: 265-8; Larson 2009: 81). One of his tasks was to draft in other Wellcome employees, whose jobs otherwise were as delivery men, workmen, personal attendants and caretakers, to act as bidders when Wellcome wished to buy antiquities. Frances Larson (2009: 81) calls such members of staff 'factotums' and they were the ones 'who packed and unloaded and recorded and cleaned Wellcome's curiosities, week in and week out'. Wellcome threw himself into a whirl of competitive and cooperative activities focused on the determination of the monetary value of an artefact and the thrill of making a successful bid to claim ownership over it. Larson (2009: 91-2) suggests that he relished his entry as a collector into the antiquities market, and that he felt more comfortable in joining it than the academic community to which he wished to belong by planning his Historical Medical Museum. Shortly after the First World War, a market in pre-Hispanic antiquities was emerging (Coe 1993: 271) and by this time Wellcome's collection had been growing at an exponential rate. Perhaps it was during this period that Wellcome acquired the statuette.

In 1913, Wellcome had inaugurated a Historical Medical Exhibition in premises in Wigmore Street, London. For this new development he drew on his previous experiences of participating in trade exhibitions and fairs (Larson 2009: 22-3). With Thompson now as Curator of the Exhibition, Wellcome encouraged his staff to put on a display combining original artefacts, carefully repaired ancient objects and copies of originals (Larson 2009: 172). The Exhibition

remained open for nineteen years. Wellcome's attitude towards collecting was based on using his collections to demonstrate that medicine was a branch of anthropology in which anthropological questions might be addressed 'in a wide sense'.²⁵ Andean mummies, textiles, pottery and other items would all contribute towards demonstrating how the history of medicine (and the human body) might be treated in a holistic manner. Wellcome therefore aimed to make his collections as 'complete' as possible for the Historical Medical Museum he intended to open (Larson 2009: 90). It is likely the Liverpool statuette was destined for this museum as a potential exhibit. Because he was aware of practices used by auction houses to sell antiquities, the possibility that the statuette was the product of a dealer's workshop might not have dissuaded Wellcome from acquiring it.²⁶

Wellcome died in 1936 and, after World War II, trustees of the as yet unopened museum only retained the artefacts they deemed to be specifically related to the history of medicine. In a report dated 1944, the ethnographic materials were stated to be 'more extensive than any other' part of Wellcome's collections (Russell 1986: 57). Large numbers of items that were declared to be surplus were transferred to the British Museum, where its staff selected items for their collections and the remainder were distributed to a number of university and municipal museums, including some in the Commonwealth.

Accordingly, six months after the end of World War Two, under an agreement between the Trustees of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum and the Keeper of Ethnography at the British Museum, about 1,300 cases of artefacts and other materials were transferred to the British Museum. Plans were put in place for Wellcome staff to check the two hundred cases of Mexican and Peruvian material for items

25. H.S. Wellcome, Royal Commission on Museums, written answers (1929), Wellcome Library, London, WA/HSW/OR/1.1

26. Another possibility is that Wellcome's own staff might have dressed the statuette in an ancient Wari textile.

Figure 12. The statuette during conservation with the upper garment raised, revealing the T-shaped slot cut into the textile. Accession number 1951.68.545, National Museums of Liverpool. Photograph by Vivien Chapman

Figure 13. The statuette during conservation showing the loss of textile in the dark blue area due to moth damage and the second neck opening between two green modular units. Accession number 1951.68.545, National Museums of Liverpool. Photograph by Vivien Chapman

of potential interest to the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum. The British Museum then had first choice of the remaining artefacts before the Wellcome trustees made the rest available for distribution to other museums in the UK and Empire. Liverpool was mentioned in the plans for this process as a particularly worthy recipient because it had 'close association with the Colonies, the prominent place it takes in the teaching of tropical medicine and the fact that most of its Ethnographical Collection has been destroyed by enemy action'.²⁷

The statuette perhaps was selected by the City of Liverpool Public Museum on 8 February 1951, during the fourth allocation of surplus artefacts, concerning 'general African and general American items in equal proportions ... the first selection of Peruvian pots – about 100 in all'.²⁸ E. Ashworth Underwood, the Director of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum, explained the 'material ... consists mainly of Peruvian pottery and textiles and there is also a miscellaneous collection of other types of material'.²⁹ Alternatively, the statuette might have been chosen for Liverpool on the sixth instalment, which took place on 18 October 1951.

In any event, in 1951 the statuette reached Liverpool. On entering the collections of the municipal museum curatorial staff gave it a new accession number, clearly signalling the date of its arrival.

Concluding thoughts

If the Liverpool statuette is a talisman, it is a talisman of a modern age. Its glowering presence is intended to dissuade the viewer from examining its fabrication too closely. People living during Wari times conceivably considered the brilliance of the dazzling hues in the textile to possess special qualities when the spinners of all white camelid fibre produced the warp and weft yarns for weavers and dyers to make strips of modular units for assembling into a full-sized tunic. The textile, however, was not originally intended to clothe the statuette. Someone cut its remnants to fabricate small-scale under and upper garments and a head cloth. Whatever Sir Henry Solomon Wellcome thought when he purchased the statuette before 1936, in its dressed aspect it now seems to belong to a period of time when dealers and collectors thought that ancient objects might be 'improved'.

Wari style tie-dyed textiles were vulnerable to modification because of the construction method using modular units, which were dovetailed together along horizontal joins and stitched between vertical joins. The decay of this stitching added to other forms of destruction occurring in ancient times. Finds from the uppermost layer of Structure 5, a subterranean chamber, at the site of La Real in the Majes Valley, Department of Arequipa, provides an instance where

27. T.R.G. Bennett, Memorandum I, The Wellcome Ethnographical Collections (1945), Wellcome Library, London, WA/HMM/TR/Eth/A.1

28. Letter from E Ashworth Underwood, Director of WHMM to GHS Bushnell, Curator CUMAE (30 January 1951), Cambridge Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology Archive (Box 376 Doc 111).

29. Letter from E. Ashworth Underwood, Director, WHMM to G.H.S. Bushnell, Curator, CUMAE (8 October 1951), Cambridge Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology Archive (Box 376 Doc 111).

Figure 14. Front view of the statuette after conservation with the upper garment now supported by net, accompanied by the cord. Accession number 1951.68.545, National Museums of Liverpool. Photograph by Vivien Chapman

Figure 15. Rear view of the statuette after conservation with the upper garment now supported by net. Accession number 1951.68.545, National Museums of Liverpool. Photograph by Vivien Chapman

excavators encountered a fragment of a tie-dyed tunic made from triangular units with a stepped hypotenuse. The fill of this chamber included disarticulated human remains and a large part of a four-cornered hat was also present the same level, suggesting that these deposits were derived from the disturbed burial of at least one Wari lord (Quequezana Lucano, Yépez Álvarez and López Hurtado 2012: 114, Figures 4.1 and 4.16a; Yépez Álvarez 2012: 19–21). Daniela Biermann

(2006: 229) also reported the insertion of a Wari tie-dyed tunic in the early Nasca-period cemetery of Cabezas Achata-das. Some prehistoric practices, therefore, resulted in the alteration of Wari style tie-dyed tunics, separating them from their original contexts.

During the course of the twentieth century, Andean antiquities increasingly became a collectible category through the activities of the art market, subjecting textiles to other types of modification. Collectors favoured Wari style tie-dyed tunics if they survived to a greater extent than the fragment from La Real. The stitching of the tunics was vulnerable, allowing dealers to convert them into something more desirable to the collectors. Two different strategies were considered here: the conversion of a seamed tunic into a flat textile suitable for display on someone's wall and the use of a smaller fragment to dress a figurine. Someone repurposed such scraps by turning them into small-scale garments in order to dress the statuette now in Liverpool. In so doing, this anonymous person (or persons) attempted to reunite the textile with a human form. The textile had probably been separated from a human body it once accompanied in a funerary context. Their attempt, however, does not entirely convince viewers who are conversant with Wari depictions of elite male warriors.

The Liverpool statuette therefore is a composite object bringing together not only different materials, such as wood, textile and rawhide. In its composite character it also is an amalgam of different episodes in time in which an earlier textile wraps a more recent wooden figurine, combining different substances with different temporal dimensions.

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