Pre-Columbian Huari Figural Vessel



Figural vessel from the Huari people of Peru

The Huari culture belongs to a group of important Pre-Columbian cultures in Peru. It developed in the mountainous valley of Ayacucho in Central Peru and was influenced by the Tiwanaku culture that flourished in the altiplano of Bolivia. The center of the culture was the city of Huari, whose massive ruins cover an area of approximately 10-15 square kilometers.



Huari have gained attention in recent decades for the way they used works of art, including elaborate textiles, to express their ideas about human society, nature, and the cosmos

The Huari influence spread to a large area. Their impressive ruins as well as the number and styles of artifacts found elsewhere in Peru; specifically, the south and middle coast, tell about the prevalence of the culture. Scholars traditionally consider the Huari state to have been warlike in nature. It is also generally considered a state with a large sphere of political influence. Huari was probably the first centrally governed state of the Andes. Ultimately, it formed the basis for the Inca Empire. Although long overshadowed by the more famous Incas, the Huari have gained attention in recent decades for the way they used works of art, including elaborate textiles, to express their ideas about human society, nature, and the cosmos. Like other ancient Andean peoples, they never developed a writing system and depended on art for their highest expression.

The Huari state lasted approximately 500 years (500-1000 AD), but its influence lived much longer through its art. This particular vessel is generally called a face neck jar and is a miniature form of often huge (up to 3 feet high) ceremonial feasting vessels which were intricately painted in rich colors and then burnished smooth. Even in this smaller example, the carefully modeled and detailed face has all the confident dignity of a royal personage or deity.