



UNIVERSITÉ LIBRE DE BRUXELLES
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GENDER ARCHAEOLOGY IN ANCIENT PERU: A CASE STUDY AMONG THE RECUAY

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To my mum, for raising me to be an independent woman

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this thesis was to offer a functional database of stone sculptures, ceramics and textiles to scholars investigating Recuay iconography, through which human figures, their attributes, clothing styles, functions and possible status in society could be examined. A second objective was to enrich the general knowledge of Recuay society and the agencies acting in it. Based on this research, one main conclusion is that the Recuay culture was a stratified society in which warriorhood and ancestry played vital roles. Analyses of the monoliths reveal that only men were represented as petrified ancestors by the Recuay. The central position and larger size of men in the representations of ceremonies on the ceramics also imply the predominance of men in religious life. Among the Recuay men, however, hierarchical differences appear to have also existed. The different sizes and positions of male figures within scenes, and the variations of attributes and clothing styles among warriors and guardians all seem to refer to different social positions. The smaller sizes, less elaborately decorated clothes and often auxiliary positions of women in iconographical representations, on the other hand, seem to suggest that women held lower ceremonial statuses. Nevertheless, the presence of women – often associated with cups or shells, represented in copulation scenes or holding a child - seems to have been a crucial element of the ceremonies. In this dissertation, it is proposed that women's procreative abilities made them vital aspects of religious life as they added significance to the rituals by their overt reference to fertility. By profiling themselves mainly as warriors or at the centre of libation scenes, men, on the other hand, could extract power from the rituals in which they were key players. Ceramics were therefore not only used within ancestry ceremonies in order to carry out libations, but they were probably also commissioned in order to enhance, the ceremonial status of certain men, and perhaps also to accentuate their political position in society.

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Key to references

Berlin: Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin

MNAAHP: Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú in Lima

Smithsonian: National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.

MRAAH: Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels

Huaraz: Museo Arqueológico de Ancash in Huaraz

Cabana: Museo Arqueológico Zonal de Cabana

Larco: Museo Larco in Lima

Chacas: Museo de la Municipalidad Provincial de Asunción in Chacas

Cassinelli: Museo Cassinelli in Trujillo

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