

One of the dominant qualities of Pre-Columbian art, appearing in both Peruvian and Mexican work, is what might be described as a lateral movement or form. This expression or style, since it is so defined that it can be designated as such, is distinctive to this area. Although most cultures at this level design in a single plane, frontally and flat, a necessity which American art shares, none stress a lateral movement as this work does. The contrast will become evident as the term is explained and illustrated.

The primary quality of the lateral structure is a spreading from the center of the work to its edges, which are the most defined and have the sharpest movement. The action and the dramatic, heavy shapes are at the periphery of the work, often as if they are pushing against something enclosing it; these culminating forms are the largest and the most deeply cut. The interior ones are flattened, in comparison, and oriented from the center outward. Since the movement and the shapes are strongest at the edge, the center is stable, often almost static, maintaining its position, if taken separately, in the way usual to relatively flat painting and sculpture, which at a minimum depend upon an interesting relation of part to part with no unifying movement or encompassing structure (Egyptian paintings and reliefs are often so). The means of achieving the expansion of form varies among different cities and cultures and is connected to surrounding, prior, or later cultures; the structure elucidates these relationships. Within the rectangular format, various cultures, such as Chavín, carve or suggest varying depths; later ones, such as Tiahuanaco and Coast Tiahuanaco, often organize the structure in a complex rotary movement. In some cases, where objects are not in the usual rectangle but are from a culture which uses it, or whose individual motifs have been taken from context and used independently, individual units have a lateral surface tension, retaining in isolation the quality of their origin. The form is primarily of the "abstract" style, consisting mostly of a stressed

breadth, and considerably less so of the actually realistic style, e.g., pottery heads and figures.

The Ica leeboard in the American Museum of Natural History, reproduced in The Museum of Modern Art's book, is an excellent example to begin with, since it is a simple version of this form (and since it fulfills the requirement of availability). The opening description was a generalization of the form; the particulars vary – these as well as the qualities in common should be emphasized, thus articulating the actual form of each object. In this case, the salient difference is that the object is a plank, oblong, and not a square, as is usually the case. This difference accounts for the stress on the top edge, and on a single edge instead of on four edges, or at least two. The object's use, which demands it be stuck upright between the logs of a raft, determines the shape and so, primarily, the elaboration also. The fact that the leeboard is a board, perhaps only three-quarters of an inch thick, also accounts for the variation: its flatness and obvious two-sidedness have a unique quality; the expanding form, the carved design, is placed in actual space, so that the design's single plane is a physical fact and can be sensed as so. (It usually is not, as exemplified by Tiahuanaco's Gate of the Sun or at Chavín.) That the major portion of the plank is plain and undecorated is its version of the unstressed center that is so frequent. All of the carved elements move up and outward from this area. In addition to the very defined top, the right edge is carved in small units, which is very necessary in maintaining the two-dimensional lateral form of the object, since the repeated units direct the movement of that edge into a right angle with that of the top, thus mitigating its one-directional thrust, the two sides together, with perhaps the length of the plank, creating the flat, outward movement from the center. Without the small units, the steps of which enforce the outward and upward movement, the object would move only in one direction, and would so be an anomaly in Peruvian art, and particularly in the tradition

deriving from Tiahuanaco. Other Ica leeboards have carving across the lower part of the board and sometimes up the left side, which makes the square very evident. The movement of the upper edge is initiated by the half-ellipsoidal hole in the board which, though initiating this movement, is also unassertive, relatively neutral, and is thus typical of most of the areas between the center and the edges of leeboards, areas which must provide the transition from a form in a single position to one dynamically moving. The semioval's ambivalence is in the increasing width toward its top, which causes an unemphasized movement outward, and in its unindented, smooth curve, doubled at the bottom, which minimizes it, even though it is large compared to the carved openings above it. The space frees the rectangle of the accented forms above it; being free, it can be dynamic.

The rectangle is composed of three rectangular stages of equal size which progressively become stronger. The first is plain and solid, but, being so among openings, is definite. The second stage is of stepped shapes developing upward from the first, in openwork. The angle of the side of the frets is repeated across this stage; a short form of two steps alternates with one double its height which divides at midpoint into two parts. This creates a somewhat complex upward movement, serrate and devious, multiplying the longer angle, counteracting it with shorter, also outward, angles, and stopping both temporarily with the horizontal, bottom lines of the steps. This jagged movement is surmounted by the most forceful of the whole piece: the outermost part, the row of standing figures. There is no frame around this third stage; the figures are all cut free. Both individually and considered together, the figures are the most sculptural and autonomous part of the leeboard. Generally their movement is straight outward, the culmination of the preceding forms. Despite their monolithic drive, or a small Ica version of that, they are broken into horizontal parts, which, like the three stages, are progressively stronger. The legs

are very short with an open space between them, providing some transition from the open frets below; a short skirt provides a long horizontal to slow the outward thrust somewhat, and, like the arms and chest, to form the figures into a band and unit. The rather flat, wide chest carries out the flatness of the interior of the leeboard. The legs, skirt, arms, upward-indicating hands, and torso culminate in the widest part of the figure, its shoulders, thus providing a momentary stop to the movement, which drives out again in the head. The head and hat, although less wide than the shoulders and surrounded by more space, are stronger by virtue of their consequent isolation and also because of their more solid and rounded form. The hair, or perhaps it is part of the hat, again unites and checks the movement, and accents the edge; the massive hat on top of the already large head forms the final thrust and definition of the edge.

The thinness and flatness of the units of the board, as well as their smallness, are characteristic of Ica and Coast Tiahuanaco work. The lateral movement is one of thin areas, unlike, for example, the lateral movement of Chavín or Tiahuanaco work. (The contrast of Tiahuanaco work to that of Coast Tiahuanaco is in, as all authors have noted, the large forms of the former and the small ones of the latter.) The definition of the edge is done by small shapes, also in contrast to the other two cultures. This smallness and thinness is perhaps due to the Ica emphasis on textiles rather than on stone, where larger shapes would be necessary for clarity, and where incising and rounding would give depth and solidity. The necessities of textile decoration prescribed smaller areas, ones easily understood and visually interesting when seen only in part; this aesthetic requirement caused the images and structures of Tiahuanaco to be abstracted and reduced in size when reworked in textile design. Like the leeboard, Coast Tiahuanaco textiles have only the thickness of the material. They display the lateral form fully in many instances and also frequently have the rotary

movement. The design units of the poncho with the stylized feline motif, figures five and eighty-five in The Museum of Modern Art's book, have a distinct clockwise rotation; the form is opened at the edges.

Several Ica leeboards similar to the one discussed are reproduced in *Kunst und Kultur von Peru*, pages 428–33; the major difference is that, rather than a semioval, some have a center pole, which frees the carved rectangle less effectively perhaps. Some are more elaborate than the one of the three stages: a four-tier one has two rows of animals carved across its face, thus closing the square more; a six-tier one has birds on the vertical edges and birds and frets mixed in the tiers, the uppermost stage being of figures; there is one of five stages with a center pole and frets, and surrounded by figures; and also two unusual ones in which the semioval is partially open, one side of it pointed, and the other carrying a stage on which are two sitting men and a dog, in one case, and two dogs, in the other.

The running figures on the frieze of Tiahuanaco's Gate of the Sun are perfect examples of a lateral structure. The surface of one of these figures and the surface of the background are clearly distinguished by their relative largeness and simplicity; both are flat. The height of the relief is evident because of this and the edge of the raised figure obvious, which results in a certain thinness, allied to that of the Ica leeboard, an object carved in a style which derived from Tiahuanaco. (This two-dimensional quality, or at least this extent of it, is not invariable in work from these cultures; Chavín work is more solid, for example, often suggesting the bulk of the stone on which the relief is carved.) A running figure is virtually all one shape, so connected is the edge which defines him. All four edges of the square which the figure forms are stressed in comparison to the center; the two vertical edges are particularly emphasized – the edge created by the staff very much so, since it is on the side toward which the figure faces, leading to the central

god, and the edge created by the wing somewhat less but still very strong. The feathers of the wing are defined, stressing the outer edge by repetition, as are the five parts of the headdress. The circumference of the square is much indented while the outline of the body, the interior, is less so. At the bottom edge the forward leg and foot drive directly downward, while an upward movement of the knee is suggested. The knee of the back leg is directed down, the heel of the foot upward, raising the wing, and then the foot downward. The two legs form a very common form seemingly found everywhere in the Americas, which is of bent shapes forcing against the edge and rotating, somewhat like a swastika; frets are often of this form. The lateral movement is given a powerful rotary motion at the edge, one staccato, contained, creating the square it seems to force outward. In this relief it is only moderately developed and provides the running movement of the figure. Near each corner the background opens out of the square; this squares off the form and contributes to the rotation. The body swings diagonally toward the upper left corner, toward the central god, but is relatively neutral and undramatic compared to the other areas; there are no deep cuts near the center, only a low relief on the body. The narrowing extent of the deeper carving toward the center is somewhat symmetrical and radiates, brokenly, from there. These are transitional areas, similar to the semioval in the leeboard; the eye is in this category. It is half-way between the center and the upper edge and is deeply cut and so strong, but is a circle and so neutral. The head thrusts up; the wing, beginning at the center, swings to the right edge; the body and legs move downward; the arm and nearly independent staff go left; four areas, originating at the center, move laterally outward to culminate at the edge.

The individual elements of this form and especially those at Tiahuanaco are distributed widely, and all bear the movement of spreading from a center, e.g., the stepped fret or “staircase sign,” as Posnansky terms it. He considers this the

most important sign at Tiahuanaco, and of the Americas, originating at the former and becoming omnipresent in the latter. It is the sign of the earth and of the sky. It develops from a point and closes upon itself, such as the version found at Mitla, among innumerable other sites.

Symmetry is frequent in Tiahuanaco work, in the running figure, and in the Coast Tiahuanaco and Chavín styles. A concomitant of symmetry is the neutral transitional area from one symmetrical unit to another. Symmetrical form is thus an integral element of the lateral form. Apropos of symmetry and in connection with Chavín reliefs, Bennett has stated: “Symmetry is another characteristic of Chavín style, although not so universal as some others. In a front-view figure, such as the Raimundi stone this is usually achieved. In profile figures, where symmetry is less obvious, it is none the less observed in the arrangement of scrolls and appendages or in design detail like top-view feline heads.”

The example of one more culture exhibiting the lateral form must suffice for brevity; Chavín carving, so much earlier than Tiahuanaco, often has this form and contrasts in its heavier form with the latter. The typical square format is absent but essentially the forms move laterally, even more completely than those of the figures of the Tiahuanaco gate. (The Stela Raimundi is on the same principle as the square, even though it is oblong.) The movement is strongest here because of the curvilinear band style, which has the solidity and implied thickness so absent in Tiahuanaco work and its progeny, and which in its constant curving and repetition of line creates a lateral tension in each small unit, thus multiplying the effect. Every part – feline mouths and eyes, crosses, circles, S shapes – spreads across the surface and relates to another part, even when it is a motif such as the cross, which usually isolates itself. The units have a surface tension which is also full and weighted; they are flat, move flatly, and yet are not thin, but massive, due in large part to the roundness of the relief carving,

the rounding of every raised edge and incised line. The Chavín style is extremely powerful because of this. Bennett has written that surface area is portrayed as a series of bands of uniform width. The bands, in powerful curves, push outward, as wave after wave. This is unlike the Tiahuanaco and Coast Tiahuanaco styles, whose fragments would not show the lateral tension as clearly since there the movement of individual units depends most upon the total composition. Perhaps the power of the smaller elements in the Chavín style made redundant such a strong general composition as the rotary movement, which is not found at Chavín. H. Ubbelohde-Doering states: "Any stroke of the modeling-tool in the clay is done with so passionate a force that, even when found as the only trace in a fragment, it would in itself contain the whole style, its *verve*, all its style of Chavín."

The Stela Raimundi, as has been mentioned, although not square but rectangular, is open and most strong at the edges. The center section of the stone is all double incised lines, less dramatic than the top vertical edges of the stele, which are carved in distinct relief. The top and bottom of the center section are opened to complete the emphasis upon the periphery. Thus, with the exception of the suggestion of rotation, a later development, the stele has the same rectangular lateral form as the Tiahuanaco and Coast Tiahuanaco art.

The structure, its modifications, and its isolated elements are widespread, perhaps traceable, and so useful, and a fact, useful or not.