

Trends in Decoration Practices over Time in Fabrics with Secure Contexts

A detailed study of decorative practices over time was not possible at the time; however, a short discussion of some general trends in weaving practices and decorative techniques is presented here. Because the study involves chronology, only fabrics with secure contexts are included. This is a preliminary study, so the attributes are not yet broken down by fabric category (i.e., plain weave, twining, knotting, and looping). In other words, the trends in the use of complementary warps—a decorative technique used in both plain weave and weft twining—includes all category of fabrics, so if there are different chronologies based on fabric category, it would not be clear in this report. This discussion presents change over time of sixteen attributes associated with decorative practices:

These preliminary results presented several interesting trends concerning the relative production of fabric types/categories, and the change over time in textile techniques, including decorative practices. Keeping in mind that the discussion of trends over time is limited to Phases III through V, because of the small number of Phase II fabrics with sound provenance (there are only ten specimens). Phase II data, however, are taken into account if the question involved simple presence-absence.

Technical discussions of the data are presented in the form of tables and diagrams at the end of the appendix. A summary of the major trends found in them is as follows: (1) half of the decorative techniques practiced over time at Huaca Prieta experienced a decline between Phases II and III; (2) the majority of decorative techniques peaked in Phase IV and declined significantly in Phase V; (3) the use of weft twining mirrors these two trends; (4) the pattern for plain weave is the inverse; and (5) only five out of sixteen techniques, all associated with weft twining, experienced an increase in frequency between Phases IV and V.

What do these trends tell us? First, there was a decrease in the number of decorated fabrics in Phases II and V, and the majority of techniques that decreased in use are generally associated with twining (e.g., the use of milkweed fiber, fugitive cotton fiber, and inter-warp knots) (see Diagrams 4 and 5). This seems

perfectly logical...a drop in twining is connected with a drop in decorative practices associated with twining.

But this doesn't explain everything. There were several practices associated with weft twining that increased in Phase V, for instance, the use of fugitive cotton, inter-warp knots, and the use of milkweed. It would seem as though there was a tremendous change that took place between Phase IV and V. This can also be seen in bundling practices, where bundles from Late V contexts are completely different from earlier bundles (see section on Bundling).

Huaca Prieta fabric production seems to have had its apogee in Phase IV. It was during this phase when all but two examples of crossed-warp patterning were produced, and crossed-warp patterning represents the most difficult and complex weft-twining technique. It is curious that the percentage of plain weave is inversely proportional to the percentage of weft twining, and in Phase IV, plain weave is almost nonexistent. This pattern seems support the idea that there might have been (at least) two groups of people who had different fabric-making traditions, an idea discussed throughout the chapter.

The possible existence of two populations is tempting but not necessarily the only explanation for the inverse relationship between plain weave and weft twining. Another explanation might be a division of labor, possibly based on gender, where men probably made nets and women probably made the plain weave and the twining. Netting is frequently encountered in both male and female burials, where bodies are wrapped in fishing nets. Ethnographic evidence, however, suggests that men on the north coast both made and used their fish nets (Vreeland 1986:368).

There is a significant body of archaeological evidence in the form of weaving baskets that are almost never found in men's tombs that suggests that spinning and weaving were primarily associated with women. The only Preceramic weaving tool found at Huaca Prieta was probably used as a composite weaving tool—part pick and part batten—and was associated with the burial of a woman. Ethnohistorical accounts from the north coast confirm this (Vreeland 1986:368).

Discussion of Tables 2a and 2b: Numbers and Percentages of Fabrics by Category over Time

Concerning the relative production of fabric categories over time, Table 2a (below) is extracted from Table 2 in the main text. It presents the number of fabrics for each fabric-structure category by phase. Table 2b presents the percentages of the same data by phase. The data in Table 2a are plotted in Line Diagram 1.

Table 2a. The Number of Fabrics per Phase from Secure Contexts Grouped by Structure Category

FABRIC STRUCTURE	PHASE				TOTAL
	2	3	4	5	
FIGURE-8 LOOPING	0	0	7	21	28
KNOTTED NETTING	3	1	2	7	13
PLAIN WEAVE	1	25	4	50	80
WEFT TWINING	6	19	62	171	258
SUBTOTAL	10	45	75	249	379

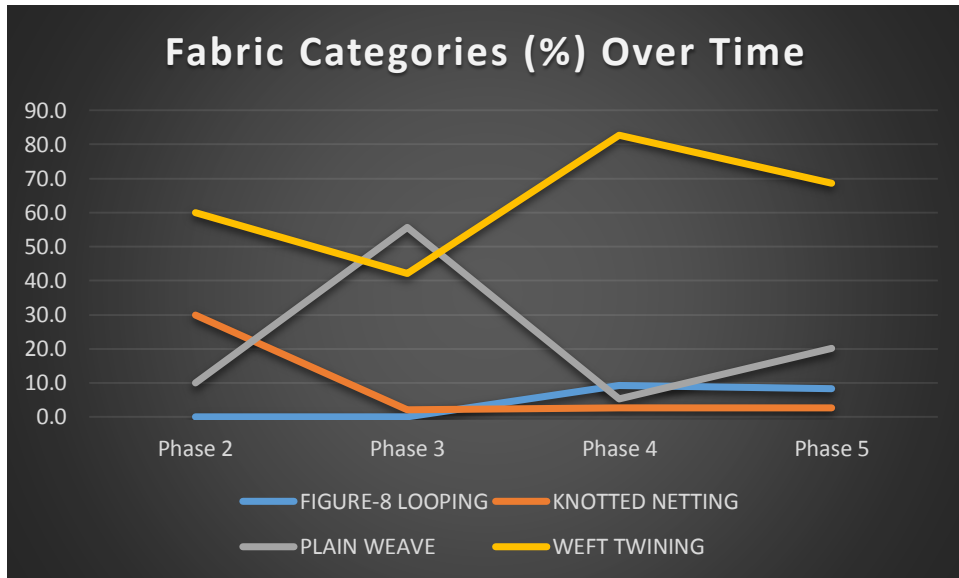
Table 2b. Percentage of Fabrics per Phase from Secure Contexts Grouped by Structure Category

FABRIC STRUCTURE	PHASE				TOTAL
	2	3	4	5	
FIGURE-8 LOOPING	0%	0%	9.3%	8.4%	7.4%
KNOTTED NETTING	30%	2.2%	2.7%	2.8%	3.4%
PLAIN WEAVE	11%	55.6%	5.3%	20.1%	21.1%
WEFT TWINING	60%	42.2%	82.7%	68.7%	68.1%
SUBTOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Discussion of Diagrams 1–5: Trends in the Percentage of Decorative Techniques over Time.

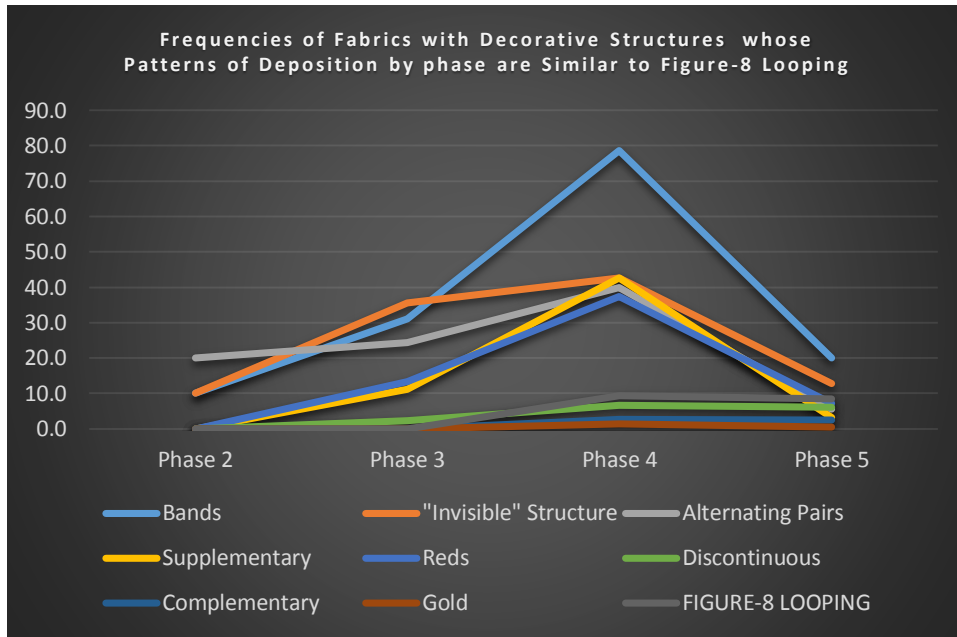
Line Diagram 1 presents the data from Table 2b. Among the more interesting trends is the fact that, figure-8 looping does not appear until Phase IV. This is contrary common thinking that suggests that looping preceded twining and plain weave. The pattern here might be the result of sampling. The production of knotted netting is stable at 2–3% over time if Phase II data are excluded. Plain weave and weft twining demonstrate a clear inversely proportional relationship.

Line Diagram 1 of the Percentage of Fabrics from Secure Contexts by Phase and Structure



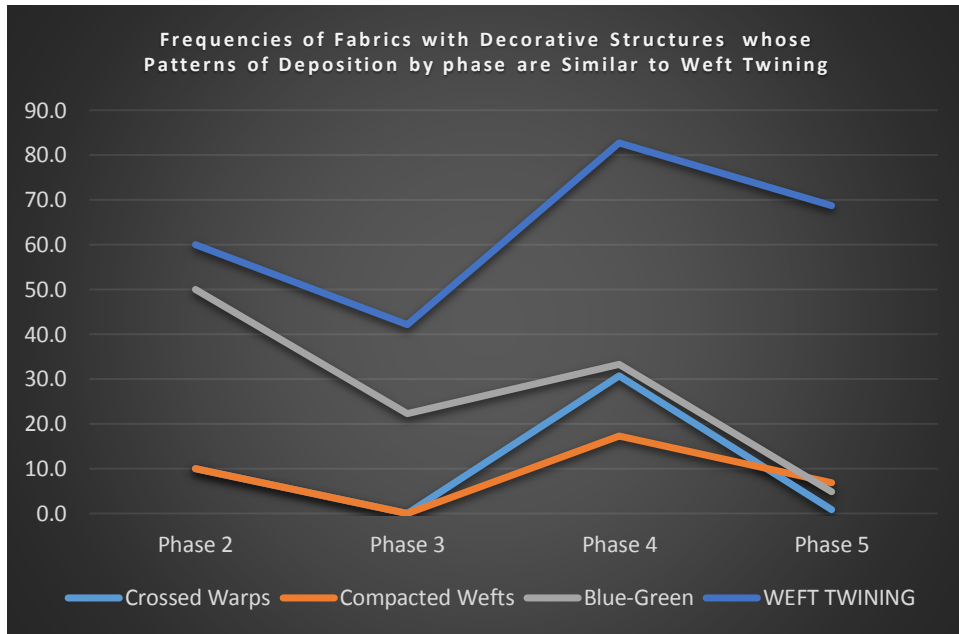
Line Diagram 2 presents the percentages of those attributes whose patterns of use are similar to that of Figure-8 looping, where usage increased continuously from Phase II to Phase IV and dropped off in Phase V. These techniques include weft bands, “invisible” structures (stripes and/or bands), weft twining with alternate pairs of warps, supplementary wefts, complementary warps, discontinuous wefts, the use of red, and the use of gold. The use of red pigments and both supplementary discontinuous wefts first appear in Phase III, while the use of complementary warps first appears in Phase IV.

Line Diagram 2. Decorative Fabric Structures Whose Frequency Patterns are Similar to Figure-8 Looping



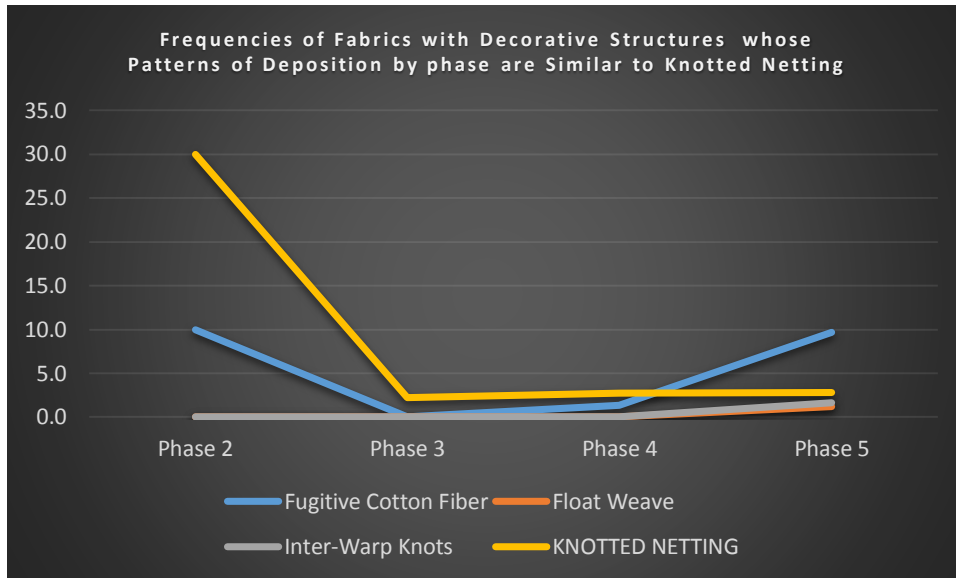
Line Diagram 3 presents the percentages of those attributes whose patterns of use are similar to that of weft twining, whose representation is high in Phase II (presuming Phase II data are accurate), drops off in Phase III, peaks again in Phase IV, and drops off precipitously in Phase V. Those attributes with the same pattern of representation include the use of compact wefts to make weft bands, the color blue and blue-green, and crossed-warps patterning. The use of crossed-warp patterning is all but limited to Phase IV with only one example each from a Phase II and an early Phase V context.

Line Diagram 3. Decorative Fabric Structures Whose Frequency Patterns are Similar to Weft Twining



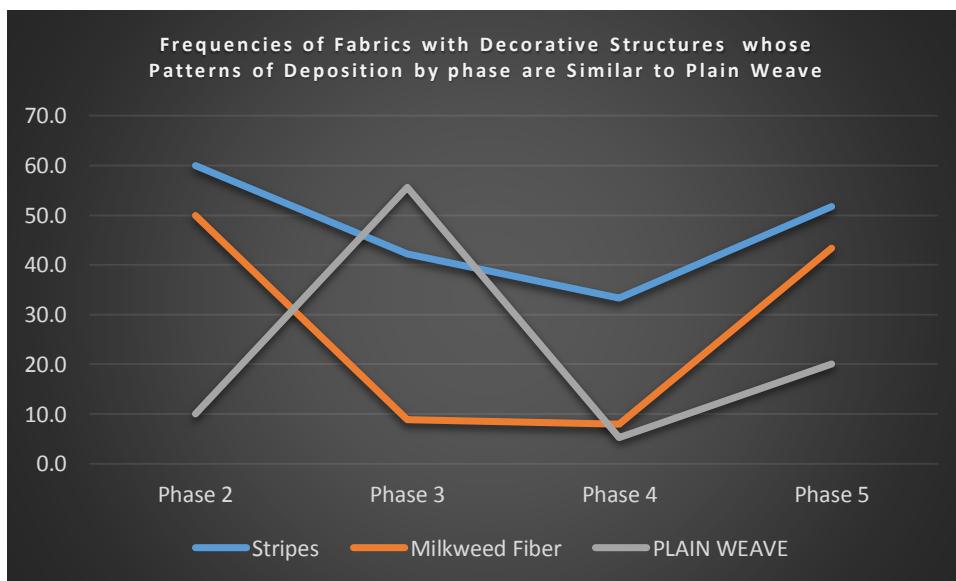
Line Diagram 4 (below) presents the attributes whose patterns of use over time are similar to that of knotted netting, which slowly increased from Phases II through V. The techniques include the use of fugitive cotton in warp stripes, the use of float weaves, and the use of inter-warp knots. The use of float weaves and inter-warp knots don't appear until Phase V.

Line Diagram 4. Decorative Fabric Structures Whose Frequency Patterns are Similar to Knotted Netting



Line Diagram 5 presents the frequencies of attributes whose representations over time are similar to that of plain weave, which begins low in Phase II, peaks in Phase III, plummets in Phase IV, and rises again in Phase V. The decorative practices whose patterns are the closest to plain weave are warp stripes and milkweed; they differ in that they decrease between Phases II and III (plain weave increases).

Line Diagram 5. Decorative Fabric Structures Whose Frequency Patterns are Similar to Plain Weave



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- 1986 Cotton Spinning and Processing on the Peruvian North Coast. In *The Junius B. Bird Conference on Andean Textiles, April 7th and 8th, 1984*, edited by Ann Pollard Rowe, pp. 363-383. The Textile Museum, Washington, D.C.