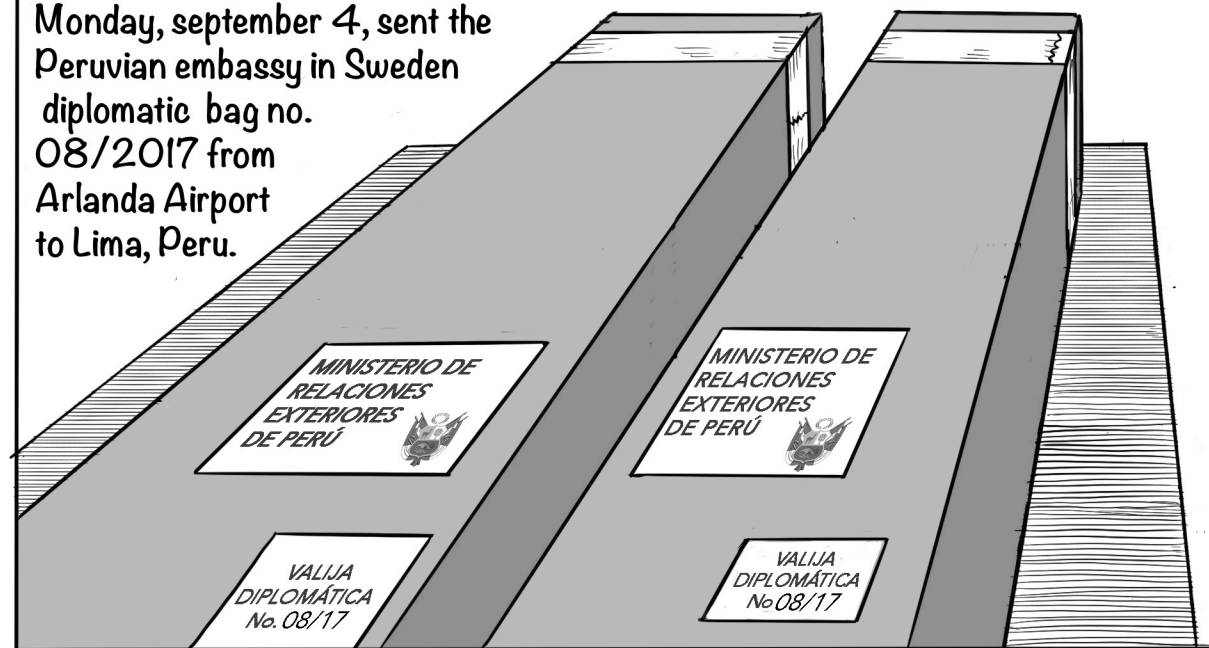
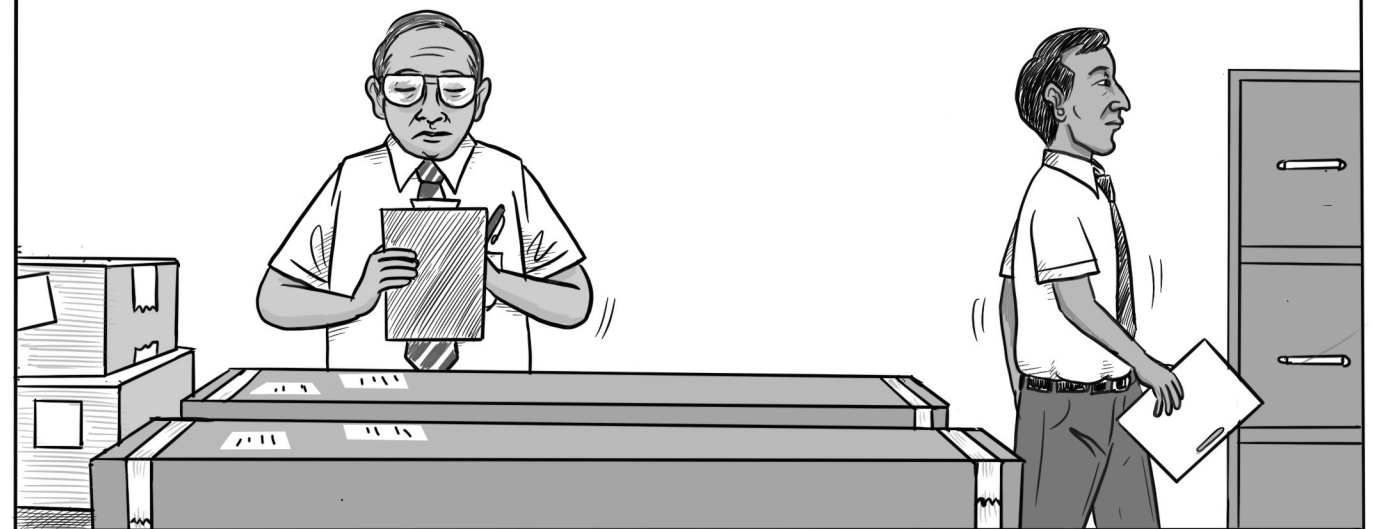


Monday, september 4, sent the  
Peruvian embassy in Sweden  
diplomatic bag no.  
08/2017 from  
Arlanda Airport  
to Lima, Peru.



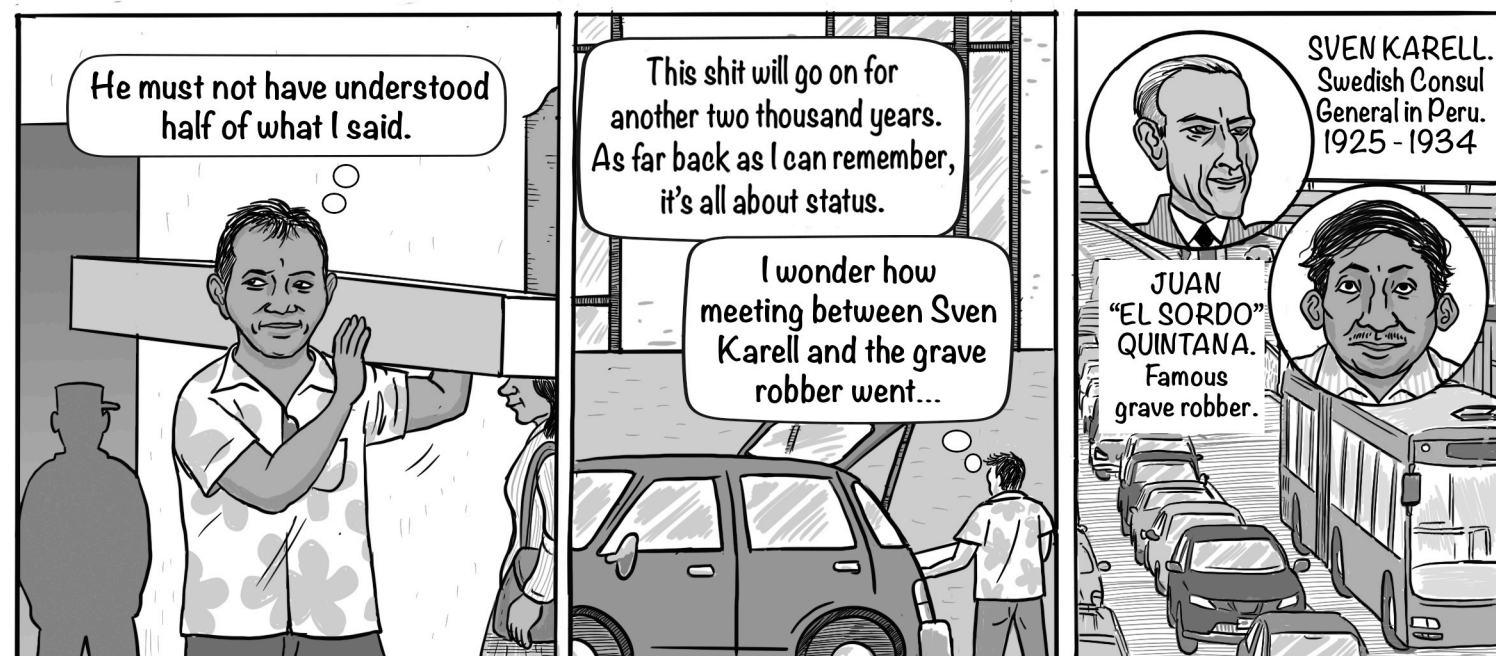
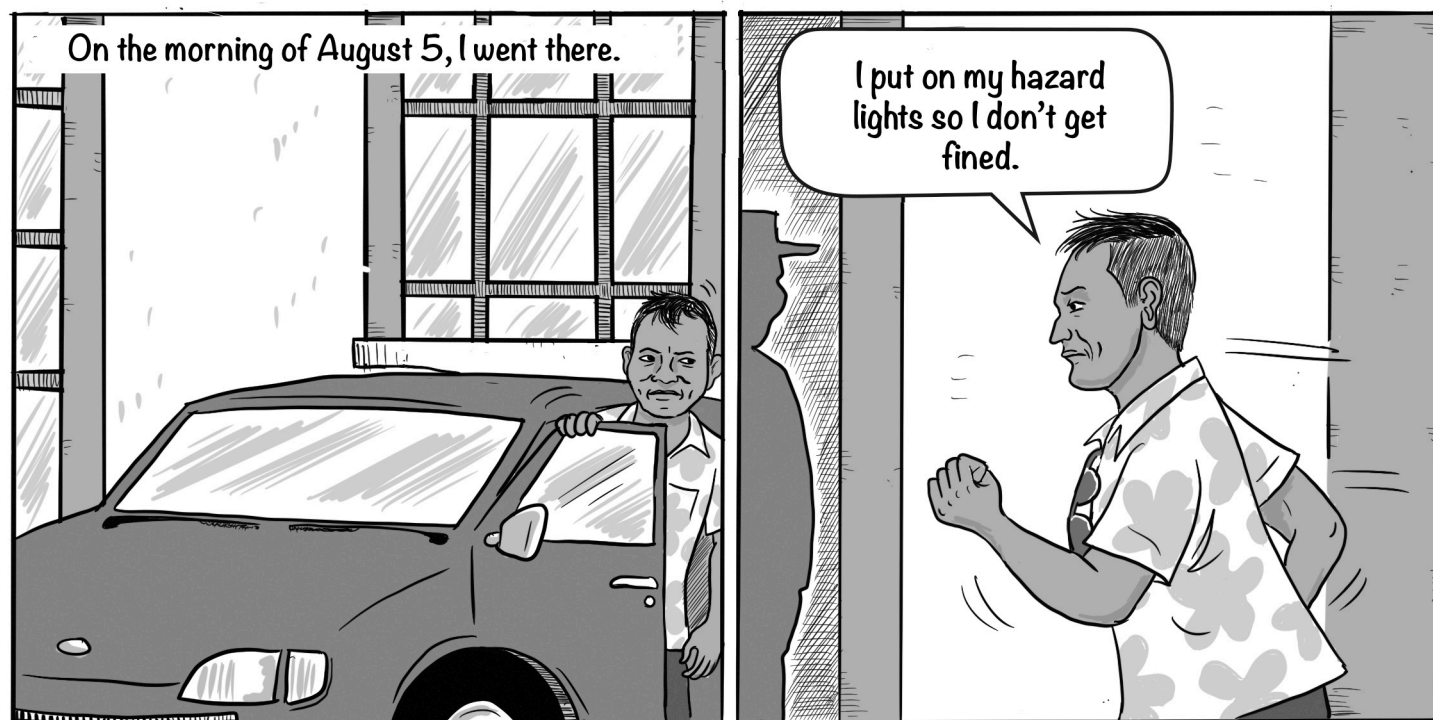
It contained copies of over two-thousand-years-old textiles from Paracas.



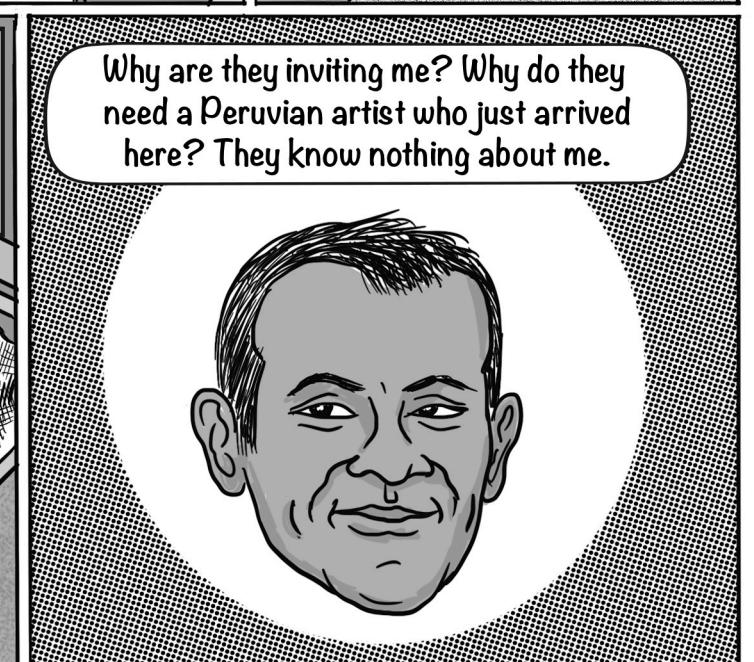
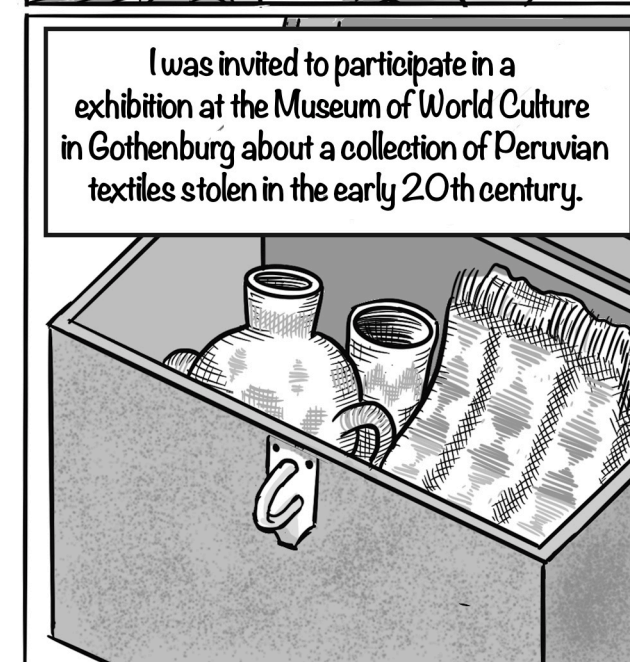
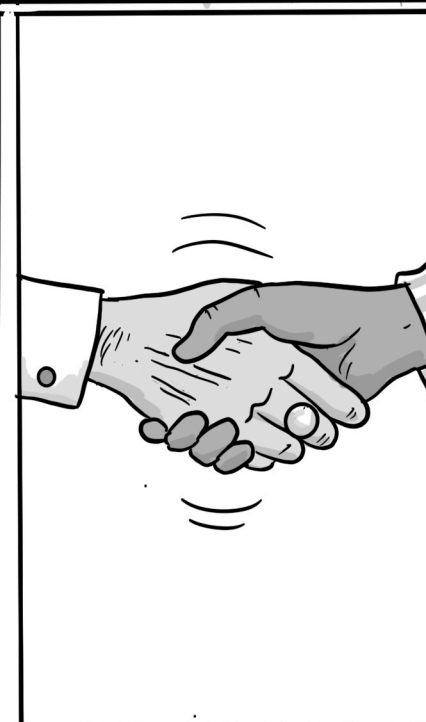
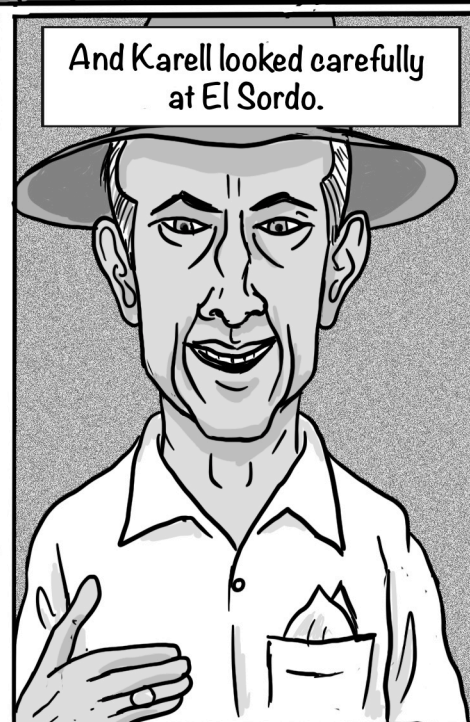
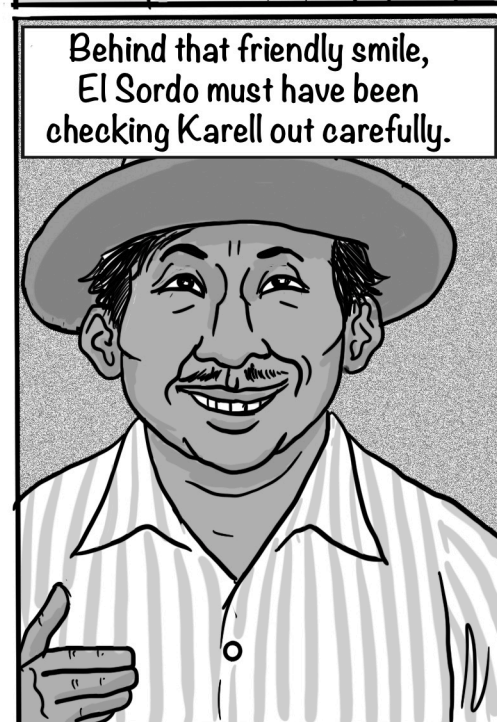
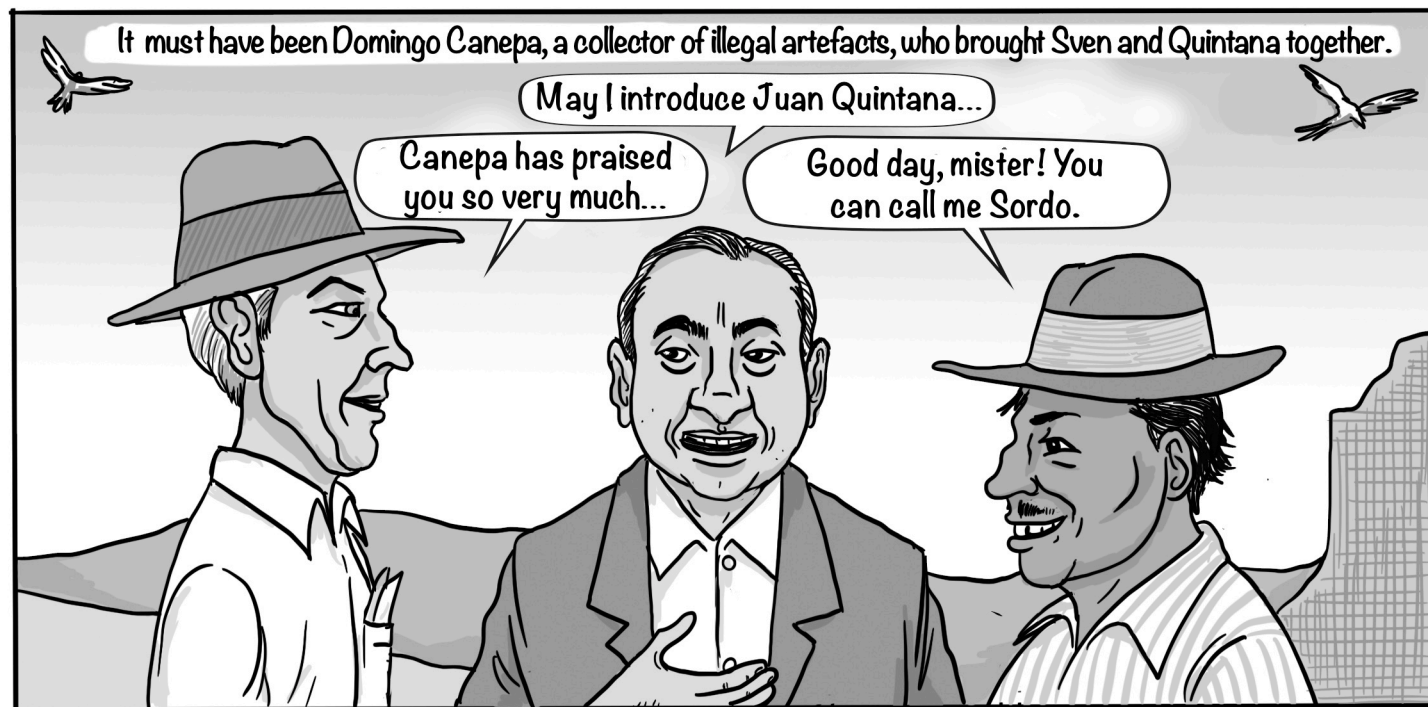
The shipment was picked up by officials  
and was taken to the Ministry of Foreign  
Affairs in downtown Lima.









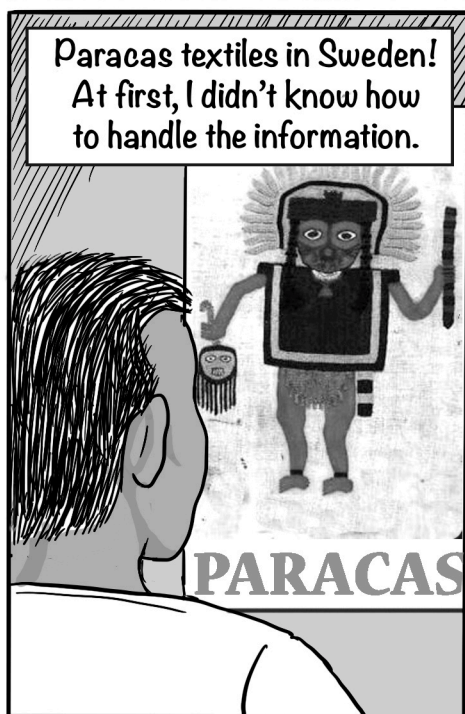




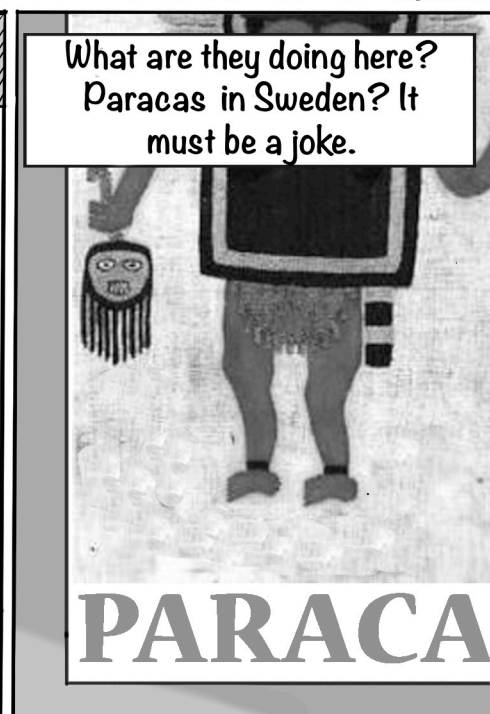


In 2008 I was contacted by Cristian Penalva, producer for the exhibition "A Stolen World" at the World Culture Museum...

A project proposal for an art exhibition in connection with an exhibition of textiles from the Paracas culture



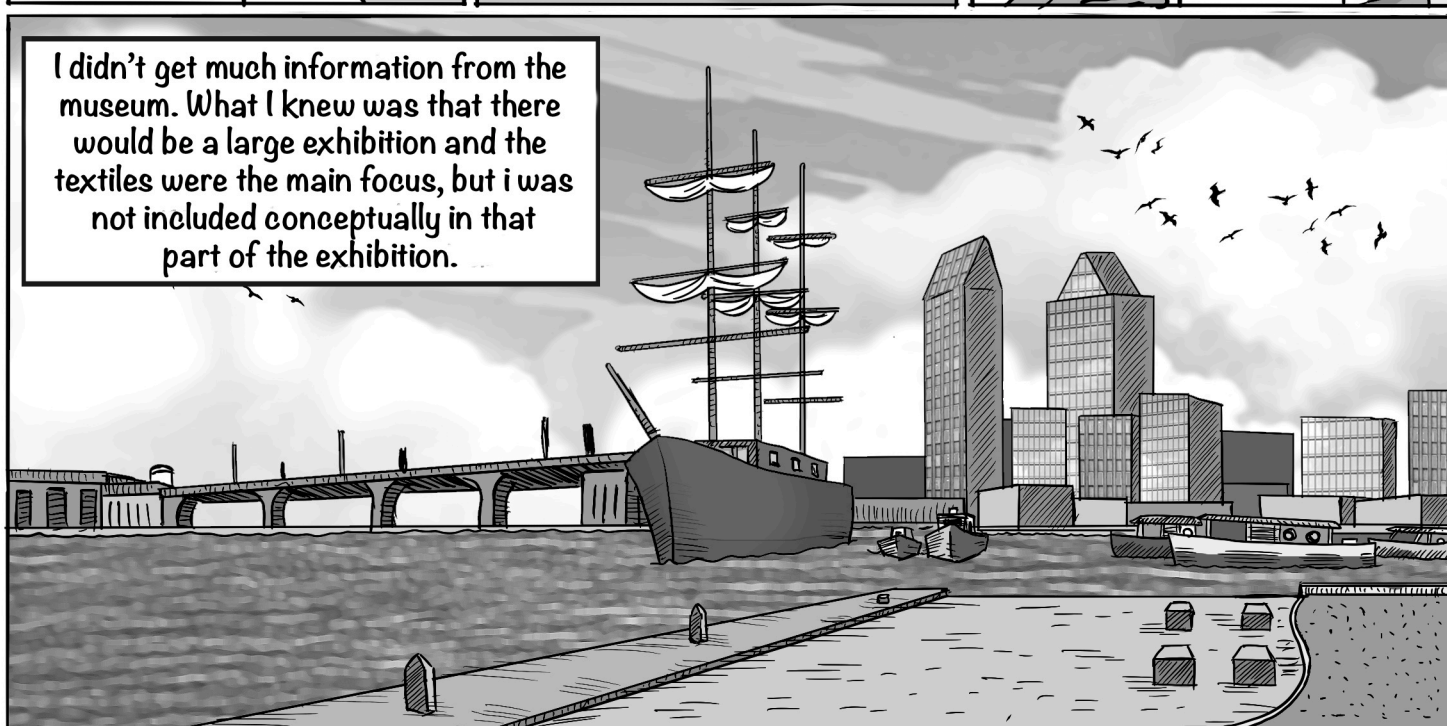
Paracas textiles in Sweden! At first, I didn't know how to handle the information.



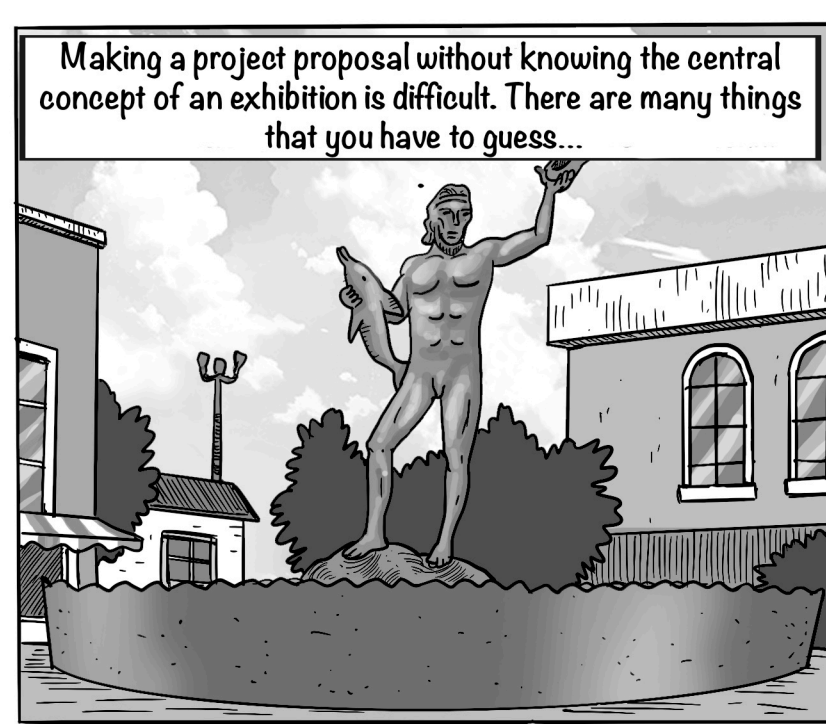
What are they doing here? Paracas in Sweden? It must be a joke.



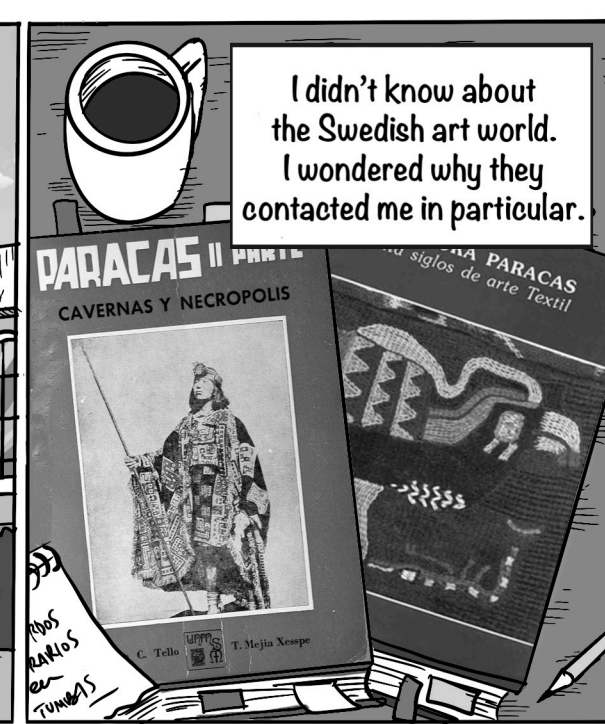
How did they get here? They must have been smuggled here.



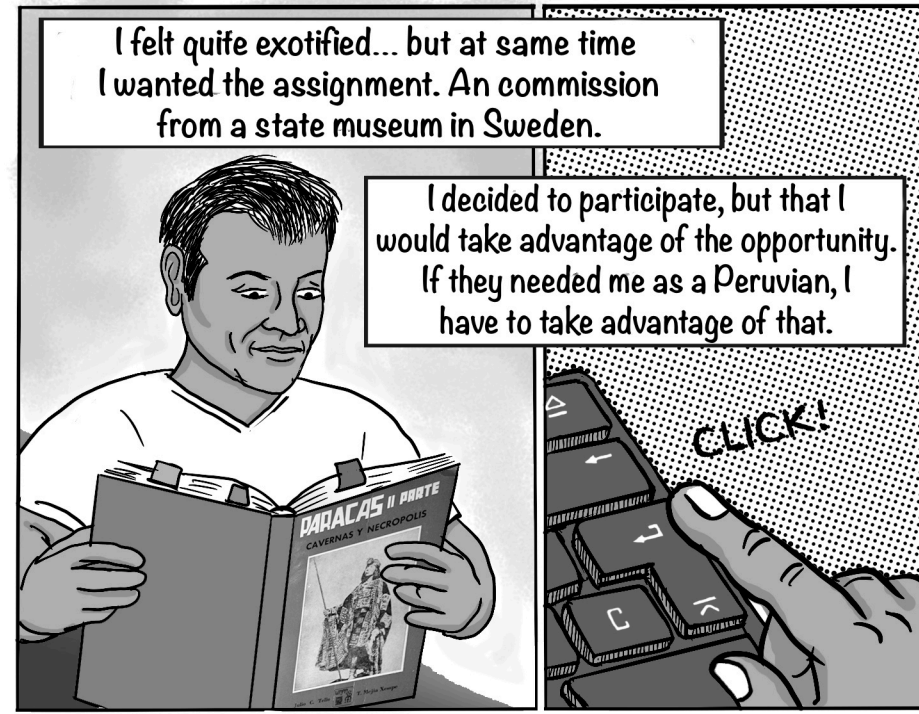
I didn't get much information from the museum. What I knew was that there would be a large exhibition and the textiles were the main focus, but I was not included conceptually in that part of the exhibition.



Making a project proposal without knowing the central concept of an exhibition is difficult. There are many things that you have to guess...



I didn't know about the Swedish art world. I wondered why they contacted me in particular.

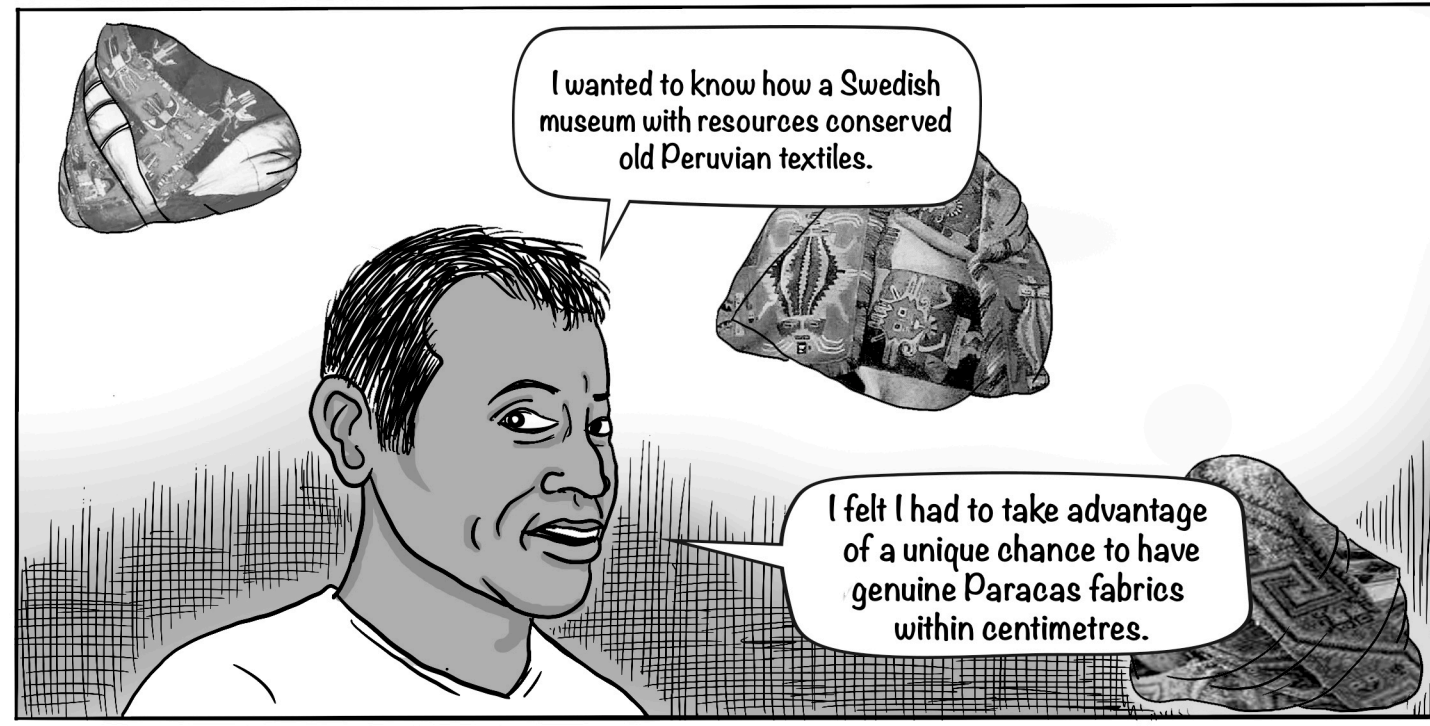


I felt quite exotified... but at same time I wanted the assignment. An commission from a state museum in Sweden.

I decided to participate, but that I would take advantage of the opportunity. If they needed me as a Peruvian, I have to take advantage of that.



See the Paracas textiles directly, without glasses beetwen...



I wanted to know how a Swedish museum with resources conserved old Peruvian textiles.

I felt I had to take advantage of a unique chance to have genuine Paracas fabrics within centimetres.



The only time I have visited the conservation rooms at the National Museum of Archaeology, Anthropology and History of Peru was when I was to interview archaeologist Carmen Thays.

Museo Nacional de  
Arqueología, Antropología  
e Historia del Perú

I had to apply for permission to bring my camera and write a letter to the museum director where I explained the purpose of my visit in detail.

Credentials, please.

That was my only reference to how ethnographic museums preserve their objects.

Fill in your details.

FICHA DE INGRESO

NOMBRE: .....

DNI: .....

PROCEDECIA: .....

MOTIVO DE VISITA: .....

The visitor is authorized to enter.

But the valuable collection in Gothenburg was preserved under completely different conditions...

I was convinced that a country like Sweden protected its museum collections in a impenetrable bunker, but now I was standing in front of a relatively ordinary building.

Good morning... Anna Javier?

Mr. Lara, welcome!

Conservator at the World Culture Museum

Please, come on, it's downstairs.

Anna took me to the room where the textiles were kept.

But I couldn't really appreciate them, because I focused more on how weird the situation was.

PARACAS TEXTILES IN SWEDEN! Hidden in a house in a suburb of Gothenburg!

HOW DID THEY COME TO SWEDEN?



On October 15, 2024, the regional museum in Ica, Peru, was robbed.

The robbery was carried out in a very professional manner...

Museo Regional de Ica

MINISTERIO DE CULTURA

I started by interviewing specialists of Peruvian cultural heritage.

How could those fabrics have ended up in Sweden?

All collections in Europe are made up of illegally acquired objects.

Ruben Garcia. Archaeologist and chief archaeologist in Ica.

So professional it must have been a commissioned job...

Susana Arce, archaeologist and former museum director of the regional museum in Ica.

...with the aim of bringing the best items to Europe or the USA.

As I continued my research, I began to realize that it is accepted that museums in Europe and the USA house stolen cultural heritage

It's what I call a troubled conscience.

Peruvians are not surprised if someone with money has old ceramic objects in their living room or office.

Luis Lumbreras. Archeologist, former museum director of the regional museum in Ica and former Minister of Culture.

Robberies by Request are common when it comes to cultural heritage, and is connected to well-organized mafias with internal contacts.

About 4000 objects have been stolen from peruvian museums over the years to then appear in trustworthy museums in the Western world.

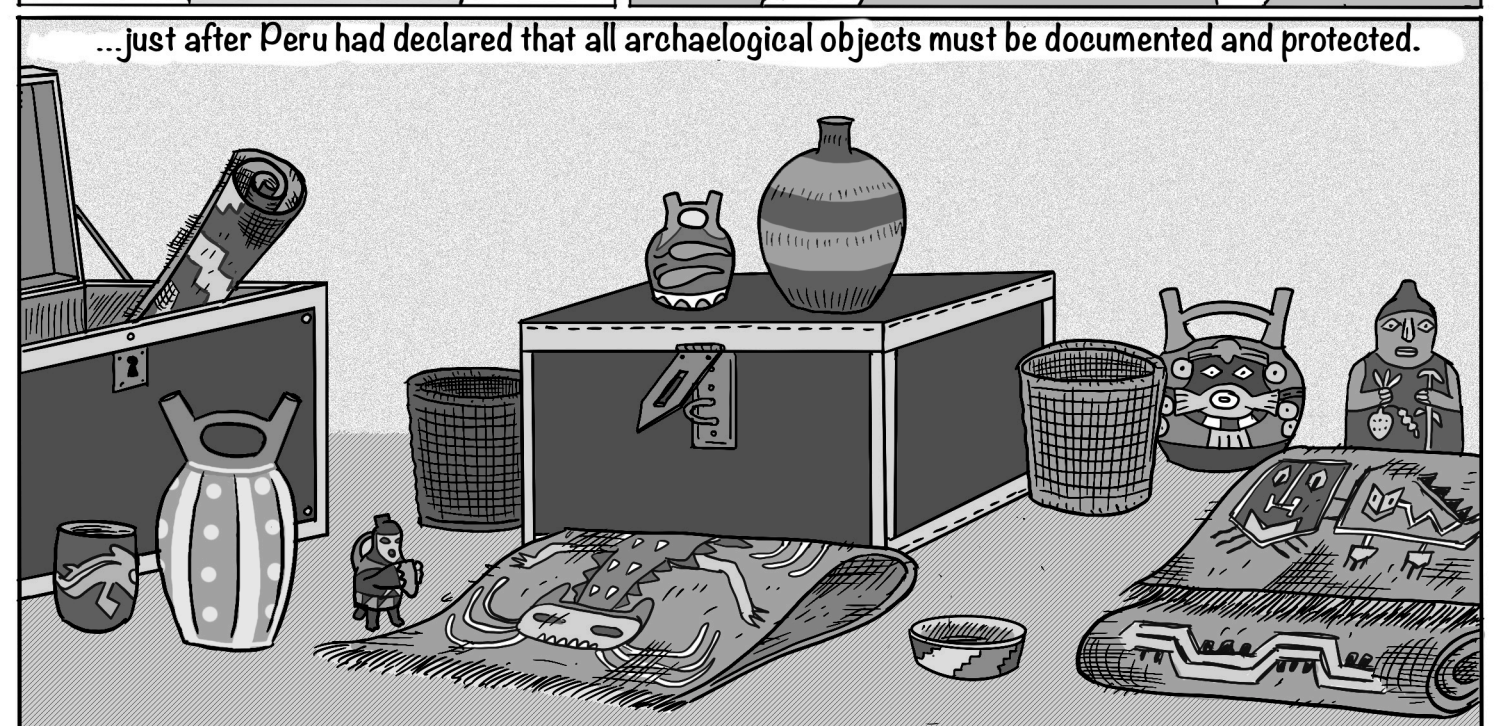
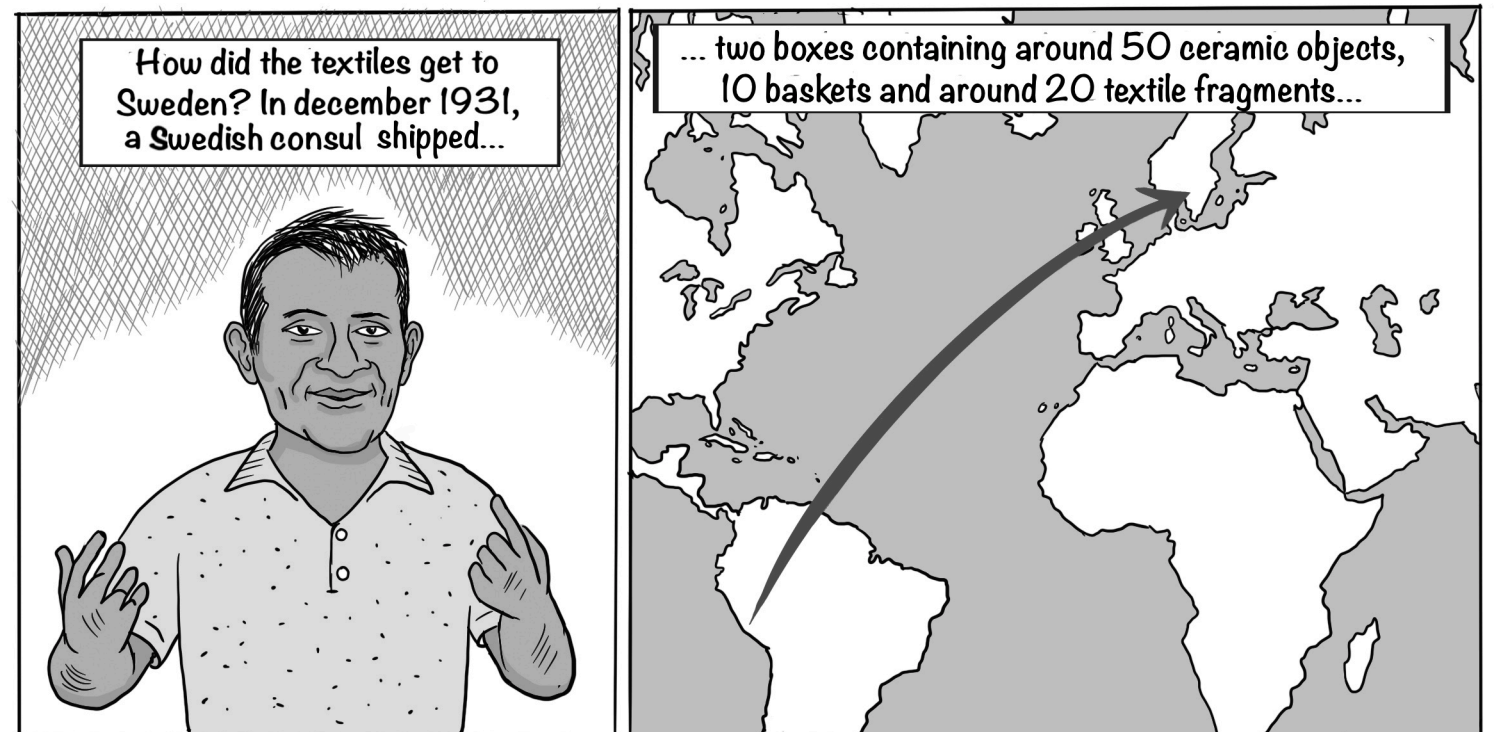
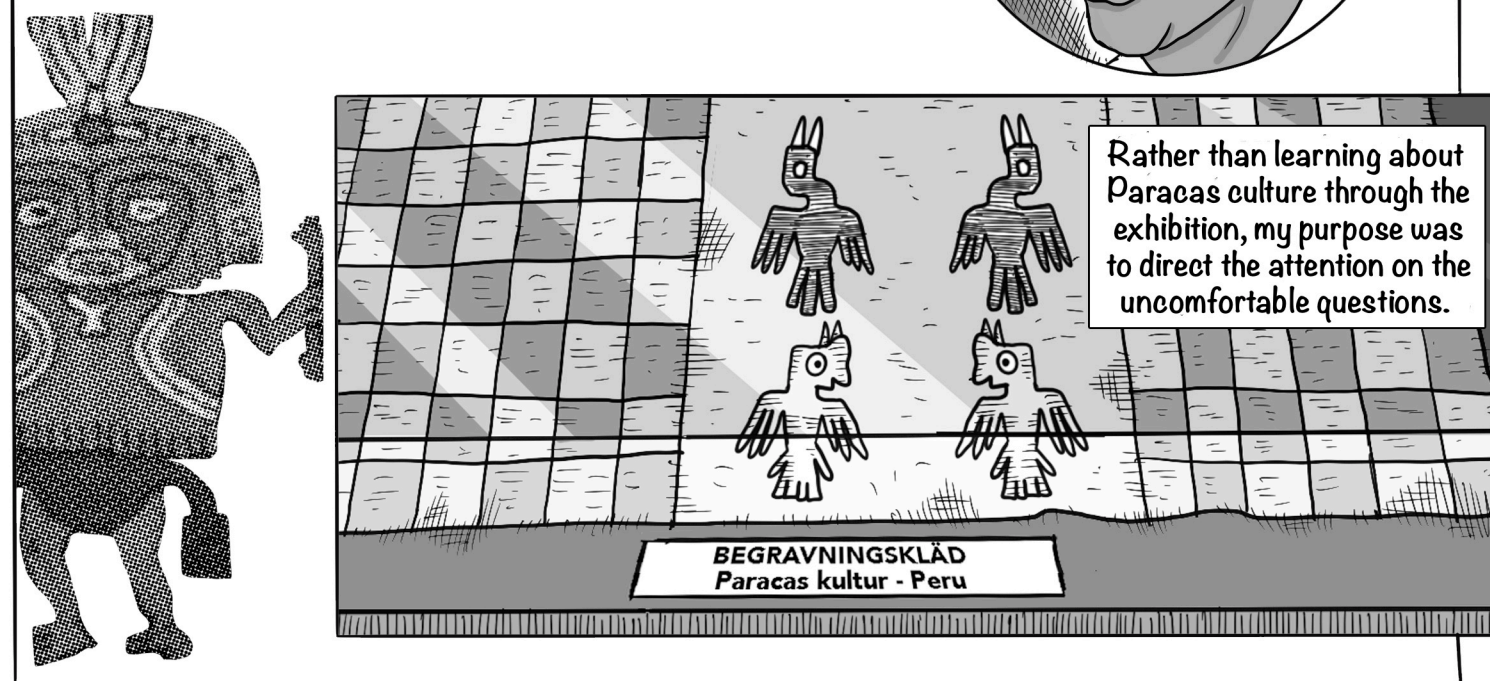
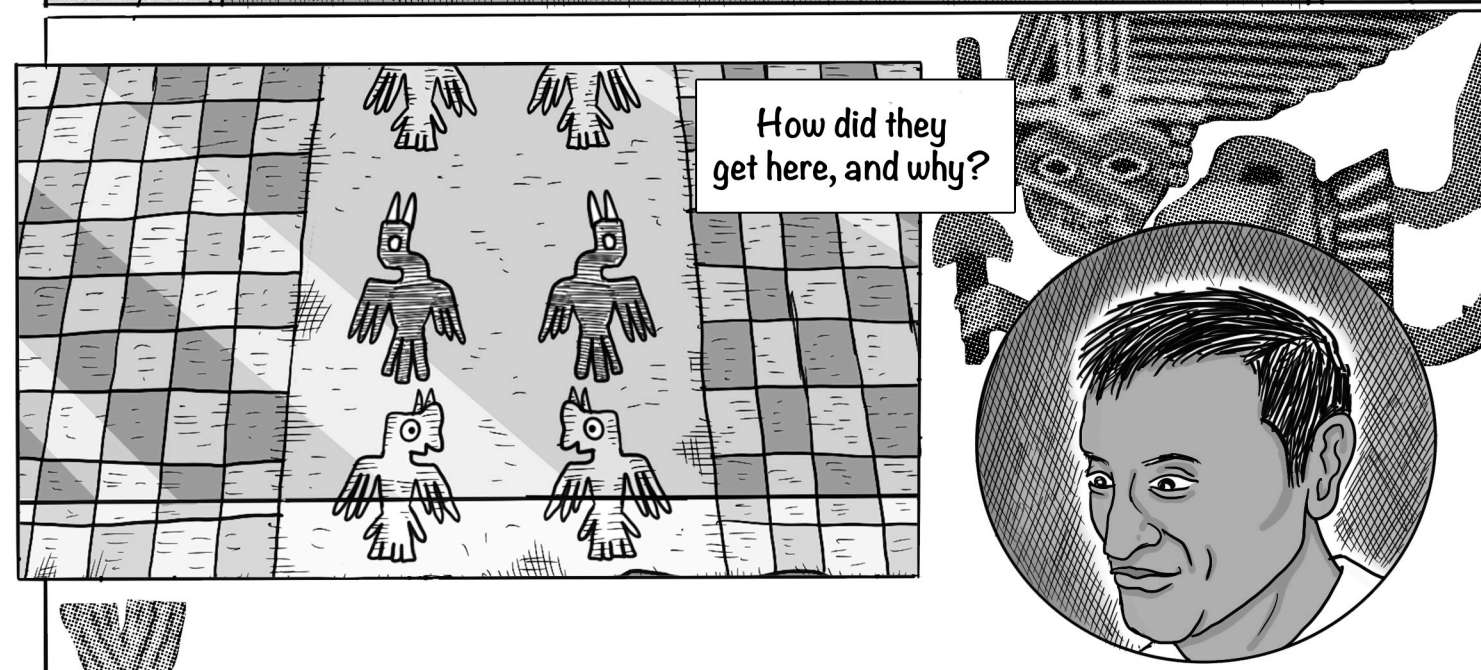
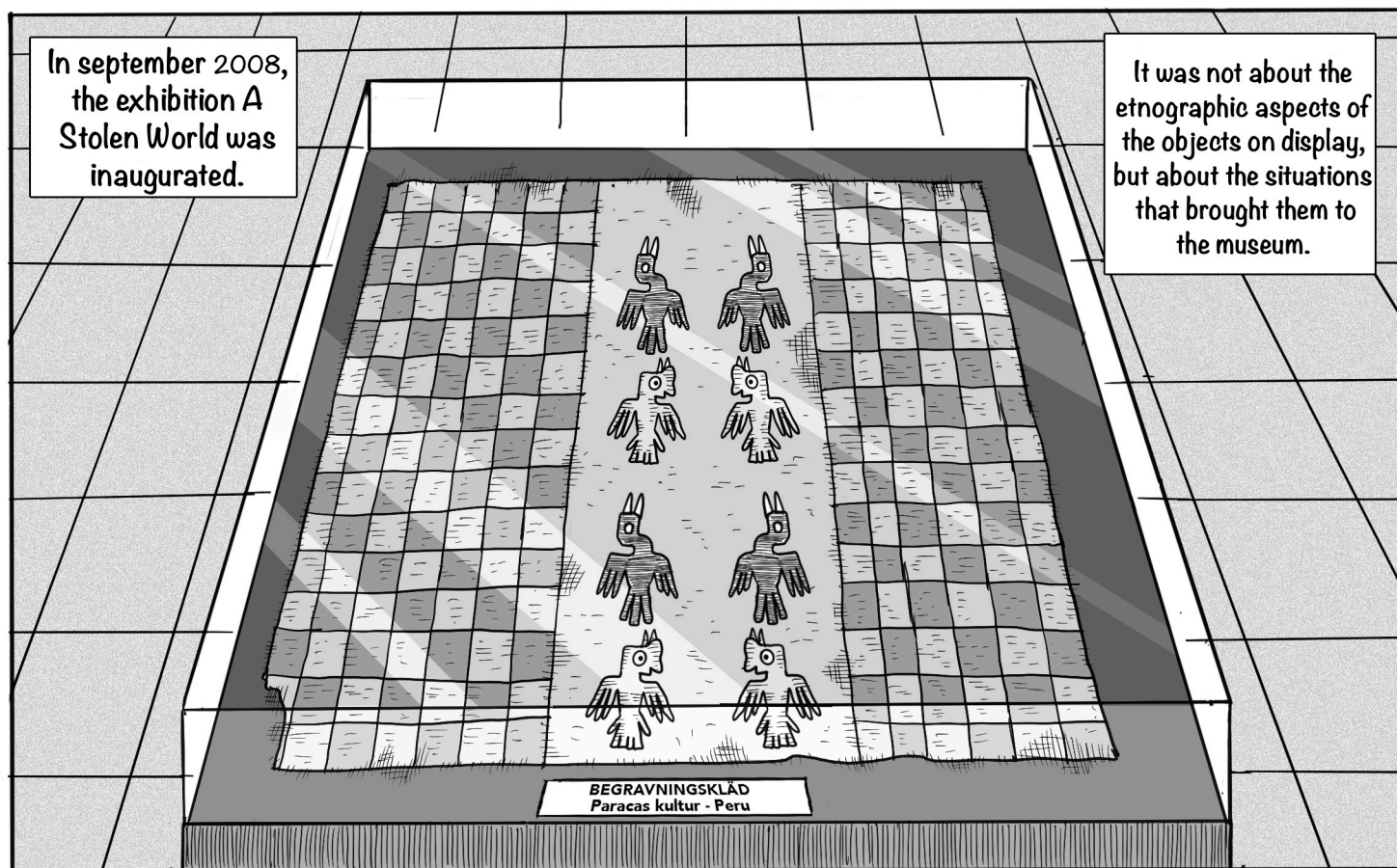
ROBBERIES BY Request



I realized that my contribution to the exhibition would have a greater impact on the Peruvian diplomats if I included well-known scholars

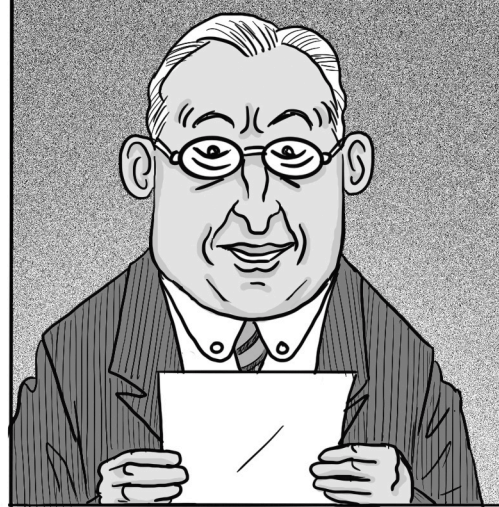
I was mainly interested in how Peruvian diplomats would react to the questions about stolen cultural heritage that my work would rise.



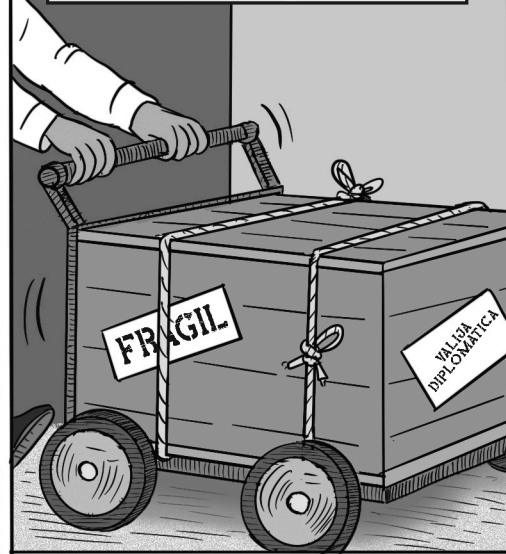




The shipments of these items were accomplished through strategic negotiations between the consul and the museum board in Gothenburg.



The textiles were shipped off as personal belonging protected by diplomatic immunity.



I was fascinated by how the Swedish consul used his diplomatic privileges in the 1930s to smuggle Peruvian cultural heritage to his homeland.



When the exhibition "A Stolen World" had been inaugurated suggested peruvian ambassador Gilbert Chauny to the Secretary of State that the Paracas collection should be demanded back via the Peruvian embassy in Sweden.



They take the textiles, smuggle them, and then they make an exhibition about how they did it?



It was amazing to take part in the exchange of letters between Karell and the museum board in Gothenburg.



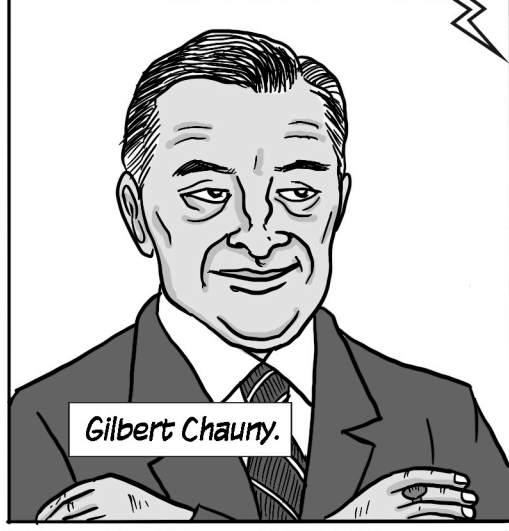
*"Now it's about avoiding risks, because it is unthinkable to obtain an export permit"*  
Letter from August 1931

*"Our collection of peruvian objects is becoming numerous..."*  
Letter from June 1932

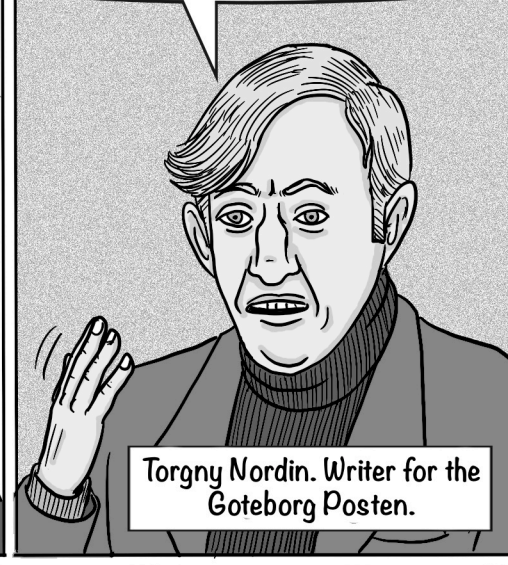
*"I ask you to arrange with the customs office so that the bags pass unnoticed..."*  
Letter from March 1933

*"If any of the objects are to be exhibited and information about the donor is required, I hope we make an exception this time..."*  
Letter from december 1932

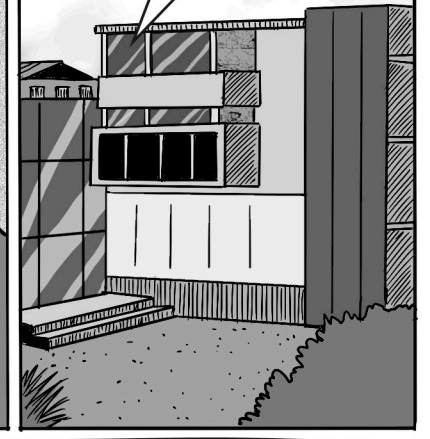
If Gothenburg had not taken care of these items, they might have been lost.



It's not about owning the objects, but about the responsibility of taking care of them.



There is no single scientific article about the Paracas collection in Gothenburg.



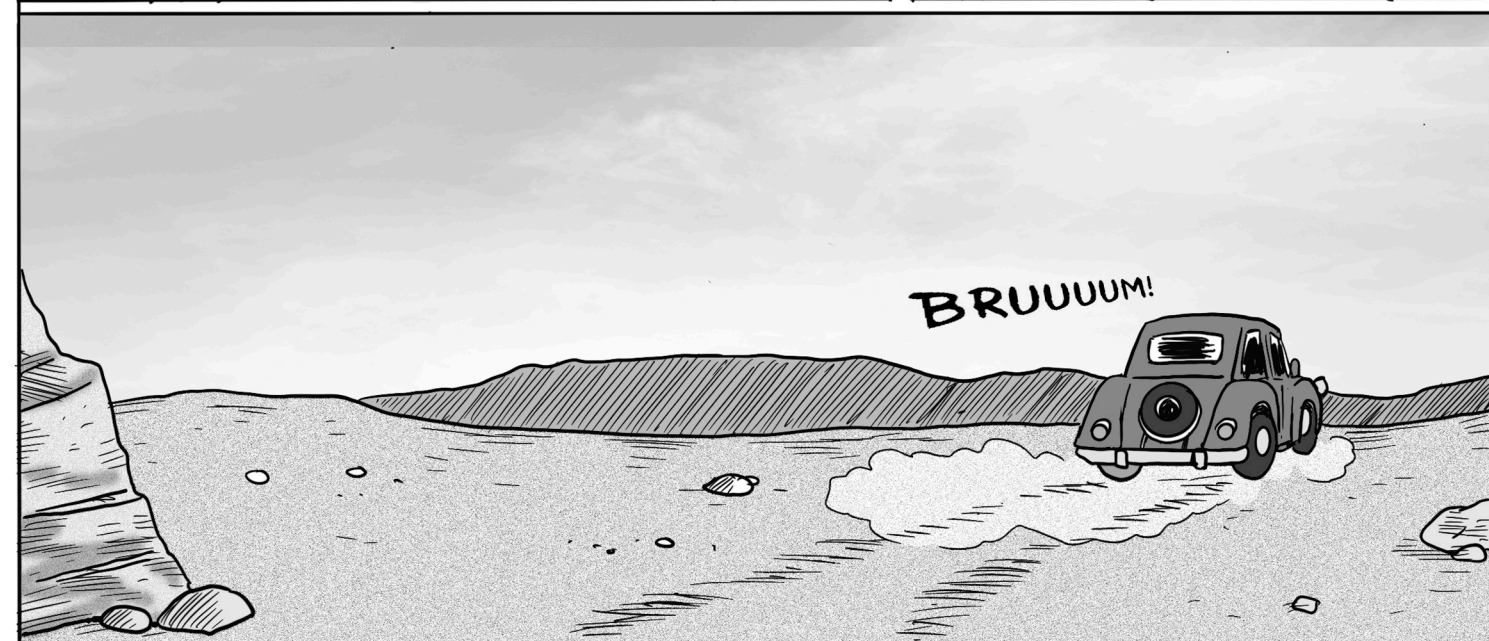
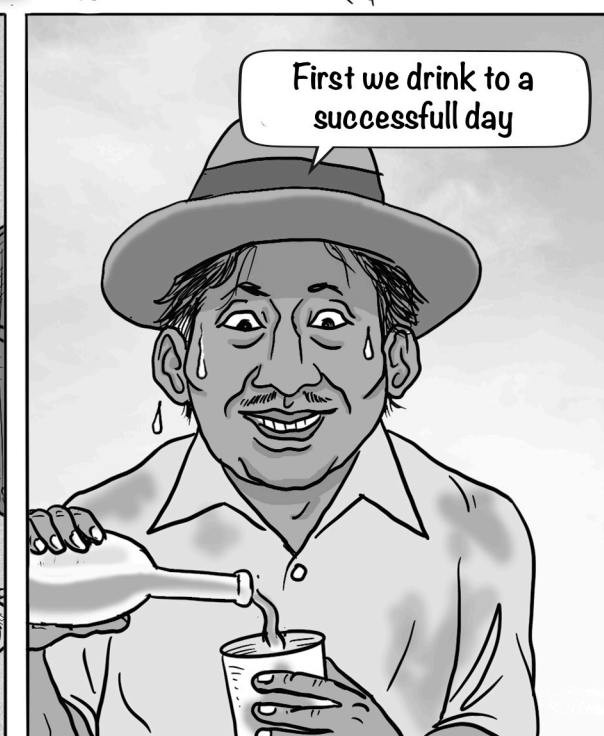
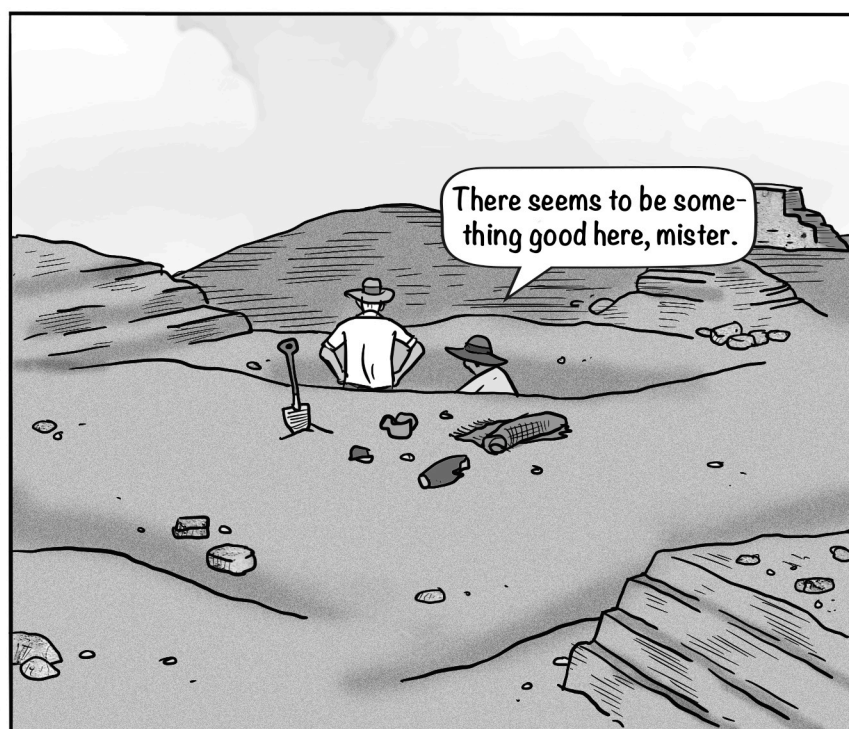
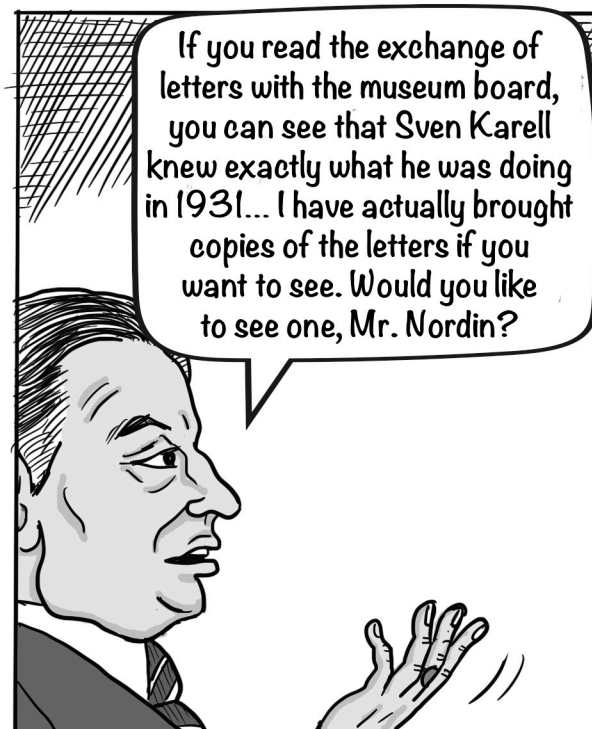
Can one then really speak of "availability for researchers"?



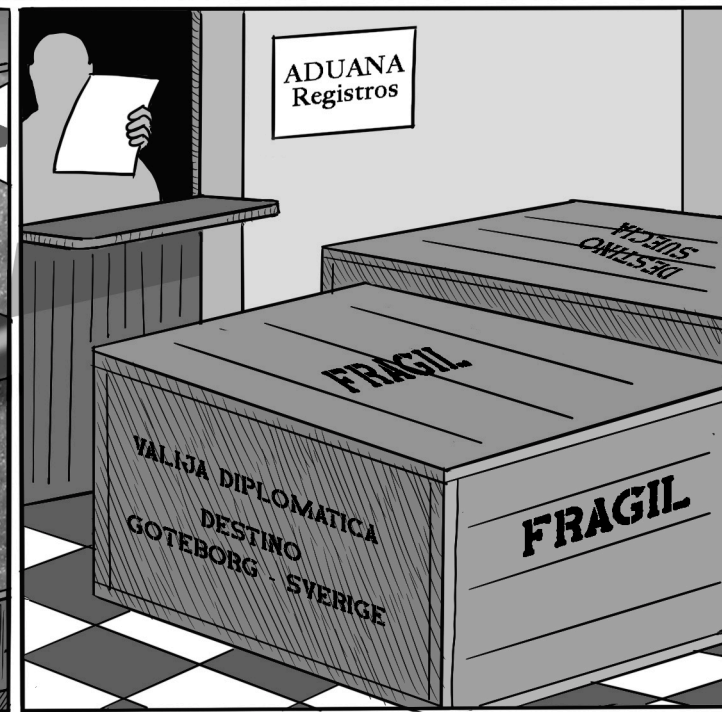
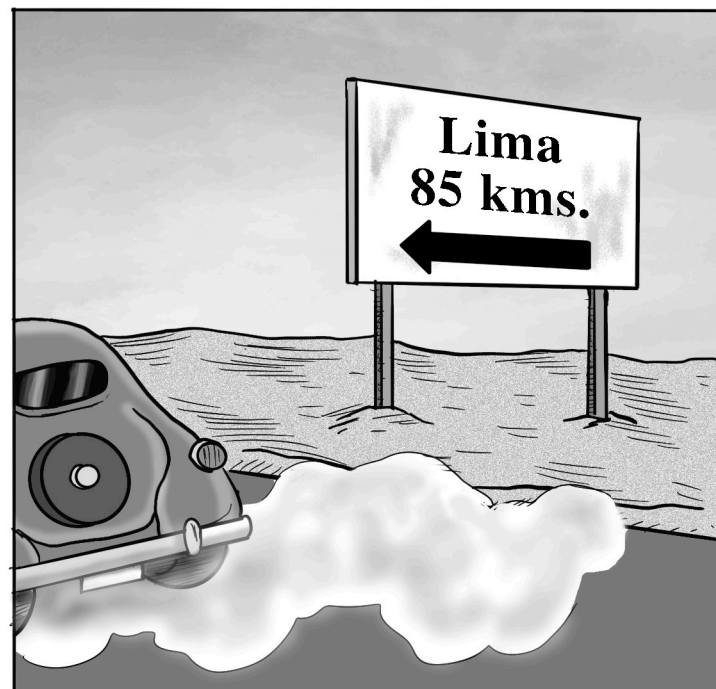
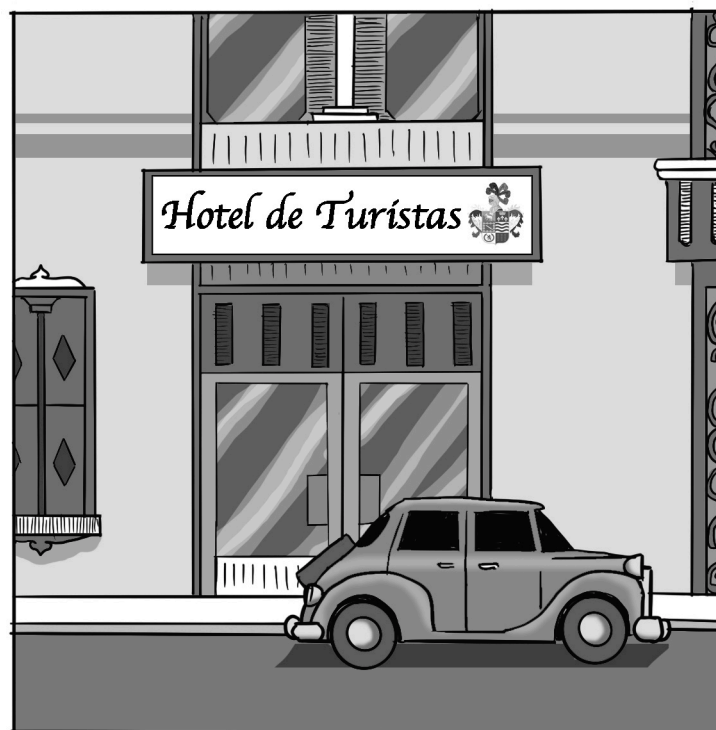
I wonder if Mr. Nordin thinks that we cannot take care of our cultural heritage in Peru?





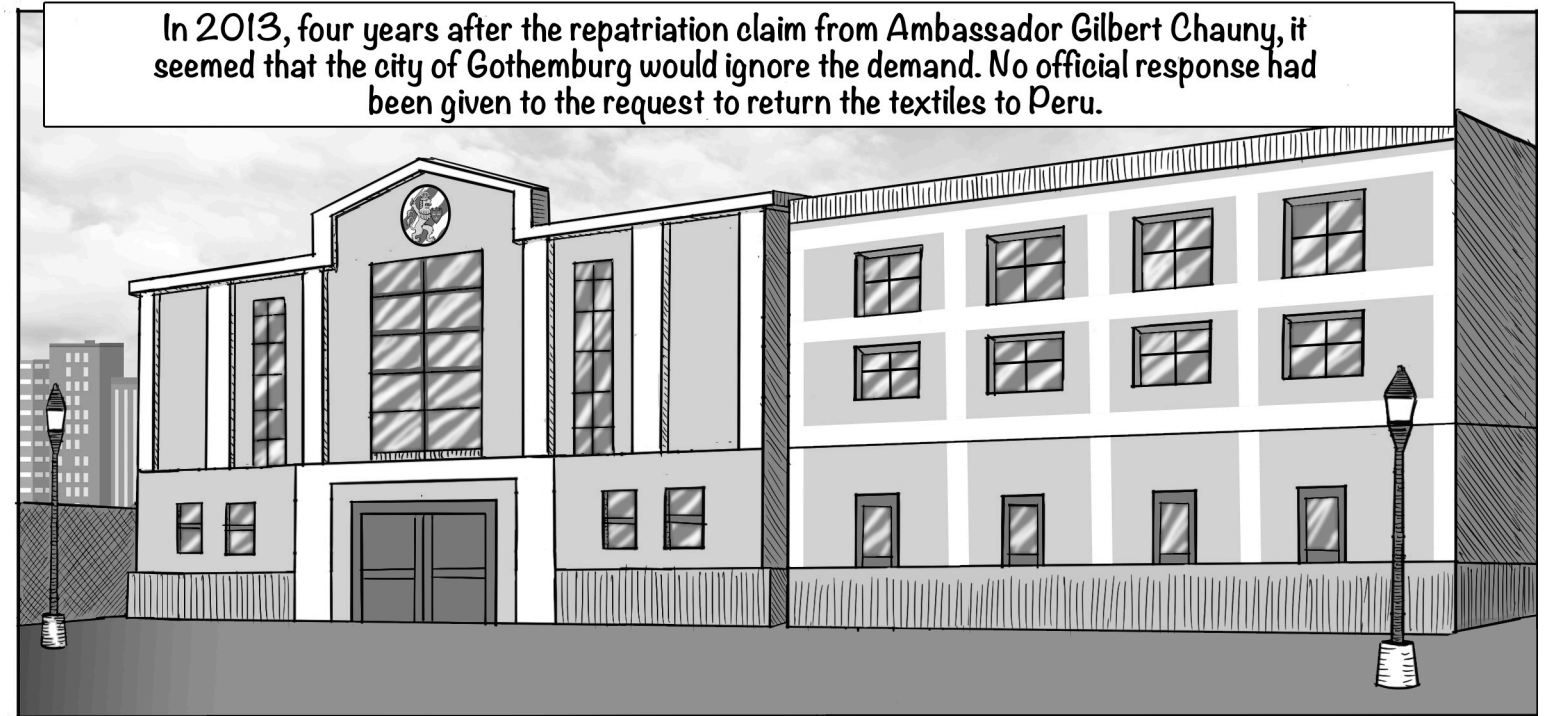




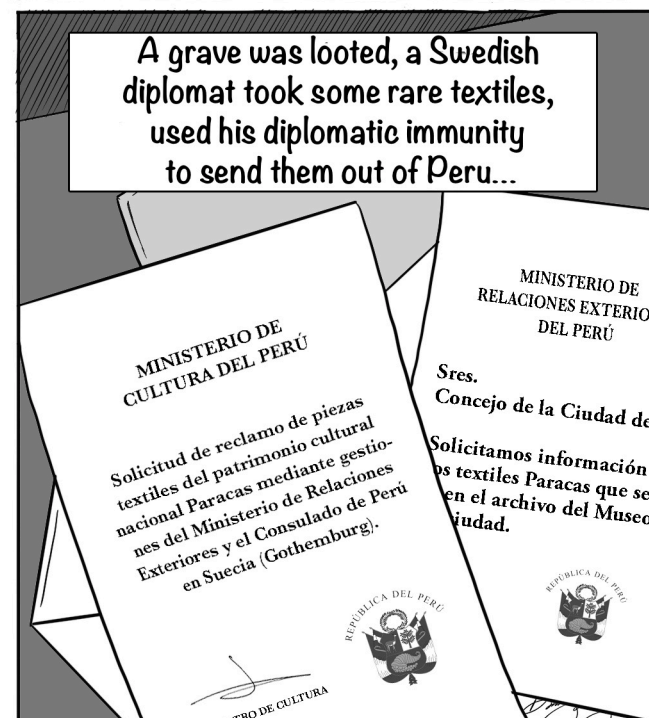


DIPLOMAT POUCH / DESTINATION GOTHENBURG - SWEDEN

In 2013, four years after the repatriation claim from Ambassador Gilbert Chauny, it seemed that the city of Gothenburg would ignore the demand. No official response had been given to the request to return the textiles to Peru.

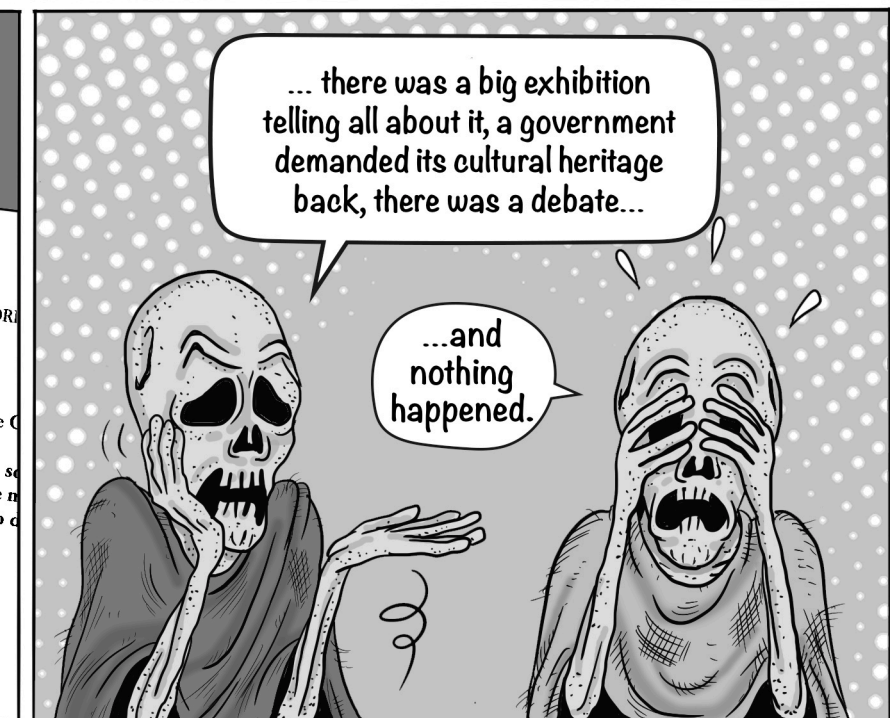


A grave was looted, a Swedish diplomat took some rare textiles, used his diplomatic immunity to send them out of Peru...



... there was a big exhibition telling all about it, a government demanded its cultural heritage back, there was a debate...

...and nothing happened.

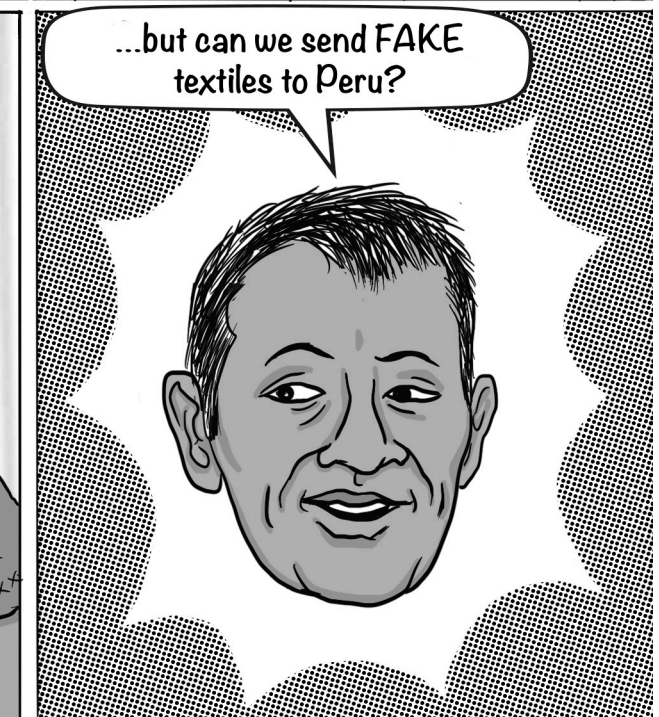


I felt a huge frustration.

Ok, Peru can't get them to return the textiles...



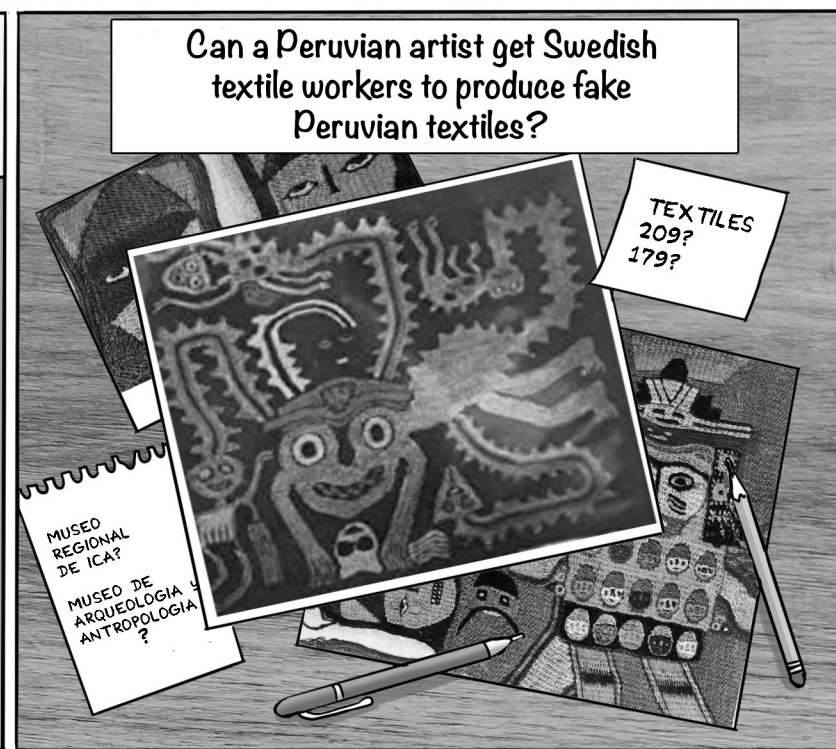
...but can we send FAKE textiles to Peru?







The idea went from a delirious comment to an impulse with a specific challenge.



Can a Peruvian artist get Swedish textile workers to produce fake Peruvian textiles?

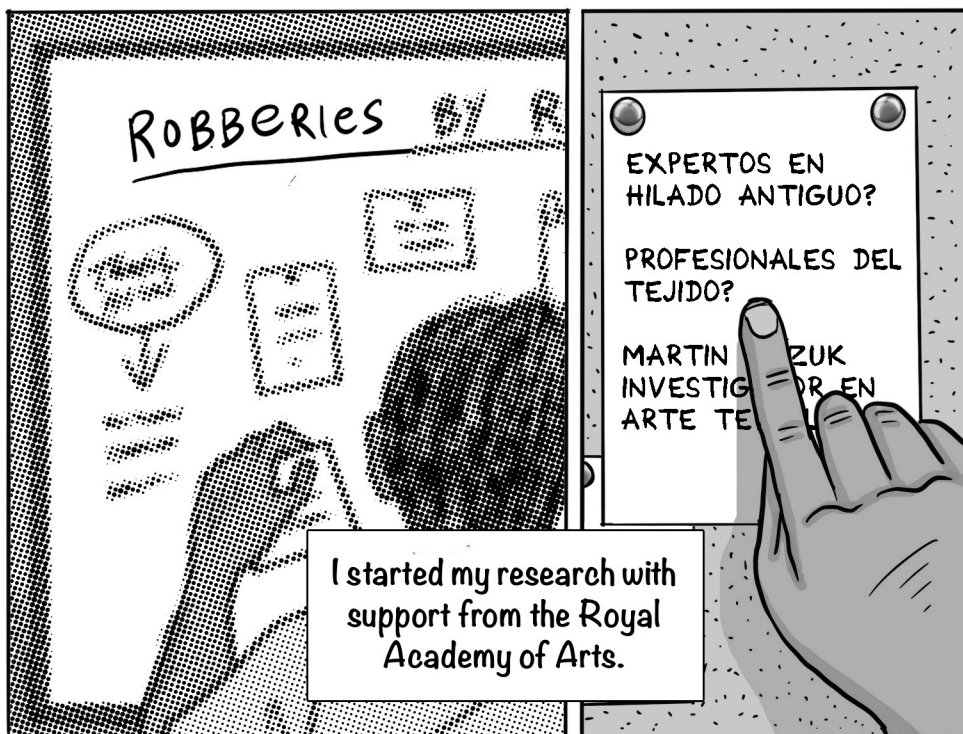
TEXTILES 209? 179?

MUSEO REGIONAL DE ICA?  
MUSEO DE ARQUEOLOGIA Y ANTROPOLOGIA?



Could an artist use his access to resources in a Western country to turn textile workers into forgers of historical objects?

Will I succeed?



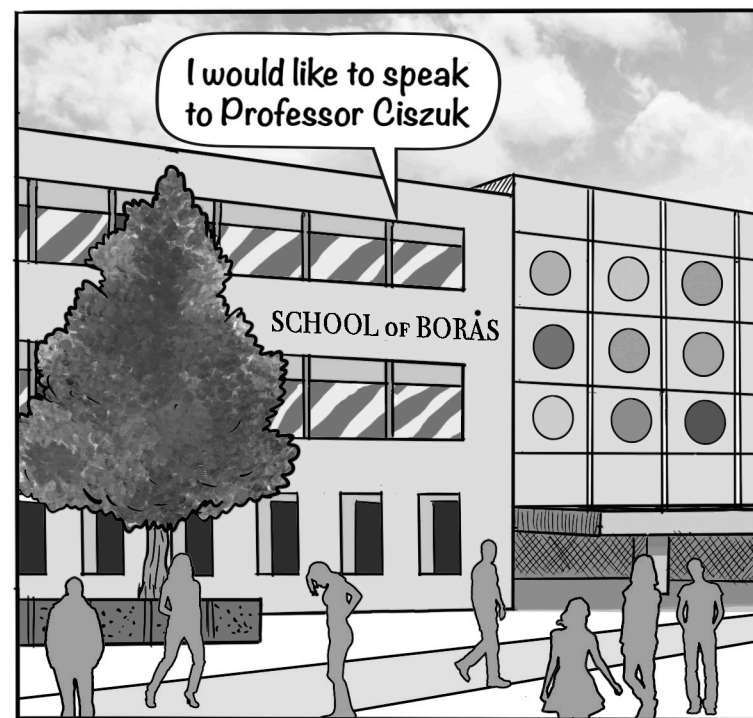
I started my research with support from the Royal Academy of Arts.



EXPERTOS EN HILADO ANTIGUO?  
PROFESIONALES DEL TEJIDO?  
MARTIN CISZUK  
INVESTIGADOR EN ARTE TEXTIL



Good afternoon, the University of Textiles in Borås?



I would like to speak to Professor Ciszuk



Hi, Oscar. This is Lena Hammarlund, she will also help us.

Nice to meet you.



Yes!

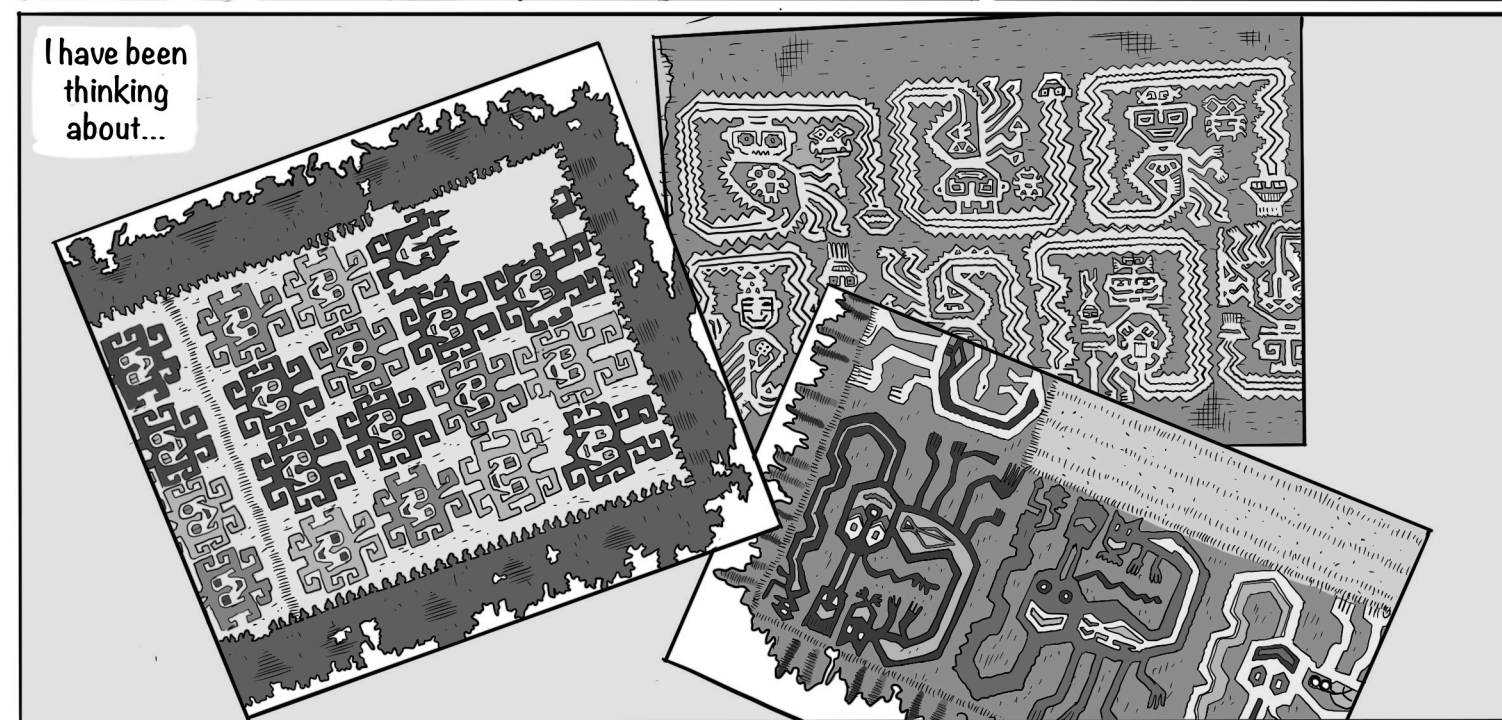
...that's the idea, to recreate ancient Peruvian textiles with Swedish materials.

I know the museum collection, it's impressive.



It would be fantastic to succeed in making a copy!

Do you know which one you want to copy?



I have been thinking about...

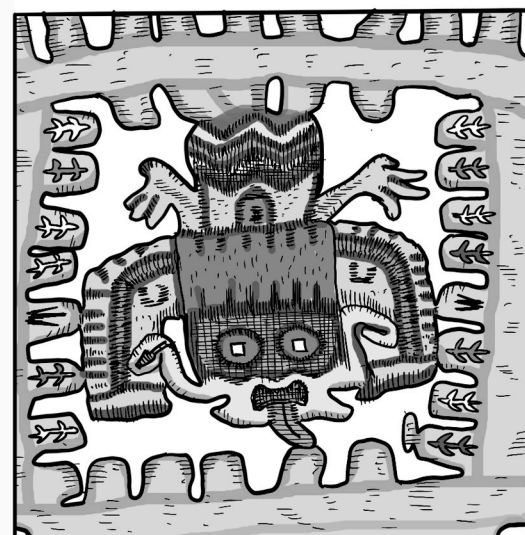
WEAVING EXPERTS?  
TEXTILE WORKERS?



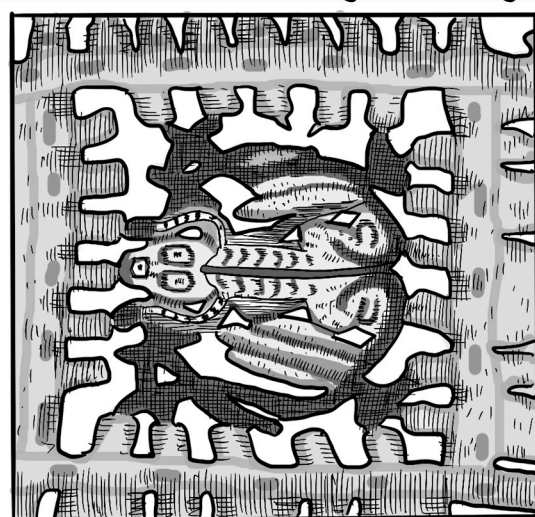
During my research for the exhibition “Robberies by Request” in 2008, I learned from the experts that the most valued object in the collection in Sweden is the mantle, Calendario, as it called in Peru.



In Gothenburg it is called “Textile 179” or “Three-dimensional textile”. A small piece, woven so intricately that it creates a three-dimensional effect.



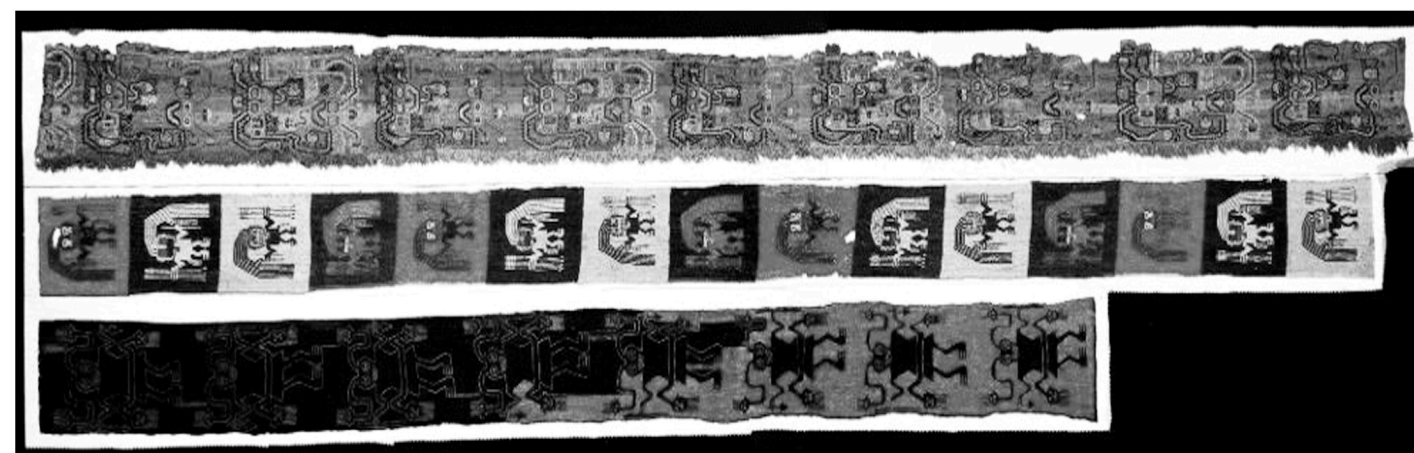
According to Carmen Thays, director of the textile department at the National Museum of Archaeology, Anthropology and History of Peru, it is an agricultural calendar. It is considered one of the finest textiles in the world, owing to its sophisticated character design and its age.



As you’ve planned it, it’s impossible... It would take several years and a much larger budget...

... to hire a skilled workforce. They would need to work in shifts; no one has the stamina or eyes to study and replicate weaving techniques all day.

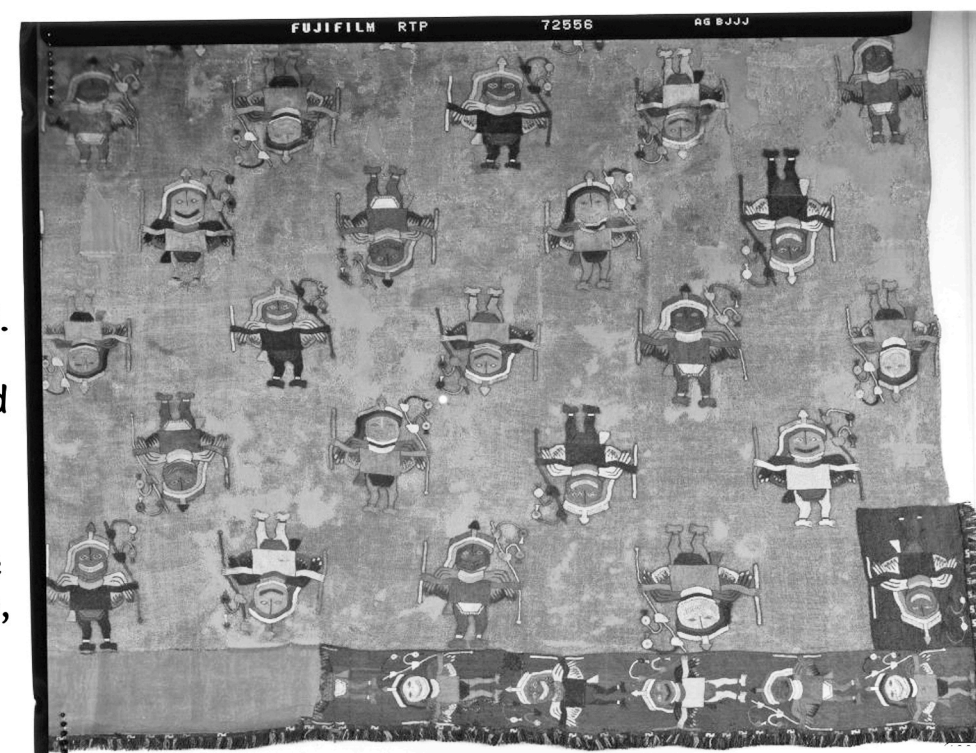
I needed to put together a work team. Martin Ciszuk helped me gather textile researchers and students.



First, I had to select different textiles because of the challenges that working with Textile 179 would have presented.

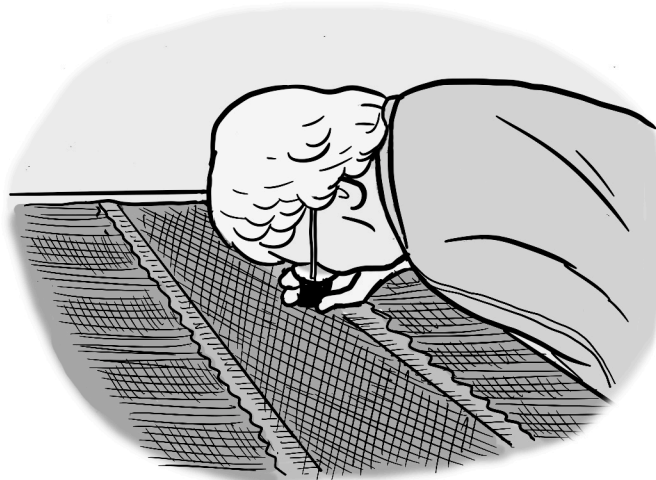
We chose Textiles 209 and 079. Textile 209 was large and damaged in several places. It had been repaired both in Peru and (most likely) in Sweden.

It was a textile that could tell the story of grave looting, smuggling, cultural heritage theft, and attempts at preservation.





And we succeeded. Recreating Textiles 209 and 079 took almost four years of constant negotiations and research. Thread was spun from alpaca wool, dyed, woven, embroidered, and assembled in various cities across Sweden.



About a dozen people participated in the production.

Between April and August 2017, I made a series of agreements with the Royal Academy of Arts in Stockholm (K&H), the Art Museum in Lima (MALI) and Peruvian diplomats.

Would be possible to carry out diplomatic smuggling, but from Sweden to Peru?



During those months I attended almost all the events which the Peruvian Embassy arranged.

EMBAJADA DE PERÚ

At one of these events, I met the cultural attache Marinere Muñiz. I explained the scope of my project and the reason for sending the textiles through the Peruvian embassy.



It's a brilliant initiative!

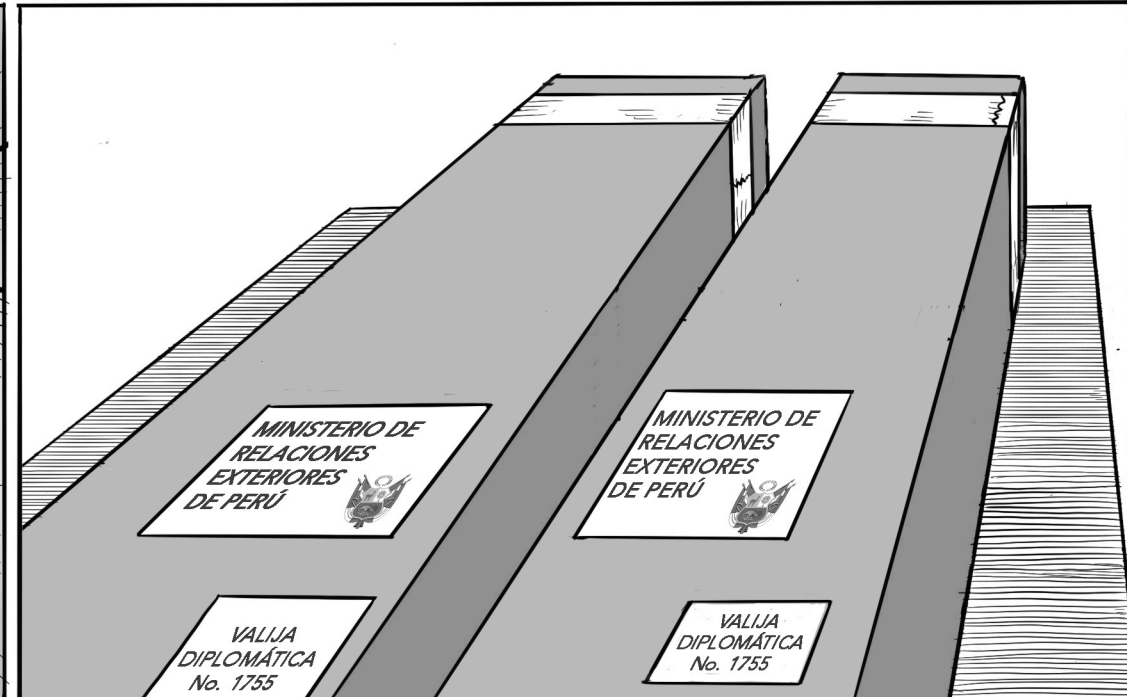
Let me see how we can help you!



At the end of August...

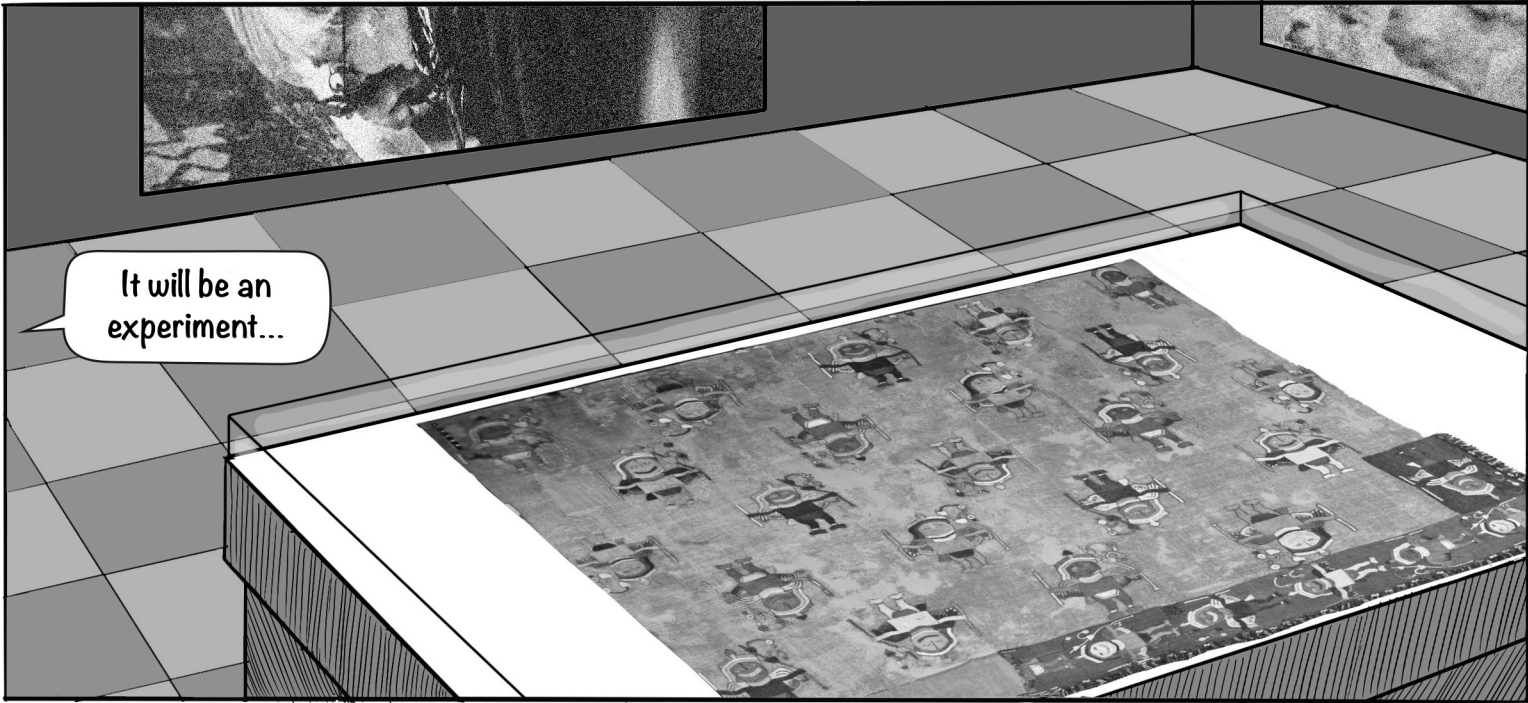
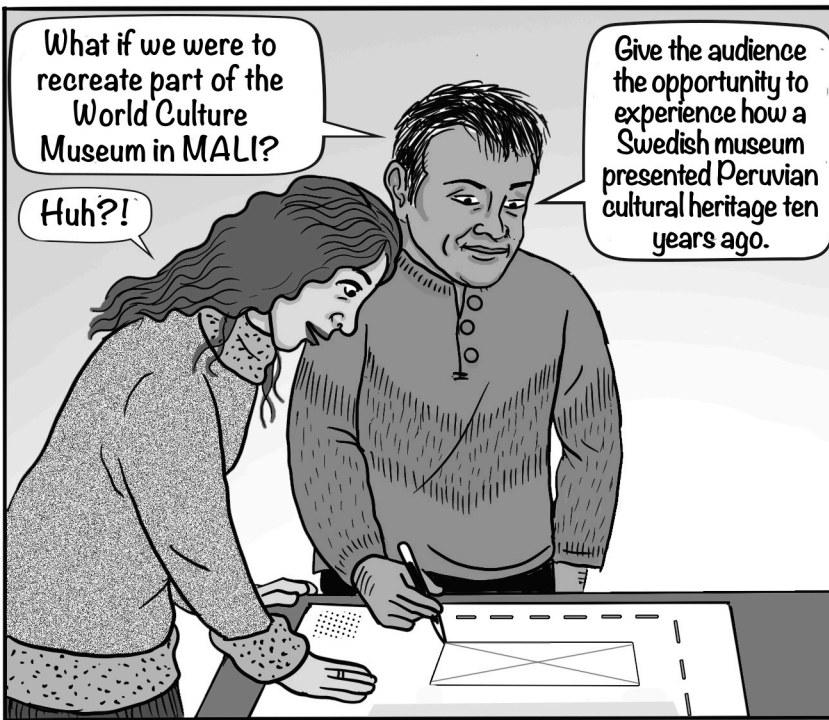
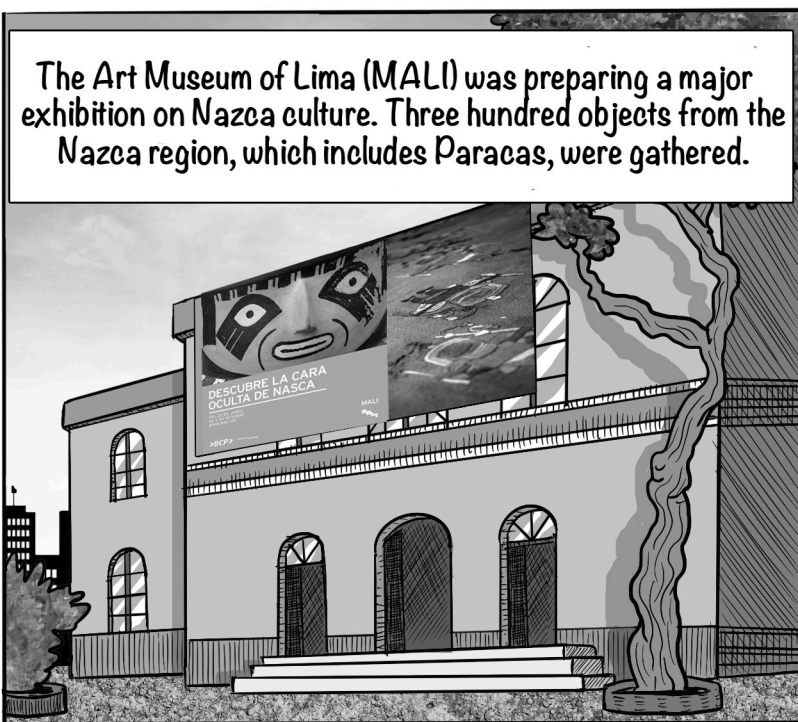


Good news, Oscar! The embassy will cover the cost of shipping!



DIPLOMAT POUCH CONTAINS OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS ONLY FROM THE PERUVIAN EMBASSY IN SWEDEN TO THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF PERU.









I'm in charge here!

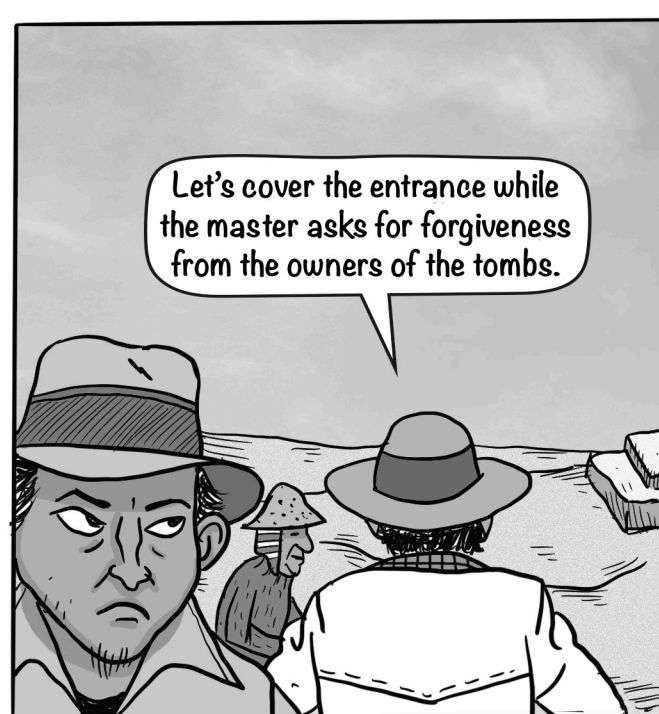


Not one more step!



Let the master work in peace.

Ok, ok.



Let's cover the entrance while the master asks for forgiveness from the owners of the tombs.



I offer you a little of San Pedro...



Apologies to the old ones for disturbing

OH, SORDO, LOOK!



Apologies to the owners for what we are going to do today...



This disrespectful boy...



There's a prize here!



Here's the deal... Take all ceramics you can carry today and I'll come back tomorrow for the rest.

Are you sure?

The gringo needs to choose in person, so I'll go back to him.



Let's look here, Sordo.



You can see something here.



One hour later...

What a disappointment!

There is nothing here that would interest Karell.

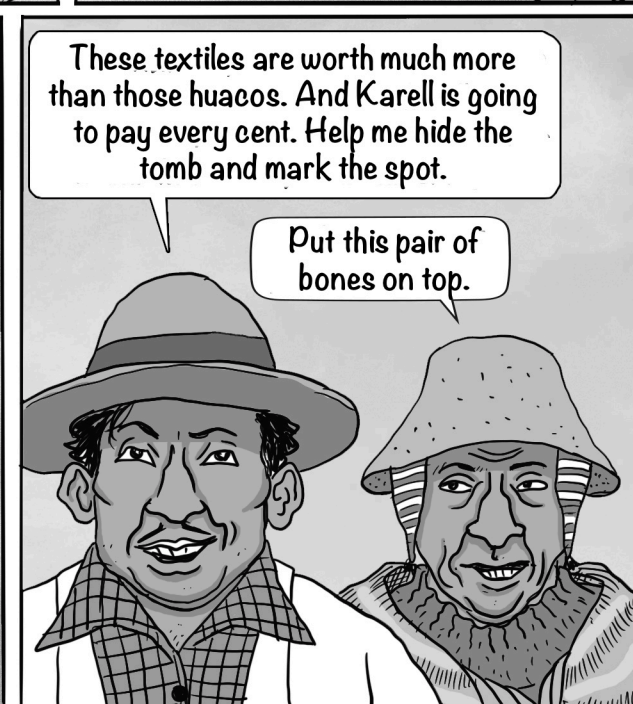


If you say so...

You have been generous, Sordo.

Thanks for the deal, haha!

As they say, the devil knows more because is older...



These textiles are worth much more than those huacos. And Karell is going to pay every cent. Help me hide the tomb and mark the spot.

Put this pair of bones on top.



The fact that Peru was celebrating 200 years of independence in 2021 was used as an argument in the repatriation request. We sold Sweden the famous "Bicentennial Exhibition" and that year the original Mantos Paracas were returned to Peru and declared a nation's treasure.



That same year, I was invited to participate in the Gothenburg Biennial. They were interested in my Paracas textile project.



My proposal was for my textiles to cross the ocean to Europe once again...

I had tried to get replica certificates from the Ministry of Culture. I called and spoke to five different people.



I called the Ministry of Culture (MINCUL), and they told me they would send someone to verify the textiles. Meanwhile, I had to unpack the textiles that my father and I had worked so hard to pack...



You can Google my exhibition in Sweden. In fact, you're all invited!



They didn't have much of a sense of humour.



Each one told me something different and as always it was all extremely bureaucratic.



I decided to trust my luck.



But...



Then, the official from MINCUL arrived.



Look, they are replicas, yes, but no one believes that they were made by a group of Swedish women.



Hang on, this guy replicates original fabrics in Sweden, then sends the imitations back to Peru through the Peruvian embassy...

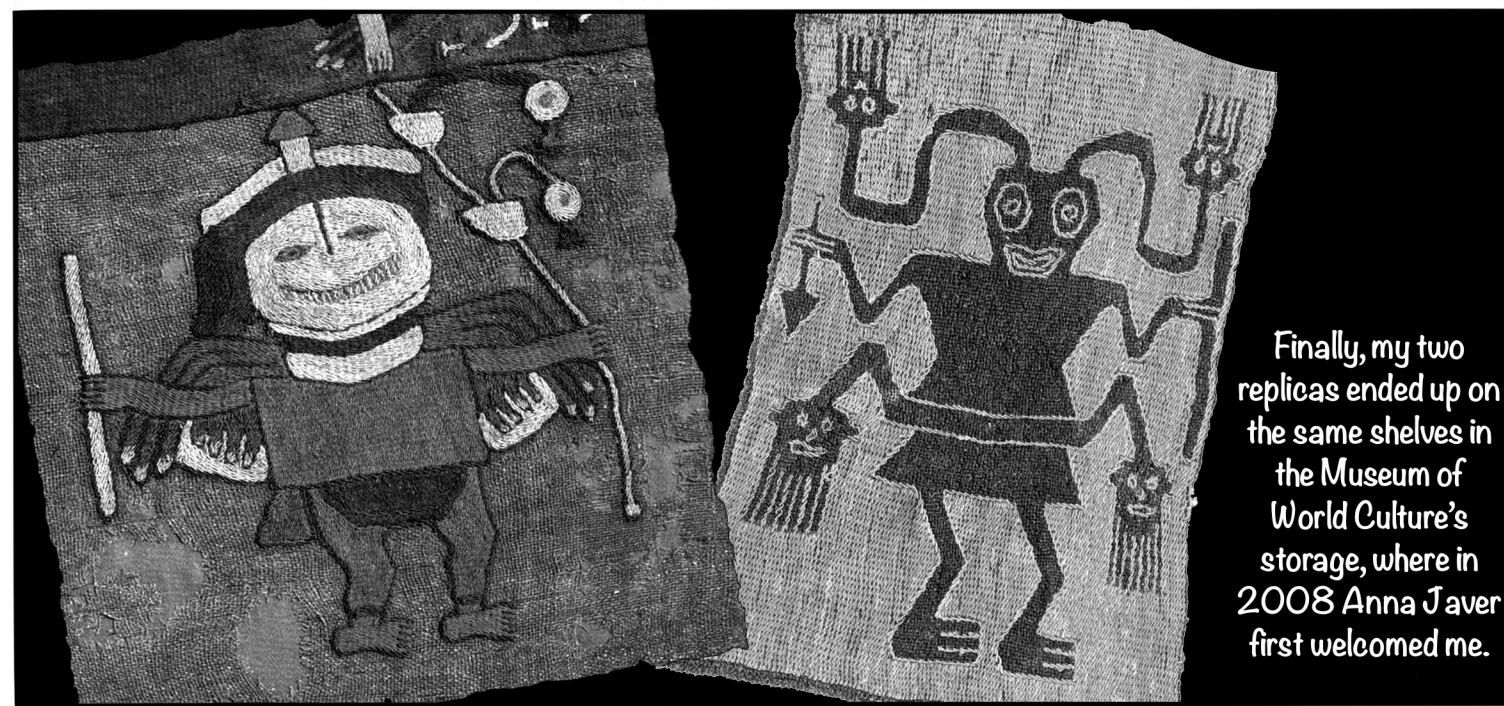
...and now, that he wants to return them to Sweden, the customs officials think they are originals??



They are replicas... part of my artwork...



I will call the Ministry of Culture to clarify this.



Finally, my two replicas ended up on the same shelves in the Museum of World Culture's storage, where in 2008 Anna Javer first welcomed me.