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STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF ART • 63 •

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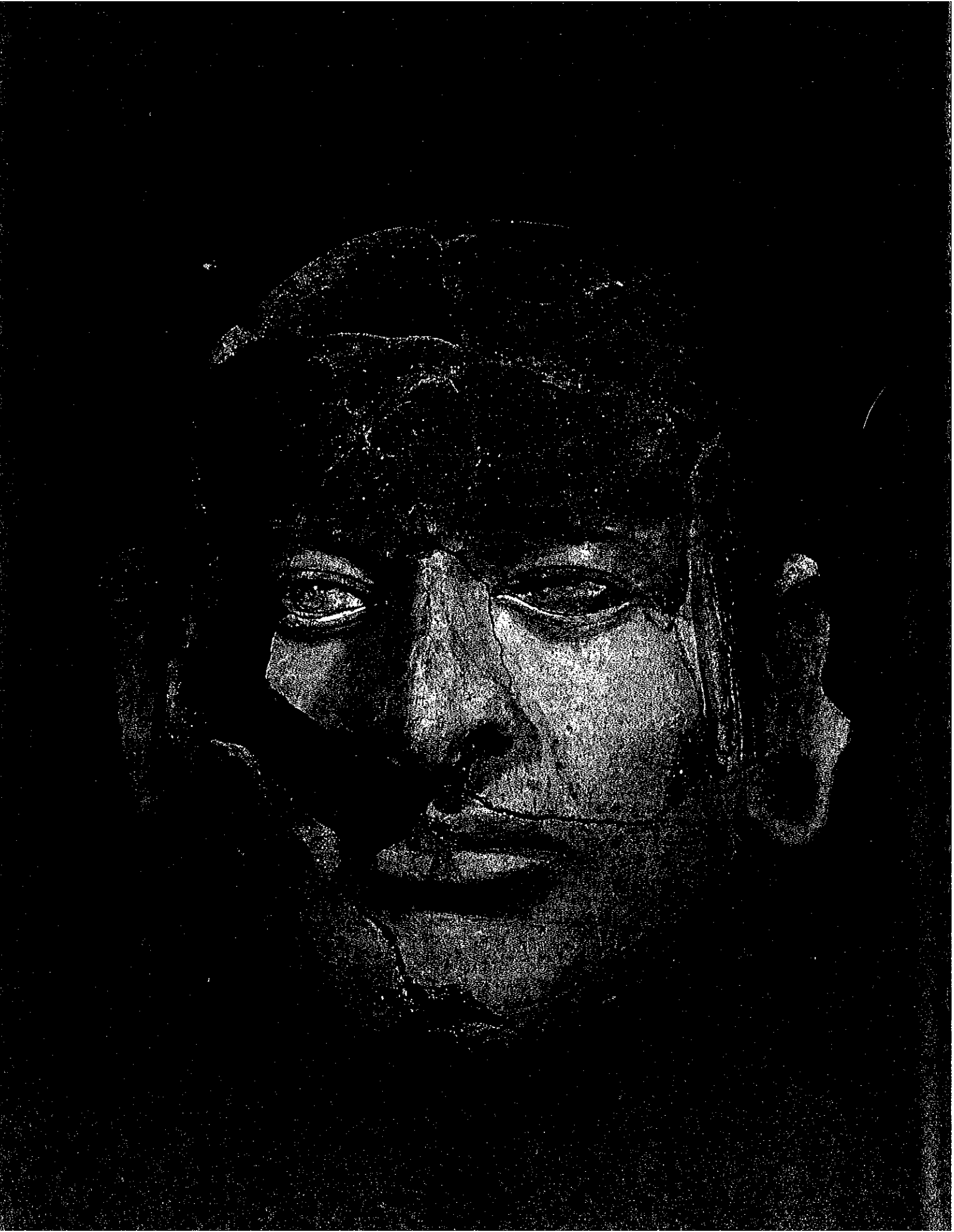
Symposium Papers XL

Moche Art and Archaeology in Ancient Peru

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STEVE BOURGET

University of Texas at Austin and University of East Anglia, Sainsbury Research Unit
for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas

Rituals of Sacrifice: Its Practice at Huaca de la Luna and Its Representation in Moche Iconography

Until recently most of our information on the subject of human sacrifice in the Moche culture came from the study of its iconography (Donnan 1978; Hocquenghem 1987). Depictions of various types of torture and sacrifice were modeled and painted on ceramic vessels. Individuals are shown strapped to wooden structures, where they would be tormented by vultures, mutilated, and ultimately decapitated and dismembered (see, for example, Berrin 1997: 152, fig. 93). One of the most complex scenes painted on Moche vessels is known as the Sacrifice Ceremony (Introduction, this volume, fig. 5; Alva and Donnan 1993: figs. 132, 143). In this scene, naked men are sacrificed by having blood drawn from their necks, their hearts may also have been removed. On the upper register, a goblet, presumably filled with the blood of the victims, is being exchanged between human and what appear to be supernatural individuals.

In the last fifteen years, a number of major archaeological discoveries have transformed our perception of Moche society and our understanding of their system of representation. Many of these new finds contain clear evidence of human sacrifice, giving us archaeological confirmation that at least some of the practices known from the iconography were indeed carried out. Perhaps the most important of these finds occurred in 1987, with Walter Alva's discovery of the Sipán tombs in the Lambayeque Valley (Alva, this volume, and 1988, 1990; Alva and

Donnan 1993). For the first time, not only was it possible to see the complete, complex burial chambers of some of the highest-ranking individuals of Moche society, but it was also possible to link these individuals with the Sacrifice Ceremony. For example, the individual in Tomb 1 at Sipán was recognized as one of the main protagonists of the ceremony, while Tomb 2 was seen as the resting place of his counterpart, a figure identified as the Bird Priest. A third personage of the Sacrifice Ceremony, a female, was found at San José de Moro in the Jequetepeque Valley a few years later by Christopher Donnan and Luis Jaime Castillo (1992, 1994). Furthermore, Daniel Arsenault (1994: 217) suggests that a female burial at Huaca de la Cruz in the Virú Valley, originally excavated in the late 1940s by members of the Virú Valley Project, is also linked to the Sacrifice Ceremony. He argues that a wooden staff found alongside her is similar to an anthropomorphized staff on the lower right of the rollout drawing of the Sacrifice Ceremony (Introduction, this volume, fig. 5). In this scene, the anthropomorphic staff is shown drawing blood from a captive. It has therefore become clear that individuals attired in the same regalia as the figures of the Sacrifice Ceremony were interred in various places in the Moche region, and over several generations, suggesting that this sort of ritual may indeed have occurred as something of a regular practice in Moche culture.

Fragment of a Moche clay
effigy, Plaza 3A, Huaca de
la Luna (height: 18 cm)
Museo de Arqueología,
Antropología e Historia,
Universidad Nacional de Trujillo

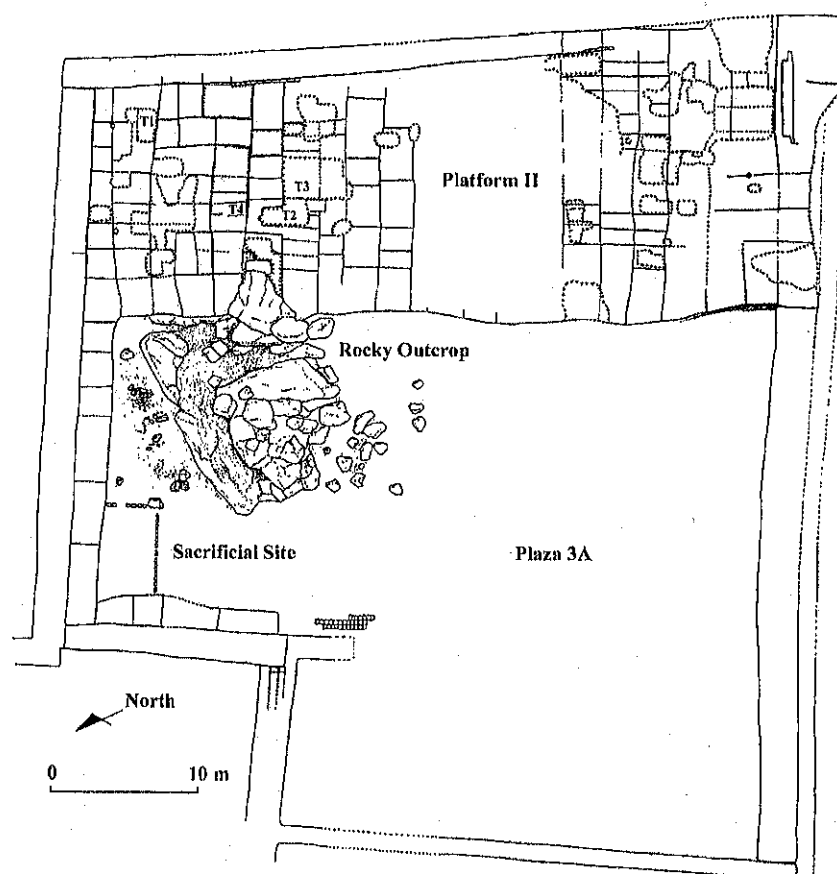


1. View of Cerro Blanco and the Huaca de la Luna, Moche Valley, Peru

2. Plan of Plaza 3A and Platform II, Huaca de la Luna. T1-T4 mark the positions of tombs

These excavations have also provided specific evidence of extensive and complex sacrificial practices among the Moche. In many instances human sacrifice was part of elaborate funerary rituals. At Sipán, San José de Moro, and Huaca de la Cruz, individuals appear to have been sacrificed and placed over tombs of high-status individuals to act as guardians (Alva and Donnan 1993; Strong and Evans 1952).¹ The practice of interring a male directly above a principal burial is known from Tomb 1 and Tomb 2 at Sipán, and the tomb of the Warrior Priest at Huaca de la Cruz (Alva and Donnan 1993; Strong and Evans 1952). Moreover, at Sipán the guardians' feet were missing, further underscoring the sacrificial nature of these burials. Other examples of sacrifice have been found at Huanchaco in the Moche Valley, Huaca Cao Viejo in the Chicama Valley, and Dos Cabezas in the Jequetepeque Valley (Cordy-Collins, in press; Donnan and Foote 1978; Franco, Gálvez, and Vásquez 1995, 1996).

In 1995 the single largest sample of human sacrifice known for the Moche was found at the site of Huaca de la Luna in the Moche Valley (fig. 1) (Bourget 1997a, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b). More than seventy individuals were



3. View of Plaza 3A and Platform II at the beginning of excavations



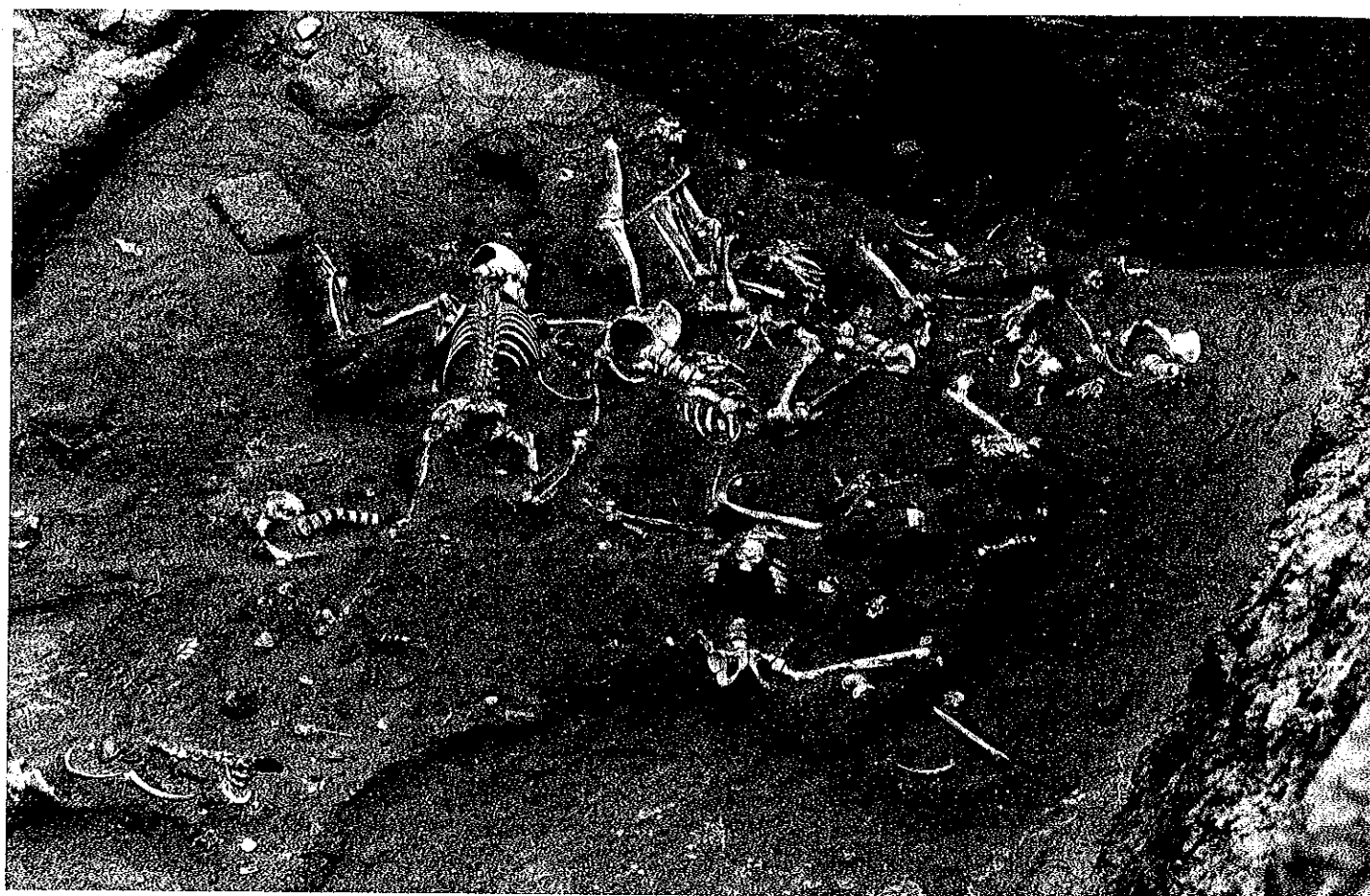
sacrificed during at least five episodes. The sacrifices were carried out in Plaza 3A, located to the east of the principal platform of Huaca de la Luna, Platform I (fig. 2). The sacrificed individuals were found to the north of a natural rocky outcrop, a feature that may have been the impetus for the construction of Plaza 3A and its adjacent platform, Platform II, in this area (fig. 3). High adobe walls on the north and south sides of platform/plaza connect this area with the rest of the Huaca de la Luna complex. These walls, even in their current eroded state, reach eight meters in height. At least two of the sacrificial episodes appear to be closely linked with the phenomenon of El Niño, an often severe geoclimatic perturbation that can result in downpours, massive flooding, famine, and disease on this normally arid coast. The sacrificial victims of Plaza 3A were found embedded in clay, indicating that the rituals were performed during spells of torrential rains brought by El Niño.

The sequence of events and, in many instances, the precise positioning of the human remains suggest a high degree of ritual organization. After each ritual, the mutilated remains of the victims were left in the plaza, exposed to the sun and the wind, where they

played host to countless flies who deposited their eggs in the rotting flesh (fig. 4). Ritual specialists must have conducted these practices according to strict guidelines. The evidence from Huaca de la Luna and other Moche sites indicates that these practices formed an integral part of Moche religious and ideological organization.

In the first part of this contribution, I will consider Moche warfare, capture and sacrifice, comparing visual representations with archaeological data obtained from various Moche sites. Emphasis will be given to the Huaca de la Luna, as it provides our most extensive data set on this subject. Using a comparative approach, it will be possible to evaluate how closely the visual representation of warfare and sacrificial practices matches evidence from the archaeological record.

In the second part of this paper, symbolic dimensions of these practices will be explored, such as the close associations between the sacrificial victims of Plaza 3A of Huaca de la Luna and sea lions. Moche practices and beliefs about death will also be investigated, especially aspects regarding natural processes such as decay and insect infestation. Finally, I will discuss the ways in which the events at



Huaca de la Luna shed light on Moche beliefs about the natural world.

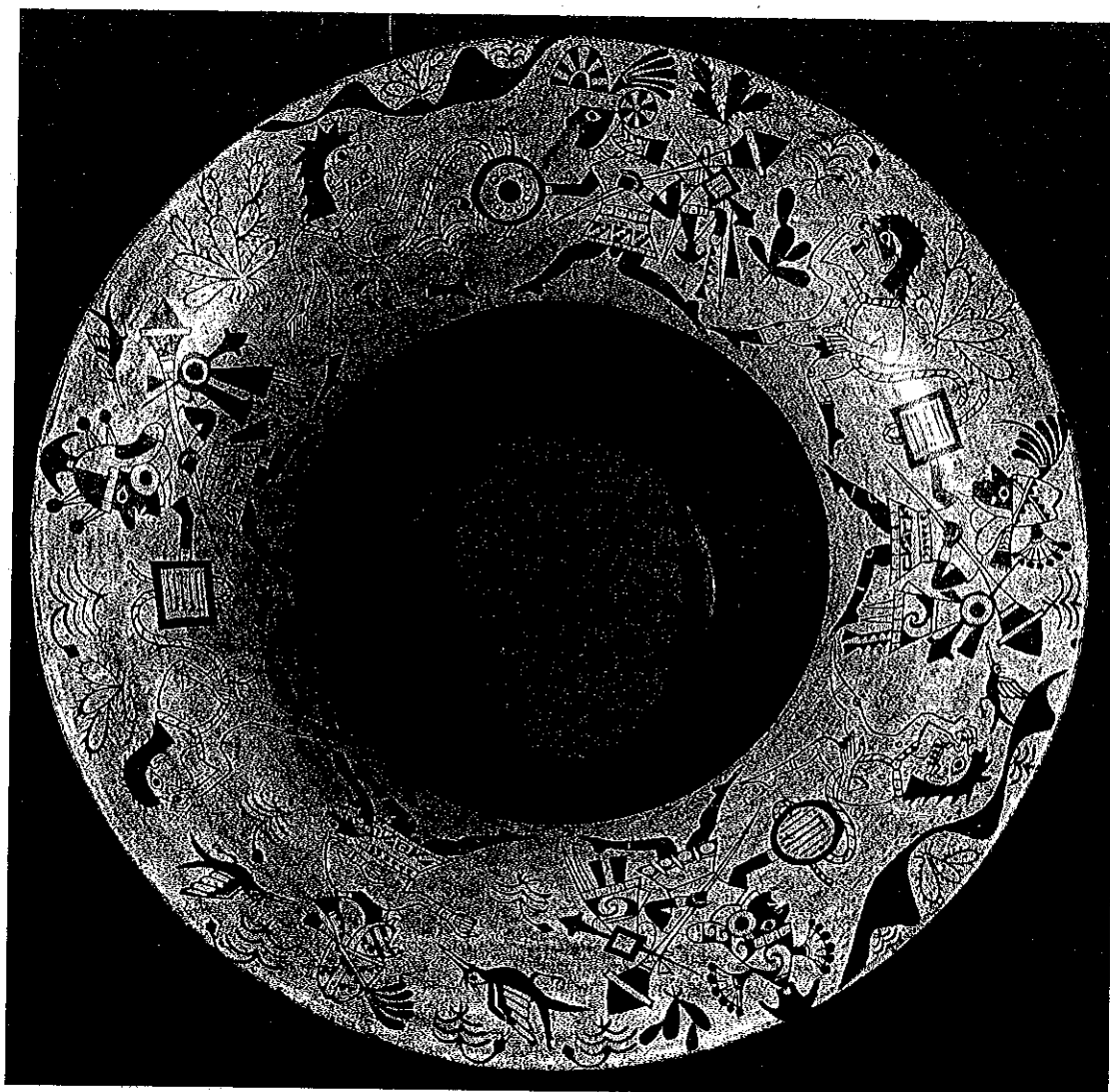
Ritual or Secular Warfare?

The nature of Moche warfare is still a matter of debate (Topic and Topic 1997; Verano, this volume). Various authors have discussed the problem of demonstrating secular warfare during the Moche period, and have used the fine-line depictions of battle scenes as corroborating evidence for full-scale battles for territorial expansion. For example, David Wilson (1988: 66) mentions that the Moche achieved integration of the north coast valleys through warfare, although the physical evidence of such practices is lacking. He argues that "there is clear iconographic evidence in pottery and murals both for inter-regional warfare and for conquest." Did the Moche engage in large-scale battles? Are the fine-line depictions of bellicose activities such as armed combats or taking prisoners on

Moche ceramics indicative of military campaigns, perhaps for territorial gain? Certainly it is difficult to try to separate artificially "ritual" and "secular" warfare. Armed conflicts and wars often have ritualized aspects, thus blurring the line between this distinction. This said, it is worthwhile to consider whether the depictions of Moche battles were intended to represent more mundane, perhaps territorial conflict, or whether they were intended to evoke conflict that was an integral part of religious practices.

The seventy individuals found in Plaza 3A at Huaca de la Luna were a select group. All were male, between the ages of fifteen and thirty-nine, with an average age of twenty-three (Verano 1998). Their skeletal morphology indicates that they were healthy, strong individuals who were physically very active. Many of them had well-healed fractures, and at least eleven of them had fresh injuries, suggesting that they were probably warriors captured during violent encounters. Although

4. Human remains in Plaza 3A. The disintegrated mud bricks in the upper left are evidence of heavy rainfall during an El Niño episode



5. Interior view of a flaring bowl showing a procession of captured warriors
Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin
[VA-48171]

warriors are frequently depicted in Moche art, where they are recognizable through their protective helmets, backflaps,² shields, and warclubs, this is the first archaeological evidence of such a large number of warriors.

Christopher Donnan (1997) has suggested that the main objective of battle was not to kill the opponent but to incapacitate him by a blow to the face or to the legs. Afterward, the victors stripped the vanquished and led them back to temples. A number of painted representations on ceramics suggest that these battles were performed under the guidance or supervision of high-ranking individuals, such as the one represented on a flaring bowl now in the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin (fig. 5). Flanked by a bird on each side, he is seen running amidst a group of four warriors with

prisoners. Birds are closely associated with scenes of combat and are frequently shown accompanying warriors to the battlefield. Elsewhere I have proposed that these birds could have functioned as metaphoric devices, representing the verbal orders given to warriors by their chief (Bourget 1989: 121).

On the basis of representations of attire and accoutrements, it appears that warriors on both sides of the battle are Moche: foreigners are rarely depicted. Apart from a few exceptions, all warriors wear a conical helmet, or a more elaborate headdress, and a backflap, and carry a round or square shield and a long club. There is no discernable pattern in the distribution of symbols on their attire and accoutrements. For example, in Figure 5, each of the victorious warriors wears a

different outfit (headdress, tunic, shield), and when one of them holds a square shield, the victim's shield represented in the weapon bundle slung over his shoulder is circular, and vice versa. If this represented secular warfare, one would expect the victorious soldiers to be dressed in the same style, adorned with the same designs, and equipped with similar headdresses and distinctive shields.

This alternation between round and square shields has also been noted on an architectural relief at Huaca Cao Viejo. In one panel, twenty-four pairs of warriors are organized into four registers, with twelve combatants in each. In the top register the left figure of each pair holds a square shield, and the right figure holds a round shield. This is reversed on the next register; the third register returns to the same sequence as the top band, and so forth. Representations of combat scenes on diverse media, therefore, appear to show Moche warriors engaged in a form of intra-Moche ritualized warfare.

Recent discoveries at Dos Cabezas and Huaca Cao Viejo have provided additional evidence as to the ritual nature of Moche warfare. In a Moche burial at Dos Cabezas, Christopher Donnan and Alana Cordy-Collins found three wooden shields, each about 30 cm in diameter and covered with metal plaques (Christopher Donnan, personal communication, 1999). At Huaca Cao Viejo, two wooden maces were found deposited at the base of a wall (fig. 6) (Franco, Gálvez, and Vásquez 1999). The maces, carved from a single piece of wood, were originally covered with sheet metal. Although these weapons must have measured at least 120 cm in length, their shafts were less than 3 cm thick. As can be observed in Figure 5, the forms and sizes of these objects closely match those represented in the iconography. Several morphological features of these items suggest that they were more appropriate for ritual battle than for any kind of large-scale warfare. The shields, probably tied to the left wrist of the combatant, are too small to have offered much protection. The long, slender shafts of the maces make them relatively fragile and ineffective against an enemy. After the maces were broken, possibly in battle, they were deposited at the base of a wall at Huaca Cao Viejo, emphasizing once more the sacred and ritual dimensions of these objects. The metal coverings of



the shields and the maces also underscore the ritual nature of these accoutrements.

This does not mean that the Moche did not engage in more secularized, full-scale or all-out warfare. Such a subject, however, was clearly deemed unsuitable, or perhaps unnecessary, for depiction. If large-scale warfare were depicted, one would expect to see the type of weapons generally used in such battles, including slingshots, lances, and spear-throwers. Almost none of these are shown outside of deer hunting scenes.³ The Moche were more interested in showing details of what appears to have been a warrior cult or class. Moche artists and their patrons chose to emphasize the *ritual* of combat, most likely a specific ritual sequence culminating in the sacrifice of prisoners. The ritualized nature of Moche warfare is constantly reiterated in scenes that portray the adoration of the warrior's bundle (Kutscher 1983: abb. 278), the display of a warrior's tunic and war implements (Berrin 1997: 138, fig. 77), and the anthropomorphization of the warrior's regalia (Kutscher 1983: abb. 271).

There is currently no evidence to suggest that the victims sacrificed at Huaca de la Luna were foreigners. Their apparent good health, their strength (based on the indices of muscle attachments), and the numerous old injuries suggest that they could have been part of a select group of Moche males specifically trained and prepared for these ritual activities (Verano, this volume, and 1998: 161).

6. Wooden clubs deposited at the base of a wall at Huaca Cao Viejo, El Brujo complex, Chicama Valley
Collection: Huaca Cao Viejo Archaeological Project

Blood and Sacrifice

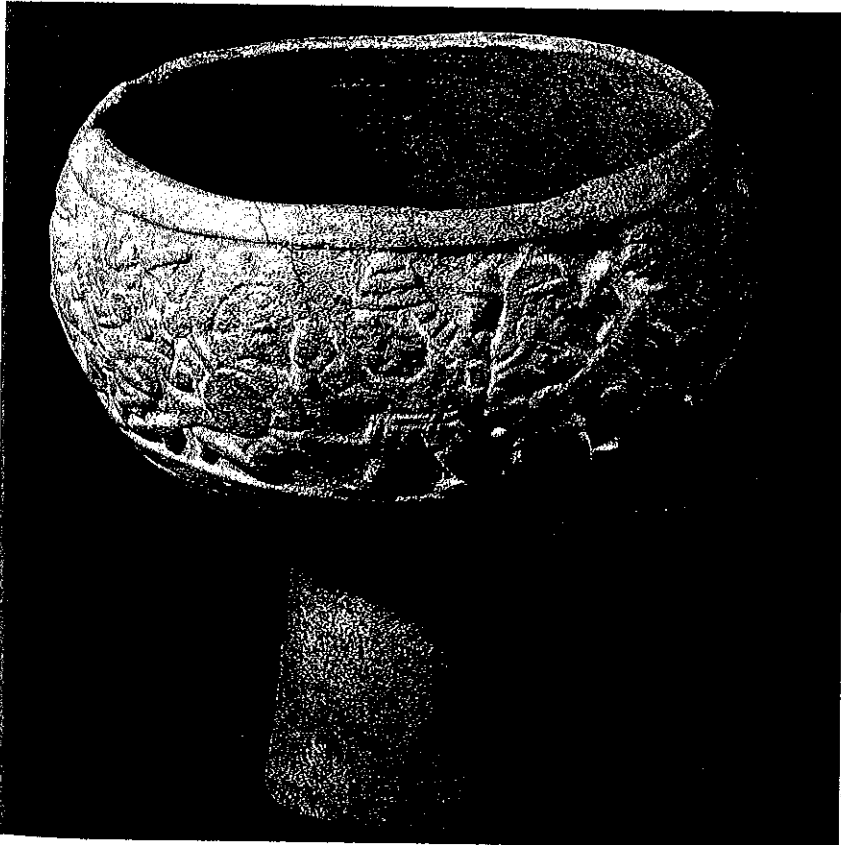
As mentioned earlier, the main objective of battle was not to kill but to defeat opponents by capturing them and bringing them to the temple. The depiction of cactus, epiphytic plants, and what appear to be sand dunes or hills in the battle scenes has led authors to propose that these combats took place in unpopulated areas, away from human settlements (Alva and Donnan 1993: 129; Bawden 1996: 66; Shimada 1994: 110; Wilson 1988: 338). It is not clear to me where these ritual confrontations took place. Such plants, often shown with their root systems (fig. 5), are also present in other contexts, and could signify something other than a geographical location. They may refer to a subterranean world, and therefore to concepts of fertility and death (Bourget 1994). Upon arrival at the temples, captured warriors were presented to high-status individuals and eventually sacrificed by having their throats cut (Benson 1972: 46). Presumably their spurting blood was collected in a goblet and consumed by high-ranking individuals such as those represented

in the Sacrifice Ceremony. Alva and Donnan proposed that this ritual really took place:

"When the Sacrifice Ceremony, with its distinct priests and symbolic elements, was first identified in Moche art in 1974, we wondered whether this ceremony was actually enacted by the Moche or whether it was played out by deities in some mythical setting. Since the only evidence of the ceremony was in the artistic depictions, we had no way of knowing whether it was a mythical or real event. The anthropomorphized bird and animal figures certainly seemed mythical, but perhaps these were artistic means to imply the supernatural aspects of real people who were enacting prescribed roles. Could it be that the Moche actually sacrificed their prisoners of war and consumed their blood? Not until the excavation of Tomb 1 [at Sipán] did we have archaeological evidence that this ceremony actually took place, with living individuals enacting the roles of the priests depicted in the art" (Alva and Donnan 1993: 141).

The discoveries at Sipán and San José de Moro provided evidence that details in the depictions of the Sacrifice Ceremony, particularly the regalia, had close correspondences with the archaeological record. Evidence for the actual collection of blood, however, remained elusive and conjectural until recently. In 1996 and 1997, Margaret Newman and I selected two Moche ceramic goblets, similar in form to those represented in the Sacrifice Ceremony, from museum collections for analyses. One goblet from the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin (fig. 7), and one from the Museo de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia de la Universidad Nacional de Trujillo, were tested by immunological analysis. Samples taken from the inside of each container showed a very strong positive reaction to human antiserum. The samples were also tested against a range of ten animal antisera, and human blood was the only positive result (Bourget and Newman 1998). We can, therefore, assume with confidence that at least some of these cups once contained human blood. To our knowledge, it represents the first conclusive evidence that the Moche did fill goblets with human blood, possibly to be drunk by religious attendants. The scene modeled in bas-relief around the body of the Berlin vessel implies that the blood was obtained from victims captured in battle.

7. Ceramic goblet containing traces of human blood
Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin
[VA-47985]



Four pairs of warriors are shown engaged in one-on-one combat. Three of the pairs are exchanging blows to the face or the legs; in the fourth pair, one warrior is grasping his adversary by the hair, a sign of capture in Moche iconography (Alva and Donnan 1993: 129).

I do not mean to suggest a direct relationship between the Sacrifice Ceremony, the goblets, and the sacrificial site at Huaca de la Luna. We currently have no evidence that these rituals were linked. On the basis of archaeological and iconographical data, it is conceivable that a number of discrete rituals with sacrificial components could have been performed by the Moche, for different purposes. These may include rituals relatively well known to us through iconography and at least partially through archaeology, such as the Sacrifice Ceremony, as well as others that are less well understood and documented. For example, one type of ritual, called the Mountain Sacrifice, is known to us only through iconography at the moment (Bourget 1995; Zighelboim 1995). Others are known to us only through archaeology, such as the El Niño-linked sacrifice at the Huaca de la Luna. Representations of this ritual have yet to be properly identified in Moche iconography.

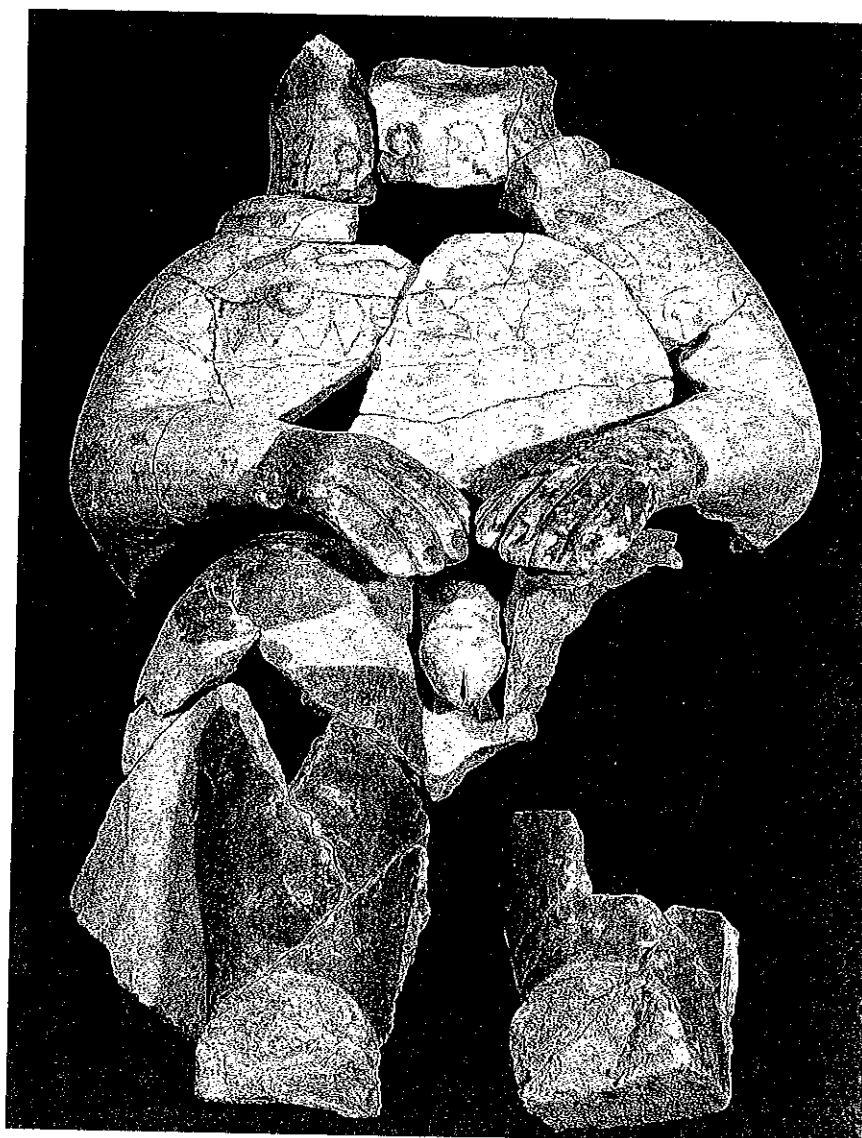
The Huaca de la Luna Sacrificial Site

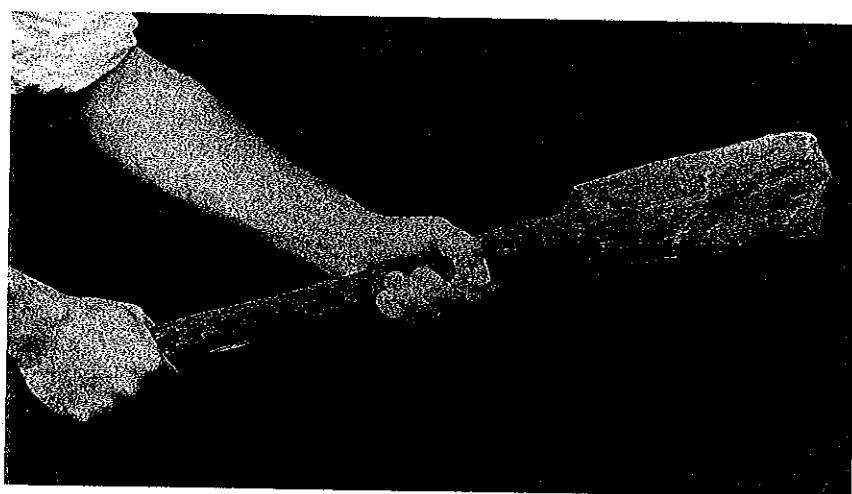
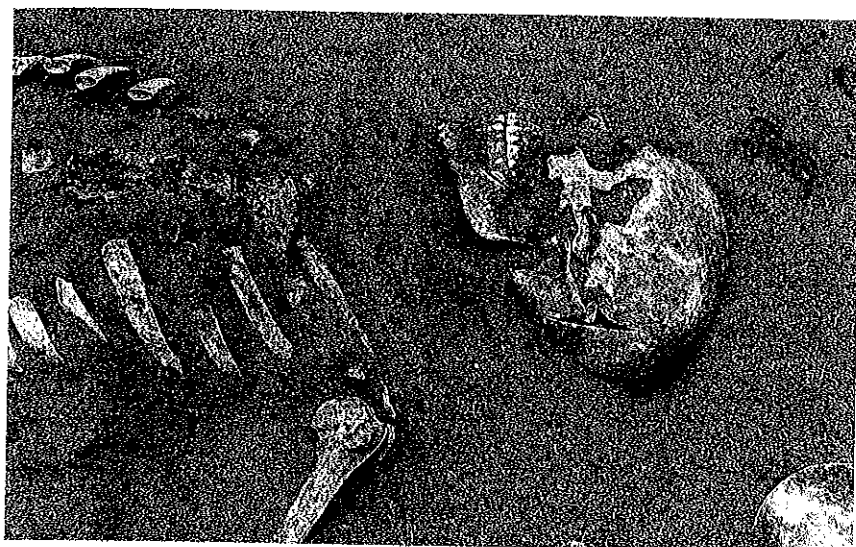
The Huaca de la Luna is found at the foot of Cerro Blanco, and is composed of three platforms linked together by a series of terraces, corridors, and plazas (Uceda, this volume). The focus of my research has been Platform II and its associated plaza, designated Plaza 3A. This area is a prolongation of the main platform (Platform I) toward Cerro Blanco, and was completed during one of the last architectural phases of the site. Platform II and Plaza 3A represents a single architectural project constructed between the sixth and seventh centuries. Although Platform II has been badly damaged by looting activities and natural processes over the centuries, we were able to identify four tombs in this structure (fig. 2). These tombs are grouped together, on the northern side of the platform. A natural rocky outcrop is located toward the center of the complex, contiguous with the platform and the adjacent plaza. The sacrificial victims were found in the plaza, to the north and west of this feature.

Over the course of three field seasons we excavated fifteen strata of human remains in the plaza, representing at least five distinct rituals. We estimate that the remains of at least seventy individuals were in this 60 m² area. Few of the skeletons were complete; many disarticulated body parts were scattered across the area. In addition to the human remains, we found fragments of at least fifty unfired clay effigies of nude males with ropes around their necks, shown seated cross-legged with their hands usually resting on their knees (fig. 8).⁴

Plaza 3A provides evidence for a type of ritual that was heretofore undocumented in the archaeological record. It is now clear, however, that elements of this ritual were

8. Clay effigy from Plaza 3A, Huaca de la Luna
Museo de Arqueología,
Antropología e Historia,
Universidad Nacional de Trujillo





in Figure 9 have been found in burials at several Moche sites. These include the burials of two females in the urban sector of the Moche site (Chapdelaine et al. 1997: 82; Uceda and Armas 1997: 102), Tomb 1 at Sipán (Alva and Donnan 1993: 96) and the burial of a male at Dos Cabezas (Cordy-Collins, in press). Numerous representations of similar knives are seen on ceramics, in scenes of throat slashing and decapitation (see, for example, Berrin 1997: 150, no. 91).

A wooden club covered with black residue was found in Tomb I, on Platform II, adjacent to Plaza 3A (fig. 10). This tomb, partly looted, contained the remains of two males, one in his sixties, the other an adolescent. Immunological analysis of the residue on the club indicated that it had been repeatedly drenched in human blood (Bourget and Newman 1998). Approximately 70 cm in length, the club could have been used to break crania or other bones of victims. Figure 11 shows an individual with the sort of fracture that could have been inflicted by such a weapon. The sexagenarian male buried with the club could have been one of the official sacrificers associated with the plaza.

Body parts were removed from the victims and scattered around the plaza, as evidenced by the disarticulated skeletal remains of heads, arms, and legs (fig. 12). This practice may also have a counterpart in iconography. Depictions of severed arms and legs are found on a number of ceramic vessels, including a bottle

9. Detail of a human skeleton from Plaza 3A. The left temporal lobe shows evidence of a knife wound

10. Wooden club from Tomb 1, Platform II, Huaca de la Luna
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Antropología e Historia,
Universidad Nacional de Trujillo

11. Cranium with evidence of a blow to the occipital region, Plaza 3A, Huaca de la Luna

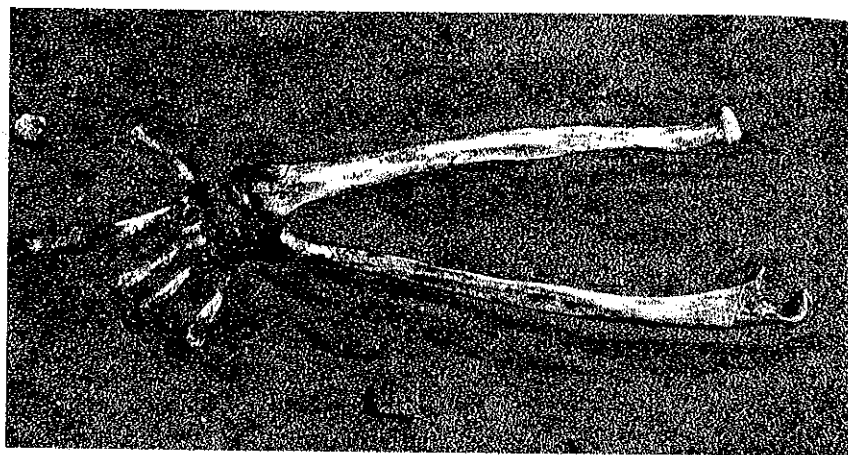
represented in Moche iconography. In this section I will discuss the physical and artifactual evidence discovered at Huaca de la Luna and compare it with the iconographical record.

Although most of the sacrifice tools were not found in the plaza, we can infer their use through the study of the skeletal remains. Knives and clubs were among the principal tools used. Figure 9 shows the remains of the upper torso and cranium of an individual who was dispatched by a knife wound on the left temporal region; the cut was deep enough to pierce the skull. This fatal wound was delivered with what appears to have been a crescent-blade copper knife at least 7 cm in width. We assume knives were also used to cut throats or decapitate victims. Knives of the type and size to deliver the wound shown



in the collections of the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia in Lima (fig. 13). In such depictions, ropes are often shown attached to disarticulated limbs and decapitated heads. In Plaza 3A, by the wrist of a victim, we found the imprint of a rope in the hardened clay. On one side of the Lima bottle, a phallus and testicles are painted between two nude individuals with ropes around their necks. The genitals appear to have been separated from the body. This practice is, of course, much more difficult to document archaeologically.

Other treatments of the body have been recorded. For example, we documented the insertion of body parts and other materials into the victims. At least four individuals were subjected to this type of activity. A rib and a human jaw were inserted respectively into the sacrum and thoracic cage of one victim; a toe was introduced into the pelvis of another, and a finger bone was forced between the ribs of a third. A rock, probably from the rocky outcrop, was tightly squeezed into the pelvis of the fourth victim (fig. 14).⁵ In order to insert some of these objects, organs undoubtedly would have to be removed first.



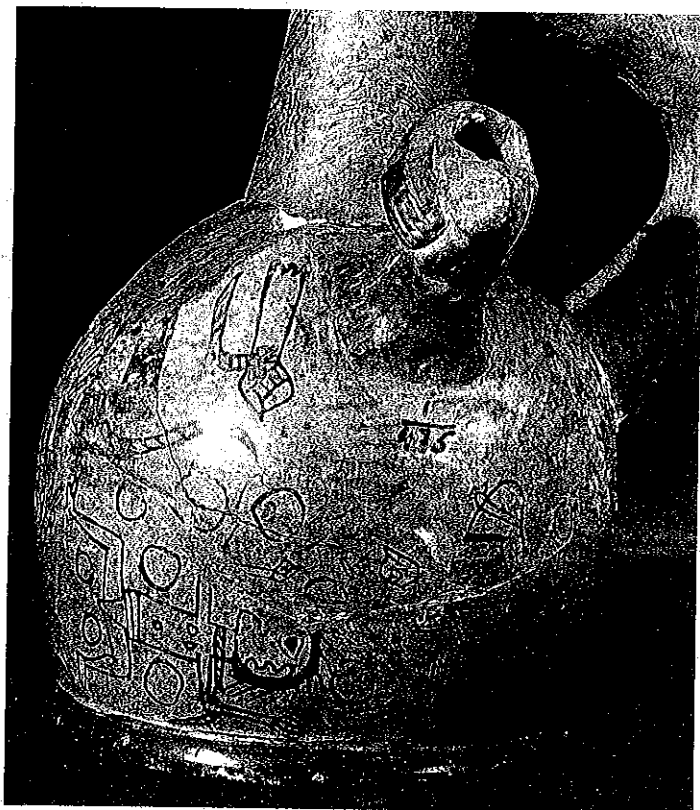
12. Remains of a disarticulated left arm; Plaza 3A

The victims' genitalia may have been a preferred area of torture, as underscored by a vessel found in Tomb 2 on Platform II (fig. 16). This vessel represents a seated prisoner, with zoomorphized rope (a snake) biting his penis. The image may be more than metaphor; it could signal the eventual removal of the sexual organs from the warriors.

Rocks were used as weapons in the plaza and were depicted in the iconography as well. Figure 13 shows an individual on the right

13. Ceramic bottle with a depiction of a sacrificial ritual

Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia, Lima [C-04339]



14. Detail of a human skeleton with a rock in its pelvis and a sea lion canine on its chest, Plaza 3A

15. Two human lower jaws side by side, Plaza 3A



16. Three vessels in the shape of captured warriors from Tomb 2, Platform II, Huaca de la Luna
Museo de Arqueología,
Antropología e Historia,
Universidad Nacional de Trujillo



throwing a rock at a victim lying on the ground. In Plaza 3A numerous fragments of stone, probably from the rocky outcrop itself, were used as projectiles. These were thrown at the individuals in the plaza and at the clay effigies that were scattered amongst the victims. In a number of scenes in Moche iconography, fanged or skeletonized individuals are often shown about to hurl a stone (Donnan 1982: 120). This gesture is usually associated with funerary scenes or sacrificial rituals.

Another practice carried out on the victims at the Huaca de la Luna was the removal of the lower jaw. As mentioned earlier, in one instance a jaw was inserted in the thoracic cage of an individual, just to the side of him, two disarticulated lower jaws were placed next to each other, back to front (fig. 15). Jaws are often singled out in iconography. This anatomical part is also stressed in most of the clay effigies from the site. These figures have a design painted on their jaws, extending from cheek to cheek (fig. 17). In several fine-line paintings of combat and defeat, individuals are shown with their jaw decorated. A mural found early last century on Platform III of Huaca de la Luna represents a warrior pursued by an animated headdress (Bonavia 1985: fig. 59b). The marks on the warrior's jaw may represent similar designs. In one final example, the base of a Mountain Sacrifice scene from the Amano collection has been transformed into a gigantic skeletonized jaw and the victim is falling into it (Bourget 1994: fig. 3.14).

Another important aspect of sacrificial practices seen in the iconography is the



17. Fragment of a clay effigy with a painted design on the lower jaw, Plaza 3A
Museo de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia, Universidad Nacional de Trujillo

Tomb 1, we found the vertebra of an adult sea lion (*Otaria byronia*), along with some sherds of domestic ceramics, in a small recess at the bottom of a posthole (fig. 18, arrow). From a contextual perspective, these elements seem to indicate that sea lions are somehow associated with one of the victims of the sacrificial site, the clay effigies, and some of the activities performed on the platform.

A ceramic vessel in the collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin, may shed light on this association (fig. 19). The ceramic vessel represents a person strapped to a rack. The vertical and horizontal elements of the rack terminate in sea lion heads. The face and hairstyle of the prisoner in the rack is similar to those of the clay effigies from the plaza (fig. 20). When seen from the back, one can see that the victim is firmly holding the lower jaws of the sea lion heads (fig. 19). The vessel links a captured male with sea lions, lower jaws, racks, and sacrifice.

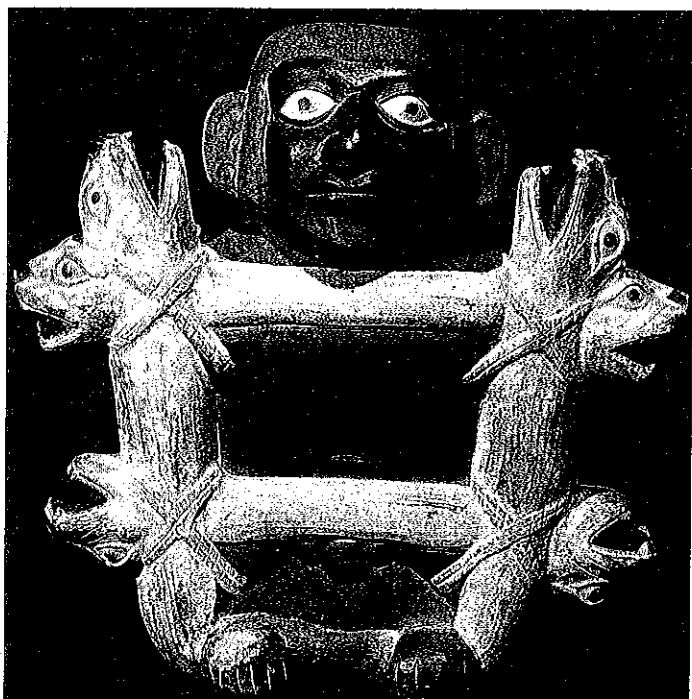
18. Tomb 1, Platform II. The arrow (at right) points to the posthole

removal of the skin from the face (Larcó Hoyle 1966: 22). At least one individual in Plaza 3A may have had one of these "face lifts," judging from the cut marks on the forehead and on the right orbit. To a certain extent, the physical evidence of sacrificial practices appears to match closely those represented in the iconography, but ritual sacrifices are more than just manipulations of the body. These physical practices were embedded in a complex web of beliefs. Turning to the symbolic aspects of human sacrifice, I will now focus on the relationship between the victims of Plaza 3A and sea lions and sarcosaprophagous insects.

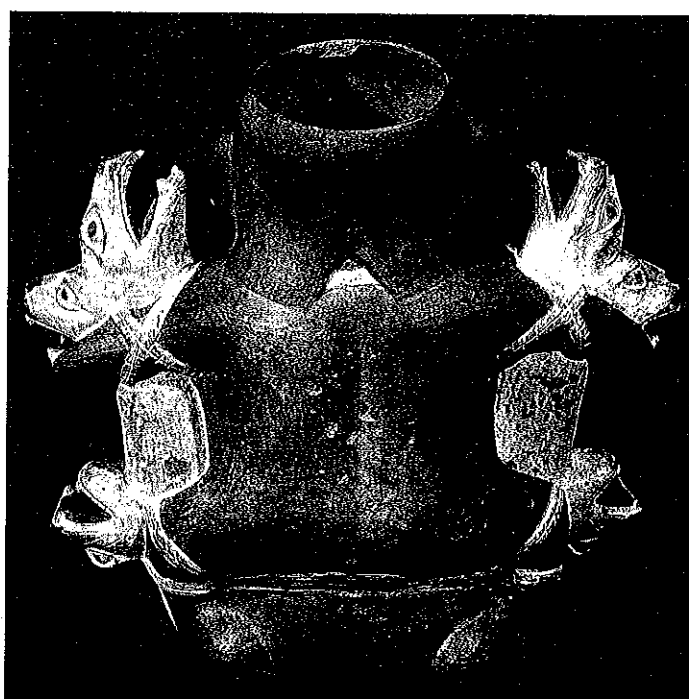
Sea Lions

There seems to be a symbolic linkage between the victims of the plaza, an individual buried in Tomb 1 on Platform II, and sea lions. The canine tooth of a sea lion pup was found resting on the sternum of an individual in the plaza, the same individual who had a fragment of the rocky outcrop tightly inserted into his pelvis (fig. 14). This canine was not part of a necklace, but had been intentionally deposited on the body. Just next to this individual was a clay effigy with an image of a sea lion painted on its chest. On Platform II, by the side of





19. Front and back views of a ceramic effigy of a victim in a sacrificial rack
Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin
(VA-48078)



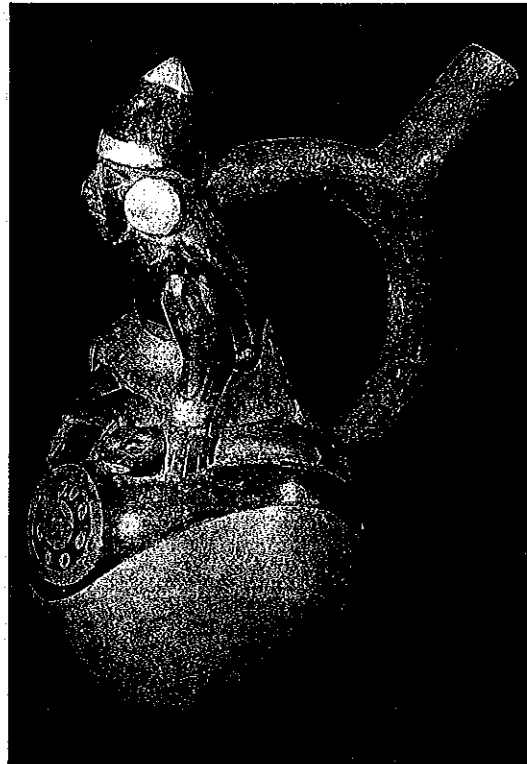
20. Fragment of a clay effigy,
Plaza 3A, Huaca de la Luna
Museo de Arqueología, Antropología
e Historia, Universidad Nacional de
Trujillo

Platform II was heavily looted in colonial and modern times, so that much has been lost. Nevertheless, despite the damage to the platform, we have been able to identify four postholes, three of them along the north side of the platform, and one near the south wall. A speculative, but intriguing possibility is that some of these postholes served to anchor wooden sacrificial racks. If this was the case, the sea lion vertebra deposited in the posthole could fulfil a metonymic function and underscore the symbolic relationship between sacrificial victims and sea lions.

The location of the posthole beside Tomb 1 may be significant. To continue in this speculative vein for a moment, it is tempting to suggest that sacrifices involving a rack were performed during the burial of high-ranking individuals such as the occupant of Tomb 1, the fellow with the bloody club. Christopher Donnan and Donna McClelland (1979) noted similar racks in the depictions of the Burial Theme, but the vertical and horizontal elements of the rack in this scene terminate in black vultures (*Coragyps atratus*). Similar racks are also represented in front of a stepped platform (Donnan 1978: 81, fig. 137). These racks clearly seem to be associated with funerary rituals, human sacrifice, and ceremonial architecture. Furthermore, the

Berlin vase (figs. 19), stylistically dated to Moche IV, could represent a form of *pars pro toto* for the Burial Theme, imagery which is more commonly associated with the Moche V period. Donnan (1978: 172) has shown that Moche artists could break down complex themes into constituent parts, and choose to represent only one or two aspects of a larger scene. These isolated subjects, usually





21. Stirrup-spout bottle in the shape of a warrior with conical helmet and club, Tomb 1, Platform II, Huaca de la Luna

Museo de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia, Universidad Nacional de Trujillo

22. Stirrup-spout bottle in the shape of a warrior with conical helmet and zoomorphic club

Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia, Lima (C-03244)

rendered in three-dimensional form, could stand for the larger theme.

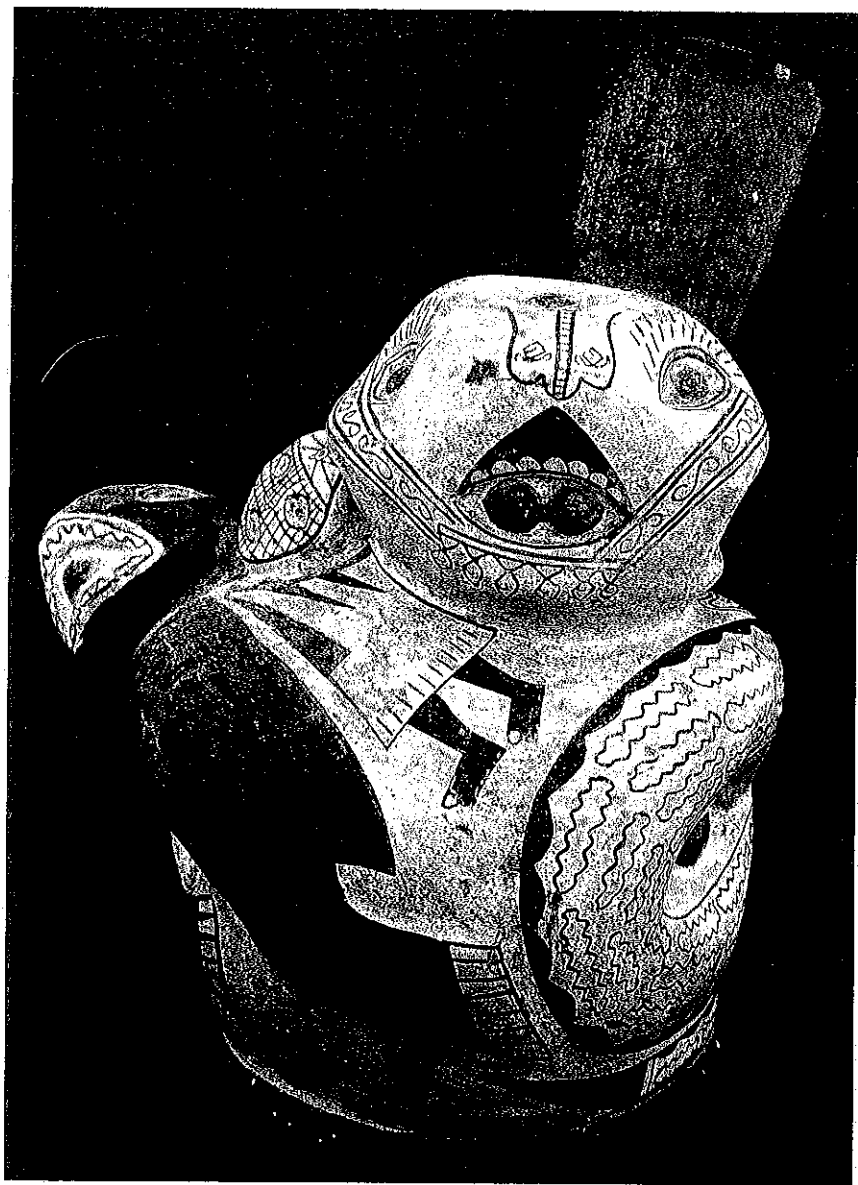
A stirrup-spout vessel found in Tomb 1 also appears to be associated with the theme of sea lions (fig. 21). The modeled figure on the vessel is a seated warrior, shown wearing a conical helmet and holding a bulbous club. This type of club is often shown in hunting scenes, including deer, fox, and sea lion hunts. In a fine-line depiction of a sea lion hunt (fig. 23), the sea lions are clubbed in the face, in

the same manner that warriors are in other painted scenes. The hunter on the left of Figure 23 is depicted with a black design on his jaw. Alongside this hunter, on the very far left of the scene, a female is seated in front of a small structure, preparing funerary offerings. The sea lion hunters wear headdresses that are typical for fishermen in Moche maritime scenes. In a depiction of a sea lion hunt on a vessel in the Museo Arqueológico Rafael Larco Herrera, Lima, one hunter also carries a small

23. Sea lion hunt on a painted Moche vessel from the Linden-Museum, Stuttgart

Redrawn from Kutscher 1983: 89





24. Jar in the shape of a potato with zoomorphic and anthropomorphic representations
Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia, Lima (C-02923)

round shield, suggesting that this is no ordinary seal hunting expedition but an activity possibly associated with ritual warfare (Berrin 1997: 113, no. 47). In one painting known as the Revolt of the Objects, sea lions are associated with anthropomorphized warrior regalia taking captives (Quilter 1990: fig. 3).

In a vessel from the Lima Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia (fig. 22), the warrior's club terminates in a sea lion's head. He also has a round shield resting just in front of him. This conflates the hunter and the hunted, the club and the sea lion. It is not possible at the moment to demonstrate that sea lions were perceived as surrogate

victims and were symbolically associated with the sacrificed warriors of the plaza. More research will be needed, but could it be possible that it is instead the hunters themselves that are associated with the victims of the plaza? Indeed, the hair of the hunters is disheveled much like representations of captured warriors. One other inconclusive but intriguing detail is a rounded depression on the earlobes of the clay effigies. Such a mark may indicate that these effigies represent in considerable detail the identifying elements of hunters and warriors—the depression undoubtedly connotes where an individual of such status would have worn tubular ear-plugs, that is, would have worn them before he was captured. The victims depicted in the sacrificial rack (fig. 19) and on vessels found in Tomb 2 (fig. 16) also have similar depressions in their earlobes.

A number of funerary contexts reinforce the mortuary and liminal associations of sea lions, one of the larger marine mammals found off the coast of Peru (Bourget 1990). At Huaca de la Cruz in the Virú Valley, a large sea lion effigy jar was buried with the attendant of the Warrior Priest burial (Strong and Evans 1952: 151). In the tomb of the female identified by Daniel Arsenault as linked to the Sacrifice Ceremony, two polished pebbles were found at the bottom of a flaring bowl (Strong and Evans 1952: 147). This tomb was situated just a few meters from the Warrior Priest burial. Marine biologists have noted that pebbles are swallowed by sea lions (Schweigger 1947: 210), and the Moche clearly knew this as well. Donnan has pointed out that sea lions are frequently represented with stones in their mouths (1978: 136). Figure 24, a potato effigy jar, shows a sea lion with two pebbles in its mouth.

A number of ceramics in the form of sea lion heads have been found in burials at Huaca de la Luna and Huaca Cao Viejo (Donnan and Mackey 1978: 113, 187; Franco, Gálvez, and Vásquez 1998: 15). At Pacatnamú, a site in the Jequetepeque Valley, a boot-shaped chamber filled with nine cane coffins contained the offering of a sea lion cranium (Hecker and Hecker 1992: 45, Tomb EI, Ubbelohde-Doering 1983: 53). Elsewhere in the Jequetepeque Valley, a sea lion scapula was found in a burial at San José de Moro (Donnan 1995: 147). Two gilded copper beads with sea lion facial

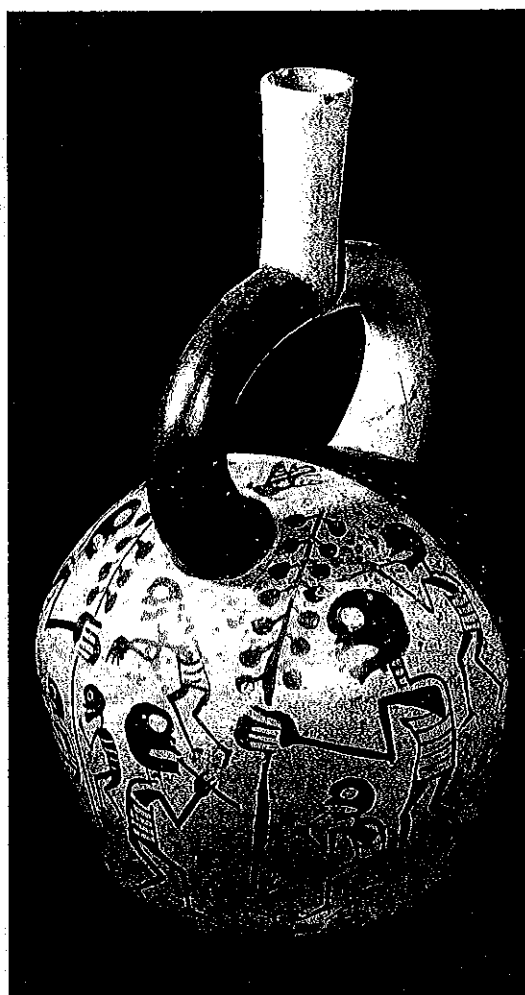
features were recovered from the looted tomb at Sipán; a necklace consisting of ten smaller sea lion beads was excavated from Tomb 3 as well (Alva 1988: 511; Alva and Donnan 1993: 200).⁶

Sea lions may have been associated with the victims of the sacrificial plaza at Huaca de la Luna because during El Niño events the Moche had to compete against these marine mammals for diminished resources. Sea lions also destroy fishing nets and poach fish in the process (Schweigger 1947: 209). Sea lions, symbolically speaking, are also liminal creatures. As their very name implies, they cross territorial boundaries of land and sea: they swim like fish, yet are covered with fur (Bourget 1994). This liminality probably had important symbolic ramifications in Moche beliefs about sacrifice, death, and the afterlife.

Sarcosaprophagus Insects

Most of the clay effigies from the plaza had designs painted on their lower jaws (fig. 17). Painted jaws are also indicated in fine-line depictions of warriors taking prisoners (Alva and Donnan 1993: 128, fig. 137). The larger scale of the designs on the plaza effigies, however, allows us to study these designs in greater detail. The lower jaws of the effigies are painted with a band of oval-shaped motifs, extending from ear to ear. The oval-shaped motifs appear to have heads and two appendages. I propose that these represent muscoid flies emerging from their pupal cases. Such a symbol would reiterate the transforming aspects of bodily decay, literally through insect infestation, that occurs in the liminal state of death.

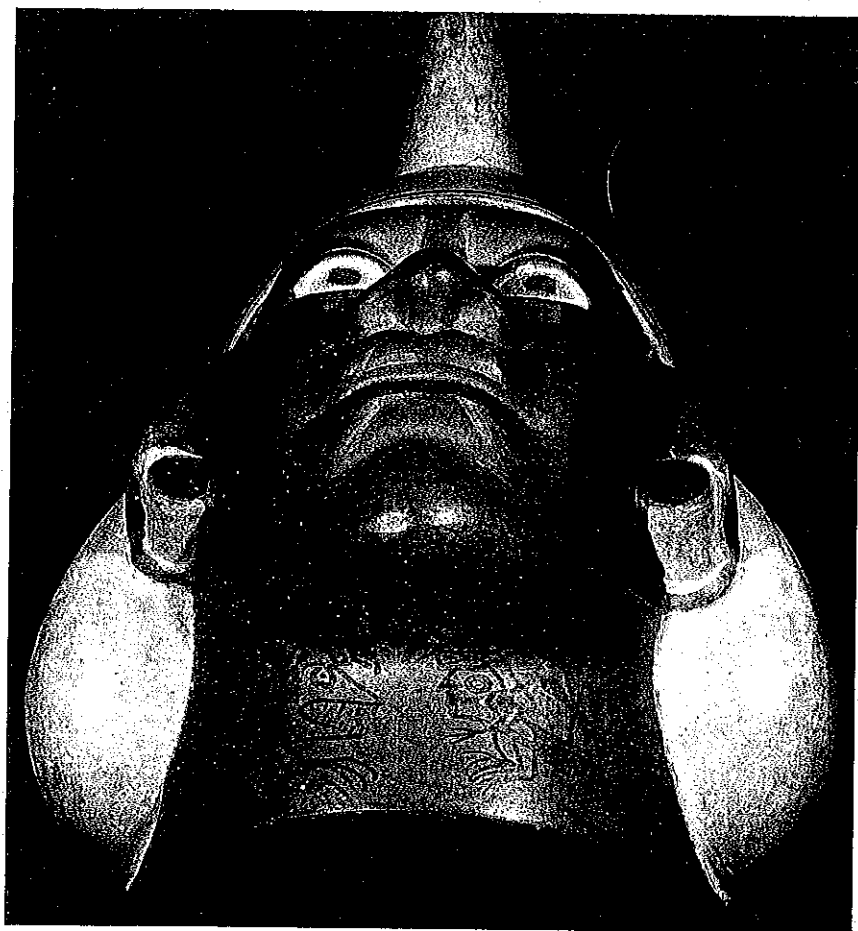
Muscoid flies are usually the first to detect the presence of death. The flies will rapidly alight on the corpse and lay eggs or living larvae. The eggs will then hatch into larval forms and undergo successive molts before entering the inactive pupal stage (Smith 1986). The pupa is simply the hardened outer skin of the last larval stage, and the adult will develop inside this protective skin. In order to break free from the pupal case, the adult fly, while still inside the case, begins to fill with fluid a structure on top of its head, just between the eyes. The inflated head breaks the end of the pupal case and the fly begins to extract itself with its anterior legs. Thus the



25. Stirrup-spout bottle with depictions of skeletons and a fly
Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin
[VA-62199]

design on the chin precisely depicts the anterior legs and the inflated head of the fly, with what appears to be an eye in the center, but which is more likely to be the large organ used to pop open the extremity of the pupal case.

Textual sources from the early colonial period and other evidence suggest that the soul took on the form of a fly after death. Anne-Marie Hocquenghem (1981) has suggested that the painting on a vessel in the collection of the Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin (fig. 25) represents a "welcoming party" of skeletons greeting the arrival of the "soul" of a deceased individual, which takes on the form of a fly. The fly is located on top of the body of the vessel, just under the stirrup spout. In the Huarochirí Manuscript, a document dating to the end of the sixteenth century, flies and maggots are associated with the vital essence of the dead. Great caution must be exerted when using documents of a



26. Stirrup-spout bottle in the form of a human head
Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin
(VA-32567)

later period in the discussion of Moche iconography, but in this case, it is worth mentioning, as it shows the degree of pragmatism that may be part of the symbolic domain of ancient Andean cultures:

"In very ancient times, they say, when a person died, people laid the body out until five days had gone by. The dead person's spirit which is the size of a fly, would fly away saying, 'Sio!' When it flew away, people said, 'Now he's going away to see Paria caca, our maker and our sustainer'" (Salomon and Urioste 1991: 129).

Leaving the body exposed for five days would indeed have attracted a number flies, and it is likely that larvae or maggots could have been seen feeding, especially around orifices of the body such as the eyes, nose, or mouth:

"At Yaru Tini, as the sun was rising, the dead spirit would arrive. In the old times, two or three big flies—people call them *llacsa anapalla*—would light on the garment she

brought. She'd sit there for a long while. As soon as those maggots called *huancoy* worms left the corpse, the woman would say, 'Come on, let's go to the village.' And as if to say, 'This is him,' she'd pick up a small pebble and come back" (Salomon and Urioste 1991: 130–131).

In a footnote to this text, Frank Salomon and George Urioste mention that the *huancoy* could refer to maggots: "The point would then be that the cadaver must be left long enough to breed worms so its *anima* can emerge and escape in the form of flies" (1991: 131). This process would take at least eighteen to twenty days, from the time of the deposit of eggs or larvae to the departure of the adult flies.

The removal of the jaw of some victims in the plaza might in some fashion have been seen to accelerate the liberation of the soul or *anima* from the rotting corpse. A portrait vessel in the collection of the Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde (fig. 26) shows painted designs on the lower jaw and chin similar to those on the clay effigies of the plaza.⁷ We can see a similar string of flies emerging from their pupae in association with a different sort of insect, shown immediately below the line of pupae, above the pair of figures with headdresses. I propose that these represent a species of carrion beetle, another insect that feeds on dead tissue. At this moment it is not possible to determine the exact species, but they could represent members of the Histeridae or Dermestidae families commonly found on corpses in the later stages of decomposition (Faulkner 1986, Smith 1986). Larvae of dermestids do not occur before the body is dry. Larvae and adults feed on dry skin, hair, and other dry dead organic matter. The representation of these insects and the integration of them into the symbolic domain of the Moche reiterate once more their pervasive interest in the human body and in the processes of death and decay in all its details. I suspect that the victims of Plaza 3A were intentionally left exposed for the flies to complete the ritual process. The departure of hundreds of new flies would have signaled the end of the sacrificial ceremony.

The practice of intentionally leaving disarticulated corpses to rot in the open air has been noted elsewhere on the north coast of Peru. During the Lambayeque occupation of

Pacatnamú (the cultural phase following the Moche occupation of the site), fourteen males were sacrificed and left exposed for some time in a trench alongside the northern entrance of one of the principle complexes (Verano 1986). Although these sacrifices appear to have been conducted for different reasons, striking similarities can be seen between this context and the Huaca de la Luna sacrificial site. All of the victims were between fifteen and thirty-five years of age. Further analyses of their skeletal material revealed that they were robust individuals, and a number of them showed evidence of old injuries. Verano (1986: 133) suggests that these victims were soldiers who had been taken prisoners of war. Some dismemberment also took place, although to a lesser extent than at Huaca de la Luna. Based on entomological evidence from the site, the mutilated corpses were left exposed for a number of weeks, if not months (Faulkner 1986).

Returning to the Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología e Historia vessel (fig. 24), we can begin to appreciate more fully the complexity of the iconography of this piece and see the linkage of the victims of Plaza 3A, sea lions, and flies. Two sea lions are modeled and painted on the body of the vessel. One is visible on the side of the body of the vessel, his tail and flippers rendered two-dimensionally and his head three-dimensionally. The second takes the general form of the potato effigy, with his head on the top of the body of the vessel. He is shown with his upper lip cut out, two pebbles in his mouth, and the characteristic designs painted on his lower jaw. The very shape of the jar, a potato, further emphasizes the association with the earth and the subterranean (Bourget 1990).

Moche Rituals of Human Sacrifice

To the extent that we understand Moche ritual behavior, human sacrifice appears to have been an important and widespread component of Moche ritual life. Sacrificial practices involved a complex liturgy and were central to Moche religious activities, both in a physical sense, at the site of Moche, and in a conceptual sense. The various types of sacrificial rituals—those sacrifices that occurred at the moment of interment of important individuals, as well as larger sacrifices carried

out for specific community purposes—were so widely represented and performed that we must assume that they were not rare or isolated occurrences, but formed a significant component of Moche religious life.

I suspect that the sacrificial site in the plaza of Huaca de la Luna is not the only one of its type and that others will be found in the future. In essence and transcendence the sacrificial site of Huaca de la Luna is intimately associated with the El Niño phenomenon and, by extension, the world of the sea—the destruction associated with El Niño is first and foremost associated with the changing sea current. Could the high walls of the plaza have contained a symbolic microcosm of the sea? Was the sacrifice of warriors in pools of mud during torrential rains symbolically related to sea lion hunts?

The practice of human sacrifice has profound implications for the social fabric and religious praxis of a society. In Moche culture, human sacrifice permeated most of their religious and symbolic performances. The social and political implications of this behavior are still poorly understood. More sacrificial contexts and more research will be needed before we fully comprehend the ramifications of these rituals not only for the Moche but for the Andean world as a whole.

NOTES

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1. Great care must be exerted when determining if these accompanying burials were those of sacrificed individuals. At Sipán, for example, the disarticulated remains of three women found in Tomb 1 indicate that these were more likely secondary burials, perhaps relatives of the principal individual in the tomb who had died at a different time and were added to the tomb (Verano 1995: 197).

2. "Backflap" is a term used to refer to a thin sheet of metal, often ornamented at the top in bas-relief and inlay, and terminating in a curved edge. Backflaps were shown suspended from the waists of warriors in Moche iconography (see also Alva, this volume).

3. For a detailed analysis of ritual warfare and deer hunting, see Donnan (1997).

4. This number was arrived at by calculating the minimum number of penises, or MNP.

5. The manner in which these items were tightly embedded in the skeletons suggests that these were intentional placements by humans rather than the accidental scatter left by animal scavengers or the shifting of remains after the sacrificial events. Although small rocks were used as projectiles in the plaza, the large rock in the pelvis of the fourth individual is probably not the result of this type of action. The rock is too tightly fitted in the cavity, and there is no bone breakage as one would expect from the force of such a blow.

6. Alva has suggested that these were faces of felines, but on the basis of the form of the face, the shape of the mouth, the canines, the nose, and the eyes, I would argue that not only are these facial features consistent with those of living sea lions (*Otaria byronia*), but also with the way these marine mammals are represented on the ceramics. Furthermore, in this same tomb, these effigies are not the only ones that can be associated with the world of the sea. For example, elements associated with marine birds, octopus, crab, and two species of fish have been identified.

7. Christopher Donnan (this volume) makes a compelling case for the association between some of these vessels and the depiction of sacrificial victims in Moche iconography. Although more research is needed, the possible relationship between these portrait vessels and the clay effigies found in the site would reinforce the hypothesis that the human victims were a select group of individuals.

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