

## THE STRUCTURAL PARADOX: MOCHE CULTURE AS POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

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*In this article I demonstrate the utility of an historical study of social change by examining the development of political authority on the Peruvian north coast during the Moche period through its symbols of power. We too often equate the material record with "archaeological culture," assume that it reflects broad cultural reality, and interpret it by reference to general evolutionary models. Here I reassess Moche society within its historic context by examining the relationship between underlying social structure and short-term processes that shaped Moche political formation, and reach very different conclusions. I see the "diagnostic" Moche material record primarily as the symbolic manifestation of a distinctive political ideology whose character was historically constituted in an ongoing cultural tradition. Aspiring rulers used ideology to manipulate cultural principles in their interests and thus mediate the paradox between exclusive power and holistic Andean social structure which created the dynamic for change. A historic study allows us to identify the symbolic and ritual mechanisms that socially constituted Moche ideology, and reveals a pattern of diversity in time and space that was the product of differential choice by local rulers, a pattern that cannot be seen within a theoretical approach that emphasizes general evolutionary or materialist factors.*

*En este artículo demuestro la ventaja de un estudio histórico sobre la integración y el cambio social, a través de un examen del carácter del poder político en la costa norte del Perú durante el período Moche. Con demasiada frecuencia equiparamos el registro material con "las culturas arqueológicas"; asumimos que éste refleja la realidad cultural amplia y la interpretamos con referencia a modelos evolutivos generales. En este artículo presento una evaluación de la arqueología Moche dentro de su contexto histórico, al examinar la relación entre la estructura social subyacente y procesos de corta duración que modelaron la formación política Moche, y llego a conclusiones muy diferentes. Veo a la arqueología Moche solamente como la manifestación de una ideología política distintiva cuyo carácter fue históricamente constituida dentro de una tradición cultural continua. El elemento que dio forma a la ideología Moche fue su cimiento básicamente andino, establecido en el contexto regional de la costa norteña. Los aspirantes a gobernantes emplearon la ideología para manipular los principios estructurales tradicionales en su propio interés y así mediar la paradoja entre el poder exclusivo y la estructura social holística andina que constituyó la dinámica de cambio. Un estudio histórico nos permite identificar los mecanismos rituales y simbólicos que socialmente constituyeron la ideología Moche, y revela un modelo de diversidad en tiempo y espacio que no se puede ver dentro de una perspectiva teórica basada en la teoría evolutiva general.*

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Scholars are increasingly aware that the structure underlying early Andean social complexity incorporated a distinctive pattern of structuring principles (e.g., Moseley and Cordy-Collins 1990; Netherly 1984; Zuidema 1986). However, the implications of this insight for understanding social development have not been thoroughly explored, especially for pre-Inkaic societies. In these cases, general models of cultural evolution often provide the theoretical framework for social explanation. Such mod-

els emphasize increase of managerial complexity, and general material causes of change. This approach tends to deflect study from mechanisms of social integration and change that are mentally constructed in the specific cultural experience of a society (e.g., Ohnuki-Tierney 1990). It has been so with the Moche "culture" of the Peruvian north coast (Figure 1), often described as a chiefdom or embryonic state. In this study I view Moche sociopolitical integration as a product of a distinctive cultural tradi-

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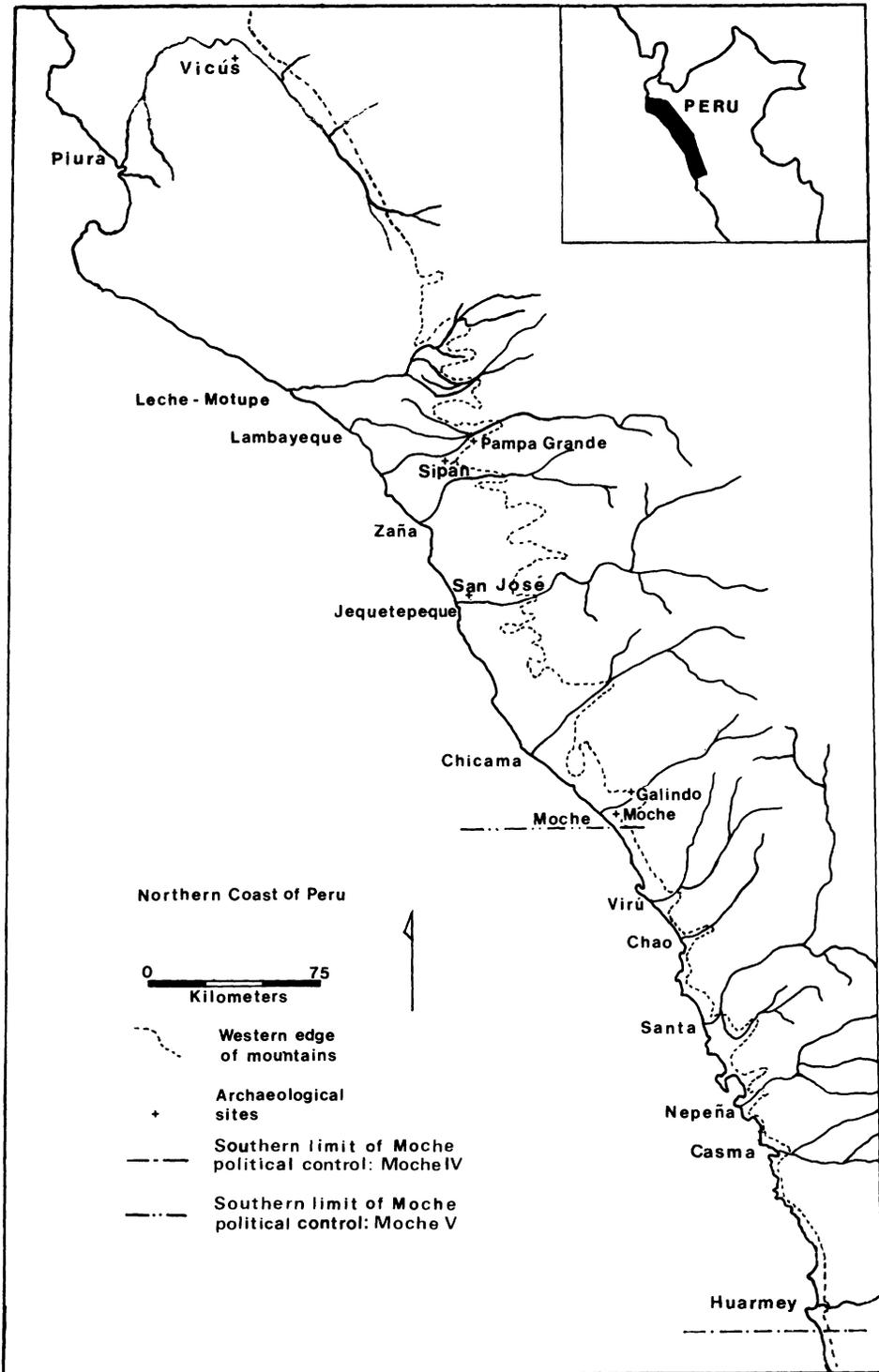


Figure 1. Map of the Peruvian north coast region with principal sites mentioned in text and the southern limit of Moche political influence in the Moche III-IV and Moche V phases.

tion, and I explore the structural dynamics that determined its development.

### Models of Moche Political Development

Although recent fieldwork (AARG 1993a, 1993b; Alva 1988, 1990; Donnan and Cock 1986; Shimada 1976, 1978, 1990; Tschauner 1993; Wilson 1983, 1988) and iconographic research (Castillo 1989; Cordy-Collins 1992; Donnan 1978, 1988; Donnan and Castillo 1992; Donnan and McClelland 1979; Hocquenghem 1981, 1987; McClelland 1990; Quilter 1990; Schuster 1992) is modifying the database, the developmental scheme for the Early Intermediate Period Peruvian north coast (Figure 2) still depends largely on ceramic and settlement analysis generated from the Moche-Chicama-Virú "core area" (Bawden 1982a; Beck 1991; Donnan and Mackey 1978; Fogel 1993; Hastings and Moseley 1975; Kroeber 1925, 1926; Larco 1938, 1939, 1945; Moseley 1975; Moseley and Mackey 1974; Topic 1982; Willey 1953). As with most style-based chronologies, the Moche sequence (Moche I–V; Figure 2) emphasizes temporal disjuncture, whereas the wide projection of ideas derived from a "core area" imposes an unreal pattern of spatial unity.

The traditional model describes Moche society as evolving from antecedent Gallinazo culture around A.D. 1 to 100 (Figure 2; see Fogel 1993 for a somewhat later date), and in Moche III times establishing a conquest state supported by exploitation of labor, intensive agricultural production, and monopolization of trade (Shimada 1987; Topic 1982; Willey 1953; Wilson 1988). After recovering from major ecological disruption around A.D. 600 at the end of Moche IV (Moseley and Deeds 1982; Niles et al. 1979; Shimada et al. 1991), the state collapsed around A.D. 750 (e.g., Shimada 1990). As is common in studies of early society, the scheme sketched in the foregoing sentences associates change with material agencies that act through functionalist or adaptive processes to produce a series of definable social stages. The value of such studies in creating our current databases is clear, but they have been less successful in identifying dynamics of social integration and change.

Newer evolutionary theories focus much more on the structure of political systems and the

COLONIAL		COLONIAL PERIOD
INCA	1500	LATE HORIZON
CHIMU		LATE INTERMEDIATE PERIOD
	1000	
MOCHE	V	EARLY INTERMEDIATE PERIOD
	IV	
	500	
	III	
	II	
GALLINAZO	I	EARLY HORIZON
	A.D.	
SALINAR	B.C.	INITIAL PERIOD
CUPISNIQUE	500	INITIAL PERIOD
	1000	
	1500	

Figure 2. Chronology of north coast archaeological cultures.

nature of the power that they embody (e.g., Earle 1991a; Upham 1990a). Despite growing recognition of variability, however, concepts of social typology continue to influence such research. While accepting the importance of ideology in the formation and maintenance of political systems, these approaches ultimately regard ideology as the means by which elites exploit their power, and they continue to ascribe the basis of political formation to the material domain (Claessen and van de Velde 1987, 1991; Daggett 1987; D'Altroy 1992; Earle 1991a; Earle and D'Altroy 1989; Friedman and Rowlands 1978; Gregg 1991; Haas 1982; Haas et al. 1987; Hastorf 1990, 1993; Isbell 1987; Johnson and Earle 1987; Kristiansen 1991; Patterson 1991; Upham 1990b).

The utility of evolutionary views is increasingly being questioned (e.g., Bawden 1989; Brumfield 1992; Demarest 1989; Hodder 1986; Leonard and Jones 1987; Paynter 1989; Roscoe

1993; Shanks and Tilley 1987; Wylie 1989; Yoffee 1993). There is no need to review this criticism fully here, but three points are relevant to this study. First, the use of social categories, no matter how sophisticated, inclines the scholar to investigate integration and change by reference to cross-cultural similarity. This approach downplays the importance of unique development. Second, functional models, still influential in Andean studies, assume systemic equilibrium as the objective of evolution and progressive complexity as the adaptive mechanism by which this is achieved. Historic events that upset balance are viewed as anomalies and insignificant in wider evolutionary terms.

The third point, which is especially relevant to my study, is the tendency to base evolutionary models on the relatively accessible material aspects of human culture. Although few scholars would deny the role of material agencies, their frequent use as the explanatory determinants of social integration and change has obscured the importance of less tangible factors that derive from the specific cultural experience of each human group. Prominent among such factors are the structurally based ideological systems through which interest groups negotiate their political advancement. In this paper I explore the role of the structural and ideological aspects of society during the Moche period, and reassess the historic development and political dynamics that characterized the north coast at this time.

### **The Andean Basis of North Coast Social Structure**

Structure embodies the innate complex of shared values and rules that defines group psychology or "worldview," the relations between group members, and the responsibilities associated with such relations. It therefore sets the parameters for social action. Structure is historically constituted, and at its broadest extent defines the world's great cultural traditions. Within this broadly shared heritage, specific cultural histories describe their own variants. Two important points should be made: first, although structure shapes, it does not determine social action by group or individual because a range of alternative actions is applicable to any situation; second, and closely related, action is not only constituted in structure, but, by

negotiation in the social arena, reflexively changes it (Giddens 1979, 1984). In the political domain such negotiation usually occurs between conflicting interests, a dialectic interaction that is an important dynamic in social change.

Andean social order is embedded in a structural tradition defined by kinship principles. Here such factors as affinity to mythical founder, ancestral reverence, and emphasis on community membership define status, strengthen social cohesion, and impede intergroup political integration. At the basic community level authority is exercised more through consensus than through exclusive political formation. Consequently, elite power, by definition exclusive in nature, must be constructed within a context that innately resists it; this creates structural paradox between what have been aptly termed holistic and individualizing ideology (Bloch 1992; Dumont 1980, 1986). It follows that the greater the paradox, the greater the potential for disruption should social stress imperil the ability of elites to sustain their position.

Within the greater Andean tradition the Inka masked power behind an ideology grounded in principles of genealogy and ancestry by presenting themselves as a senior kinship group (Bauer 1992; Conrad and Demarest 1984; Urton 1990). Netherly's (1984, 1990; also Zuidema 1990) ethnohistoric study of the Chimú successors of the Moche suggests that they were organized according to an extended segmentary system within which moieties of unequal status were nested hierarchically by rules of asymmetrical dual organization while they retained their internal social integrity. Given the persistence of Andean social strategies it is quite likely that, despite the impact of conquest, this pattern generally reflects earlier structure. In both the Inka and the Chimú case the structural foundations of integration embodied paradox between holistic and individualizing forces that inhibited formation of strong, long-lasting political entities and ensured that their components would revert to autonomous existence with the removal of the superstructure.

I assume that the structure of earlier societies was also embedded in traditional Andean principles and that Moche elites, like their Chimú successors, faced the challenge of creating individualizing power within a holistic cultural milieu. I

stress, however, that although these broader principles provided the conceptual context for Moche political formation, they could not determine its specific strategies or course. These specifics were the products of discrete decisions by which Moche elites created a paradoxical dynamic of social change in which an ideology of power served to mediate structure and political enhancement.

### **Ideology and Power**

Various overlapping meanings are ascribed to ideology in social studies (e.g., Althusser 1971; Bloch 1983; Bourdieu 1977; Conrad and Demarest 1984; Demarest 1989; 1992; Eagleton 1991; Friedman and Rowlands 1978; Giddens 1979; Gilman 1989; Godelier 1978a, 1978b; Shanks and Tilley 1987; Valeri 1990). I focus here on ideology as the means by which the interests of certain groups are promoted relative to others through the perceived resolution of social opposition, often with recourse to divine sanction (e.g., Foucault 1984; Gero 1985; Giddens 1979, 1981; Godelier 1988:149–168; Gordon 1980; Gramsci 1971; Handsman and Leone 1989; Leone et al. 1987; Tilley 1989). In helping to sustain inequality, ideology enters the domain of political relations. Although initially actively created, ideology, if successful, becomes part of structure and embodies the beliefs of its cultural context while it is continually reconstituted as a dynamic mechanism of power.

It is important to realize that society is always in a state of transition. Internal tension, whether between the forces and relations of production, competing views of social order, or individual interest relative to that of wider institutions, spurs negotiation and change. Ideology as both cause and product of social imbalance cannot ultimately possess greater inherent stability than the conditions it seeks to disguise. Hence, it is constantly adjusting to changing situations, whether to maintain the position of the privileged, to confront opposing ideologies, or to mediate challenge by those whom it seeks to subordinate. When it can no longer resolve the contradictions presented by such situational challenges, breakdown in social process occurs.

In the Andean political domain it appears clear that elites used ideology as a vital mechanism for

the construction of power. Ethnohistory reveals that Inka rulers consciously translated traditional concepts into ideologies of authority in order to surmount the constraining effects of local belief systems (Conrad and Demarest 1984; Patterson 1991; Urton 1990). Similarly, archaeological research reveals the importance of ideological manipulation of concepts of descent and kinship by Chimú rulers (Conrad 1981, 1990). These ideologies employed ritual enactment of mythic events and processes that underlay group integration as the means of maintaining social order. By conducting these rituals, rulers and their political order identified themselves with the transcendental quality of myth and the social permanence that it fostered.

Material symbols played active roles in the above-mentioned political process. Symbols are active forces in ordering, interpreting, even reconstituting reality, and resolve social contradictions by permitting humans to forge links with the structural events that give them group identity (Kurtz 1982:203). Such diverse symbols as dress, regalia, religious and funerary paraphernalia, ritual iconography, monumental public art, and the architectural contexts of power all act to articulate human leadership with the structural foundations of society. By so doing, material symbolism confers both mundane and supernatural status on elite leaders, closely identifies them with the foundations of social order, and legitimizes their exercise of power.

### **Reassessing Uniformity and Diversity in the Moche Period**

Moche “culture” traditionally has been largely understood through archaeological research centered in the Moche and Chicama valleys. The resulting scenario sees a discrete archaeological culture succeeding Gallinazo in this restricted “core area,” and later spreading throughout the region as the material expression of a unified state. My reassessment of the evidence drastically modifies this view by suggesting that there was no disruption in the north coast cultural tradition during the Early Intermediate Period. The characteristic Moche material complex was actually the symbolic manifestation of an influential political ideology that was differentially adopted by local

groups; north coast history of the Moche period was therefore far less uniform than supposed.

### Gallinazo-Moche Continuity

A brief summary of the archaeology of Gallinazo-Moche transition suggests that regional culture remained essentially unchanged. It is difficult to distinguish Gallinazo from Moche platform mounds by form (Kroeber 1930:77; Lumbreras 1973:100; Moseley 1992:165; Strong and Evans 1952; Wilson 1988:151), by construction because they share the segmentary technique that suggests community-based labor organization (Bennett 1950:68; Moseley 1975:183; Willey 1953:163), or by site context because they generally share the "ceremonial center" configuration (Fogel 1993; Topic 1982:165). In agriculture, the extensive irrigation systems that supported Moche populations derived from major Gallinazo-phase expansion (Willey 1953). Significant settlement disjunction between the phases was limited to the southern valleys (Willey 1953; Wilson 1988), a situation whose causes I discuss later.

Other aspects of Gallinazo-Moche material culture also display continuity. Utilitarian ceramics are almost identical, and elite pottery also shares many formal features (e.g., Collier 1955; Larco 1966a; Lumbreras 1973:106; Strong and Evans 1952; see especially Fogel 1993). In metallurgy, copper-gold alloy, the basis of Moche technology, became popular in the earlier period (Bennett 1950:101–103; Donnan and Mackey 1978:45–54; Strong and Evans 1952:71, 73). In the religious domain there are many continuities in burial practices (Fogel 1993:281–290), including the extended burial position, similar grave goods, and placement of copper in the mouth of the deceased (Donnan and Mackey 1978; Larco 1945:25–28; Strong and Evans 1952:71–79).

Only in the area of elite art is there basic discontinuity (Moseley 1992); a complex and formal iconography replaced the much plainer Gallinazo elite style (Fogel 1993:279). Various scholars have described the religious content of Moche art (e.g., Donnan 1978; Donnan and McClelland 1979; McClelland 1990; Quilter 1990). Iconography was restricted to such status symbols as fine pottery, textiles, and metal, and was used in broadly ceremonial contexts—elite burials and great platform

complexes. Exclusive use of religious iconography in contexts of corporate authority and formal religion clearly identifies it as a symbolic component of power. Continuity in many other aspects of religious and corporate practice suggests, however, that Moche iconography and its related elite belief system were outgrowths of existing cultural conception, not cultural replacements. It follows that the art complex that has traditionally been regarded as marking Moche "culture" actually possessed its greatest significance as the symbolism of a political ideology growing out of the cultural tradition that formed its continuing context and gave it meaning.

### North Coast Diversity during the Early Moche Period

Having narrowed the meaning of elite Moche material culture to an ideology of power, I now propose to examine its emergence and development. The earliest Moche stylistic phase is found far more widely than emphasis on core area distribution would suggest. Most prominent among numerous "peripheral" appearances is the far north Vicús complex (Figure 1), where early pottery (Larco 1966b; Lumbreras 1979) and ornate metal items (Jones 1979; Lechtman 1979) appear in the looted Loma Negra cemeteries, together with ceramic features that suggest distant connections with Ecuador (Guffroy 1989; Kaulicke 1991; Lumbreras 1973:149) and the Peruvian southern coast (Larco 1966a:63–64). The Vicús Moche style (Lumbreras 1979:119–144) is distinct from that of Moche and Chicama in terms of ritual iconography (Schaffer 1981), emphasis on metallurgy (Cordy-Collins 1992:Note 1; Jones 1979), and mass production of pottery jars from the same mold (Larco 1966a:84).

Some scholars believe that the Vicús material reflects the presence of a distant Moche colony (Larco 1966a:87–88; Lumbreras 1979; Shimada 1987:135). Although this is certainly possible, it is important to note that Moche I and II material is increasingly being found in the Jequetepeque, Zaña, and Lambayeque valleys (e.g., Shimada 1987:131; Ubbelohde-Doering 1983:Plate 63); recent work in the Lambayeque region even evokes the suggestion of a Moche I and II northern polity (AARG 1993b:19). Hence even if its

origins were external rather than local, Vicús is most likely to have been a product of northern innovation that was succeeded by the elaborate Sipán (Alva 1988, 1990) and San José de Moro (Donnan and Castillo 1992) sites, whose burial symbolism differs markedly from that of the southern valleys. Moreover, Kroeber (1930:163) long ago noted and Shimada and Cavallaro (1986) recently reiterated that such northern platforms differ in form, location, and construction from their southern counterparts, a trait that persisted in later settlement configuration (Bawden 1977:359).

Distributional studies support the evidence for diverse Moche origins and early development. They now indicate that Moche and non-Moche societies coexisted throughout the Early Intermediate Period in the north (Kaulicke 1991; Schaedel 1951, 1985a:448; Shimada 1987:132–133), not the pattern to be expected in a unified state. Also, as I have noted, the fact that there is better evidence for a distinct Moche I–II presence in the north than there is in the supposed core area (AARG 1993b:19; Fogel 1993), casts doubts on the latter area's generative role in broad political expansion. Indeed Fogel (1993) interprets the sparse early southern Moche material remains as indicative of terminal Gallinazo culture, at best transitional between it and Moche; only in Moche III is there clear evidence of strong Moche political presence in this area, a far cry from the picture emerging from recent work in the north. All this challenges simple evolutionary models of Moche origins and state formation.

### **The Ideological Dynamic of Moche Historic Development**

Central to the ensuing discussion are two implications of my assertion that Moche material culture was the symbolic component of political ideology. First, changes in the material record should denote ideological adjustment. Second, it follows that dynamics of social change during the Moche period can be observed in the ideological domain. I apply these premises to explain the diverse nature of Moche development presented above. I focus on the Vicús Moche complex to study the internal structure of Moche political ideology, on the “flourescent” Moche III–IV phases in the Moche-Chicama area to portray the dynamic of change in

this elite ideology, and on a more general discussion of Moche ideological response to stress in the final Moche V phase. By so doing, in the broadest sense I examine the reflexive relationship between short-term historic processes and social structure. More particularly, I use this interaction to explain the specific historic changes evident in the Moche archaeological record.

### **Vicús as Ritual Signification**

The superb quality of Moche I metal objects from Vicús, including many of gold alloy, has raised doubts as to their date relative to pottery. The ultimate resolution of this issue awaits further study, but Lechtman et al. (1982:5) have elegantly addressed the apparent incongruence by asserting the structural priority of Andean metallurgical canons. The inherent qualities of gold imbued it with profound cultural significance in Andean thought. Gold possessed sacred import; its non-corrosive nature made it an ideal ideological symbol for the permanence of divinely ordered power (Sallnow 1989:222–223). It was so used by Inka rulers, who monopolized all gold production for this purpose (Harris 1989:258; Helms 1981; Sallnow 1989). Lechtman (1975:8–10, 1984:29–35) has proposed that the essential nature of gold shaped Andean metal technology, and explains the metal's importance even when painted or interred (Lechtman 1979:32). Superb Moche metal items probably also acted as symbols of divinely sanctioned power, a status that would explain their technical superiority relative to pottery in the Moche Vicús complex. Moreover, their presence in a funerary context would have separated the deceased from the general population and would have accorded them sacred status.

The Vicús funerary inventory also possessed more particular ideological significance. The metal inventory included masks and other items that repeated specific themes, a reflection of the process of symbolic codification that is vital for general communication of a well-defined ideological system. Furthermore, headdress emblems were used to link their wearers iconographically to representations of specific rituals, the beginnings of the Moche practice of interring powerful persons in the regalia of their rank and ritual status

(Donnan 1988; Donnan and Castillo 1992). Although several rituals are suggested in the Vicús material, the best-defined includes a figure holding trophy head and knife (Jones 1979:96–100). On grounds of iconographic similarity (Cordy-Collins 1992:Figure 8; Jones 1979:Figure 37), I propose that this is an early version of the Decapitation Theme (Cordy-Collins 1992), a ceremony concerned with ritual sacrifice.

Sacrifice is a central and persistent theme in Moche ritual iconography. Sacrifice is an event that enables officiants, acting on behalf of their community, to acquire the vitality of outside forces through ritual violence in a setting charged with supernatural power where they themselves become spiritually transcendent (Bloch 1992). When they re-enter the mundane community, the sacralized participants retain aspects of their supernatural vitality that enhance their status and authority. Belief in the ability of a shaman to mediate directly with the spiritual world is a fundamental feature of Andean belief. We can assume that, by taking the shaman's place, Moche elite transformed the ritual of sacrifice into formal religious practice. At the same time they used their control of this important ritual to acquire divinely sanctioned authority.

A recurrent motif associated with the trophy head/sacrifice theme is the "Moon Animal" (Jones 1979:95), a religious symbol adopted from the adjacent highland Recuay Culture (Menzel 1977:62–64). The symbol is an example of adoption of a material signifier of ideas that transcended limitations of local belief systems as an adjunct of power. Whereas the "Moon Animal" exemplifies borrowing from a familiar nearby tradition, the Moche also used powerful symbols from their own religious history. For example, the Moche Decapitation Theme itself derived from earlier Chavín-related Cupisnique iconography (Cordy-Collins 1992), as did the fanged mouth, also a dominant symbol of the Chavín Horizon (Benson 1974; Kan 1972:81–84; Menzel 1977:61–62). Adoption of Cupisnique/Chavín motifs suggests the intentional manipulation of powerful symbols of an earlier pan-Andean ideological system. Hence, to reinforce elite status, Vicús symbolism was used both to identify an elite with the supernatural ritual of Moche ideol-

ogy and to harness in symbolic form powerful ideas that were distant in time and space and yet part of the north coastal cultural experience.

The use of funerary ritual as a primary focus of ideological symbolism offers another avenue for understanding the structural basis of Moche ideology. Almost by definition, burial possesses important religious connotations. In Andean belief the treatment of the dead was integrally linked to kin-based principles of descent and the relationship between the living and their forebears. Whether at the community level (Bastien 1985; Sallnow 1987:128) or in the Inka royal cult (Conrad and Demarest 1984), funerary ritual played an essential role in Andean religious belief by making ancestors vital players in the affairs of the living. I propose that Moche elite burial practice naturally embodied these Andean structural principles to create a spiritual context within which political ideology could be most effectively constituted by animating elite ancestors as vital supernatural forces for perpetuating the prevailing sociopolitical order.

### **The Dynamic of Change: Individualizing Ideology in Moche III and IV**

I have noted that political ideologies are never static; they exist in a state of dialectic tension with antagonistic forces within their wider societies. Through active engagement with these forces the ideologies continually adjust, and, in the process, they reflexively affect social structure and stimulate wider change. The Moche III–IV archaeological record illustrates this dynamic aspect of ideology. The well-known Moche-Chicama-Virú Valley "core area," location of the Huaca del Sol platform (the Moche site:Figure 1) and assumed center of an expansionist state, has traditionally been used to characterize Moche III–IV society as a whole, a danger that I have explored above. Important regional trends are apparent, but they vary locally in symbolic expression. I continue my contextual focus on funerary ritual here as a vehicle to study growth of the individualizing element in Moche ideology.

Moche portrait vessels, variously interpreted as realistic depictions of individuals (Larco 1939) or symbolic images of shamans (Hocquenghem 1977), are among the best-known and admired

expressions of New World indigenous art. They portray persons wearing headdresses that bear distinctive emblems. Two important points provide the geographic and social contexts of their meaning: almost all known vessels have been recovered in the Moche-Chicama area, and were used exclusively in funerary settings (Strong and Evans 1952:156). Portrait vessels repeat the Vicús practice of using headdress signifiers to link individuals with specific ritual activity, now chiefly depicted in fine-line ceramic painting. The actors in these larger ritual scenes either are themselves divinities or assume supernatural quality through the masks that they wear (e.g., Donnan 1978, 1992:42; Quilter 1990:44).

Formally, portrait vessels denote an extension of the ideological symbolic system and its meaning. I suggest that, in the Moche-Chicama Valley, Moche III political leaders succeeded in acquiring a greater degree of exclusive power than either their predecessors or northern counterparts. The question of whether the vessels were actual portraits or not is less significant than the fact that symbols of social position were now so strongly individualized, a development that suggests progressive differentiation of exclusive elite groups if not actual persons. This in turn indicates emergence of a domain of power less constrained by community sanction, together with its structural corollary—increased potential for tension between individualizing and holistic ideology.

This unprecedented consolidation of exclusive power accompanied coercion of the valleys from Virú to Huarmey into a Moche Valley-centered polity (Figure 1). Rapid southward spread of Moche artifacts and architecture, together with major changes in settlement and agricultural patterns (e.g., Donnan 1973; Willey 1953; Wilson 1988), constitutes the single clear body of evidence for the forceful replacement of Gallinazo political hegemony by the Moche. There is little sign, however, that the intrusive Moche III–IV southern ceremonial centers accompanied significantly increased managerial differentiation. Largely absent in the architectural inventory are highly controlled corporate storage facilities, elaborate administrative complexes, military housing, and specialized craft sectors, all of which form such a conspicuous part of Moche V

and Chimú government centers (Isbell 1986:194; Schaedel 1985b:159–160). I propose that the viability of the southern Moche polity depended chiefly on the ability of its rulers to articulate in their own persons the combined authority of high social position, ritual status, and supernatural affiliation, through the codified symbolism of Moche ideology.

Projection of the expansionist model to the entire north coast generated the idea of a unified Moche III–IV state. Examination of the record, however, shows that this view is untenable. Recent excavation of elite burial sites at San José de Moro in the Jequetepeque Valley (Figure 1; Donnan and Castillo 1992) and Sipán in the Lambayeque Valley (Alva 1988, 1990; Donnan 1988; Schuster 1992) reveals the persistence of local variation in Moche elite funerary practice. These two sites represent the only intact examples of such high-status burials, and hence comparisons with the thoroughly looted Vicús and southern sites, known chiefly through private and museum holdings, must be made cautiously. Despite this preservational asymmetry, however, it is possible to identify certain differences between northern and southern patterns which suggest that the interred individuals of Sipán and San José were members of autonomous local societies, not provincial governors of a Moche Valley-centered polity.

The Sipán and San José sites follow the general Moche custom of burying elaborately accoutred individuals with iconographic signifiers of their participation in the important Presentation or Sacrifice Ritual (Donnan 1988). However, they differ from Moche-Chicama practice by emulating earlier Vicús emphasis on precious metal items for this purpose. In contrast, the southern-area inhabitants used the new and exquisitely crafted portrait vessels to designate status in funerary ritual. There is no evidence that such vessels were used at Sipán, San José, or in the Vicús area, whose large pottery inventories lack the quality and iconographic richness found in the southern valleys. Finally, at San José de Moro, the presence of Cajamarca and Nievería pottery from the northern highlands and central coast respectively, together with lapiz lazuli from Chile and *Spondylus* shell from Ecuador (Donnan and

Castillo 1992:42), suggests that the local elite exploited a wide distribution network as autonomous leaders.

It would be surprising if there were not competition among the local polities. Although the tension is most clearly seen in the subjection of the southern Gallinazo sphere, it also appears that Moche polities fought among themselves, a practice reflected in the common artistic theme of combat between warriors wearing identical Moche garb (see Donnan 1978:Figure 266; Kutscher 1955:11, Figure). Given the frequent association of sacrificial scenes with captive taking, both Donnan (1978:182) and Kutscher (1955:29) reasonably see combat as having played a major ritual role. This interpretation, with which I concur, has two implications. First, the very custom intrudes an ideological requirement that other polities exist as ritual partners, a structural obstacle to political unity. Second, combat was an activity conceptually and practically integrated into a ritual complex centered on the Presentation/Sacrifice Ceremony (Donnan 1978, 1988), and hence provided another visual referent to the principal sacralized actors of Moche ritual—the elite.

It appears that by Moche III–IV times several autonomous north coast societies existed, some adhering to Moche ideology while others rejected it. Moche societies ranged in size from the large Moche III–IV multi-valley southern polity with its center in the Moche Valley, probably organized on segmentary principles (Moseley 1975), to smaller northern examples that may not have controlled the entire valleys in which they were located (Bats 1991; Hocquenghem 1991; Schaedel 1985a:448; Shimada 1987:132–133). Through several centuries of local development, Moche societies created diverging political and symbolic systems; differentiation in the latter sphere shows that, while sharing most ideological precepts, local elites used different means of communicating this basis of their power.

Moche III conquest of the south must have increased the demands on central authority. However, this challenge was addressed primarily by ideological adjustment rather than administrative differentiation, a process dependent on further enhancement of elite power through funerary and political ritual whose extreme symbol was the portrait vessel. Individualization of authority

would have further separated the ideology of power from its holistic cultural origins, and thus increased the potential for social tension should authority no longer be perceived as serving the general interest. Around A.D. 600, in the context of regional crisis, the efficacy of Moche political ideology was apparently so tested, with resultant structural crisis and transformation.

### **Ideological Response to Stress: Collapse Revisited**

The well-known basic framework of the Moche IV–V transition included Moche expulsion from the southern valleys (Figure 1), abandonment of the “capital” at the Huaca del Sol, establishment of the inland urban settlements of Galindo and Pampa Grande at the valley necks (Figure 1), abandonment of previously cultivated land, and major changes in the iconography of elite art (e.g., Bawden 1982a:287; Moseley 1992:213). The transformation has variously been ascribed to Wari invasion (Menzel 1964; Schreiber 1992:274–275; Willey 1953:397), internal breakdown (Bawden 1982a, 1982b), and environmental perturbation (Craig and Shimada 1986; Moseley and Deeds 1982; Moseley and Ortloff 1981; Niles et al. 1979; see especially Shimada et al. 1991). Whereas these changes have usually been viewed as reflections of unitary, pan-regional, state collapse, I now propose that they were the differential expressions of local response to disruption, and that they depict the complex nature of Moche ideological adjustment. I trace this process through Moche V funerary, iconographic, and settlement data.

### **Iconography**

In Moche V many of the key figures of earlier ritual iconography disappeared, to be replaced by new ones or, as in the case of the Presentation Theme, used in innovative contexts (Bawden 1983:231–233; Berezkin 1980, 1983; Donnan and McClelland 1979; McClelland 1990; Quilter 1990). Following other scholars, I regard the Revolt/Presentation/Burial/Raft thematic series as a mythic cycle asserting the triumph of order over chaos (Berezkin 1980; Quilter 1990). Myths, like structure, are not changeless. They embody persistent ideas that underlie the relationships of people with their wider temporal and spatial universe. However, they also resolve particular structural

contradictions of their society and hence necessarily incorporate interpretational flexibility (Bloch 1992:99; Lévi-Strauss 1955; Obeyesekere 1992:10–15). It follows that myths are constrained by time, and address major historical problems and events (Obeyesekere 1992; Sahllins 1985).

I suggest that the Moche V mythic cycle reflects ideological adjustment in response to terminal Moche IV disruption, and is an example of the ritual form commonly used to promote social renewal (e.g., Bloch 1992). The focal Presentation Theme offered historic continuity and symbolized acquisition of vitality from the defeated forces of disorder portrayed in the Revolt Theme through the medium of sacrifice conducted by elite officiants. The Burial Theme depicts further transformation signifying re-entry of the sacralized officiants into the community, bearing spiritual power that reinforced political authority in the mundane world. Finally, the Raft Theme shows the arrival of the two central divinities of the Presentation Theme from exotic maritime sources (McClelland 1990). They symbolize renewal by bringing with them valued commodities that include the sacrificial prisoners vital for the ritual reconstitution of Moche V society.

One other major iconographical change indicates the reality of ideological adjustment. Portrait vessels, symbols of the triumph of individualizing ideology, abruptly disappear from the Moche ceramic tradition. Their elimination is a major indicator of the rejection of the ideological complex in which they were central players, following broad economic and political collapse.

### Funerary Ritual

In the important area of funerary ritual diverse local change occurred in Moche V. In the Jequetepeque Valley elite burial practice demonstrates general continuity (Disselhoff 1958; Donnan and Cock 1986; Ubbelohde-Doering 1951, 1983) by following earlier patterns of extended cemetery and mound burial. Elsewhere change is much more pronounced. Neither Galindo nor Pampa Grande, the best-known Moche V towns, possesses formal cemeteries, a major break with convention. The means of burial at Pampa Grande has yet to be discovered, but three innovative types of burial have been found at Galindo in the rump southern polity (Bawden

1977:362–377). They include modest in-house burial and groups of chamber burials whose location within a town is otherwise unknown in the Moche period, as well as a single small burial platform (Bawden 1982a:293–296; Conrad 1974). Moreover, a large proportion of the dead were buried in semiflexed side position. The magnitude of these innovations in a social domain imbued with supernatural significance clearly marks profound religious change.

### Settlement

Moche V settlement survey reveals that, apart from loss of the valleys from the Virú Valley south, the overall Moche settlement distribution remained much the same, comprising the entire Moche, Chicama, Jequetepeque and Zaña Valleys (Figure 1) and the middle parts of the valleys farther north (Eling 1987; Schaedel 1985a; Shimada 1990:334–5), where non-Moche polities also persisted (Schaedel 1985a:448–449). However, data from the Moche V towns of Pampa Grande (Anders 1981; Haas 1985; Shimada 1976, 1978) and Galindo (Bawden 1977, 1982a, 1982b, 1983; Moseley and Ortloff 1981; Topic 1991) clearly support iconographic and burial evidence for change. Located in the valley necks in order to control the main canal intakes and maximize agricultural capacity that had been significantly diminished during the ecological crisis of late Moche IV times (Moseley and Deeds 1982:38–39; Shimada et al. 1991), these towns introduced an urban pattern of unprecedented complexity and administrative differentiation.

The economic disruption reflected by such major adjustments would have been greater at Galindo than in the north. The small Moche Valley was previously the core of a large polity that drew on the resources of the subjected southern valleys (Willey 1953; Wilson 1988:335–336). With the Moche IV disruptions not only was this entire economic sphere lost but also the southern part of the Moche Valley itself fell out of production (Moseley 1983). This massive economic blow was probably magnified by the need to support settlers ejected from the southern valleys. In contrast, although it is clear that significant reduction of agricultural capacity did occur in the north (Shimada et al. 1991), it was not compounded by loss of political control over large areas.

Local response reflected such differential impact. The substantive Galindo innovations have been described elsewhere (Bawden 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1990). The platform, architectural focus of social integration since the early Gallinazo period, virtually disappeared, to be replaced by a new walled enclosure form (Bawden 1982a). Corporate storage, probably intended for subsistence goods, reflects important economic innovation in the face of food shortage (Bawden 1982a:304–306). Residential occupation was highly differentiated (Bawden 1982b), with the lowest privileged group formally segregated by a massive wall that may originally have been built for defence during the disruptions that attended the town's founding (Topic 1991).

The much larger Pampa Grande, often considered the capital of a late Moche state, is more feasibly explained as the product of local northern response to pressure. The town far exceeds all contemporary Moche V settlements in its urban qualities. Dense residential occupation surrounds a vast corporate precinct whose formal complexity suggests highly differentiated managerial structure. However, the fact that residential classes were not segregated as at Galindo implies less social stress. Extensive craft-production areas are located in the corporate precinct (Shimada 1976, 1978). A large area of corporate storage displays a high degree of standardization, excellent construction quality, and restricted access. Most significant, the central precinct comprises a complex of enclosures and platforms dominated by the Huaca Fortaleza (Haas 1985), one of the largest edifices ever built in the Andes. Displaying the distinctive chamber-and-fill technique and formal proportions characteristic of the northern part of the region (Shimada and Cavallaro 1986), the edifice stands solidly in the north coast platform tradition, its awesome size and ideological meaning proclaiming the dominant authority of its builders, a situation that contrasts vividly with Galindo.

#### **The Nature of Moche V Political Reconstitution**

In response to collapse, Moche V ideological structure underwent major adjustment. A new mythic cycle that combined traditional and innov-

ative elements mediated past disruption through ritual transformation and renewal. However, while this adjustment was probably a major factor in allowing temporary recovery on the regional level, local political strategies reflect deepening social contradiction that heralded further crisis.

The rulers of Pampa Grande created an organizational system of unprecedented complexity. In light of the holistic worldview of north coast peoples, this further concentration of power may well have laid the foundations for further social tension. In the short term, however, it effectively sustained political cohesion. The basis of recovery is revealed by its great symbol, Huaca Fortaleza. Bearing murals that proclaimed the ideological core of power, this huge platform manifests the ability of the local elite to construct power by harnessing the force of cultural continuity embodied in symbolic form. By using this powerful symbol of traditional north coast administrative organization as the integrative focus of a complex urban system, the Pampa Grande elite effected a structural transformation and appropriated exceptional political control.

The Moche Valley situation is very different. Here Moche IV leaders developed individualizing ideology to an extreme degree in the absence of a complex administrative system, thereby centering social integration on their personal qualities. By so doing they augmented structural paradox, and posed the danger that failure would be solely ascribed to them and their ideology. As a result of the late Moche IV crisis and loss of the southern territories, the system collapsed. In an attempt to restore control, Moche V leaders rejected the discredited ideology together with its material symbols. At Galindo, their attempts are vividly seen in the material record. Burial practice was transformed. Iconographic changes, greater than those that occurred farther north (Bawden 1977, 1987), included elimination of the portrait vessel, the symbol of individualized Moche IV power. Moreover, no evidence of the Moche V mythic cycle has yet been found. New architectural forms without historic meaning replaced platform mounds as dominant symbols of the new order. A single burial mound complex suggests a supreme ruler without counterpart or successor. Furthermore, an extreme degree of imposed resi-

dential segregation indicates that the changes occurred in the context of social stress and structural change (Bawden 1990).

I suggest that these varied responses were historically shaped. There is no evidence in the Lambayeque area of the political disjunction experienced by the south. The rulers of Moche V Pampa Grande were therefore able to base their organizational changes on traditional structure, and restore economic strength in more favorable conditions than their southern counterparts enjoyed. Northern crisis did not discredit historical signifiers of power, and ideological continuity played an important role in political recovery. At Galindo, however, in the context of profound political stress rulers rejected the political ideology that had sustained power. The archaeological picture suggests an ensuing state of instability in which an embattled elite ruled a highly stratified population largely through coercion. Power here seems unmasked by ideology and the structural paradox appears even greater. It follows that, with the structural foundations of society eroded, the Galindo polity was even more vulnerable to complete collapse at the next major crisis. Ironically, with the complete removal of structural restraint on power and what can superficially be construed as the triumph of individualizing ideology, Moche Valley society was at its weakest and ripe for the extreme dissolution that occurred in little over a century.

### Postscript

By A.D. 750 the Moche V cities of Galindo and Pampa Grande were abandoned, and a distinctive Moche symbolic complex had ceased to exist as the dominant expression of north coast material culture. However, as with its history, the end of Moche culture was not as uniform or complete as often believed.

Abandonment of Galindo accompanied total disintegration of the Moche Valley polity. Settlement reverted to a rural pattern until the emergence of Chanchan well over a century later. It is significant that the long-abandoned Huaca del Sol was renewed as the site of ritual activity related to foreign Wari-related ideology (Menzel 1977; Uhle 1913). These events marked the final collapse of an ideology and its related political system. Having become so disconnected from its

structural base, Moche ideology in the south ceased to possess structural meaning and disappeared from history. The Moche Valley population returned to a system of self-dependent social groupings, the usual response of Andean populations to the removal of central political superstructure, a situation that was repeated at the fall of the Chimú polity. Wider religious focus naturally moved to the transcendental Wari religion, and articulated it with the powerful aura of the ancient Huaca del Sol while rejecting all semblance of Moche ideology.

In the north where Moche V changes were grounded in cultural tradition, the end of the period did not involve such deep disjunction. Hence although urbanism, in its role as response to structural crisis, disappeared as quickly as it did farther south, the Lambayeque Valley inhabitants continued to erect large ceremonial centers whose mixed Moche-Wari iconography signaled transition from Moche into the later Sicán (Lambayeque) phase rather than transformation (Bonavia 1985; Donnan 1972; Shimada 1990:313). In this respect there obviously had been no deep break, with the Huaca Fortaleza at Pampa Grande maintaining cultural continuity through the Moche V period. Here Moche ideology had not divorced itself so completely from structure, and it appears to have played an important role in the transition to Sicán.

### Conclusions

Conventional scenarios of Moche political development have stressed a temporally and spatially uniform evolutionary pattern that is not supported by the diverse archaeological record. I believe that more specific focus on social construction and change allows better understanding of historic process and its internal dynamics. I have therefore reassessed Moche culture from a historic viewpoint by examining the relationship between underlying north coast social structure and the shorter-term processes and events that shaped Moche polities. I have conducted the study through the agency of material symbolism, which I regard as a sensitive indicator of Moche political development. I believe elite Moche material culture to be the symbolic component of political ideology that gave objective meaning to the precepts that defined it as a source of power. It follows that

by studying variation in the symbolism one can identify regional diversity and change in political structure.

Moche political ideology and symbolism, irrespective of local variation, acquired social significance within a structural system in which pervasive principles of kinship, ancestral reverence, and the centrality of direct spiritual mediation in religious practice provided its persistent internal logic of meaning. Such group-focused, holistic ideation was a structural obstacle to the growth of exclusive power, and it encouraged local autonomy against broad political union. Local rulers met this challenge by placing themselves at the axis of social structure and organization. They achieved this by assuming central roles in the enactment of myths of communal order, thereby ritually identifying themselves in life and death with the omnipresent spiritual forces of society. They thus constructed political ideology according to the constraints of structural meaning. However, by achieving a large degree of exclusive power they created contradiction between holistic and individualizing ideology. This structural paradox provided a dynamic for further ideological adjustment and related social change. At the same time it raised the potential for internal social crisis.

Structure constrains but does not determine action. Within the constraints individuals always have alternatives open to them. Their chosen course of action is given meaning by structure, but also reflexively influences it and thereby creates a force for change. The significant variation evident in the symbolism of Moche power through time and across space vividly illustrates this process of choice. Thus, throughout the course of Moche history, we see fundamental difference in cultural form and symbolic use between north and south. However, this difference was not merely one of passive cultural diversity. It also represents the active production of discrete historic courses through the conjuncture of short-term process and persistent structure, differentially mediated through unique social practice. The natural corollary of this process was the development through time of different local political strategies and histories within the greater Moche ideological sphere.

Finally, this study of the Moche suggests that

the various levels of integration within a cultural tradition experience different forms and rates of change, a notion that generally accords with Braudel's multiple time-scale scenario (e.g., Braudel 1980; see also Knapp 1992). Hence although structural change ensued from reflexive interaction with social practice over the long term, it occurred within a context of consistent meaning. In contrast we have noted that both symbols and their meaning are subject to more abrupt modification at times of major short-term historic change, whether generated from inside the system as part of the political aspirations of Moche III ruling elites, or produced in response to the wider social disruptions of Moche IV–V. It is clear that profound short-term social disruption occurred concurrently with deeper structural and cultural continuity. Only in the Moche Valley during Moche V do we see radical disjuncture of structural meaning, total collapse of sociopolitical superstructure, and disruption of the very tradition of social control of which it was part. This was, of course, the culminating consequence of the structural paradox inherent in Moche political formation.

In conclusion, I believe that study of material culture in its full historic context can facilitate recognition of important social dynamics that might not be considered within a materialist evolutionary model. Moreover, the study of cultural meaning through material symbols informs us of the significance of these mechanisms for understanding the deeper structural fabric that constructs both political ideology and culture itself.

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