

THE Art AND  
Archaeology  
OF THE Moche

AN ANCIENT ANDEAN SOCIETY OF THE PERUVIAN NORTH COAST



EDITED BY STEVE BOURGET AND KIMBERLY L. JONES

---

THE **Art** AND  
**Archaeology**  
OF THE **Moche**

---

**An Ancient Andean Society  
of the Peruvian North Coast**

EDITED BY STEVE BOURGET  
AND KIMBERLY L. JONES

University of Texas Press  Austin

THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOK WAS MADE POSSIBLE, IN PART,  
BY GENEROUS SUPPORT FROM THE POTTS AND SIBLEY FOUNDATION.

Copyright © 2008 by the University of Texas Press  
All rights reserved  
Printed in the United States of America  
First edition, 2008

Requests for permission to reproduce material from this work  
should be sent to:

Permissions  
University of Texas Press  
P.O. Box 7819  
Austin, TX 78713-7819  
[www.utexas.edu/utpress/about/bpermission.html](http://www.utexas.edu/utpress/about/bpermission.html)

☺ The paper used in this book meets the minimum require-  
ments of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (R1997) (Permanence of  
Paper).

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

The art and archaeology of the Moche : an ancient Andean  
society of the Peruvian north coast / edited by Steve Bourget  
and Kimberly L. Jones. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

Papers originally presented at a symposium at the Depart-  
ment of Art and Art History at the University of Texas at Austin  
in November 2003.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-292-71867-8 (cloth : alk. paper)

1. Mochica Indians—Antiquities—Congresses. 2. Mochica  
art—Congresses. 3. Excavations (Archaeology)—Peru—Moche  
River Valley—Congresses. 4. Moche River Valley (Peru)—  
Antiquities—Congresses. I. Bourget, Steve, 1956– II. Jones,  
Kimberly L., 1979–

F3430.1.M6A78 2008  
985'.1601—dc22

2008027539

# Contents

- Preface viii  
STEVE BOURGET
- Introduction ix  
STEVE BOURGET AND KIMBERLY L. JONES
1. Iconography Meets Archaeology 1  
ELIZABETH P. BENSON
  2. Sacrifices and Ceremonial Calendars  
in Societies of the Central Andes:  
A Reconsideration 23  
ANNE MARIE HOCQUENGHEM
  3. *Ulluchu*: An Elusive Fruit 43  
DONNA MCCLELLAND
  4. Moche Masking Traditions 67  
CHRISTOPHER B. DONNAN
  5. Convergent Catastrophe and the Demise of  
Dos Cabezas: Environmental Change and  
Regime Change in Ancient Peru 81  
MICHAEL E. MOSELEY, CHRISTOPHER B.  
DONNAN, AND DAVID K. KEEFER
  6. Forensic Iconography: The Case  
of the Moche Giants 93  
ALANA CORDY-COLLINS AND  
CHARLES F. MERBS
  7. Moche Forms for Shaping Sheet Metal 113  
CHRISTOPHER B. DONNAN, DAVID A. SCOTT,  
AND TODD BRACKEN
  8. Moche Art Style in the Santa Valley:  
Between being “à la Mode” and Developing  
a Provincial Identity 129  
CLAUDE CHAPDELAINÉ
  9. The Priests of the Bicephalus Arc: Tombs  
and Effigies Found in Huaca de la Luna  
and Their Relation to Moche Rituals 153  
SANTIAGO UCEDA
  10. The Moche People: Genetic Perspective  
on Their Sociopolitical Composition and  
Organization 179  
IZUMI SHIMADA, KEN-ICHI SHINODA,  
WALTER ALVA, STEVE BOURGET, CLAUDE  
CHAPDELAINÉ, AND SANTIAGO UCEDA
  11. Communality and Diversity in  
Moche Human Sacrifice 195  
JOHN W. VERANO
  12. Art and Moche Martial Arts 215  
JEFFREY QUILTER
  13. Moche Textile Production on the Peruvian  
North Coast: A Contextual Analysis 229  
JEAN-FRANÇOIS MILLAIRE
  14. Spiders and Spider Decapitators in Moche  
Iconography: Identification from the Contexts  
of Sipán, Antecedents and Symbolism 247  
NÉSTOR IGNACIO ALVA MENESES
  15. The Third Man: Identity and Rulership  
in Moche Archaeology and Visual Culture 263  
STEVE BOURGET
- Index 289



# Sacrifices and Ceremonial Calendars in Societies of the Central Andes

## A Reconsideration

ANNE MARIE HOCQUENGHEM, CENTRE NATIONAL DE RECHERCHES SCIENTIFIQUES

### Abstract

*In the Prehispanic iconography of the central Andes, two particular forms related to human death draw particular attention: prisoners with their throats cut, and supplicating men and women. Returning to a method of iconographic analysis and interpretation proposed in the 1970s, in this chapter I attempt to demonstrate the sacred character of these images, to identify the main actors, and to reconstruct the circumstances and significant features of these acts. Such features relate to rites of propitiation and of expiation in central Andean society, and likely Prehispanic Moche society as well.*

Without entering into a grand debate over the nature of sacrifice, this ritual act can be considered as an offering to animate or inanimate divinities, and as consecrated and placed continually outside of profane use between that of immolation and destruction. The sacrificial act can be thought of as expressing a dependant relationship between humans and mythical beings. The communications established through the sacrifice, between the sacrificers and the supernatural beings, further can be understood as an act of submission and homage, which humans perform to obtain favors from or divert the wrath of powerful immortals. Sacrifice thus has two potential frameworks. On one hand, a person offers what they have. On the other, a person deprives himself of something with the objective of obtaining in exchange for the offering a counter-gift, one that relates to the vital force. Within this model of exchange, it can be supposed that the sacrifice will be better received and more effective if the offering has high value. It is in this sense that the immolation of human beings can best be understood. Yet sacrifice does not have to pertain to a particular type of rite but rather consists in generic forms that include many sacrificial acts in various social contexts. These acts can be distin-

guished by their offerings, by their nature, by the form of immolation, by the circumstances, and by the particular objects of established communications between the sacrificers and the entities upon which they depend.

In order to explore the sacrificial theme in the societies of the central Andes, I will address the corpus of Prehispanic iconography in Peru, centering my attention upon the highly representational Moche images. The majority of Moche representations appear on objects from funerary contexts located in and around administrative and ceremonial centers along the north coast of Peru, which date between AD 200 and 700. Among many visual themes, the images illustrate diverse ways of killing human beings: men, women, and children.

In the context of this work, I will take into account the scenes that reference or depict the decapitation of prisoners and those that illustrate human punishment. I intend to demonstrate the sacred character of these images, to identify the actors, and to reconstruct the circumstances and particular objects of these ritual acts. In order to accomplish this task, I will apply a method of analysis and interpretation to the iconography that I proposed in the 1970s (Hocquenghem 1973, 1977a, 1977b, 1987).



### The Sacred and Ceremonial Character of Moche Iconography

From the materials preserved in European and Peruvian collections and museums, I have constituted a photographic corpus of painted, modeled, sculpted, etched, and woven representations on more than 4,000 objects of clay, ceramic, stone, metal, bone, shell, vegetable fibers, and animal fur. From analyses upon this corpus, I have evinced some of the internal structure and sacred character of the iconography. In sum, the corpus has yielded the following observations:

1. The different representations were reproduced in large number through the same techniques over similar supports or through various mediums of artistic expression on objects of diverse forms and qualities. They present reproductions of parts or details of the complex scenes.
2. The complex scenes were also reproduced in large number and with variant forms, whether complete, in parts, or in detail. They represent a limited number of specific actions that refer to the communication between the real world and the supernatural world—or which develop in parallel in these two worlds. The real world is populated by human beings, while the supernatural world is inhabited by the deceased, whose bodies are skeletons, and by the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic mythological beings, whose attributes are fangs and serpents.
3. The different complex scenes are not independent from each other. The actors are the same, and the actions are organized in temporal sequences.

In addition to the above observations derived from independent studies, the Moche corpus has been compared with other visual programs from Prehispanic Peru. These derive from the coast and central Andes, and they date from the first millennium before the Common Era until the Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century. Such comparative studies have further yielded the following assumptions:

1. Although styles differ across regions and epochs, the structure of the Andean visual systems of representation and the represented actions themselves remain similar.

2. The internal structure of the visual programs and their themes indicate that the diverse representations illustrate, across time and space, a specific discourse enunciated and replayed in parts or details. This repeated discourse does not relate to the sphere of the profane and quotidian but rather to the sacred and ceremonial.

By accepting these above observations and assumptions, I am thus accounting for the sacred and ceremonial character of all the Prehispanic visual systems, including that of the Moche. As such, the Moche images of prisoners with their throats cut and of tortured men and women can be considered representations of sacrificial acts. In order to understand the particular significance of these scenes, it is necessary to try to reconstruct the meaning and function of the iconographic group of which they form part.

### The Iconography and the Andean Ceremonial Calendar

In order to reconstruct the meaning and function of this group of Moche images, I will first compare them with the texts that, since the sixteenth century, have addressed the discourses and customs related to the sacred and the ceremonial, to the myths and rites of the central Andes. This method seems justified by applying a structuralist approach. For example, Claude Lévi-Strauss writes in his article “The Serpent with Fish inside His Body”:

We can no longer doubt that the key to so many heretofore incomprehensible motifs is directly accessible in myths and tales which are still current. One would be mistaken to neglect these means which enable us to gain access to the past. Only the myths can guide us into the labyrinth of monsters and gods when, in the absence of writing, the plastic documentation cannot lead us any further. By reconstructing the connections between distant areas, various historical periods, and cultures at different stages of development, this kind of research documents, illuminates—and, perhaps, one day will explain—the vast syncretism that has persistently frustrated Americanists in their search for the historical antecedents of specific phenomena. (1963:272–273)

From the texts of the Spanish chroniclers and the extirpators of idolatry, such as Juan de Betanzos ([1550] 1987), Pedro Cieza de León ([1553] 1967, 1987), Cristóbal de Molina ([1575] 1959), Juan de Acosta ([1590] 1954), Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala ([1615] 1936), and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega ([1609] 1985), I composed and analyzed a corpus of accounts about the rites and myths of the Inca. I then compared these ethnohistoric accounts with the Moche visual representations. The results have suggested that each one of the different Moche iconographic scenes relates to one of the ceremonies that constituted the Incan ceremonial calendar (Hocquenghem 1987, 1997).

The Incan ceremonial calendar established parallels between the cycles of natural phenomena, the celestial bodies and the seasons, the animal and vegetal reproductive cycles, and the reproduction of humans and their institutions. It established homologies and marked the passage of one age to another in the natural and social cycles. The Incas celebrated sacrifices to mark each one of the twelve ceremonies related to one of the twelve months of the lunar and solar calendar. The nature of the sacrificial offerings varied according to the type of ceremonies. The offerings could have been men, women, children, llamas, coca, precious metal objects, gold, silver, shell of *Spondylus* or *Strombus*, textiles, first fruits of the harvests, or some part of all that was produced during the course of the year.

The Quechua manuscript that describes the rites and traditions of the Huarochirí, as well as the commentaries upon the translated text offered by Gerald Taylor ([1608] 1987a), offer the most direct glimpse of how the sacrificial offerings functioned. They elucidate how the life force was transmitted through the medium of sacrifices between a strong animate (*camac*); an ancestor, predecessor, or sacred entity (*huaca*); and a being or animated object (*camasca*). According to the manuscript, the perception of the *camac* during the seventeenth century was that of an effective force that animated and sustained not only humans but also animals and plants so that each could realize its full natural potential. The ancestors possessed different capacities to animate and sustain. Some *camac* were more effective than others depending on their rank and on the quality of their cult—on the quality of the sacrifices that their *camasca* offered to them. The existence of a powerful *camac* did not exclude the others, whose strengths could have

been complementary. The *camasca*, who received their existence from and paid tribute to different sources, could increase the quality of the *camac* and reanimate it (Taylor [1608] 1987a; Garcilaso de la Vega [1609] 1985).

In his vocabulary of the general language of Peru, called Quechua ([1608] 1952), Diego González Holguín associated *camac* to *hucha*: a demand, transaction, or plea. Taylor observes that, in the less acculturated passages of the Huarochirí manuscript, *hucha* corresponds above all to *falta*; that is to say, to the lack of observing a ritual obligation, the consequence of which is inevitably the sickness or death of the guilty party or one of his next of kin. *Falta* implies obligation, and in the series of *camac* definitions from the same dictionary, there are expressed varying shades of “dues” and “duty.” *Pleito* is a disputed and recovered fee, while *negocio* in this context seems to signify “task or function associated with someone” (Taylor [1608] 1987a:29–30).

It is further noteworthy that the Huarochirí distinguished between three aspects of vital force, or three different forms of power (Taylor [1608] 1987a). An intellectual power, *callpa*, was related to communication, memory, and knowledge, which the priests obtained through effort and constant work. The priests repeated the gestures of their predecessors in order to acquire the ancestral arts that permitted them to see and avoid evil. A physical power, *sinchi*, was related to valor and bravery, which the leaders developed during an extended and rigorous process of initiation in order to confront and overcome all adversities. Finally, a political power, *capac*, was related to wealth, opulence and generosity, which respected individuals acquired and demonstrated in order to impose and maintain order.

With the goal to maintain the circulation of vital force, the Incas sacrificed to the most powerful mythical ancestors. First they sacrificed to Viracocha Pachacamac, the *camac* that animated and sustained space and time (*pacha*) from their beginning until their end. Next, they sacrificed to Inti Viracocha, the sun and father of the Incas, followed by those that accompanied him and had designated rooms in his temple. These included (1) Mama Quilla, the moon, wife, and sister of the sun and mother of the Inca; (2) Venus, the light of dawn and dusk, together with the seven Pleiades and the stars, models of all things existing; (3) Inti Illapa, the lightning-thunder-hail entity, both opposite and comple-

mentary to the sun; and (4) Cuichu, the arc of the sky, so grand that it occupied both walls of the temple with all its vivid colors, and so venerated that, when they saw it, the Incas closed their mouths and placed their hands over them. If the teeth were discovered, they would be lost or would rot. The fifth room of the Temple of the Sun was that of the highest priest, who sacrificed to the mythical ancestors and to the mummies of the founding ancestors of the diverse Incan lineages (Garcilaso de la Vega [1609] 1985, L. 3:127–129).

Based on these accounts and their interpretations, I consider the maintenance of the vital force as a form of negotiation between the immortal leaders and the humans that performed the sacrificial acts. On one hand, the capacity to animate and sustain the ancestors depended on the nature of the offerings that they received and on the earnestness of their descendants in fulfilling their ritual obligations. On the other hand, the quantity and quality of vital force that the *camasca* received were relative to the treatment that they offered to their *camac*. This relationship suggests that from month to month, from year to year, and from generation to generation through the medium of sacrifices, the Inca ceremonies had to maintain the circulation of vital force between humans and their ancestors, mythical and real. The ceremonial calendar was thus the institution that actuated the cult of the ancestors and, by recalling the myths and reenacting them through ritual, assured the social production and reproduction of the central Andes.

Returning to the discussion of Moche iconography, I would argue that if the established parallel between the

Moche scenes and the Inca ceremonies is justified, then Moche iconography functioned to establish an ancestral order through the medium of the image. In order to identify the actors and to discriminate between the circumstances and particular objects of the two forms of human sacrifice in this study, I will next demonstrate, using some of the Incan rites and certain survivals of an Andean ceremonial calendar, how these different images could be interrelated.

### Decapitation and the Rites of Propitiation

In Moche iconography there exists a sequence of complex scenes that depict some form of ritual battle. The warriors often confront one another in pairs and strike at each other with clubs (Figure 2.1). Blood runs, and the defeated are captured (Figure 2.2). The prisoners, deprived of their attire and with ropes around their necks, are presented to important individuals (Figure 2.3). Afterwards, their hands bound, they are beheaded by zoomorphic mythic beings, and their blood is offered to anthropomorphic beings that possess fangs and serpents (Figure 2.4). A grand bicephalus serpent divides the scenes of the sacrifice and the offering of blood (Figure 2.5). Finally, together with their charge of objects, the sacrificed individuals embark on boats to navigate the ocean (Figure 2.6) (Hocquenghem 1978, 1979a, 1979b, 1987).

Ethnohistoric accounts, in particular those of Cristóbal de Molina, refer to a similar sequence of Inca ritual acts that can be placed in parallel with the above Moche iconographic sequence. Molina describes a ritual battle

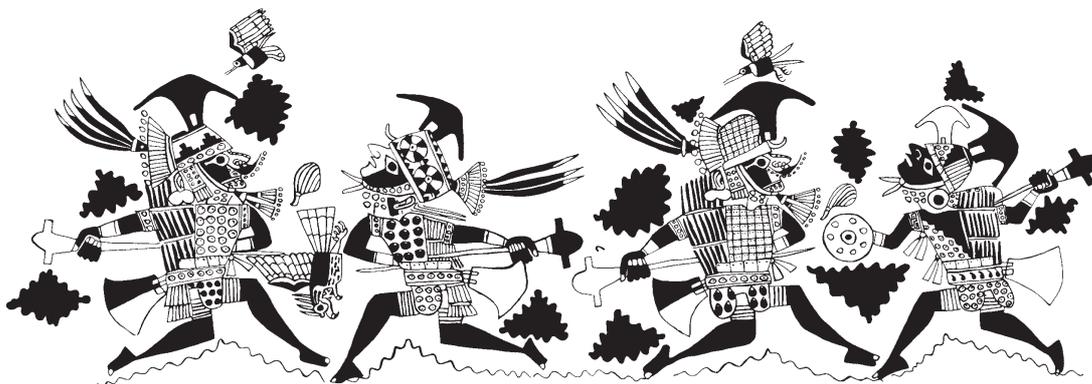


FIGURE 2.1. Warriors in combat. Private collection. Drawing by Donna McClelland.



FIGURE 2.2. Warriors and prisoners, Museo Amano, Lima. Drawing by Donna McClelland.



FIGURE 2.3. Warriors and prisoners. Private collection. Drawing by Donna McClelland.

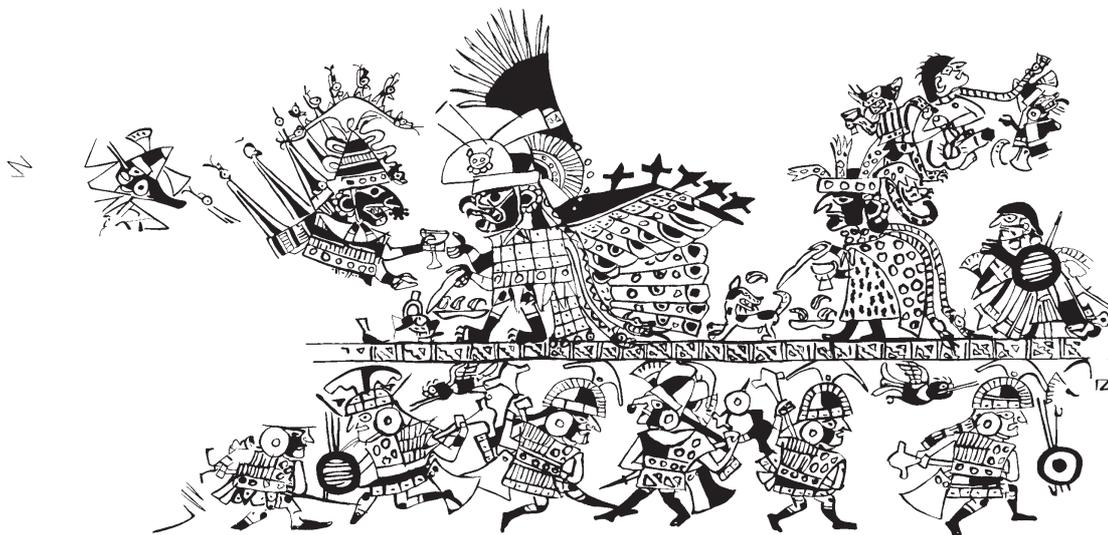


FIGURE 2.4. Fineline painting of the Presentation Theme. Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia del Perú, Lima. Drawing by Donna McClelland.



FIGURE 2.5. Fineline painting of the Presentation Theme. Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich. Drawing by Donna McClelland.



FIGURE 2.6. Bottle in the form of fish-boat. Museo del Banco Central de Reserva del Perú, Lima (ACE-2975). Photograph by Steve Bourget.

that was celebrated in Cuzco after the December solstice ([1575] 1943). Following the battle but before the March equinox, a dance was sung with a large rope, and a major sacrifice was performed. The remains were tossed into the waters of the river that passed through the ceremonial and administrative center of the Inca. In order to better grasp its eventual comparison to Moche visual representations, I will describe these ethnohistoric accounts in greater detail.

In the new moon following the summer solstice in January, at the beginning of the humid season when nature demonstrates its vital force and when the plants grow and the animals fatten, the Incas celebrated the ritual combat of *Camay*. The combatants, young warriors recently initiated, represented the two halves of Cuzco: *hanan* and *hurin*. They would confront each other in the plaza, throwing heavy fruits with all their might. Eventually the Inca would stop the combat and reconcile the two parties (Molina 1959). The individual warriors presumably were demonstrating their vital force, valor, bravery, and physical strength—their individual *sinchi*. Their participation in the battle perhaps served as a reminder that those who completed their ritual obligations would come to be very animated (*ancha camasca*) by their different *camac*. As indicated by its name, this rite would have been related to the transmission of the vital force, specifically through the form of physical prowess.

During the full moon, the Inca men and women of Cuzco would sing and dance the *taqui Yanayra*. During this performance, they would carry in their hands a long rope of four colors: black, white, red and tawny. They would take this rope, which they called *moro urco*, from a house of the same name located next to the House of the Sun. Dancing in turns around the plaza, the Inca would deposit the rope on the ground in the form of a spiral, rolled up in the manner of a snake. Those in charge of the rope would then return it to its room (Molina 1959). The *moro urco*, which had its room in the Temple of the Sun, together with the most powerful ancestors, was none other than the arc of the sky, Cuichu, mentioned by Garcilaso de la Vega and known to have had the power of corruption; that is, the power to deprive someone of his vital force. In the following study concerning the *taqui* song and dance, I intend to demonstrate that these ritual performances related to the transmission of

vital force from the *camac* to the *camasca* that celebrated it (Hocquenghem 1996).

The Inca song and dance with the rope-serpent corresponds closely with earlier Moche representations of men and women dancing with a large rope (Figures 2.7, 2.8). In some of these images, the Moche dancers also wear different face masks (Figure 2.7). This attribute may correspond to another related act described in the ethnohistoric accounts. The Quechua manuscript of the Huarochirí mentions that the Checas Indians preserved the facial skin of an ancestor (*Namsapa*) and transformed it into a mask. When the Checas celebrated the harvest as a victory over the negative vital and adverse physical forces, they would sing and dance with this relic, which conserved the vitality, as well as the valor and bravery, of the ancestor (Taylor [1608] 1987a). The Huarochirí would also cut off the facial skin of their principal enemies and preserve them in the form of masks, with which they would dance and sing, thus appropriating the vital force and physical prowess of their enemies (Taylor [1608] 1987b). Drawing upon such related sources and actions, I would argue that the *taqui Yanayra*, celebrated after the combat of *Camay*, was a ritual act related to transmitting the vital force through the particular form of physical strength, or *sinchi*. Such power would have animated and sustained not only the warriors but the whole of society. It would have been intended to confront and overcome all of the obstacles to social production and reproduction.

In February, the lunar month that succeeds the rites of *Camay* and *Yanayra*, and the month when the rivers are strongest and most abundant, the Incas celebrated the rites of *Mayocati*. The objective of these rituals was to transport to Viracocha Pachacamac all the carbon and ashes that remained from the enacted sacrifices, along with a portion of the production and yield of the entire year. These elements would be tossed into the waters of the river that runs through Cuzco so that it would carry them to its confines, to the center of the world. The Incas would supplicate themselves, asking that the sacrifices be received as a sign of gratitude for all that had been bestowed upon them, with the hope of obtaining more throughout the coming year (Molina 1959). I would suggest that, before the equinox of the humid season, the Incas gave to the water the whole of their sacrifices in order to return to its source the vital force under all

its forms of power that had been conceived throughout the annual cycle, with the hope of it returning in excess the following year. The name of this ceremony supports this interpretation: *mayo* or *mayu* means “river,” while *cati* or *cuti* means “to return.” The sacrifices presented in this context would have had the significance of rites of propitiation.

The ethnographic accounts further attest to certain continuities in the form and significance of the Inca rites of *Camay* and *Mayocati* and the performances of modern Andean groups. For example, between the holidays of the Virgen de la Candelaria and Carnaval in January, certain indigenous ceremonies involve the demonstration of force and the offering of sacrifices to the entities that animate and sustain the Andean world. Furthermore, many indigenous groups continue celebrating ceremonial combats between the two halves of the community. The bloodshed and, in some cases, the lives of the victims of these sacred confrontations are offered to the earth and to the guardian divinities in order to assure continued production. These ceremonial confrontations and their consequences preserve the significance of such ancient rites of propitiation (Alencastre and Dumézil 1953; Contreras 1955; Gorbák, Lischetti, and Muñoz 1962; Hartmann 1972).

By comparing the sequence of Moche visual representations with the sequence of ethnohistoric and ethnographic data, and by assuming that the ritual acts have preserved over time some of their forms and meanings (although the nature of the offerings changes), I further propose an interpretation of the Moche representations of sacrifice by decapitation. The recently initiated Moche warriors would have represented the two halves of the society. In the first new moon following the summer solstice, they would have undertaken a ritual combat to demonstrate the vital force, in particular the physical power, of their lineages (Figure 2.1). All of the Moche would have propitiated this vital force in the full moon, dancing with a large rope and wearing the masks of their ancestors (Figure 2.7). In the following moon, the month preceding the equinox of the humid season, the defeated warriors would have been consecrated as sacrificial victims and decapitated (Figure 2.5). The beheaded bodies and the rest of the year’s sacrifices were then shipped on boats for a trip across the ocean, a trip intended to return them to the confines and

origin of the Andean world, to the source of vital force (Figure 2.6). This sacrifice, part of the exchange of vital force between the Moche and their ancestors, would have been celebrated with the goal of obtaining for the upcoming year the vital force—in particular, physical strength—which would ensure social and economic reproduction. This sequence of sacred acts would have had the significance of rites of propitiation.

In this model of interpretation, then, who are the mythical anthropomorphic beings who figure into the scenes of sacrifice, and whose attributes are fangs and serpents (Figures 2.4, 2.5)? I would argue that these attributes represent the immortal power and absolute authority, the *camac*, of these sacred beings, or *huaca*, sources of the vital force that animates and sustains the Andean world (Hocquenghem 1983a, 1987). The Moche illustrated three masculine and one feminine entity with such attributes (Figure 2.9). These would have been the Moche predecessors of Viracocha Pachacamac—the auspicious master of life and death in the Central Andes—of Inti Viracocha, of Inti Illapa, and of Mama Quilla.

The zoomorphic mythical beings would have been the ancestors of the diverse lineages that composed Moche society (Hocquenghem 1987, 1998). The serpent with two heads—the grand, mythic boa—would have been the Moche predecessor of the Inca *Cuichi*, the arc of the sky (Figure 2.5). It should be recalled here that the ethnohistoric and ethnographic accounts regarding Andean beliefs and customs suggest a relationship between ophidians, the circulation of water, and the circulation of vital force (Hocquenghem 1983a, 1983b, 1987).

The diurnal arc of the sky is the rainbow, and the nocturnal arc is the Milky Way: the *mayu*, or celestial river. These arcs continue to be extremely feared and respected in the Andes. They should not be looked at or signaled to directly so as not to risk becoming sick—that is, losing one’s vital force. I would further recall here that the Andeans feared and respected the terrestrial river, *mayu*, because its currents returned the vital force of all that it carried to the origin of water, the sea or *mamacocha*, mother of the high Andean lagoons. It is likely that the Andeans established a relation between the circulation of water and the circulation of the vital force. As the fertility or sterility of the valleys depends upon the quantity and nature of water that flows in the rivers between the Andean peaks and the Pacific littoral,



FIGURE 2.7. Moche dancers. Redrawn by Christopher B. Donnan from Lavalle 1985, page 58.



FIGURE 2.8. Dancers holding a long rope. Redrawn from Kutscher 1983, Figure 152.



FIGURE 2.9. Detail of the Presentation Theme. Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich. Drawing by Donna McClelland.

so does human reproduction or annihilation in the Andean world depend upon the abundance and quality of the vital force that flows in the arc of the sky between the world's origin and its confines. The large Moche mythic boa, the Inca arc of the sky, would then have represented the circulation of vital force that animates and sustains the Andean world.

### The Punishments and Rites of Expiation

Moche iconography represents punishments inflicted on human individuals. In some cases, they were left exposed on mountain peaks (Figure 2.10), with the skin of their faces pulled away and hanging. Others were stoned to death, and their physical remains abandoned to the vultures (Figure 2.11). Some were decapitated and dismembered (Figure 2.12) (Hocquenghem 1980, 1987). Here I must admit that, as Steve Bourget signaled to part (1994:92–93), in 1987 I committed an error in considering these “mountain sacrifice scenes” as separate scenes without noting the bodies of sacrificial victims that often lie decapitated and dismembered like those of the punished (Hocquenghem 1987:180–185). In the more complex scenes of torture, the executions relate to the offering of *Strombus* shells to mythical beings, individuals often seated in the interior of a temple structure (Figure 2.13). On the roof of the temple, part deer, serpent, and jaguar zoomorphic beings emerge from other *Strombus* shells. The acts of punishment relate to activities around an open tomb. Ethnohistoric accounts also provide evidence of the celebration of Inca rituals that involved such suffering, as I discuss below.

The texts and drawings of Guamán Poma de Ayala indicate that corporal punishments formed part of the ritual acts of the ceremony of *Uma raimi quilla*, celebrated during the lunar month that follows the month of equinox and the dry season in October, when water is scarce. In the “moon ceremony of the water” (*quilla* [moon] + *raimi* [ceremony] + *uma* [water]), the Incas lashed and struck at their llamas and dogs in the plaza while they and their children cried. Through this ritual, they expressed great pain in order to call the attention of Viracocha Pachacamac by exposing their sufferings and those of their animals. They pleaded to the most powerful of the *camac* to concede to them the vital liquid (Guamán Poma de Ayala [1615] 1936:254–255). Guamán Poma de Ayala also states that the Incas stoned pairs

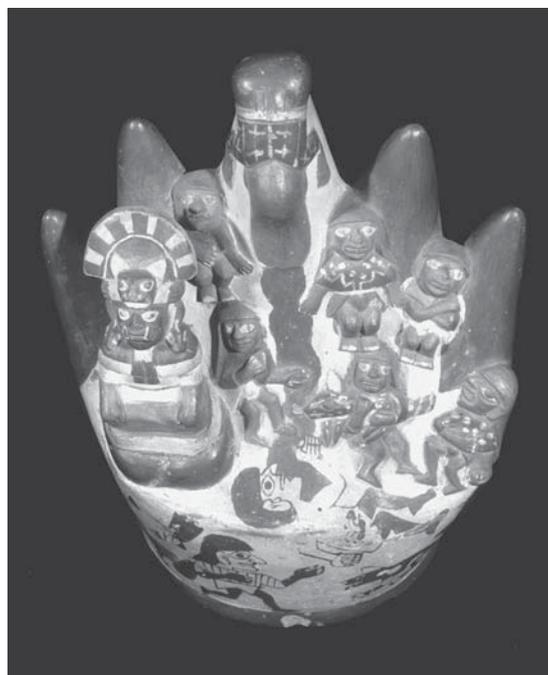


FIGURE 2.10. Stirrup spout bottle in the form of a mountain. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin—Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum (VA-48095). Photograph by Steve Bourget.



FIGURE 2.11. Skeletal being tied to a tree and pecked by a black vulture. Museo Larco, Lima (ML-001478).



FIGURE 2.12. Fineline painting of sacrificial victims. Moche Archive, UCLA. Drawing by Donna McClelland.



FIGURE 2.13. Burial Theme. The sacrificial victim eaten by vultures is located in the upper left corner. Moche Archive, UCLA. Drawing by Donna McClelland.



or Mother Earth, to suffer by leaving them out to dry in the sun. The Aymara inflicted this punishment with the intent of calling attention from the ancestors, so that they would take pity on the sufferings of the earth and of its beings—animals, plants, and humans—greatly in need of more water. If the rains still did not come, the Aymara would search out a scapegoat, a person who had committed a mistake, and force him or her to atone for it (Tschopik 1946).

In the Peruvian Andes, the month of October has continued to be the month of grand processions in honor of the Señor de los Milagros, the Señor Cautivo, the Señor de los Temblores, the Señor de Luren, and the Christs of the Passion, bloodied prisoners who carried their crosses and were crucified to atone for the sins of men. According to the Catholic Church calendar, there is no reason why these Christ figures appear in October, when they are traditionally related to the rites of Semana Santa, which is celebrated in March, after the equinox of the humid season. Nevertheless, at the end of the dry season, the popular fervor brings forth these images from the churches, some associated with sources of water and others with terrestrial events, invoking the divine will and entreating God to free the world of all the evil that threatens and afflicts mankind: droughts, floods, famines, earthquakes, epidemics, wars, aggressions, repressions, robbery, and other natural and social calamities. Many people dress in purple during October and make oaths of penitence in front of these tormented figures of the cross. These Christian rituals and processions suggest the survival of a syncretism between Andean and Christian rites.

Based on the parallel established between the iconography and the ethnohistorical and ethnological accounts, I propose an interpretation of the Moche representations of torture. The humans left exposed on the mountain summits, flayed and lapidated, would have been transgressors of the ancestral order. They would have suffered the punishments leading to death in a ceremony celebrated during the month following dry season or when extraordinary circumstances demanded. The Moche would tear away the flesh of the faces, leaving it hanging, in order to deprive the victims of, and also to destroy, the malevolent vital force—the bad physical strength, the wrongful actions, the insolence—that caused them to ignore their ritual obligations and lose

the respect of the mythic ancestors. Their bodies, decapitated and dismembered, were exposed to the elements and abandoned to the vultures. Deprived of the funerary rites that would have assured the circulation of vital force between life and death, they were thus condemned to disappear. These sacrificial rites of expiation were intended to calm the wrath of the powerful immortals and avoid their consequences.

Moche representations also highlight the relationship between the punished and the offerings of *Strombus* shells (Figures 2.16, 2.17). In 1975, John Murra reunited accounts concerning the sacrifices of snails and marine conchs, daughters of *mamacocha*, the source of vital force. Murra argued that they were presented to the high Andean lagoons when drought threatened with the aim of receiving rain. I propose that this offering would have been made not only to reestablish the circulation of water but, above all, to restore the circulation of vital force.

The deer-serpent-jaguar being, which surges from the *Strombus* shells, remains to be identified. In certain images, it accompanies the female ancestor the moon—who does not stop transforming throughout the monthly cycle or passing through the sky, day and night—without losing her identity (Figure 2.18). Therefore, in Moche iconography the *Strombus* appears to be one of the attributes of the mythic ancestors. Comparatively, in the Huarochiri tales, the *camac* animate and sustain, convene and order their *camasca* by blowing a shell trumpet (Taylor [1608] 1987a:77). These accounts suggest that the being with feline potency, serpent vitality, and the majesty of a deer surging forth from a *Strombus* possesses vital force through its three aspects: *sinchi*, *callpa*, and *capac* (Figure 2.19). The being is the manifestation of immortal power and absolute authority, and of those who govern the Andean world. It would likewise represent the *camac*, or animate, by way of the ancestral spirit that resonates from the shells.

Indigenous myths tell of a mythic being, or *amaru*, that lives in the high Andean lagoons. Every so often, the *amaru* emerges with extraordinary violence, similar to the fury of the savage bull, and destroys everything in its path, thereby recording in the landscape the sign of its passage. The *amaru*'s appearance announces the disorders that provoke ancestral wrath, whose consequences are natural and social disasters that last until the restoration of order in a new cycle-state of the world,



FIGURE 2.16. Offering of *Strombus* shells. Detail from a Burial Theme (Figure 2.13). Moche Archive, UCLA. Drawing by Donna McClelland.



FIGURE 2.17. Woman pecked by vultures. Detail from a Burial Theme (Figure 2.13). Moche Archive, UCLA. Drawing by Donna McClelland.



FIGURE 2.18. Drawing of the moon and the lunar fox. Redrawn from Kutscher 1954, Figure 44b.

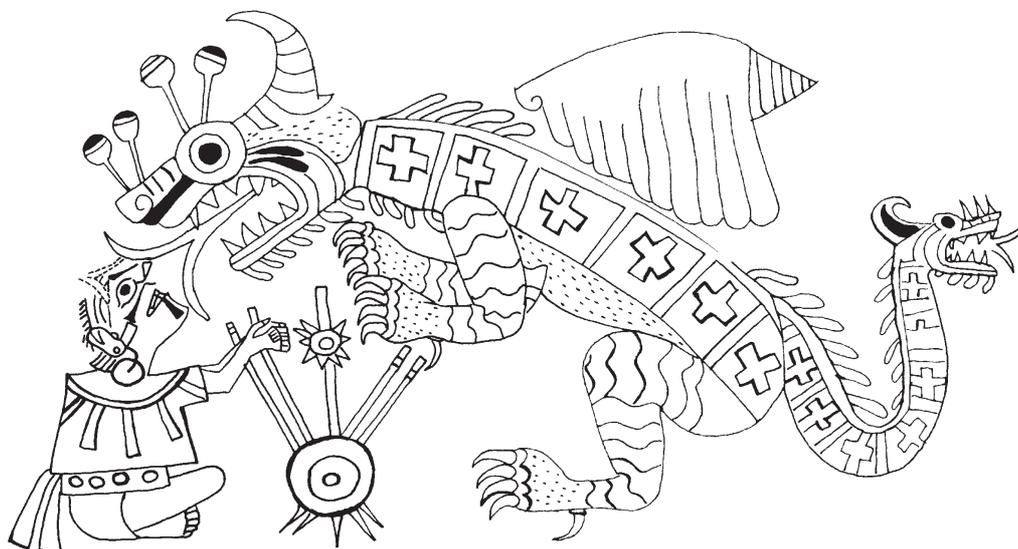


FIGURE 2.19. Detail of warrior sitting in front of a *Strombus* Being. By kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum, London. Drawing by Donna McClelland.

a *pachacuti*. The *amaru*'s features recall the calamities occasioned by lack of respect for ritual obligations (*hucha*). The Moche deer-serpent-jaguar arguably represents the predecessor of the *amaru*, the feared manifestation of the eternal return—under diverse forms and in different contexts—of the ancestral order (Hocquenghem 1983b, 1987).

If the first rains in the mountains and the swellings of the rivers can be considered signs of reconciliation between humans and their ancestors, and the reestablishment of the circulation of vital force, I suggest that the open tomb in Moche iconography signifies the punishments related to the offerings of *Strombus* (Figure 2.13). Upon completing the rites of *Uma raimi quilla*, offerings were made to the deceased, who would return to their origins and establish communication between the real and mythic worlds (Guamán Poma de Ayala [1615] 1936; Hocquenghem 1979, 1987).

#### The Archaeological Testimonies: The Rites of Expiation in Huaca de la Luna

Archaeological research since the 1950s has increasingly suggested that the Moche iconographic scenes represent actual rites of a type practiced at the ceremonial and administrative centers. In 1987, Walter Alva, Susana

Meneses, and Luis Chero discovered the tomb of the Lord of Sipán and excavated this Moche site over the next eight years (Alva and Donnan 1993). These excavations confirmed the existence of the personages, attributes, ornaments and objects represented on funerary artifacts and temple walls (Alva 1994). Following this discovery, what remained to be found was archaeological evidence of the ceremonies, the sacrificial locations, and the features of the sacrificers and of the sacrificed (Bourget 1995).

In 1995, Steve Bourget located and excavated a sacrificial site in Plaza 3a within the highest platform of Huaca de la Luna, the Moche's administrative and ceremonial center. Bourget exposed the remains of men who apparently were sacrificed. Some were sacrificed in the manner of rites of expiation celebrated in the context of an extraordinary ceremony similar to that of the *Inca Itu*, while others appear to have been killed as in rites of expiation celebrated in the context of an annual ceremony similar to that of *Uma raimi quilla*.

These excavations in Plaza 3a, the studies and results of which have been published by Steve Bourget (1997, 1998a, 1998b) and John Verano (1998), brought to light a series of skeletons preserved in two levels of mud (Figure 2.20). The mud had accumulated from the disintegra-

tion of the enclosure's adobe walls during a period of extraordinary rains, the consequence of an uncommon but powerful natural event, El Niño, also known as the El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) (Hocquenghem 1998; Hocquenghem and Ortlieb 1992; Ortlieb and Machare 1993). The archaeological excavations revealed that the bodies fell over wet soil. As they decomposed, wind-blown sand penetrated into the thoracic cavities, indicating that the bodies remained exposed to the elements. Some time after, a second series of bodies fell, this time over a cap of sand that had dried, enclosed, and cracked. In this case, the remains of fly casings on the skeletal remains and the whiteness of the bones attest to the open-air exposure of the bodies before they too were eventually covered by fine sand. Dogs, foxes, and other carnivores apparently did not have access to the plaza; however, vultures could still account for the disorder of some of these skeletal remains.

The study of the Plaza 3a human remains revealed that all of the individuals were male and died between the ages of 15–39 years, the average age being 23. These men, who ought to have been robust, active, and of good health, suffered from repeated face-to-face combat. The skeletal remains exhibited ante mortem lesions such as fractures of the nose, ribs, and long bones, among others (Verano 1998). At the time of death, at least eleven individuals had lesions that were healing, suggesting a period of up to one month between infliction of the injury and death. The perimortem lesions include cuts on the cranium indicating facial cuts, cranial fractures that could have been caused by mace hits, and cuts in the cervical vertebrae indicating decapitation. Finally, in some cases the sacrificed individuals had cuts to the long bones and phalanges, indicating dismemberment.

The positions of the skeletons suggest that the bodies fell one by one, some over others, after being struck by



FIGURE 2.20. Sacrificial victims in Plaza 3a, Huaca de la Luna. Photograph by Steve Bourget.



FIGURE 2.21. Human cranium, Plaza 3a, Huaca de la Luna. Photograph by Steve Bourget.



FIGURE 2.22. Human remains, Plaza 3a, Huaca de la Luna. Photograph by Steve Bourget.

clubs. The bodily positions, with arms and sometimes legs wide open, further suggest that these individuals were firmly tied or held to the ground at the moment of execution. Indeed, there remained in the mud the imprint of a rope at the height of a wrist (Bourget 1998b). Various bodies were decapitated, with the heads located here and there throughout the sacrificial arena, and with the inferior mandible sometimes separated (Figure 2.21). Other bodies were dismembered with apparently savage cuts to the skin and muscles. The two sequences of sacrifices could have been partially mixed given that most of the remains of the first act were only partially covered by the layer of soil, whose thickness did not surpass 10 cm. Articulated arms and legs and groups of vertebrae in anatomical position cover the site (Figure 2.22). It can be supposed that the sacrificers returned to the sacrificial site to manipulate the skeletal remains.

Recent mitochondrial DNA analyses show that all of the victims were related to the same group that lived in the ceremonial center (Shimada et al., this volume). Therefore, they cannot be considered the remains of

enemies. Instead, and without doubt, they are the remains of warriors representing the two halves of the society, who had just confronted one another in ritual combat. They were then consecrated as sacrificial victims and executed.

The parallels between Moche iconography and the ethnohistoric and ethnographic information thus serve to reinforce further the identification of Plaza 3a as a sacrificial site and the executed bodies as the remains of sacrificial victims. I would even venture that the warriors whose skeletons lie in the mud were subjected to mistreatment during the ritual combat of the first lunar month after the December solstice—during the humid season. These particular humid seasons apparent in sediment layers of the plaza were marked by abnormal rains created by a mega El Niño event. The rivers overflowed, destroying the ceremonial center and some houses, damaging irrigation systems, and inundating fields.

The sacrificial victims were thus designated as scapegoats. Burdening the offenses, the debts of all of the community in front of the ancestors, they were tortured



FIGURE 2.23. Sacrificial victims in Plaza 3a, Huaca de la Luna. Photograph by Steve Bourget.

during a ceremony of extraordinary expiation, similar to the *Inca Itu*. This ceremony was intended to calm the wrath of those who animated and sustained the Moche world, which had manifested in the form of a flood. In contrast, I would argue that the skeletons lying over the cracked clay had been tortured some months after the rains, at the end of the dry season after the September equinox, during a ceremony of annual atonement similar to the *Inca Uma raimi quilla* (Figure 2.23). The ceremony presumably had an exceptional character since the consequences of the recent flood would still have been felt.

As one final note, some broken ceramic sherds and clay sculptures representing naked men seated with their legs crossed and ropes around their necks were found among the tortured bodies (Figure 2.24) (Bourget 2001). These sculptures bear some presumed similarities with the victims deposited in the plaza. I would even propose that the deposition of such material between these unburied bodies could be interpreted as a form of harassment rather than physical torture.

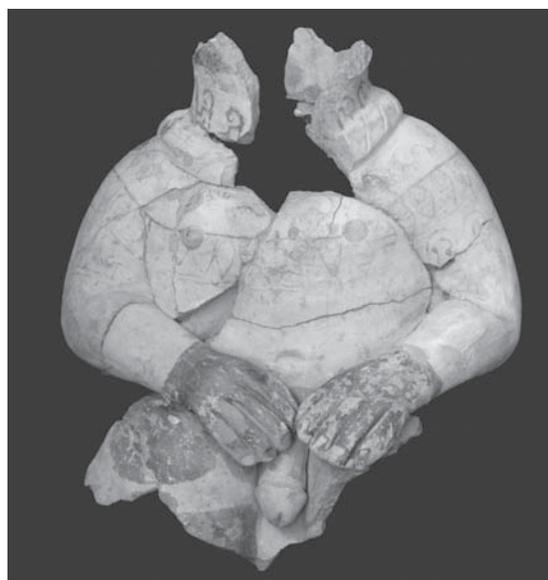


FIGURE 2.24. Clay statuette from Plaza 3a, Huaca de la Luna. Photograph by Steve Bourget.

## Conclusion

By establishing relations between the independent but complementary sources of information—iconographic, ethnohistoric, ethnographic, and archaeological—I have tried to demonstrate how it is possible to reconstruct the meaning and function of Moche and Prehispanic iconography, as well as the circumstances and objects of the represented scenes. I cannot conclude this chapter without trying to communicate the emotional burden of confronting the remains of the atrociously mutilated bodies in Huaca de la Luna, as well as in the imagery of the Moche and others of martyred men and women or of decapitated young warriors. Nor can I conclude without expressing the impossibility of considering human sacrifice without it bringing to mind recollections of all the executions committed in the name of implacable divine justice, some infinitely given. All the massacres and all the common graves—in all times, here and in other places—attest to the atrocity of the sufferings imposed with the goal of establishing and maintaining social order.

## Bibliography

- Acosta, Juan de**  
[1590] 1954 *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*. BAE, Madrid.
- Adorno, Rolena, and Ivan Boserup**  
2003 *New Studies of the Autograph Manuscript of Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala's Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*. Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen.
- Alencastre, Andrés, and Georges Dumézil**  
1953 Fêtes et usages des indiens de Langui. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*. T. XLII:22–118.
- Alva, Walter**  
1994 *Sipán*. Colección Cultura y Artes del Perú, Lima.
- Alva, Walter, and Christopher B. Donnan**  
1993 *Royal Tombs of Sipán*. Fowler Museum of Cultural History, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Betanzos, Juan de**  
[1550] 1987 *Suma y narración de los incas*. Atlas, Madrid.
- Bourget, Steve**  
1994 Los sacerdotes a la sombra del Cerro Blanco y del arco bicéfalo. *Revista del Museo de Arqueología, Antropología e Historia* 5:81–125. Trujillo, Perú.  
1995 Éros et Thanatos: Relations symboliques entre la sexualité, la fertilité et la mort dans l'iconographie mochica. *Recherches Amérindiennes au Québec*, Vol. XXV (2):5–20.  
1997 Excavaciones en la plaza 3a de la Huaca de la Luna. In *Investigaciones en la Huaca de la Luna 1995*, 51–59. Edited
- by Santiago Uceda, Elías Mujica, and Ricardo Morales. Universidad Nacional de la Libertad, Trujillo, Perú.  
1998a Pratiques sacrificielles et funéraires au site moche de la Huaca de la Luna, côte nord du Pérou. *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Etudes Andines* 27 (1):41–74.  
1998b Excavaciones en la plaza 3a y en la plataforma II de la Huaca de la Luna durante 1996. In *Investigaciones en la Huaca de la Luna 1996, Proyecto Arqueológico Huacas del Sol y de la Luna*, 43–64. Edited by Santiago Uceda, Elías Mujica, and Ricardo Morales. Universidad Nacional de la Libertad, Trujillo, Perú.  
2001 Rituals of Sacrifice: Its Practice at Huaca de la Luna and Its Representation in Moche Iconography. In *Moche Art and Archaeology in Ancient Peru*, 88–109. Edited by Joanne Pillsbury. National Gallery of Art and Yale University Press, Washington, D.C.
- Cieza de León, Pedro**  
[1553] 1967 *El señorío de los incas*. IEP, Lima.  
[1553] 1984 *Crónica del Perú*, Primera Parte. Lima.  
[1553] 1987 *Crónica del Perú*, Segunda Parte. Lima.
- Cobo, Bernabé**  
[1653] 1956 *Historia del nuevo mundo*. BAE, Madrid.
- Contreras, M. A.**  
1955 Las guerrillas indígenas del Chyaraque y del Toqto. *Archivo Peruano de Folklore* 1 (1):110–119. Cuzco.
- Garcilaso de la Vega, Inca**  
[1609] 1985 *Comentarios reales de los incas*. Banco de Crédito del Perú, Lima.
- Gonzáles Holguín, Diego**  
[1608] 1952 *Vocabulario de la lengua general de todo el Perú llamada quichua o del inca*. Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima.
- Guamán Poma de Ayala, Felipe**  
[1615] 1936 *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*. Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, Paris.
- Gorbák, C., M. Lischeti, and C. Muñoz**  
1962 Batallas rituales del Chirajaje y del Tocto de la provincia de Canas (Cuzco, Perú). *Revista del Museo Nacional*, T. XXXI:245–304.
- Hartmann, Roswith**  
1972 Otros datos sobre las llamadas batallas rituales. *Actas y memorias del XXXIX Congreso Internacional de Americanistas*, 125–135. Lima.
- Hocquenghem, Anne Marie**  
1973 *Code pour l'analyse des représentations figurées sur les vases mochicas*. Institut d'Ethnologie, Paris.  
1977a Une interprétation des vases portraits mochicas. *Ñawpa Pacha* 15:131–146.  
1977b Quelques projections sur l'iconographie mochica. *Baessler-Archiv* 25:163–191.

- 1978 Les combats mochicas: Essai d'interprétation d'un matériel archéologique à l'aide de l'iconologie, de l'ethno-histoire et de l'ethnologie. *Baessler-Archiv* 26:127-157.
- 1979a L'iconographie mochica et les rites andins: Les scènes en relation avec l'océan. *Cahiers des Amériques Latines* 20:113-129.
- 1979b Rapports entre les morts et les vivants dans la cosmovision mochica. *Les hommes et la mort: Objets et mondes* 19:85-95.
- 1980 L'iconographie mochica et les représentations de supplices. *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* T. LXVII:249-260.
- 1983a Les crocs et les serpents: L'autorité absolue des ancêtres mytiques. *Visible Religion, Annual for Religious Iconography*. V. II:58-74.
- 1983b The Beauty of the Deer-Serpent-Jaguar. *Camak beilage I, Mexicon*: 4-7. Berlin.
- 1987 *Iconografía mochica*. Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima.
- 1996 Relación entre mito, rito, canto y baile e imagen: Afir- mación de la identidad, legitimación del poder y perpetuación del orden. In *Actas del simposio interdisciplinario e internacional "Cosmología y música en los Andes"*, 137-173. Edited by Max Peter Baumann. Vervuert, Iberoameri- cana, Frankfurt-Madrid.
- 1997 Como una imagen del otro lado del espejo: Una memo- ria para el futuro, una visión del orden del mundo andino. In *Pensar América: Cosmovisión mesoamericana y andina*, 215-247. Edited by A. Garrido Aranda. Coedi- ción Obra Social y Cultural Cajasur, Ayuntamiento de Montilla, Córdoba.
- 1998 *Para vencer la muerte: Piura y Tumbes: Raíces en el bosque seco y en la selva alta, horizontes en el Pacífico y en la Ama- zonia*. CNRS, IFEA, INCAH, Lima.
- Hocquenghem, Anne Marie, and Luc Ortlieb**
- 1992 Eventos El Niño y lluvias anormales en la costa del Perú. *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Etudes Andines* 21 (1):197-278.
- Kutscher, Gerdt**
- 1954 *Nordperuanische Keramik: Figürlich Verzierte Gefässe der Früh-Chimu*. Gebr. Mann, Berlin.
- 1983 *Nordperuanische Gefässmalereien des Moche-Stils*. Mate- rialien zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäolo- gie, 18. C. H. Beck, Munich.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude**
- 1963 *Structural Anthropology*. Translated by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. Basic Books, New York.
- López-Baralt, Mercedes**
- 1993 *Guaman Poma, autor y artista*. Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima.
- Molina, Cristóbal de**
- [1575] 1943 Fábulas y ritos de los incas. *Las crónicas de los moli- nas*, 7-84. Lima.
- 1959 Ritos y fabulas de los inca. Editorial Futuro, Buenos Aires.
- Murra, John**
- 1975 El tráfico de mullu en la costa del Pacífico. *Formaciones económicas y políticas del mundo andino*, 255-267. Insti- tuto d'Etudes Peruanos, Lima.
- Ortleib, Luc, and Jose Machare, eds.**
- 1993 Registro del fenómeno El Niño y de eventos ENSO en América del sur. *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Etudes Andines* 22 (1):406.
- Taylor, Gérald**
- [1608] 1987a Ritos y tradiciones de Huarochirí del siglo XVII. Instituto d'Etudes Peruanos and Institut Français d'Etudes Andines, Lima.
- 1987b Cultos y fiestas de la comunidad de san Damián (Huarochirí) según la carta anua de 1609. *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Etudes Andines* 16 (2-4):85-96.
- 1999 *Camac, Camay, y Camasca y otros ensayos sobre Huarochirí y Yanyos*. Lima SFEA; Cuzco: Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos «Bartolomé de las Casas.»
- Tschopik, Harry**
- 1946 The Aymara. *Handbook of South American Indians*, Vol. 2:501-573. Washington, D.C.
- Verano, John**
- 1998 Sacrificios humanos, desmembramientos y modifica- ciones culturales en restos osteológicos: Evidencias de las temporadas de investigación 1995-1996 en la Huaca de la Luna. In *Investigaciones en la Huaca de la Luna 1996*, 159-171. Edited by Santiago Uceda, Elías Mujica, and Ricardo Morales. Universidad Nacional de la Libertad, Trujillo, Perú.