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# Moche Human Sacrifice: The Role of Funerary and Warrior Sacrifice in Moche Ritual Organization

## **Keywords**

Moche, human sacrifice, Peru, iconography, funerary rituals

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**Moche Human Sacrifice:  
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Christina Taggart

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**Introduction**

Human sacrifice has been an enduring topic of interest to archaeologists, as it embodies an extreme representation of the exotic 'other' and offers considerable insight into past ritual behaviour and ideological organization. Human sacrifice, which implies the "intentional offering of human life" (Verano 2001:167), presents a departure from standard mortuary treatment and fulfills a different social and ideological role. The study of human sacrifice has particular relevance to Andean archaeology, where a longstanding tradition of scholastic interest in the related themes of death and ancestor worship prevails. Evidence suggests that the Moche, the dominant culture on the North Coast of Peru during the middle and later part of the Early Intermediate Period (200 B.C. – A.D. 750), valued human sacrifice as a fundamental component of their ritual behaviour. However, despite the extensive study of Moche iconography, rich with representations of sacrifice, and recently excavated sacrificial remains, the motivations behind the practice remain poorly understood. Only within the last decade has it been possible to integrate the iconographic, archaeological, and biological evidence of Moche human sacrifice, potentially providing a means to gain a more thorough understanding of its role in broader Moche ideological systems.

An integrated analysis of Moche human sacrifice suggests that funerary and warrior sacrificial rituals occupied distinct roles in Moche belief systems regarding death and ancestor worship. The application of Arnold van Gennep's (1972 [1909]) classic work on rites of passage and William Duncan's (2005) study of veneration and violation in the archaeological record to Moche sacrifice provides useful theoretical models through which to explore these opposing roles. While funerary sacrifice served to help ensure the successful journey of deceased elite from life to the afterlife, warrior sacrifice may have served to prevent such a journey by Moche from competing polities, thereby enhancing the authority of

dominant Moche centres. The amalgamation of these theoretical models provides a fruitful means through which to interpret iconographic and archaeological evidence for Moche sacrifice in terms of beliefs regarding life, death, and the afterlife.

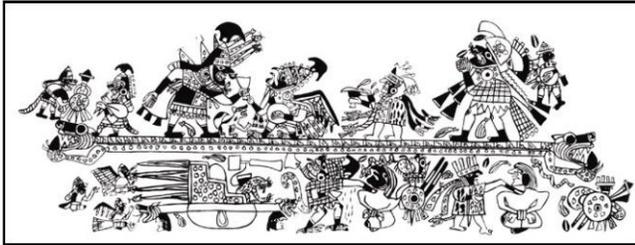
***Iconographic Evidence and Archaeological Correlates of Moche Human Sacrifice***

The current state of knowledge on the subject of Moche human sacrifice has resulted largely from the study of iconography depicted in temple wall murals and on ceramic vessels (Bourget 2001:89). Moche iconography is rich with representations of warfare, sex, death, and sacrifice, particularly scenes of warrior sacrificial contexts. Common in Moche art are depictions of the capture, presentation, arraignment, and sacrifice of war prisoners, as are scenes of victims being left exposed to scavenging vultures and insects (Verano 1995:192). One of the most recurrent scenes in Moche iconography is the Sacrifice Ceremony (Figure 1), which has led scholars to believe that sacrifice was an important aspect of Moche religion (Alva and Donnan 1993:132,137). Despite considerable variation in the way that the Sacrifice Ceremony is depicted, there are common symbolic elements and characters which are diagnostic of the Sacrifice Ceremony scene (Alva and Donnan 1993:132).

"The Sacrifice Ceremony was clearly of great importance in the religion of the Moche people, and their artists, like Christian artists depicting the Nativity, were able to manipulate, combine, or separate out its symbolic elements to create masterful works of art, each of which would have been perfectly recognizable to the Moche" (Alva and Donnan 1993:138).

In general, the Sacrifice Ceremony depicts naked men being executed and the exchange of a goblet, presumably filled with sacrificial blood, between human and supernatural figures (Bourget 2001:89). The Warrior Priest, the Bird Priest, the Priestess, and a fourth priest, often referred to as a

Feline Priest, are the central participants of the scene (Alva and Donnan 1993:133).



**Figure 1:** Sacrifice Ceremony rollout on Moche pottery (Donnan 1978). Reprinted with permission.

When the Sacrifice Ceremony was first identified in Moche art in 1974, scholars were unsure as to whether this ceremony was actually enacted by the Moche or whether the scene instead portrayed a mythical event played out by supernatural deities. However, recent major archaeological discoveries have provided new insight into the current interpretations of sacrificial depictions. There now exists clear physical evidence of human sacrifice (Alva and Donnan 1993; Bourget 1998, 2001), providing confirmation that some of the practices depicted on Moche vessels were actually carried out, with living individuals enacting the roles of the priests depicted in the art. A map of major Moche archaeological sites yielding evidence of human sacrifice is presented in Figure 2.

Burial contexts have yielded the remains of individuals attired in the same regalia as the central participants depicted in the Sacrifice Ceremony (Bourget 2001:89). In 1987, during excavation of three royal tombs at Sipán, Walter Alva and Christopher Donnan identified the individual buried in Tomb I not only as a warrior but specifically as the Warrior Priest, based on the objects in and around the plank coffin within the tomb (Alva and Donnan 1993). In the Sacrifice Ceremony, the Warrior Priest is consistently depicted wearing a conical helmet with a large crescent-shaped headdress, large circular ear ornaments, large bracelets, and a warriorback-flap. Each of these items was found inside the plank coffin. Furthermore, the sceptre held in the right hand of the individual in Tomb I strengthens his identification as the Warrior Priest, as depictions of such sceptres are limited to the Sacrifice Ceremony (Alva and Donnan 1993:140).

A looted tomb at Sipán contained many identical objects to those found in Tomb I, strongly suggesting that this tomb also contained an individual who held the role of the Warrior Priest (Alva and Donnan 1993:141). The contents of the coffin in Tomb II, including a large owl headdress, back-flap, and a copper cup placed near the right hand of the deceased, suggest that he may have been the Bird Priest of the Sacrifice Ceremony (Alva and Donnan 1993:163).

Since these mortuary excavations at Sipán, additional discoveries have been made along the North Coast that suggest that the Sacrifice Ceremony was actually performed. At San José de Moro (A.D. 550), an archaeological site located in the lower Jequetepeque Valley, approximately fifty kilometres south of Sipán, the tombs of two women who have been identified as the Priestesses of the Sacrifice Ceremony scene were excavated (Alva and Donnan 1993:223; Donnan and Castillo 1992). Samples taken from ceremonial goblets found inside one of these burials have tested positive for human blood antigens, providing the first conclusive evidence that the Moche filled goblets with human blood, possibly to be consumed by religious attendants as is depicted in the Sacrifice Ceremony (Bourget 2001:95). San José de Moro dates to at least 250 years later than Sipán, indicating that the Sacrifice Ceremony had a long duration in Moche culture (Alva and Donnan 1993:226).

A female burial at Huaca de la Cruz in the Viru Valley has also been linked to the Sacrifice Ceremony, as is evident by a wooden staff found alongside the skeletal remains that is similar to an anthropomorphized staff depicted in the Sacrifice Ceremony scene (Bourget 2001:89).

These archaeological discoveries have led to several important conclusions regarding Moche social and ritual organization. Firstly, members of the Moche elite impersonated deities or supernatural figures and presided over ceremonies involving the sacrifice of captives. Based on the presence of multiple, asynchronous burials impersonating the same deity, it appears that these ritual roles were passed on through time. Furthermore, evidence seems to suggest that the Sacrifice Ceremony was enacted not only in one location, but at multiple sites extending from the

## TOTEM 4

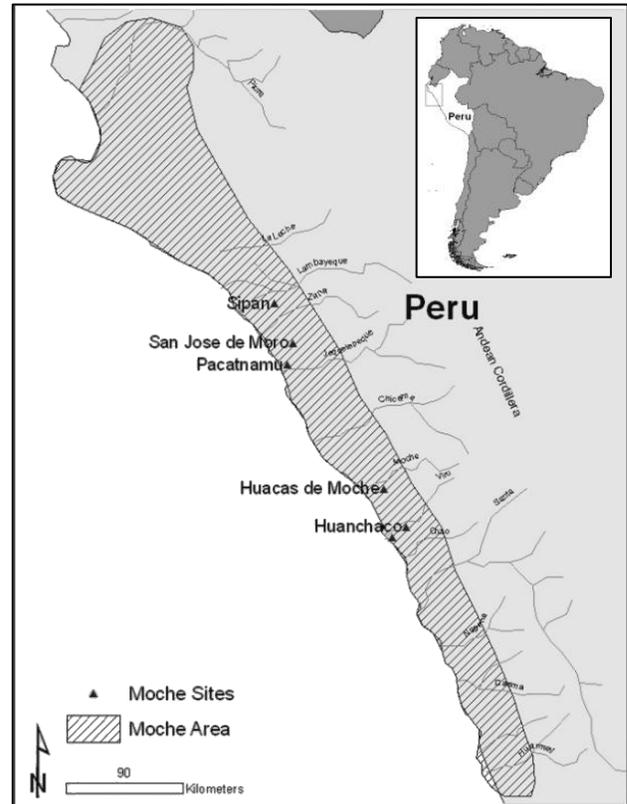
Lambayeque Valley in the north to the Nepeña Valley in the south (Verano 2001b:115). Given the widespread geographic and temporal distribution of the Sacrifice Ceremony both iconographically and archaeologically, it can be hypothesized that it formed part of a state religion, with a priesthood of both men and women in each region of the empire who dressed in prescribed ritual attire and performed the ritual. When members of the priesthood died, they were buried at the temple where the Sacrifice Ceremony took place, wearing regalia and objects they had used to perform the ritual. Subsequently, other men and women were chosen to replace them, to dress like them, and to perform the same ceremonial role (Alva and Donnan 1993:226).

The Mountain Sacrifice Ceremony is another common but less extensively studied sacrificial scene in Moche iconography. In this scene, supernatural figures known as Wrinkle Face and Iguana are depicted participating in a sacrificial activity that takes place in a mountain setting (Bourget 2006). Garth Bawden (1996:70) has hypothesized that as locales of direct access to the supernatural world, mountain peaks may have provided an ideal location for ritual, including human sacrifice. Archaeological evidence for the enactment of mountain sacrifice has been largely elusive to date. However, the archaeological evidence of the Sacrifice Ceremony has confirmed that Moche iconography is realistic and narrative in nature, suggesting that other depictions, such as the Mountain Sacrificial Ceremony, may have correlate in the archaeological record.

### **Bioarchaeological Evidence of Moche Human Sacrifice**

Despite the prevalence of iconographic depictions of human sacrifice, there have been relatively few finds of sacrificial human remains attributable to the Moche (Sutter and Cortez 2005:526). The few physical remains of human sacrificial victims that have been recovered can be classified into two groups: those that were buried in formal graves, often accompanying high-status individuals, and remains from ceremonies involving the mass sacrifice of captives. These two contexts for sacrificial remains will be referred to as funerary

and warrior, respectively. According to John Verano (2001:171), the demographic characteristics of sacrificial victims and the way their remains were treated may provide insight into the meaning and purpose of a particular sacrificial practice.



**Figure 2:** Major Moche archaeological sites yielding evidence for human sacrifice.

### **Sacrificial Remains from Funerary Contexts**

Sacrificial remains from funerary contexts comprise the minority of human remains identified as the result of sacrifice. In most Moche interments, retainers accompanying elite figures exhibit evidence for an extended period between death and burial. Therefore, such retainers do not likely represent sacrificial victims, as their deaths would have greatly preceded those of the principal elites with whom they are entombed. However, there are rare cases, of presumably sacrificed retainers, or individuals who were killed for offertory purposes during the funerary ritual of the principal figure (Millaire 2004:376). Human sacrifice was occasionally a component of funerary rituals of high status individuals, with sacrificial victims placed over the tombs of elites to act as guardians or servants to

the dead (Benson 2001:7; Bourget 2001:90). The placement of sacrificed retainers in elaborate Moche tombs does not appear to have antecedents in the cultures of northern Peru, leading Donnan (1995:151) to suggest that this practice may have been introduced by the Moche. However, it is important to note that these earlier cultures are inadequately studied and remain poorly understood; caution must be exercised when assuming Moche innovation of sacrificial retainers.

In most Moche funerary contexts, the sacrificed victims were female, but the identity of the sacrificed females and their relationship to the principal male remains unknown. Examples of this type include females sacrificed and buried with a high-ranking principal burial at Huaca de la Cruz (Millaire 2004:376). A cotton sash found around the neck of one of these females suggests that she had been strangled. Duncan Strong and Clifford Evans (1952:152,158) interpret the sash, in combination with the tightly flexed position of the unwrapped body, as evidence of sacrifice to accompany the main male figure in the tomb. Another example of sacrificial human offerings comes from an elaborate burial chamber at the coastal site of Huanchaco in the Moche Valley. The remains of a dismembered adult female were found in a tomb accompanying an adult male, indicative of the sacrifice and dismemberment of the retainer prior to or during the funerary ritual of a member of the local elite (Millaire 2004:377). Sacrificed individuals in Tombs I and II at Sipán (Alva and Donnan 1993) and seven sacrificed victims in tombs at the site of Pacatnamu provide further examples of sacrificial human offering in the context of mortuary ritual (Sutter and Cortez 2005:526).

#### *Sacrificial Remains from Warrior Contexts*

Recent archaeological excavations have provided evidence for a second context of human sacrificial remains. While funerary sacrificial victims received a modified version of customary Moche mortuary treatment, this was not the case for war captives chosen for sacrifice (Verano 1995:190). Warrior sacrifices are characterized by the “disrespectful” post-mortem treatment of sacrificed war captives, including intentional mutilation, the lack of a ceremonious burial, and intentional

exposure of the victims to vultures and other scavengers (Verano 1995:195; 2001). Such treatment towards the victims implies that this type of sacrificial ritual is quite distinct from sacrifice in funerary contexts. The sacrificial remains from Huaca de la Luna in the Moche Valley are the best known example of the warrior sacrificial context. However, similarly-treated sacrificial victims from the sites of Dos Cabezas, Pacatnamu, and Cao Viejo suggest that the capture, sacrifice, dismemberment, and informal disposal of adult male warriors was not an isolated event, but instead represented a broader cultural practice performed at prominent Moche sites (Sutter and Verano 2007:195).

There is longstanding debate among scholars over whether Moche iconographic combat scenes, sacrifice scenes, and associated archaeological evidence represent a form of ritualized combat among the elite class, or secular warfare and conquest (Verano 2001b:111). There are currently three competing models used by archaeologists working on the North Coast of Peru to explain Moche warrior sacrifice. The first assumes that the victims were local Moche who participated in battles staged specifically to provide such victims:

“Most scholars who have described [combat scenes in Moche iconography] interpret them as some form of ritualized combat among the Moche elite...this interpretation is based on a number of common elements in the scenes, such as the number and placement of figures, their clothing, ornamentation and weapons, the location in which combat takes place, and the apparent focus on taking captives rather than killing the enemy. Scenes showing the display of captives and their sacrifice at rituals presided over by Moche supernaturals provide additional support for the hypothesis that Moche combat was formalized and ritual in nature” (Verano 2001b:112).

Some scholars have proposed similarities between Moche battle and historical accounts of ritualized combat among the nobles of Inca Cuzco and ritual battles among modern highland groups in Ecuador and Peru (Topic and Topic 1997 cited in Verano 2001b). However, most injuries incurred in such ritual battles are minor, and prisoners, if taken, are later returned. This is quite distinct from the Moche case, where archaeological evidence proves

## TOTEM 6

that prisoners did not return home (Verano 2001b:112). The second model states that the Moche sacrificial victims were the result of warfare with non-Moche state polities to the south and east during state expansion. However, based on depictions of warrior attire and weaponry, it would appear that warriors on both sides of the battle are Moche (Bourget 2001:93). Furthermore, evidence of frequent warfare between the Moche and their culturally distinct neighbours, in the form of abandoned settlements, fortified sites along territorial frontiers, or skeletal remains showing signs of interpersonal violence, has been largely elusive to date (Verano 2001b:117). The third model assumes that the sacrificial victims represent a number of culturally similar but independent feuding polities, being enemy Moche warriors captured during battles with competing neighbours (Sutter and Cortez 2005:521). The exact nature of Moche political organization is still a subject of considerable debate. However, the evidence of multiple ceremonial centers along the coast such as at Sipán, San José de Moro, El Brujo, Moche, and Panamarca, which all show evidence of participation in combat and the sacrifice of prisoners, tends to support a model of Moche society composed of a number of competing polities rather than a centralized state controlled from the Moche Valley (Verano 2001b:123).

Evidence from Huaca de la Luna will be presented as a case study in an effort to determine the most likely model of Moche warfare and warrior sacrifice. Huaca de la Luna is only one site for which warrior sacrificial contexts have been documented and should not be blindly used as a general template for Moche warrior sacrifice. Due to the thoroughness of research being undertaken at this site, however, it provides an ideal example through which to explore Moche sacrifice, and consequently warfare and political organization.

### ***Huaca de la Luna: A Case Study of the Warrior Sacrificial Context***

Huacas de Moche, located six kilometres inland from the Pacific Ocean in the Moche Valley, is generally accepted as the seat of influence for the southern sphere of Moche occupation (Sutter and Verano 2007:193). Within the Huacas de Moche

site, the Huaca de la Luna platform mound is found at the foot of Cerro Blanco, and is composed of three platforms linked together by a series of terraces, corridors, and plazas (Bourget 2001:96). Huaca de la Luna yielded no evidence for residential activities; the colourful friezes of Moche deities, the elite tombs of the Moche priests in the platforms, and plazas containing human sacrificial victims all attest to its ceremonial function (Sutter and Cortez 2005:528). According to Santiago Uceda (2001:63), the different spaces identified at Huaca de la Luna were used for the performance of different types of rituals. Huaca de la Luna presents a unique opportunity for the study of Moche sacrifice because it provides extensive evidence of organized sacrificial practices outside of funerary contexts (Bourget 2001b:93).

### ***Mortuary and Osteological Analyses at Huaca de la Luna***

In 1995, the disarticulated remains of more than 70 sacrificed individuals were recovered from Plaza 3A at Huaca de la Luna (Bourget 2001:90). These remains were deposited in fifteen strata, representing at least five distinct rituals. Skeletal remains from at least two of the sacrificial episodes were embedded in mud, suggestive that the victims were sacrificed during *El Niño* events, which are severe climatological patterns resulting in torrential rain, flooding, famine and disease on the normally arid coast (Bourget 2001:91). Bourget has hypothesized that these sacrificial events might have been performed as rituals directed toward the ancestors in a plea that the devastating rains caused by *El Niño* would cease and natural order could be restored (Bourget 1998). However, other sacrificial remains were found in layers of windblown sand, indicating that they were deposited during more typical dry conditions (Sutter and Verano 2007:195). Therefore, caution is required when assuming a direct correlation between sacrifice and environmental crisis. While climatological phenomena may have played an occasional role in stimulating warfare and the taking of prisoners for sacrifice, these activities should be interpreted within the larger context of Moche religious and political organization (Verano 2005:288).

The first sacrifice was carried out at Platform II during a period of torrential rain and represents only five or six victims. A second ritual sacrifice was performed directly on the dried and hardened clay surface of the first sacrificial event. The second ritual event was much more extensive than the first, with many more victims "dispatched to the ancestors" (Bourget 2001b:100). The sequence of events and the positioning of the human remains are indicative of a high degree of ritual organization (Bourget 2001:91). Fragments of at least 50 unfired clay effigies of seated, nude males with ropes tied around their necks were found with the human remains. After sacrifice, the victims were left in the plaza for some time, exposed to sun, wind, and insects. Pupal cases of muscoid flies, the weathering of bone, and the sun-dried layer of mud are indicative of a period of exposure to the natural elements after the ritual took place, with subsequent covering with sand and layers of clay (Bourget 2001b:102).

The remains of an additional 24 intact sacrificial victims, as well as numerous incomplete remains and isolated skeletal elements, have been documented for Huaca de la Luna Plaza 3C. The remains show similar evidence as those from Plaza 3A, suggesting torture, flaying of victims, and the slitting of throats. Evidence for ritual sacrifice during episodes of heavy rainfall is absent in Plaza 3C. Huaca de la Luna Plaza 3B excavations have also yielded remains of at least seven sacrificial victims, which clearly show cut marks indicating dismemberment and intentional defleshing. The current archaeological evidence supports the idea that all of the plazas at the Huaca de la Luna may have been used for sacrifice (Uceda 2001).

The archaeological and bioarchaeological evidence of sacrificial practices from Huaca de la Luna appears to be consistent with iconographical representations of warrior sacrificial contexts. Manipulations of the sacrificed victims included removal of the skin from the face, removal and scatter of body parts, and the insertion of body parts or other materials into the victims. This post-mortem treatment is consistent with artistic depictions of severed human heads and mutilated bodies (Verano 1995:192).

Skeletal analyses of the sacrificial remains from Huaca de la Luna indicate that remains from Plazas 3A and 3C show a similar demographic composition of young adult males, a similar manner of death and post-mortem treatment, and similar healed trauma, indicating that they were warriors held for some time after capture and prior to sacrifice. The Huaca de la Luna Plaza 3A individuals were all male, aged 15-39. Morphological skeletal analyses reveal that they were healthy, strong, and active individuals prior to death (Bourget 2001:92). The examination of skeletal fracture patterns, representing both well-healed and peri-mortem trauma, has led Verano (2001b:118) to suggest that the victims were professional warriors captured during violent encounters. Cut marks visible on the anterior surfaces of the vertebral bodies of the sacrificial victims appear to be the result of cutting the throat rather than an attempt at decapitation, which is consistent with the Sacrifice Ceremony in Moche artistic images (Verano 2001:181). The victims of Plaza 3C sacrifice rituals were also male, and range in age from late adolescence to young adulthood. Fractures to the hand, arm, and shoulder of many victims were in early stages of healing, signifying an extended period of time between capture and execution; either captives were brought from a distant location, or that they were held for some weeks prior to sacrifice (Verano 2005:284). Osteological analyses of the victims from Plaza 3C also suggest violent death, partial dismemberment, and evidence for defleshing, which may indicate a more complex ritual than is seen at Plaza 3A (Verano 2005:281). Verano (2005) proposes that the Moche may have been interested specifically in the defleshed skeletons of their victims for display or other purposes. This hypothesis is supported by the discovery of several isolated arms, a foot, and an articulated axial skeleton with ropes still tied around them, suggesting that they were originally suspended from some object. This evidence is consistent with iconographical scenes depicting detached limbs with ropes encircling them, indicative of the presentation of sacrificial remains prior to deposition in a small, walled patio (Verano 2005:287).

Recent molecular and morphogenetic analyses of bone from the Huaca de la Luna

## TOTEM 8

sacrificial remains are providing further insight into the identity of Moche warrior sacrificial victims. Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) evidence shows that human remains from the Moche site, including the urban sector, platform burials, and sacrificial contexts, are all characterized by genetic Haplotype A, indicating that the victims at Huaca de la Luna were drawn from the local population (Shimada 2004). However, evidence exists that the southern Moche exhibited little genetic variability and may have represented a coherent breeding population (Shimada et al. 2005 cited in Sutter and Verano 2007:204). This would make local Moche genetically undistinguishable from foreigners residing in adjacent valleys. Furthermore, a study of non-metric dental traits, which are known to have a strong genetic etiology and thus are a reliable measure of genetic relationships, indicates that the Huaca de la Luna sacrificial sample is biologically distinct and highly variable. This has led Sutter and Verano (2007) to suggest that the sacrificed individuals were likely drawn from a number of nearby polities instead of from the local Moche population. Moreover, non-metric trait analyses suggest that the Plaza 3A sample was drawn from more distant, genetically distinct North Coast populations than was the Plaza 3C sample, which showed greater uniformity.

#### *Origins of Sacrificial Victims at Huaca de la Luna*

The extensive archaeological and bioarchaeological analyses of the sacrificial victims from Huaca de la Luna, in combination with thorough iconographical analysis, allow tentative conclusions to be drawn regarding the origin of Moche warrior sacrificial victims and the nature of Moche warfare.

Bourget (2001:94) argues that there is a lack of evidence suggesting that the sacrificial victims were foreigners. As yet, mtDNA analysis cannot rule out the possibility that the sacrificial warrior victims were drawn from the local Moche population. However, it is expected that a relatively coherent breeding population in the Moche region would mask genetic differences between neighbouring populations. Non-metric morphological dental variation suggests that the victims were non-local. Although this morphogenetic technique cannot

identify the origins of the sacrificial victims, the biodistance data, in combination with evidence for the mortuary treatment of the sacrificial remains, does not support the notion that the victims were local Moche (Sutter and Verano 2007:204). Verano has argued that both the osteological and mortuary evidence from the sacrificial victims from Huaca de la Luna are atypical for Moche burials. The manner in which the victims were tortured, killed, and disposed of communicates a lack of respect that is more appropriate towards enemies than towards local warriors. An important aspect of prisoner capture and presentation in Moche art was the humiliation of captives, who were stripped of their weapons and elaborate clothing, including all markers of rank, and were then publicly displayed by their captors as nude prisoners hung with ropes (Verano 2005:289). As Verano (2005:288) indicates, "the denial of proper burial of victims in Plazas 3A and 3C was no doubt a significant and intentional statement about the social status of the victims and the nature of their deaths" (Verano 2005: 288).

When archaeological, iconographical, and bioarchaeological evidence is considered, the third model of Moche warfare, of local warfare among competing Moche polities, is best supported. This model is consistent with iconographic depictions of ritualized Moche-on-Moche combat and with the lack of respect demonstrated by the mortuary treatment of the sacrificed victims. Osteological evidence also supports this model, as non-metric dental traits indicate that the Plaza 3A sacrificial victims were warriors taken in combat with nearby competing polities, while individuals from Plaza 3C likely came from competing polities located in more distant valleys (Sutter and Verano 2007:204).

#### ***Theoretical Discussion***

##### *Death as a Rite of Passage*

Arnold van Gennep's classic work, *The Rites of Passage* (1972 [1909]), serves as a fruitful model through which Moche human sacrifice can be analyzed and interpreted. According to van Gennep (1972 [1909]), for every event, from birth, through life, to death, there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined social position to another. Because of this fundamental goal, there is a wide degree of

similarity among ceremonies that celebrate these rites of passage (van Gennep 1972 [1909]), and rites of passage tend to exhibit a similar structure cross-culturally.

Rites of passage can be broken into three major phases in terms of their order and content: separation, transition, and incorporation (van Gennep 1972 [1909]). These phases can then be applied to the structure of ritual, breaking the process into its three analogous component parts. The rite of separation ritualizes the removal of an individual from his or her usual position in life. Transitional, or liminal, rites emphasize transformation from one state into another. Rites of incorporation focus on the reconstitution of the individual and the community in a new form (van Gennep 1972 [1909]:10). The three ritual phases are not developed to the same extent by all peoples or in every ceremonial pattern. Therefore, while a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal, liminal, and postliminal rites, these three stages are not always equally elaborated.

Of particular relevance to the present discussion are rites of death and burial. Cross-culturally, ritual conduct surrounding death and burial is generally associated with transitions and passages; these associations are arguably some of the few universals of human behaviour that have been identified by anthropologists (Hill 1998:529). While rites of separation are of importance in funeral ceremonies, liminal rites often have a duration and complexity so great that they comprise the majority of the ritual (van Gennep 1972 [1909]:146). Andean funerary rituals can be particularly well-understood in terms of van Gennep's theoretical framework:

"...at the moment of death, the body is composed of flesh and bones, the soul is in the world of the living, and the mourners are within their proper social roles. After death, however, the corpse begins to putrefy, and the soul becomes liminal. It is neither of this world nor of the afterworld, and the mourners are removed from society because of their bereavement and kinship obligations to the deceased. Finally, all three are reintegrated into new roles or statuses. The clean, dry bones are placed within permanent facilities, the soul is

installed within the realm of the ancestors, and the mourners reassume their roles – or new ones – within society" (Rakita and Buikstra 2005:98).

Moche human sacrifice, as a unique form of death ritual, can also be analyzed in terms of van Gennep's model, and has identifiable phases consistent with a rite of passage. Sacrifice in mortuary contexts closely follows the pattern of funerary ceremonies. The sacrificial remains, once having passed through a liminal period of decay, are buried with a deceased high-status individual in an elaborate tomb. The soul of the sacrificial victim is believed to accompany that of the principal figure to the realm of the ancestors, acting either as a servant or guardian to the elite. Steve Bourget has argued that warrior sacrifice can also be interpreted following van Gennep's 'rites of passage' theoretical model. According to Bourget (2006), the death of the sacrificial victims represents the separation phase. The extended period of exposure on the plaza is the liminal phase, which comes to an end with the release of the victims' souls with the departure of the newly hatched, scavenging flies from the remains during the reintegration phase. However, it could be argued that in the case of warrior sacrificial victims, a permanent liminal position is maintained. Because warrior sacrificial victims were not afforded proper burial treatment, their journey to the realm of the ancestors remained incomplete, and therefore a rite of incorporation failed to occur. Such a deviation from the traditional funerary rite of passage is especially plausible if the warrior sacrificial victims do not represent local Moche but instead Moche from competing polities. This permanent liminality may be reflected in various aspects of the ritual ceremony. According to the Sacrifice Ceremony, the ritual is performed by costumed religious attendants portraying deities; they thus straddle the border between the natural and the supernatural realms. Furthermore, Moche ceremonial architecture, including the high platforms upon which warrior sacrifice was carried out, functioned as a dais that provided the living with greater access to divine forces. It thus held a transitional position between the physical and spiritual aspects of human experience, further

## TOTEM 10

enforcing the concept of liminality in warrior sacrificial rituals (Bawden 1996:71).

*Sacrifice in Relation to Moche Concepts of Death and Ancestor Worship*

Cross-culturally, death is often viewed as a transition from one existential state to another (Rakita and Buikstra 2005:97). Among the Moche, a tripartite system of iconography and religion has been proposed, entailing a world of the living, a world of the dead, and a world of mythical ancestors (Bourget 2006). The boundaries between these domains may have been blurred, as some high-ranking individuals may have been perceived as originating from the afterlife. The three states of human beings – alive, dead, or ancestral - would thus have been part of a continuum leading from life, through death, to the afterlife, with much fluidity between categories (Bourget 2006). The concept of a journey toward a certain destination after death seems to have constituted an integral part of Moche belief systems regarding death, and burial ritual would have played a significant role in linking the living, the dead, and the ancestors (Bourget 2006). Funerary and sacrificial rituals among the Moche were probably closely related, perhaps representing the two principal tenets of Moche religion. At Huaca de la Luna, tombs of sacrificial elites are placed just above the plaza containing the sacrificed warriors, reflecting a shared importance between funerary and sacrificial rituals (Bourget 2001b:114). Human sacrifice can thus be seen as a slightly deviated but conceptually related ritual to funerary customs, and therefore flows from the same fundamental beliefs concerning life, death, and the afterlife. The ritual offering of humans or human remains appears to have functioned as an important mediator between the living, the dead, and the supernatural in the Andean world - the Moche were no exception (Verano 1995:189).

William Duncan's (2005) study of veneration and violation in the archaeological record provides another useful model through which to interpret Moche sacrifice. According to Duncan, the post-mortem treatment of a body is influenced by the community's wish to either venerate or violate the deceased. Veneration includes aiding the soul of the deceased to a final resting place and honouring the

memory of the departed community member. Violation, alternatively, involves the deliberate destruction of the deceased's soul, thereby denying the deceased a final resting place (Duncan 2005:207). While it is presumptuous to assume what the Moche may have considered disrespectful treatment of the dead, particularly for warriors, customary mortuary practices offer insight into how veneration and violation may have been perceived by the Moche. Following a natural death, a Moche individual was usually buried in an extended supine position, with the arms resting alongside the body. The body was wrapped in one or more shrouds and often placed inside a cane coffin or tube. Offerings of textiles, ceramic vessels, gourd containers, and food and drink often accompanied the dead (Millaire 2004:373). Funerary ritual is thus one manner in which ancestor worship is carried out, by presenting the ancestors with offerings in exchange for the safe passage of the deceased into the realm of the afterlife (Dillehay 1995:17). The inclusion of sacrificed retainers in the tombs of high-ranking elites constitutes a form of veneration, both of the deceased and of the ancestors. Sacrifice in funerary contexts may thus have been performed in an effort to guarantee the principal figure's successful journey to the afterlife. The eventual union with the ancestors would thus ensure that the deceased would continue to be honoured after death.

The non-standard treatment of warrior sacrificial victims, on the other hand, suggests that these human remains were conceived of in a very different manner from those that were treated with standard mortuary practices (Verano 1995:189). The denial of a customary burial for sacrificial warriors and the seemingly disrespectful post-mortem treatment of the human remains may represent a form of violation as proposed by Duncan. The humiliation of warriors both after capture through the stripping of all signs of rank, and after sacrifice through the mutilation of the body and informal disposal, are consistent with Duncan's model of violation. Consequently, the violation of sacrificial warriors may have been a means of ensuring that the warriors' journey to the world of the ancestors was compromised. In Moche society, power was likely derived from the ancestors (Uceda 2001:62). Throughout the Andean region, attacking and

destroying the ancestors of outsiders, through the looting and destruction of the grave sites of non-locals, played a major role in social and political change by symbolically preventing competing states from gaining control (Dillehay 1995:17). The prevention of the sacrificed warriors' journey into the afterlife may thus represent a form of symbolic conquest by the dominant polity over neighbouring, competing polities.

#### *The Role of Sacrifice in the Moche Community*

An understanding of the motivations behind the two distinct sacrificial contexts thus leads to important conclusions regarding their respective social functions within the Moche community. The offering of sacrificial victims helped to ensure the successful transition of a deceased, high status individual from the world of the living, through the world of the dead, to a final resting place among the ancestors. As a regenerative force, therefore, funerary sacrifice provided the means for reintegrating the community after a traumatic event such as the death of an elite member. Through sacrifice, balance was restored, the life-cycle of the deceased individual was completed, and the continuance of the community was assured (Hill 1998:536).

Sacrifice in warrior contexts presents a drastic deviation from this social function. Ethnographic research in the Andes indicates that ancestor cults strengthen the cohesion of the community and its economic or political character and establish a community's claim to the territory which it controls (Dillehay 1995:17). By preventing the creation of ancestor cults of competing polities through the execution and violation of war captives, Moche warrior sacrifice served to reaffirm the power and the status of the captors and of the ceremonial center where the sacrifices occurred, such as Huaca de la Luna.

#### **Conclusion**

Reconstructing ideology in prehistoric human societies is a complex process and an ambitious goal in archaeological studies due to the difficulty of inferring worldviews, beliefs, values, and intellectual frameworks from material culture. The study of Moche human sacrifice highlights the

inherent limitations in restricting oneself to a single line of evidence when attempting to explore topics as multi-faceted as ancient religious beliefs and ritual organization. However, by adopting a holistic approach that incorporates iconographic, archaeological, and bioarchaeological evidence, and by grounding the data in broader anthropological theory, emergent patterns become clear and even challenging archaeological research problems can be resolved.

An analysis of multiple lines of evidence for sacrifice at Huaca de la Luna suggests that the sacrificed warriors originated from competing non-local Moche polities. This conclusion has significant implications for the motivations behind the ritual in terms of Moche conceptions of death and ancestor worship. While funerary sacrifice served to benefit the ancestor cult by ensuring the successful journey of deceased elite from life to the afterlife, warrior sacrifice may have served to prevent such a journey by Moche from competing polities, thereby weakening rival ancestor cults. Warrior sacrifice may thus present an exception to Arnold van Gennep's tripartite structure of 'rites of passage' because it permanently prevents an incorporation phase. Such an interpretation raises an important question: if the purpose of warrior sacrifice was to violate outsiders in an effort to weaken competing ancestor cults, rather than to offer a sacred human life, is the use of the term 'sacrifice' appropriate? In the case of the warrior sacrificial context, lives were not terminated to appease a divine force but instead to undermine supernaturally-derived morale of enemy polities. Perhaps a better designation is 'ritualized execution,' which in framework of Moche ceremonial and political organization more accurately engages with the obvious intent for slaughter and disrespectful treatment of rival warriors. A more complete understanding of Moche warfare may result in the reconsideration of the application of the term 'sacrifice' to warrior contexts. Further archaeological excavation of Moche sacrificial sites and extensive macroscopic and molecular osteological analyses of sacrificial remains will allow both funerary and warrior human sacrifice to become more thoroughly understood in terms of Moche social, political, and ideological organization.

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### To Remember, or To Forget? Collective memory and reconciliation in Guatemala and Rwanda

Tamara Hinan

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The expression “never again” has been used repeatedly following mass atrocities of the twentieth century, most notably the Holocaust (Sanford 2009:26). “Never again” represents the international commitment that no population will ever again be subjected to the horrors of genocide. The Spanish translation of the expression, *Nunca Más*, was the title of the Argentinean Truth Commission in the 1980s (Sanford 2009:26). “Never again” appeared following the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Important sites become commemorative memorials, where individuals go to pay their respects to the victims. These sites include the preserved concentration camp at Auschwitz, and the small, brick church of Ntarama in Rwanda, containing skeletal remains of many of the estimated 5,000 Tutsi slaughtered at the site during the genocide, (Buckley-Zistel 2006:132). Similar memorials exist elsewhere, including a small block of stone on the edge of the Plaza Mayor in Guatemala City, with the words “*A los heroes anónimos de la paz*” chiseled into the side, meaning “to those anonymous heroes of peace” (Smith 2001:59). And yet, time after time, “again” continues to arrive. This attempt to preserve the past seems to be for naught. With such seemingly futile attempts at

commemoration as a part of the reconciliation process, one begins to question what role memory plays in the healing process in a post-conflict society.

This paper will examine the post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Guatemala and Rwanda, and the impact of memory upon the rebuilding process. Having both experienced violent conflict, and having taken opposing approaches to the role of memory within the reconstruction process, Guatemala and Rwanda establish the necessity of memory in community reconstruction. Memory plays a crucial role in post-conflict reconstruction, as it aids the establishment of a collective memory, which in turn contributes to the creation of cultural identity, and the establishment of a narrative of truth, both of which are necessary in the rebuilding process.

#### **La Violencia – Mass Atrocity in Guatemala**

For nearly three-and-a-half decades between 1962 and 1996, the civilian population of Guatemala suffered severe violations of human rights at the hands of the military (CEH 1999:2). The Commission for Historical Clarification (abbreviated from its Spanish name to CEH) was a Truth Commission established to investigate the atrocities