

ARQUEOLOGÍA MOCHICA NUEVOS ENFOQUES



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PORTACHUELO DE CHARCAPE: DAILY LIFE AND POLITICAL POWER IN THE HINTERLAND DURING THE LATE MOCHE PERIOD

Ilana Johnson*

This paper explores hinterland communities that were established during the Late Moche Period (A.D. 600-800) on the North Coast of Peru. These communities appear to have been ethnically Moche but politically semi-autonomous. The site of Portachuelo de Charcape, located in the Jequetepeque Valley, is used as a case study of a small hinterland community that developed during this period. The site is located west of San José de Moro and is separated by a small chain of hills. Although it is not located on a defensible hilltop, Charcape is fortified by long stone walls restricting access to the only two routes through the hills. The site consists of two small huacas and several administrative structures. There is also an enclosed domestic compound consisting of several small structures that served various functions. Excavations during the 2003 field season have led to interesting insights into the daily lives of individuals living at the site in prehistory. Members of the community were living at the site on a permanent basis and conducting subsistence activities, such as weaving, cuy husbandry, food processing, and chicha preparation in the domestic sector of the site. Members of the community at Charcape also performed local rituals in the ceremonial part of the site. However, evidence of ties with San José de Moro suggest that the inhabitants of Charcape most likely traveled to the nearby Moche center to participate in larger ceremonies related to prominent Moche figures such as the Priestess and Wrinkleface. Moro-style fineline ceramic fragments also suggest that high status individuals at Charcape allied themselves with San José de Moro in order to legitimize their authority through their political ties and access to elite goods. Political ties with San José de Moro would have been advantageous, providing protection from competitors and enemies.

Este escrito explora las comunidades de interior que fueron establecidas durante el periodo Moche Tardío (600-800 d.C.) en la costa norte del Perú. Estas comunidades aparecen haber sido étnicamente moche, pero políticamente semiautónomas. El sitio de Portachuelo de Charcape, localizado en el valle de Jequetepeque, es utilizado como un caso de una comunidad pequeña de interior que desarrolló durante este periodo. El sitio se localiza el oeste de San José de Moro y está separado por una cadena pequeña de colinas. Aunque no se localice en una cumbre defendible, Charcape está fortificado con muros largos que restringen las dos únicas rutas de acceso entre las colinas. El sitio consiste en dos huacas pequeñas y varias estructuras administrativas. Hay también un recinto doméstico encerrado que consta de varias estructuras pequeñas que sirvieron para varias funciones. Las excavaciones durante la temporada de campo 2003 revelaron información interesante sobre la vida diaria de individuos que vivieron en el sitio en la prehistoria. Los miembros de la comunidad vivían en el sitio permanentemente y realizaban las actividades de subsistencia, tales como la textilera, la cría de cuyes, el procesado de alimento y la preparación de chicha en el sector doméstico del sitio. Los miembros de la comunidad en Charcape realizaron también los rituales locales en la parte ceremonial del sitio. Sin embargo, la evidencia de vínculos con San José de Moro sugiere que los habitantes de Charcape probablemente habrían viajado a centros mochica cercanos para tomar parte en las ceremonias más grandes relacionadas a figuras mochica prominentes como la Sacerdotisa o el Ai Apaec. La evidencia de fragmentos de «línea fina» de estilo Moro sugiere también que individuos de estatus alto en Charcape se aliaron asimismo con San José de Moro para legitimar su autoridad por sus vínculos políticos y conseguir acceso a los productos valiosos. Los vínculos políticos con San José de Moro habrían sido ventajosos, proporcionando protección frente a competidores y enemigos.

The site of Portachuelo de Charcape (Charcape) is a small domestic and ritual site located in the hinterland of the Moche territory in the Jequetepeque Valley (figure 1). The site was first reported by Wolfgang and Giesela Hecker (1990) and was subsequently studied by Tom Dillehay (2001), Alan Kolata, and Edward Swenson (this volume). It is a

small hamlet with its own ritual area, and contains a distinctive ceramic assemblage consisting of platform rims, fineline ceramic vessels, and Wari-influenced polychrome wares, which are all diagnostic of the Late Moche Period. Since it is a single occupation site, it provides a rare and valuable window into the daily lives of individuals living in the hinterland

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Figure1. Major Moche sites on the North Coast of Peru, including Portachuelo de Charcape.

during this time. The site was built in an ecologically challenging location on a dry, rocky pampa west of the fertile valley floor, without immediately detectible water or obvious food sources. However, several environmental factors affected settlement location and political stability during the Late Moche Period. In this paper, I will describe the domestic remains from Charcape and attempt to paint a picture of the daily life and subsistence of the inhabitants of the site. Then, I will discuss the changes that occurred at the end of the Middle Moche Period and how they affected the Moche region at large. Finally, I will address how these changes impacted the site of Charcape in relation to choice of settlement location, political ties, and economic endeavors.

Daily Life at Portachuelo de Charcape

The site of Portachuelo de Charcape is located south of the Chamán River (a branch of the Jequetepeque River), 40-50 kilometers from San José de Moro. The site consists of two small adobe *huacas*, several adobe structures with stone foundations, a large domestic compound made of cane and plaster, and several smaller structures that have been eroded away by torrential downpours and flooding during El Niño events (figure 2). This type of architectural layout has been termed a «huaca community» by Dillehay (2001: 267), and has been identified at other sites in the Jequetepeque and Zaña valleys dating to the Late Moche Period (Swenson, this

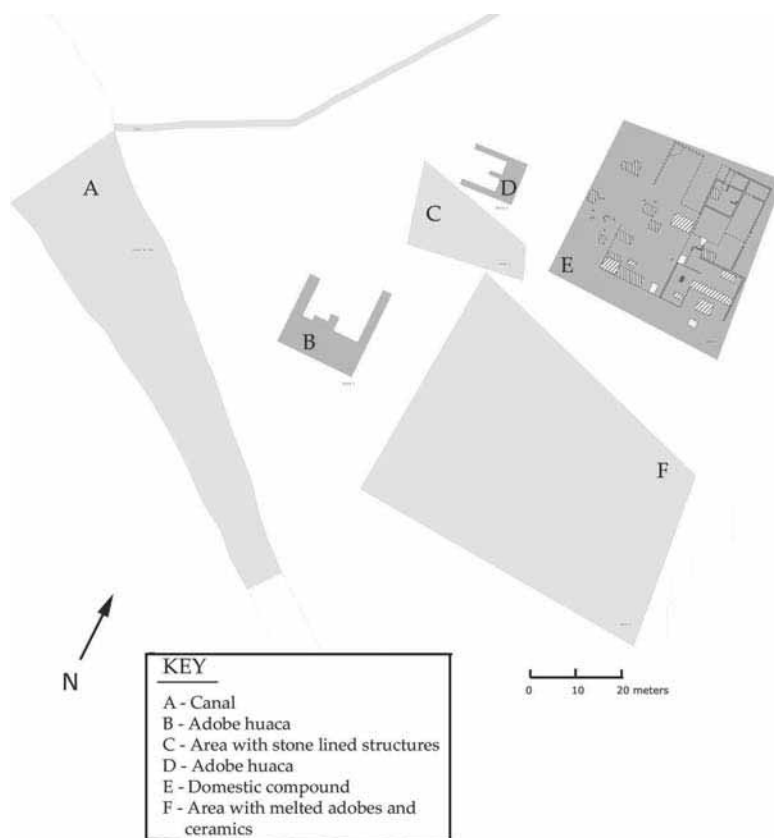


Figure 2. Map of Portachuelo de Charcape.

volume). Similar sites have not been found in the Southern Moche Region and do not appear to date to any other time period. It is speculated that Portachuelo de Charcape and similar sites located nearby housed small-scale local elites with ties to larger Moche sites such as San José de Moro.

The adobe *huacas* created a public ceremonial sector and contain only a few ceramic sherds and *Spondylus* shell fragments. It is interesting to note that these U-shaped *huacas* are very similar to models (*maquetas*) found in high status burials from this time period (Castillo *et al.* 1997; Rucabado, this volume). The significance of this architectural style remains unclear, but it was certainly an important feature of several communities during this time period. The

adobe structures with stone foundations had very little refuse associated with them and had well-packed and clean floors. These structures could either have been administrative buildings, storage structures for ritual paraphernalia, or residences for elites or religious specialists. They were most likely the residences of local elites within which administration and storage took place. The site was too small to have supported full-time religious or administrative specialists. The structures were built in a manner similar to elite residences at other sites. They were not, however, as large or formally laid-out as the residences from the urban sector at the Huacas de Moche (Pozorski and Pozorski 2003). It is likely that local, lower-status elites lived in these structures but did

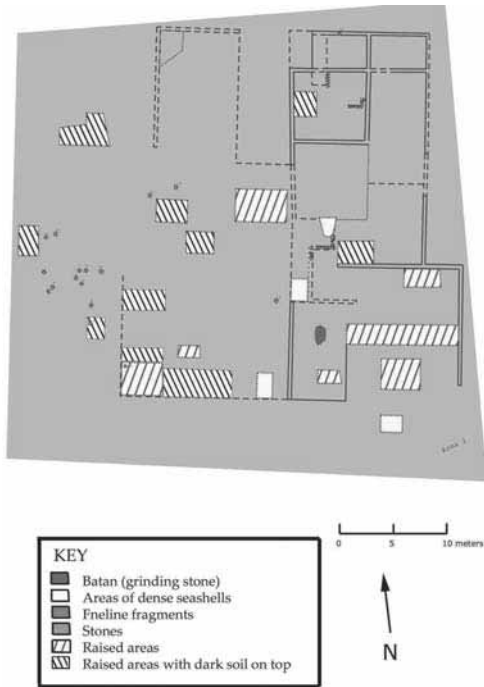


Figure 3. Plan view of the domestic compound.

not perform typical daily activities such as storage, food preparation, and weaving within the confines of their residences. These activities were probably carried out in a specialized facility. The majority of food processing and storage took place in the large domestic compound located near the elite structures (figure 3). It is difficult to surmise at this time whether the people living in the compound were servants or a family of elites. It is also possible that the compound served as a communal kitchen where people in the community came to produce food and *chicha* for the elites and for themselves.

The domestic compound measures approximately 40 by 40 meters and was built of long, thin pieces of cane that were tied together with twined rope. The cane was then plastered with very fine, whitish-gray clay. The compound consisted of several closed rooms and open patios, where a variety of domestic activities took place. There were also several raised areas, some with dark soil on top and others with yellowish soil.

One of these raised areas was excavated. This excavation revealed a collapsed structure with a cane roof. It is unclear, however, if all of the raised areas had roofed structures or if they were artificial platforms used for activities such as food preparation or sleeping. Further excavations will hopefully reveal the true nature of these elusive features.

Excavations within the domestic compound at Charcape yielded several different types of botanical remains, including cobs, cane fragments, cane twine, peanut shells, lucuma, gourd and squash fragments, textiles, string, wool, and processed cotton. Faunal remains included *cuy* (guinea pig), bird, crab, camelid, and shellfish (*Donax obesulus*, *Sinum cymba*, *Thais haemastoma*, *Thais chocolata*, and *Polinices uber*). A *mano*, several cobs, and a peanut shell were discovered, along with some charcoal deposits, in the center of the compound near a *batán* (i.e., grinding stone) (figure 3). The large amount of corn found near the *batán* and the presence throughout the site of *ralladores* (i.e., incised ceramic bowls) for grinding corn and fragments of large ceramic vessels (referred to as *paicas* or *tinajas*) indicate *chicha* production, fermentation, and storage (Shimada 1994: 222; Moore 1989; Delibes and Barragán, this volume) (figure 4).

In addition to preparing food, the people who worked in the compound weaved, raised animals, and collected marine resources. Although no spindle whorls were found at Charcape, there is convincing evidence that weaving occurred at the site. Partial textiles, spun string, processed cotton, and camelid wool have all been repeatedly found within the domestic compound. Three thin metal objects, each with a small concave disc at one end, were also found at different locations throughout the compound (figure 5). These objects are perplexing because they have not been found at other sites dating to the Late Moche Period. They may have been shawl pins, as women in Andean art are sometimes portrayed with shawls pinned at the shoulders. The pins in Andean art, however, usually have larger, flatter heads. It is also possible that they are snuff spoons, like those found in the highlands during this time period. No other snuff paraphernalia, however, has been found at the site to date.



Figure 4. Association found within the domestic compound: a) corn cobs, b) fragments of *tinajas*, c) fragmented *mano*, d) fragments of *ralladores*.

One of the raised areas at the site featured postholes at the base and large amounts of collapsed cane in the upper levels of the excavation unit, suggesting a roofed structure. Due to the dense concentration of *cuy* coprolites found under the layer of cane, it seems probable that the structure served as a *cuy* corral that was covered to protect the animals from the elements. There were also large amounts of marine resources found at the site, including several types of mollusks and numerous crab claws. This suggests that either a significant amount of resource acquisition time was spent traveling to the coast to collect marine resources or the inhabitants of Charcape had strong ties with nearby coastal communities. The most ubiquitous type of mollusk found at the site was *Donax obesulus*, which is known from many earlier sites in the Moche region and continued to be an important component in the Moche diet into the Late Moche Period.

It is also interesting to note that agricultural implements have not been found at the site, either during surface collection or excavation. It is therefore difficult to assess whether the inhabitants of Charcape were tending their own fields. It is not likely that these individuals were practicing agriculture on the dry pampa where their settlement was built. There is irrigable land to the east of the site, however, on the other side of the small chain of hills that separates it from the river valley. It has also been speculated that the canal located directly to the north of the site could have been used in Late Moche times to collect torrential rainfall from the pampa and carry it to agricultural fields located a few kilometers to the east. There are several possible explanations for why agricultural implements have not yet been found at Charcape. It is possible that the site's inhabitants took their agricultural tools with them when they abandoned the site. This pattern, however, has not been observed at other Moche sites,

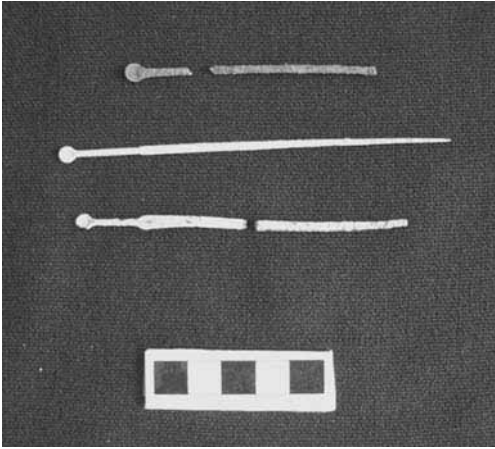


Figure 5. Metal objects found within the domestic compound.

such as Santa Rosa-Quirihuac in the Moche Valley (Gumerman and Briceño 2003: 223). It is also possible that the residents of Charcape stored their tools in a place that has not yet been excavated. A final scenario is that the residents of Charcape exclusively collected maritime resources and traded them for agricultural goods with groups living closer to the valley floor. This scenario is unlikely, due to the site's inland location. The area in which the site is located is still traveled by fishermen today, however, who are on their way to and from the nearby shore.

Regardless of the details of their subsistence strategies, the daily lives of the inhabitants of Charcape were typical of the Moche. They engaged in many of the same activities as other Moche communities from earlier time periods. However, there does not seem to have been much camelid consumption, as is the case at many high status sites (Pozorski and Pozorski 2003). Instead, the residents of Charcape raised *cuy* and collected marine resources for protein. Botanical evidence from Charcape seems to show a higher dependence on marine resources, especially mollusks (*Donax obesulus*), than at sites such as Santa Rosa-Quirihuac. Although their diet was diverse, consisting of peanuts, lucuma, squash, and a variety of protein sources, corn seems to have been the predominant cultigen consumed. The presence of a *batán*, a *mano*, and *ralladores* suggests

that they also engaged in *chicha* production for feasting and payment for services. This seems to follow the pattern observed at other sites, such as Pampa Grande in the Lambayeque Valley (Shimada 1994: 221) and Ciudad de Dios in the Moche Valley (Billman 2004), where high status individuals relied on *chicha* as a major component of their ability to persuade and motivate the community. In contrast, maize appears to have served a much less significant role at the lower status site of Santa Rosa-Quirihuac, despite the fact that several *butanes* for grinding have been documented at the site. Paleobotanical evidence has revealed that beans are present in quantities four times that of maize at the site (Gumerman and Briceño 2003:231). If we compare the occupation at Charcape to other Late Moche sites, the residents of Charcape appear to have been most similar to the middle class inhabitants of Galindo in the Moche Valley. Both lived in well-planned and well-built structures and had access to fineline ceramics and copper items (see Bawden 1982). Portachuelo de Charcape seems to be even more similar to Ciudad de Dios in the Moche Valley, even though the two sites date to different time periods (Gumerman and Briceño 2003; Billman 2004). Both sites have higher and lower status buildings and artifacts. Each site has evidence for subsistence activities as well as local ceremonial activity. Charcape has a small ceremonial precinct, and Ciudad de Dios has evidence for large-scale *chicha* production and feasting. Finally, leaders at both sites seem to have administered local groups of people while maintaining ties to larger centers located nearby.

Instability in the Late Moche Period

A drastic change occurred on the North Coast of Peru around A.D. 500-600 that forever changed the face of the Moche and the cultures that succeeded them. Ice core data from the Quelccaya Ice Cap in the Andes indicate a detrimental period of drought and torrential rainfall that affected the coast for several decades due to a prolonged period of El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events (Shimada *et al.* 1991). This phenomenon has periodically affected the inhabitants of western South America since

people first settled along the Pacific coast. Waters from the east coast of Papua New Guinea warm and move westward towards South America, bringing a whole new ecosystem and weather pattern with them (Cane 1983, 1986; Dillehay 2001: 278). This long period of environmental instability had detrimental effects on the Moche sense of community and religious ideology. In addition to the environment, other factors caused instability, including the new and powerful Wari Empire in the highlands and mounting tensions within the Moche political sphere (Bawden 2001: 291; Castillo 2001: 308). Southern valleys such as the Nepeña, Virú, Santa, and Casma, which had been populated and integrated into the Moche sociopolitical sphere during the Middle Moche Period, were suddenly abandoned (Proulx 1985; Willey 1953; Wilson 1988, 1995). The largest and most impressive Moche center (i.e., the Huacas de Moche) suffered population loss at this time, but continued as a major ritual center during the Late Moche Period (Uceda 2001).

Within the Southern Moche Region, new sites emerged that were significantly different from previous centers like the Huacas de Moche. The site of Galindo in the Moche Valley was built by disenfranchised Moche groups who were selecting and rejecting old Moche cultural and artistic features in an attempt to separate and redefine their identities within the context of a new sociopolitical environment (Bawden 2001: 285). Large populations of farmers from the valley aggregated at Galindo and built small, poorly constructed houses with very few household goods. Moche stirrup-spout vessels continued to be used, but traditional iconographic elements appeared on the vessels at a much lower frequency (Lockard, this volume). A new form of decoration, repeating geometric impressions, and new blackware forms linked Galindo elites to Wari-influenced groups on the central coast (Bawden 2001: 297). The attempt by elites to redefine their identity and ideology in the prevailing political climate of the time was ultimately unsuccessful. The drastic architectural and artistic changes innovated at this time may have been too different from the images of power the inhabitants of Galindo had become used to at the Huacas de Moche. Without continuity, the

new population of commoners at Galindo may have felt alienated and become disenfranchised (Bawden 2001: 293). Although we do not know the exact reasons for the abandonment of Galindo, recent radiocarbon dates show that the site was inhabited for a short period of time when compared to other large Moche centers (Lockard, this volume).

San José de Moro

The instability of the Southern Moche Region is also found in the north during the Late Moche Period. As the dramatic abandonment of the southern region was occurring, several centers in the north were gaining power, such as San José de Moro in the Jequetepeque Valley (Castillo 2001). Other centers, like Pampa Grande in the Lambayeque Valley, rapidly emerged and developed into large urban centers (Shimada 1994, 2001). The site most relevant to the study of Portachuelo de Charcape is San José de Moro, which is located only a few kilometers away on the valley floor near the Chamán River. There is evidence of a Middle Moche occupation at San José de Moro, but it is a «distinct cultural phenomenon» from the Late Moche Period remains found at the site (Castillo 2001: 312; del Carpio, this volume). The Late Moche Period in the north is characterized by the sudden appearance of very sophisticated fineline ceramics and the introduction of Wari-influenced wares from coastal and highland groups with Wari connections. The iconography on finelines at San José de Moro embodies the old and the new synthesized together to create a comprehensive new Moche ideology and polity (Castillo 2001: 319-320). As Bawden (2001) found at Galindo, the emerging ideologies of many Late Moche sites included elements of an old Moche tradition revised with new ideological and mythological elements that helped legitimize and explain the changes that occurred due to fluctuating environmental and sociopolitical conditions.

Fineline vessel production was reduced south of the Pampa de Paiján, and a new elite ceramic workshop became centered at San José de Moro (Castillo 2001: 318). Iconographic images of the Priestess, Wrinkleface, ceremonial «badminton,» the



Figure 6. Wrinkleface fighting an anthropomorphized marine creature (from Donnan and McClelland 1999: 177, Fig. 5.66).



Figure 7. The Priestess riding in a reed boat (from Donnan and McClelland 1999: 176, Fig. 5.65).

bean and stick ceremony, and war clubs continued as major themes in Late Moche art. Some themes and figures that were very important in earlier times, such as the Sacrifice Ceremony, deer hunting, portrait vessels, mountain sacrifice, the coca chewing ceremony, ritual runners, and the parading and bleeding of prisoners, virtually disappeared (Donnan and McClelland 1999). Images that arose late in the Middle Moche Period, such as marine animals and themes, came to dominate the iconography of the Late Moche Period at San José de Moro. These new representations could have been in response to the pronounced environmental changes that occurred, which brought new attention to the ocean and how it affected the Moche world. Animals that flourish during El Niño events, such as swimming crabs, sea urchins, strombus shells, iguanas, and eagle rays, began to be depicted more frequently in Moche art, often as anthropomorphized deities (Donnan and McClelland 1999). An interesting twist on this new trend in Moche art is that traditional Moche figures, such as Wrinkleface, were often shown fighting these anthropomorphized marine creatures with tumi knives (figure 6).

Another iconographic shift that occurred in the Late Moche Period was a new emphasis on the Priestess and reed boats (Cordy-Collins 2001; Donnan and McClelland 1999: 280-283). The Priestess was first depicted in Phase III of Moche art, and is one of the principal figures in the Sacrifice Ceremony. The Sacrifice Ceremony is part of the Warrior Narrative, which includes scenes of battle,

the parading of warriors, and prisoner sacrifice. In the Sacrifice Ceremony, the Bird Priest or the Priestess presents a goblet, speculated to be filled with blood, to the Warrior Priest. The Priestess holds a goblet, is robed in distinct regalia (including a decorated tunic and a tasseled headdress with round objects at the tips), and has long braids that terminate in serpent heads. Several of the individuals depicted in the Sacrifice Ceremony were uncovered archaeologically at the site of Sipán, with very identifiable and distinct regalia linking them to the iconography (Alva and Donnan 1993). However, the Priestess was not among those buried at Sipán and does not appear archaeologically until the Late Moche Period at the site of San José de Moro (Castillo and Donnan 1994). It is interesting to note that some elements of the Sacrifice Ceremony were found in two high status tombs, including a goblet painted with anthropomorphized weapon bundles, metal representations of the tasseled headdress, and a large circular plate reminiscent of depictions of the Sacrifice Ceremony on fineline vessels and on a polychrome mural at Pañamarca (Alva and Donnan 1993: 225). In Phase V of Moche art, the Priestess inherits a slightly different headdress and is no longer associated with the Warrior Priest and Bird Priest (Donnan and McClelland 1999: 280-283). The Priestess is most often portrayed riding in a reed boat on the ocean with several different types of marine animals swimming in the water next to her. Often, there are several small jars with ropes around their necks in the lower portion of the boat. In one

depiction, she is even drinking from a goblet while riding in the reed boat (figure 7).

The Late Moche occupation of San José de Moro appears to have been strictly ritual in nature. Ceremonies, feasts, and burials were carried out within the context of the newly formed Late Moche ideology. Non-permanent adobe structures have been found in several parts of the site with remains of large ceramic *paicas* or *tinajas* used for *chicha* production (Delibes and Barragán, this volume). This evidence, combined with mortuary data that reveals that bodies were mummified and transported to San José de Moro, suggests that the site served as a ritual center for groups living in the valley, or adjacent valleys, which came to the site for annual feasts and interment ceremonies (Nelson 1998). Death and burial became central themes in Late Moche iconography at San José de Moro (Donnan and McClelland 1999: 276), perhaps reflecting a new emphasis on burial rituals in which members of the larger community participated. The first Priestess burial excavated at San José de Moro had a copper mask and tassels with hanging discs that would have caught the light as the coffin was paraded around. This was most likely an intentional addition to the outside of the coffin to be aesthetically pleasing to onlookers during the burial ceremony.

The majority of tombs at San José de Moro were of upper class (although not of the highest echelon) individuals buried in boot-shaped tombs with few high quality grave goods (Castillo 2001: 315). However, two impressive Late Moche chamber tombs have been discovered at the site, each containing an individual with specific regalia linking them to the Priestess in the Sacrifice Ceremony. The individuals in these tombs were placed in cane coffins that were wrapped in cloth and decorated with copper ornaments. The front end had a mask with disc eyes that would have swayed when the coffin was moved. Above the mask were two copper tassels, one of the defining characteristics of the Priestess in the Sacrifice Ceremony. The sides of the coffin had copper arms and legs, and in the center were jars with ropes around their necks, often depicted in images of the Priestess riding in reed boats (figure 7). These tombs had several niches and were filled with

hundreds of ceramics. The first Priestess tomb had a distinctive bowl from the highland polity of Cajamarca, two polychrome vessels from southern polities influenced by the Wari Empire (e.g., Nievería in the Rímac Valley), Spondylus shell from Ecuador, and lapis lazuli from Chile. The second Priestess tomb had an even larger number of ceramics, but most of these were of low quality and were produced locally in large quantities specifically for the interment. This tomb also contained locally produced Cajamarca Costeño vessels and red, highly polished Teotino vessels from the central coast (Donnan and Castillo 1994; Castillo 2001: 324).

The apparent linkage between elites at San José de Moro and other nearby and distant polities suggests an entirely different sort of sociopolitical organization than that observed earlier in Moche times. At the height of the Moche state, the worldview was very much centered on the Moche sphere, as can be seen in the dominance of distinct Moche artistic themes and craft production. It is only in the beginning and ending Moche phases that leaders developed ties with other distant and powerful polities that helped reinforce their power at home. Unstable environmental and political conditions required emerging leaders to incorporate familiar ideas and artistic representations with powerful symbols from afar in order to legitimize their status and position at home (Castillo 2001: 320; Goldstein 2000). The Wari culture was probably perceived as successful and powerful, and elites at San José de Moro would have desired artifacts that manifested that power. These visual markers of contact with powerful individuals would have instilled awe in the local commoners and reinforced the power that elites had over others (Castillo 2001: 324).

Moche iconography and ceramic vessel types were slowly replaced at San José de Moro by new artistic elements during the Transitional Period (Rucabado and Castillo 2003; see also Bernal and Bernuy, this volume; Rucabado, this volume). These artistic elements came to characterize the Lambayeque and Chimú cultures that later dominated the North Coast of Peru. The ceramic chronology at San José de Moro provides interesting insights into the changing nature of the occupation



Figure 8. Fragments of face-neck jars («King of Assyria») and platform rim ollas.

at the site (Castillo 2001). In the earliest phase (Phase A) of Late Moche ceramics at San José de Moro, face-neck jars predominate, finelines are introduced, and the first vessels with Wari influence are found in tombs. In Phase B, platform rim *ollas* dominate, finelines continue with emphasis on the Burial Theme and the Priestess, and a new face-neck vessel called the «King of Assyria» is introduced. This is the phase in which Charcape was occupied, as seen in the limited assemblage from the site consisting of platform rim *ollas*, finelines, and face-neck jars, including several «King of Assyria» vessels (figure 8). The final phase (Phase C) provides evidence of what was to come in the Transitional Period. Individuals were still buried in boot tombs, but the ceramic forms and iconography began to change. Fineline vessels disappeared, face-neck jars became less prevalent, face-body jars were more popular, and imitations of foreign styles, such as the Wari

polychrome and double-spout and bridge vessels, were made with Moche iconographic elements (Castillo 2001: 321). Finally, in the Transitional Phase elements from later cultures, oxidized double-spout and bridge vessels, monkeys and frogs on the rims of vessels, and female portrait vessels with braids made their first appearance (see Rucabado, this volume). Castillo remarks that:

In the end of this process, the only elements that disappear are those most directly associated with the elite [...]. We can infer, beginning with these transformations, that the predominant authority had changed—that the elite had lost control and were banished, at least from iconographic space. This would signal an internal deterioration that might have had an element of violence, as in this era defensive constructions, walled cities, and hill-top fortifications multiply—all indications of instability reaching violent levels and requiring action (2001: 325-326).

The Hinterland

Recent systematic pedestrian surveys of the Jequetepeque and Zaña valleys have revealed a fascinating picture of the Moche countryside during the Late Moche Period (Dillehay 2001). Dillehay has observed that most local communities in the Late Moche Period had a corresponding hilltop settlement nearby for protection, suggests a shifting political climate, instability, violence, and opportunities for control (see also Swenson, this volume). Due to the inherent instability of the Moche political environment and the added stresses of the environment and the Wari Empire, hinterland communities within the Jequetepeque Valley had to fend for themselves and may have developed a higher degree of autonomy. These communities were *politically* semi-autonomous but *ethnically* Moche. In addition to the economic dependency that was observed between central and hinterland communities in earlier times, sites in the Jequetepeque Valley may have been socially dependent on each other. Hinterland communities appear to have relied on San José de Moro to bring groups together for ceremonies and feasts, while elites

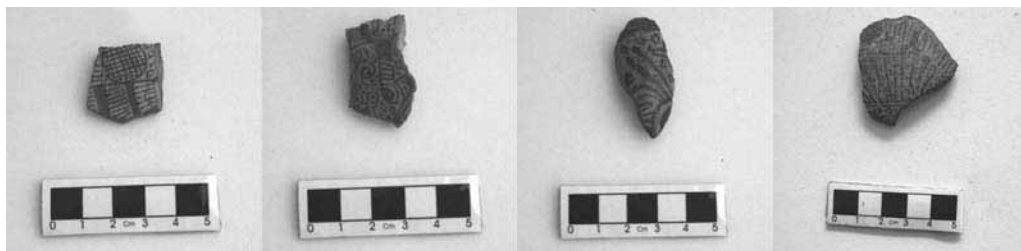


Figure 9. Fragments of Late Moche stirrup-spout vessels from Portachuelo de Charcape.

at San José de Moro appear to have relied on communities further up the valley for contacts with highland communities.

There is a great deal of variety in the architectural layouts of small hinterland communities occupied during the Late Moche Period. Some had monumental architecture, some consisted of small domestic units built up over time, and some were residential communities built within defensive hilltop sites. One trend observed in the Jequetepeque and Zaña valleys is the presence of several «huaca communities» consisting of small populations centered around one or two platform mounds (Dillehay 2001: 267). San Pedro de Lloc and Portachuelo de Charcape are two examples of this type of site. The environmental instability that occurred at the end of the Middle Moche Period seems to have continued into the Late Moche Period. Although the environment was not the sole influence on sociopolitical organization, it may have served as a catalyst that provided opportunities for control and ultimately led to competition and fighting. Limited supplies of productive agricultural land, irrigation canals, and access to marine resources may have led groups to defend the resources that they had and/or compete for resources they did not have. Another consequence of this political and economic climate was that groups made alliances with each other in order to secure access to resources they were lacking and increase their ability to compete against their enemies. Dillehay states that:

During periods of demise, when the population at large continues to survive and reconstitute a new social and economic order, conflict over choice land may have led to the initial establishment of local

elites residing in the intermediate sites rather than in one of the major power settlements such as San José de Moro (2001: 275).

Although groups in the hinterland were relatively autonomous, elites at several sites developed political ties with elites at San José de Moro as evidenced by the distribution of Moro-style fineline vessels. It was most likely advantageous for hinterland elites to link themselves with an already established Moche center, and San José de Moro provided the population with a familiar ideology as well as new elements relevant to a changed social and physical environment.

Charcape and the Hinterland

Portachuelo de Charcape was originally characterized by Dillehay (2001: 261) as unfortified, but research during the 2003 field season revealed stone walls restricting access to the site. The walls were found along the only two passes through the hills that separate the alluvial plain from the pampa on which the site rests. Although the walls are not securely dated, the only other evidence for prehistoric occupation on the pampa is a later Chimú site that is located to the south and is distant from the passes. It therefore seems logical to attribute the walls, which were presumably used to monitor traffic along these routes, to the inhabitants of the nearby site of Charcape. The walls were not very tall or well built, which implies that they were designed to control or restrict access. It is likely that they were constantly monitored by individuals with weapons, a pattern seen at other hinterland sites in the area. The nearby site of San Ildefonso is surrounded by three concentric walls that are lined with small sling stones

(Swenson, this volume). It is likely that these round stones would have been flung at attackers as they tried to enter the site. It is possible to imagine a similar tactic used at the passes near Charcape in order to keep people from attacking the site or gaining access to what lay beyond (e.g., other sites or the ocean). It is also possible that the site was not fortified or restricted during most of its occupation. As tensions rose, the need for protection grew, and the walls may therefore reflect a final attempt at protection before the site was ultimately abandoned.

Several fineline ceramic fragments from stirrup-spout vessels were found scattered over a large area between the elite residences and the domestic area (figure 3). Several of these fragments have Wari-related elements, such as polychrome paint and chevron designs, which suggest a late date for the occupation at Charcape. The most common depictions found on these fragments are the Priestess, reed boats, weapon bundles, Wrinkleface battling Circular Figure (figure 9), and snakes. These elements clearly link Charcape to San José de Moro, and probably indicate a connection that was both political and religious. Since the majority of fineline fragments were near the elite domestic structure, it can be inferred that the inhabitants of Charcape went to San José de Moro on a regular basis to participate in rituals. Also, due to the high number of Priestess and reed boat depictions, they were probably participants in Priestess-related rituals. The fact that weapon bundles were found on the spouts of several vessels indicates that they were most likely produced at San José de Moro and were used as indicators of status by Charcape elites. These rare and high quality ceramics could have served as prestige goods that indicated access by high status individuals to valuable goods and their political ties to powerful individuals at San José de Moro. These fineline vessels would have been visual representations of elite status and power, and would have served to legitimize the authority of Charcape elites.

In the western part of Portachuelo de Charcape, two U-shaped adobe *huacas* with ramps down the middle form a small civic-ceremonial sector (figure 2). One *huaca* faces north and the other west, delineating a separate space that was probably used

for local, small-scale rituals. The pattern of small ritual sectors is not seen at earlier domestic sites in the Moche region. This phenomenon seems to have emerged at hinterland sites during the middle of the Late Moche Period in the Jequetepeque and Zaña valleys (Dillehay 2001). The presence of ritual sectors suggests a greater degree of autonomy at these sites as they began to rely less on the larger Moche centers as the locations of everything ritual and sacred. Local religious specialists performed ritual activities without direct control from the priests at larger Moche centers. However, fineline and other ceramics found at Charcape suggest that the inhabitants of the site still maintained political and religious ties with leaders at San José de Moro. It is likely that although local ceremonies and rituals took place at Charcape, people still traveled to San José de Moro for larger feasts and festivals pertaining to prominent Moche figures such as Wrinkleface and the Priestess.

Conclusions

The environmental changes that occurred at the end of the Middle Moche Period added to an already growing instability within Moche society. The environment was unpredictable due to periodic El Niño events, and a powerful empire was encroaching from the highlands. The instability within the Moche sphere resulted in new opportunities for control as competition ensued for valuable resources. Small farming communities that had inhabited the Jequetepeque and Zaña valleys during the Middle Moche Period now found themselves being threatened by a lack of political centralization. The only way to ensure their survival was to aggregate together into larger defensive communities in order to protect themselves and their resources. Some sites, such as San Ildefonso, were built on hillslopes with several concentric walls for protection. Other sites, such as Portachuelo de Charcape, were not located on defensive hilltops. Access to the site was still restricted, however, by walls. These walls may have served as protection from attacking groups, or they may have been patrolled by watchmen to monitor and restrict access to other sites, resources, or marine collection points further along the pampa.

Due to the precarious and unstable nature of the political climate during the Late Moche Period, high status individuals at these sites needed support and legitimization from a large and neighboring political center. San José de Moro, being one of the largest and most influential centers of the Late Moche Period, served as an important and powerful ally to high status individuals at Charcape. Not only could elites at San José de Moro offer assistance during times of need, but association with powerful Moche elites could have increased the status and legitimization of Charcape leaders at home. The religious cult at San José de Moro also served as an attractive ideology for people who had witnessed massive changes within their own environment and culture. Without written language, Moche ideology was constantly changing and was impacted by the shifting world around them. Elements of the previous Moche ideology continued as familiar links with the past and new elements helped to explain the changes that were occurring. This ideology would have been very attractive to groups immersed in the unstable political and physical environments of the Late Moche Period, and would have created a reciprocal relationship between elites at San José de Moro and hinterland communities of the Jequetepeque Valley.

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