Archaeology in the Jequetepeque Valley:
San José de Moro

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ABSTRACT

San José de Moro is one of the most important archaeological sites of the Jequetepeque Valley and the North Coast of Perú. During its first occupation, Middle Moche Period (400 a.C. – 600 a.C.), it was used as a cemetery for various classes of the Mochica society depicting different kinds of tombs, funerary practices and individuals from distant places. It was also used as a peregrination center for all the urban settlements located in the valley, where all the communities gathered to perform ceremonies that have left some traces of the ritual traditions in the place like pottery and architectural structures made exclusively for production of chicha and food for the feasts and rituals to commemorate the ancestors and recent past members of the community and, also, for endure alliances or declare war. For the Late Moche (600 a.C. – 850 a.C.) and Transitional (850 a.C. – 1 000 a.C.) Periods, San José de Moro had the same ceremonial function with variations on the space distribution, but for Lambayeque times (1 000 a.C. – 1 250 a.C.) the site was almost forgotten and barely used by the inhabitants of the entire valley. Rarely, the people would come to bury their dead and honored them. Since the Spanish conquest, San José de Moro was gradually abandoned, but in recent years, a small human settlement is coming back to occupy San José de Moro once more. Furthermore, in SJM there are tombs of complex architectural design with great amount of pottery of the finest quality. The most important and famous to the date are the Priestesses, seven of them have being found so far. This title corresponds to some of the women that have been found who shows higher status due to the artifacts and the ritual practices made for them. The evidence indicates that these women had exclusively religious functions and it is a long time tradition that lasted until Transitional times.