

BUILDING THE LANDSCAPE OF PRE-COLUMBIAN PERU

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The Moche of Northern Peru

Between the years 100 to 850 A.D., the arid plains of northern Peru were the setting where one of the most advanced ancient civilizations of the Americas developed. We call them the Moche, and they have been the focus of some of the most important archaeological research conducted in the Western Hemisphere, producing some of the most spectacular findings in the history of world archaeology. Many Moche states coexisted in this region, sharing a common religious and cultural system, language and people. The success of the Moche, and their wealth and development was due to irrigations and agricultural technologies that transformed the deserts around them into oases of exuberant vegetation. In this talk we explore the most important feature of Moche societies, from their humble origins, to the epics narrated in their ceramics and metal iconography, to their decline and ultimate collapse.

Santiago Uceda Castillo

The Moche Temples of Huaca de la Luna: social and political changes in the history of the southern Moche

Archaeological research in the last twenty years in the archaeological complex Huacas del Sol y de la Luna in the coastal desert near Trujillo, Peru has helped determine that the Huaca de la Luna represents in fact two Moche temples from different periods. Now identified as the old and new Huaca de la Luna, these temples have different architectural features and designs, and present different iconographic discourses in their walls (or wall relief). This indicates that they represent different conditions in the social and political structure of the Moche society which occupied this site between the first and the ninth century A.D.

The old temple has gods that have their roots in previous Cupisnique and Chavin religious traditions. This temple and its religion were the ideological tools used by the Moche society between 100 - 600 AD to structure a theocratic state where the temple, and the rituals and ceremonies performed therein served to legitimize the political power of the elite. For its part, the new temple does not follow an ancient antecedent and may well show the influence of new ideologies that were emerging in the northern Moche territory. Its design and associated iconography suggest that the new temple did not have the same function as the old one and perhaps only served as an oracle.

Between the two temples drastic changes occurred in the southern Moche society: the collapse of the theocratic state replaced by a more secular one, the development of the urban elite, and the predominance of the palace above the temple.

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Moche Architectonic Models, Meaning and Context

The Moche of Northern Peru developed one of the first state level societies in the Central Andes. Among their outstanding creations are some of the most elaborated and artistic objects ever to be crafted in the southern hemisphere, particularly artifacts of clay, metals, textiles and wood. Moche ceramics depict in great detail the world of Moche myths and rituals, and Moche metallurgy was essential for the performance of ceremonies and for the display of power. Among the Moche artifacts scale representations of architecture, be it temples or elite residences, give us the opportunity to explore the lost world of the Moche habitat. But these artifacts do more than represent the kind of dwellings where the Moche lived and worshiped. They were used to represent the relations that particular individuals had with structures and sites, relationships that granted power and legitimacy to the Moche leadership.

José Canziani

City and Territory in the Andes: contributions to the history of pre-Hispanic urbanism

The research project City and Territory in the Andes aims to provide an overview of the different forms of settlement and land management of the societies that inhabited the central Andes, from its earliest inhabitants to the Inca Empire, documenting the exceptional urban and architectural heritage of ancient Peru. For this purpose, representative cases that illustrate the development of the urban phenomenon and its most significant architectural expressions have been identified in each of the periods of the historical and cultural development. A civilization and its social, economic, cultural and mythical aspects are reflected in the architecture, the form of the settlement itself, and the management and the transformation of the territory. Therefore, the proposed task was not only to reconstruct the physical identity of the material and the architectural building, but especially to understand the social activities and social representation that happened inside. By this analysis, the reading of the architecture can express the social construction and will have a key role in the historical reconstruction of social processes.