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## Cities of violence

*Sacrifice, power and urbanization in the Andes*

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### ABSTRACT

Sacrifice and related forms of ritual violence were deeply rooted cultural practices in the Andes, fundamental principles of cosmology that framed conceptions of the natural and social world and phenomena closely connected to the exercise of power. This article explores the intimate relationship between political power and ritual violence by examining the institutionalization of social inequality and the production of urban landscapes in the Andes, focusing principally on the Moche culture (AD 100–750) and earlier polities of central and northern Peru. Drawing on theories of Maurice Bloch, data from Mesoamerica will then be analyzed to illuminate cross-cultural parallels of the significance of sacralized violence in processes of prehistoric urbanization. Ultimately, a comparative approach affords a stronger analytical perspective in deciphering the striking interdependence of power and ritual homicide in the prehistory of American urbanism.

### KEYWORDS

Andes ● consumption ● dialectics ● Mesoamerica ● Moche ● power ● ritual ● sacrifice ● urbanization ● violence

## ■ INTRODUCTION

The most prominent monuments of Andean and Mesoamerican cities, such as pyramid temples and ballcourts, were elite arenas of ritual violence (Alva and Donnan, 1993; Carrasco, 1999; Schele and Miller, 1986). Sacred power focused at the center, or *axis mundi*, of the ritual complex was activated by elite directed rites of consumption deemed crucial for agricultural success and the reproduction of socio-cosmic order. Therefore early cities of the Andes often served as theaters of a highly controlled, socially encapsulated violence (Swenson, 1998).

I propose that the intensification of asymmetrical power relations complicit in the development of many Andean cities was linked to the social circumscription and elaboration of consumptive sacrificial rites. I hope to demonstrate this through a brief analysis of architectural and iconographic evidence from central and northern Peru. Although ritual violence existed in many non-hierarchical cultures of South America presumably long before the emergence of socially stratified urban society (Harris, 1977: 151; Redmond, 1994; Viveiros de Castro, 1992), its manipulation provided an important mechanism for both the generation and subsequent institutionalization of social inequality. These processes were fundamental to the emergence of centralized polities. Ultimately, I will show that the production of urban landscapes in the Andes was not only shaped by such ritual and ideological programs, but that these programs often played a critical role in the development of urban power relations more generally.

In this article, 'urbanism' is employed liberally to refer to the concentration of monumental architecture, various economic and religious services, and related social infrastructures (Mumford, 1961). Certainly, urbanism can be defined according to different criteria, and it varied significantly in scale and sociopolitical organization throughout the Americas (and the Andes). Cerro Blanco, the premier Moche urban center near Trujillo (Chapdelaine, 2001; Topic, 1982), was economically and socially more heterogeneous than Cuzco, which, although the seat of an immense empire, was in fact a relatively small bastion of the elite (Kolata, 1997). Urban-hinterland relations also differed considerably in the Andes and were fundamental to historic permutations of urban political organization (Dillehay, 2001; Isbell, 1977a). Although it is analytically useful to make distinctions between types of centers (see Rowe, 1963), be they economically diverse urban settlements with large populations or the circumscribed monuments of 'ceremonial centers', in this report urban broadly describes differing processes (or products) of socio-spatial centralization (Wheatley, 1971). Such an approach permits an improved understanding of how the construction of monumental space and convergence of differentiated and valorized services (religious, political, or economic) articulated



with ideological transformations accompanying the development of different types of centers. In fact, social stratification in the Americas was often inextricably linked to the reconfiguration of space and architectural forms which can be related to hierarchical notions of 'center' and 'periphery' (Isbell, 1977b; Moore, 1996).

It is also important to stress that urbanization in the prehistoric Americas cannot be explained simply by manipulation of ritual violence. In fact, many of the first proto-urban centers in the Pre-ceramic period of coastal Peru (2000–1800 BC), characterized by the construction of monumental architecture, appear to have been non-stratified and based on communal kinship structures (Burger, 1992; Moseley, 1975, 1982). Moreover, the centrality of ritual violence was not universal and seems to have been lacking or peripheral at several emerging and later urban polities in the Americas. Naturally, few would deny that there were multiple and overlapping factors driving the development and maintenance of urban society in the ancient Americas (Adams, 1966). Nevertheless, the striking prevalence of institutionalized ritual violence in both emerging and mature cities throughout the New World has been under-theorized and invites a more probing exploration of the relationship between sacrifice and the urban experience. Coincidence alone fails to explain why centralization and hierarchization were accompanied by conspicuous displays of human sacrifice from Cahokia in North America to the Moche pyramidal cities of the North Coast of Peru.

## ■ CONSUMPTIVE-REPRODUCTIVE POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES IN THE ANDES

The reciprocal but asymmetrical relationship envisioned between the terrestrial and supernatural realms in many ancient Amerindian cultures seems to have been predicated on a 'consumptive-reproductive dialectic', wherein human regeneration, agricultural fertility, and socio-cosmic order necessitated sacrifice, or to use Maurice Bloch's term, the 'consumption of vitality' (Bataille, 1988; Bloch, 1992). In order for people to consume the bounty of earth provided by divine forces, the latter would need vital nourishment in turn, including the consumption of humans themselves (Bawden, 1996; Clendinnen, 1991; Hicks, 1996; Schele and Miller, 1986). Those who could claim the exclusive right to control rituals of consumptive social and cosmic reproduction, who in a sense acted as surrogates of the supernatural and 'consumed' vitality and living beings by presiding over sacrificial ritual, were in a formidable position to augment their status and secure both religious and political power.

In other words, the asymmetrical relationship of reciprocity linking

humanity and the supernatural was effectively transposed to the terrestrial realm, congealed and formalized in the construction of grandiose ceremonial centers that the representatives of the divine successfully commissioned (Wheatley, 1971). Hence social differentiation was intensified by efforts to make political spheres reflect relational dependencies defining the union between the physical and transcendent worlds.

Indeed, this theory is far from new and has enjoyed popularity among social scientists of varied theoretical persuasions (Childe, 1946: 48–50, Friedman and Rowlands, 1978: 211; Godelier, 1978; Lowie, 1967: 68, 84; Mumford, 1961: 33, Turner, 1941: 1283; Wheatley, 1971; White, 1959: 314). In re-examining these ideas, I intend not to resurrect theocracy models or promote an exclusively idealist interpretation of historical process (Trigger, 1993); instead my objective is to investigate power relations and the ways in which agents induced structural changes identifiable in the material record. Manipulation of religious practice constituted strategies differentially implicated in socioeconomic and political reorganization accompanying the formation of hierarchical polities. The changing emphasis in archaeology away from rigid ecological, functionalist, and exclusively institutional analyses of sociopolitical transformation to one that examines agentive relations of power represents an exciting turn in the discipline (Alcock, 1993; Brumfiel, 1992; Miller et al., 1989; Paynter and McGuire, 1991; Wylie, 1992). It is through an exploration of ritual practice and competing ideologies that a more holistic understanding of prehistory can be achieved, one that does not privilege mechanical structural shifts or universal materialist developments.

Consumptive-reproductive world views constituted the philosophical foundation of prehistoric Andean political theologies. In fact, the concept provides a powerful interpretive framework to explain Andean ritual violence and ideological systems, one which transcends the limitations of purely functionalist, structuralist, or orthodox Marxist interpretations. Social scientists must pay heed to 'emic functionalist' cosmovisions and how ideological programs were embedded in or derived from these belief systems. Of course, as early as Tylor and Frazer, social scientists have recognized the propitiatory and reproductive basis of sacrificial ritual (Davies, 1981: 17, 48–9; Frazer, 1981; Robertson Smith, 1894; Tylor, 1889; Westermarck, 1906). However, more attention has been focused on problematic etic functionalist interpretations (Girard, 1977; Harner, 1977; Harris, 1977; Sagan, 1993) than on the manipulation of fundamental cosmological principles from which political ideologies were forged and social inequalities legitimated. Functionalist theories of ritual violence have been rightly criticized.<sup>1</sup> However, functionalism per se should not be systematically discarded, for it is precisely through the exploration of emic functionalist belief systems that power structures and ideological programs, subsuming culturally specific regimes of political authority, can be properly



understood.<sup>2</sup> It is certainly revealing, for instance, that in many 'native anthropologies', such as the Chinese Book of Rites, explanations of sacrifice sound strikingly Durkheimian (Girard, 1977: 8).

Generative violence and the essence of production through consumption symbolically inhere in both dualism and reciprocity – fundamental tenets defining the social in the Andes (Bastien, 1992: 154; Dover, 1992: 8; Netherly and Dillehay, 1986; Rostworowski, 1999; Zuidema, 1990). Principles of Andean dualism are often seen as dialectical; the universe is suffused with opposing, dangerous, but beneficent forces whose mediation is central to ritual, kinship structure, social reproduction, and economic practice (Bawden, 1996; Isbell, 1977b; Netherly, 1984; Salomon and Urioste, 1991). In fact, the Hegelian idealist dialectic (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) itself involves a metaphorical process of consumption wherein transformation (mediation, negation) progressing to the 'spirit' is symbolically violent or destabilizing in nature (Desmond, 1992: 195–6). It was emphatically so for Marx (mainly his notion of class struggle), which reveals intriguing cross-cultural parallels in conceptualizations of transformational processes, whether social or natural, material or spiritual. The crucifixion in Christian salvation, creator-destroyer deities in the Hindu pantheon (Kali, Durga), and sacrificial cosmogonies in the Vedas (such as the Purusa Sukta) provide additional parallels of the catalytic role of violence in generative processes (Fenton et al., 1988: 7, 54–5, 101–2). 'The suffering attendant at childbirth (labor) is perhaps a source of obvious metaphors for such dialectical thinking, especially relating to concepts of fertility' (Bell, 1997: 96).

The idiom of violence, both metaphorical and real, permeated many aspects of Andean life, philosophy, and cosmology. Sacrifice was (and continues to be) a pivotal concept, structuring aspects of social relations, economic exchange, mythology, feasting, *huaca* worship, and the spatio-symbolic production of the built environment (Burger, 1992; Rostworowski, 1996; Salomon and Urioste, 1991: 16–19).<sup>3</sup> For instance, the origin of nourishing crops in the mythology of Pachacamac, the most venerated coastal deity in late prehistory, exemplifies the pre-eminence of sacrifice in Andean cosmogonies; the murder of Vichma (Pachacamac's infant brother) and the sowing of his body parts by the deity introduced food to the world (Rostworowski, 1992: 28).

An ethos of reciprocity was fundamental to Andean social relations and economic organization. The sponsorship of generous feasts in the Inka *mit'a*, or labor tax, obscured exploitative extraction of surplus as a reciprocal relation between the Inka state and conscripted workers (Patterson, 1991). In fact, reciprocity can be readily analogized to sacrifice, or sacrifice collapsed into notions of reciprocal obligation (Godelier, 1999). Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1994) recognized the metaphorical violence in gifting, describing such exchange and relations of debt as a form of 'symbolic

violence' which is directly transferable to economic forms of domination. In a sense, gifting corresponds to sacrifice, while the return or manipulation of its expectation (debt) corresponds to reproduction.

Ritualized exchange is at times indivisible from violence as exemplified by the famous potlatch (status battle feasts) of the Pacific North Coast (a ceremony which became distorted and exaggerated as a result of early colonialism and the introduction of European commodities) (Godelier, 1999; Mauss, 1990). It is peculiar that Mauss, the great turn of the century theorist of both the gift and sacrifice, did not stress the importance of sacrifice as an expression or simile of gift exchange (as did Westermarck [1906], Robertson Smith [1894], and others). Hubert and Mauss (1964) assert that sacrifice serves first and foremost to establish communion between the human and divine (Valeri, 1985), and they overlook notions of dependence and relational obligations, concepts fundamental to sacrifice in the Americas.<sup>4</sup>

In the representational art of prehistoric Andean society, the pervasive iconography of violence, predation, and sacrifice, juxtaposed or conflated with symbols of agricultural fertility and cosmic regeneration, attest to the crucial role that sacralized violence and ideologies of reproductive-consumption played in Andean prehistory. The pan-Andean cult of the feline, as well as the ubiquitous iconographic depictions of trophy head cults, human sacrifice, ritualized warfare, and ferocious fanged deities, provide examples of the primacy of this ideology in Andean political culture from the Initial Period to Inka times (1800 BC–AD 1500) (Benson, 1972a, 1972b, 1974, 1998; Benson and Cook, 2001; Burger, 1992; Cordy-Collins, 1990, 1998; Kan, 1972; Lathrap, 1982; Moser, 1974; Proulx, 1971; Saunders, 1998). The discovery of human sacrifice in varied contexts of the archaeological record of the Andes further supports this view (Bourget, 1995, 2001; Cordy-Collins, 2001; Verano, 2001).

The consumptive-reproductive basis of Moche religious ideology is underscored by the association of the ubiquitous fanged deity with sacrifice and ritual homicide. This Moche deity, adopted from the Cupisnique (1500–300 BC) and Chavín traditions (900–300 BC), is often shown on modeled and fine-line ceramics with mountains – the traditional Andean abode of the gods, source of water, fertility and life, as well as the metaphoric space of human sacrifice (Bastien, 1978; Benson, 1972a; Hocquenghem, 1989: 183; Salomon and Urioste, 1991; Uceda, 2001). In fact, Moche adobe temple pyramids are thought to mimic the telluric and supernatural forces of the sierras (Bawden, 1996: 72, 135, 157; Uceda, 2001). In one striking modeled ceramic vessel (Donnan, 1978: 147), a human victim lies supine over a phallic mountain peak, which likely symbolizes fertility, and her hair, or possibly blood, flows down the mountain peak as a representation of the life-giving and alpine-derived water required for irrigation agriculture on the desert North Coast (Figure 1). The water was



**Figure 1** Photograph of Moche ceramic vessel depicting a sacrificial scene in a stylized mountain setting (Donnan, 1978: 147) (courtesy of Christopher Donnan and the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz Ethnologisches Museum)

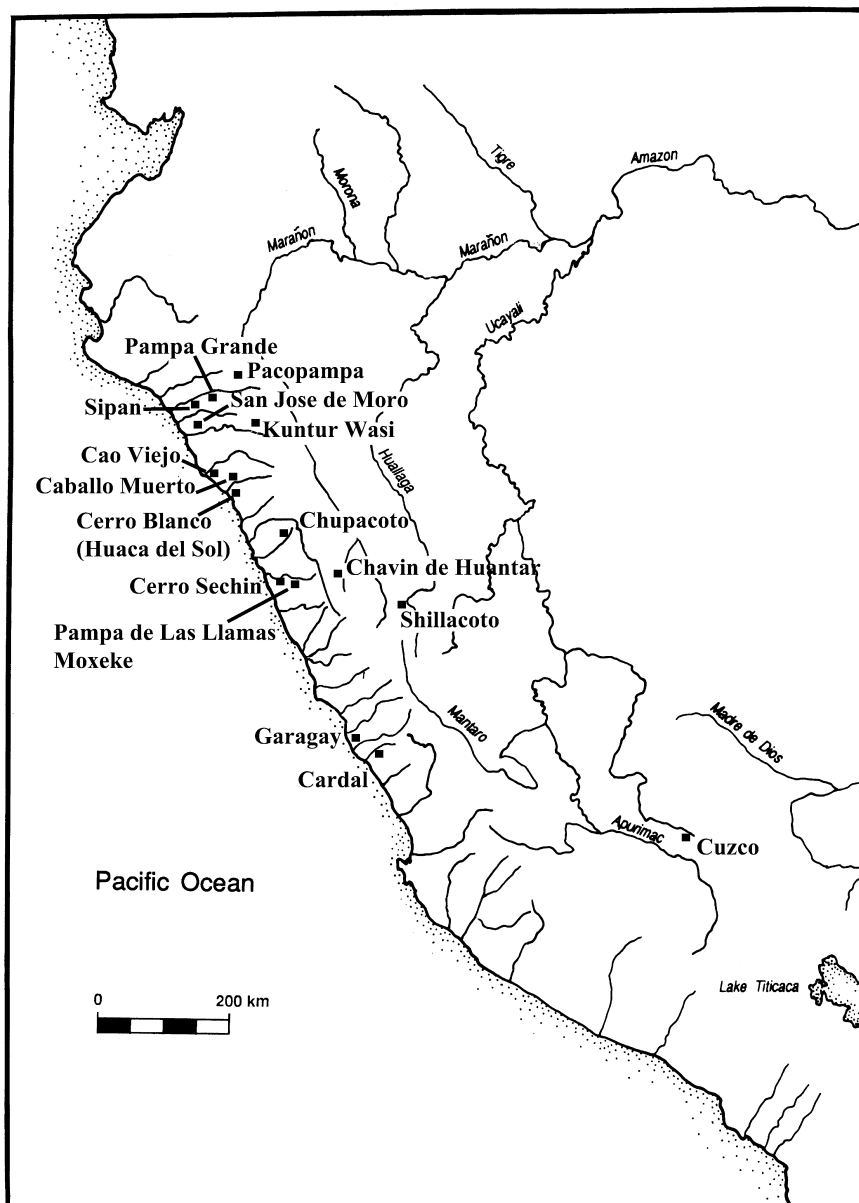


clearly brought forth by human sacrifice, which seems to have been both offered to and sanctified by the fanged deity, perched at the base of a neighboring peak. This vessel illustrates the consumptive-reproductive dialectic of Moche religion: the consumption of vitality is necessary for agricultural fertility, human life, and perpetuation of cosmological order.

## ■ ARCHITECTURAL EVIDENCE FOR RITUAL EXCLUSION AND THE ICONOGRAPHY OF VIOLENCE: CENTRALIZATION AND THE INTENSIFICATION OF POWER ASYMMETRIES IN THE CENTRAL ANDES

Some of the earliest evidence of centralization (both physical and symbolic) in the Andes, identified by the concentration of monumental architecture, populations, and various infrastructures, coincided with the eruption of iconography associated with predation, human sacrifice, and feline imagery. I would argue that the celebration of violence at such sites points to the reconceptualization of power relations inherent in the genesis of these proto-urban centers. Significantly, the first evidence of inequality was apparent not so much in the economic realm (that is, identification of differential access to resources in the material record) but rather in architectural patterns of ritual exclusivity (Burger, 1992; Feldman, 1985, 1987; Fung Pineda, 1988). Several examples from central Peru demonstrate that incipient urbanization and social inequality were connected to the social restriction of ritual practices and to the advent of sacrificial and violent iconography (Figure 2).

The architecture of Caballo Muerto, the Initial Period and Early Horizon ceremonial center in the Moche Valley (dating from 1500–400 BC), suggests that intensification of power asymmetries implicated in the emergence of this polity originated from processes of ritual exclusion. The main structure of Caballo Muerto, Huaca de los Reyes, is a large and complex temple consisting of two bilaterally symmetrical contiguous platform mounds, 5 m and 6 m high (Pozorski, 1982: 233) (Figure 3). Lateral wings extend from each mound, and three aligned plazas of increasing size stretch eastward from the interior of the temple to the exterior for over 100 m. As one enters the temple from the largest Plaza I and proceeds westward to Plaza III, located in the inner sanctuary and adorned with colonnades, niches, and adobe friezes depicting anthropomorphic feline figures, the space to be occupied decreases considerably and becomes progressively restricted. Thomas Pozorski (1980), who has worked at Caballo Muerto, considers this 'internal site stratification' to be evidence of ranked social inequality. Although it is difficult to confirm Pozorski's assertion that the three plazas correspond to three ranked social strata, he cogently



**Figure 2** Map of Peru illustrating principal archaeological sites discussed in the article (adapted from Burger, 1992: 26)



**Figure 3** Architectural plan of Huaca de Los Reyes in Caballo Muerto, Moche Valley, Peru (adapted from Pozorski, 1980: 26)

emphasizes how the center's architecture reveals that power asymmetries were configured on ritual privilege and socio-spatial segregation.

Although direct evidence of human sacrifice is wanting, the ubiquity of predatory and shamanistic iconography in the central precinct of Huaca de los Reyes reveals the significance of consumptive-reproductive ideologies in the ceremonial programs of the early settlement. The evidence from Caballo Muerto suggests that privileged control of ritual practice centered on reproductive violence was integral to the consolidation of Moche urban society hundreds of years later.

Many of the earliest monumental complexes that arose on the Peruvian coast and sierras are distinguished by iconography laden with violent imagery (Burger, 1992).<sup>5</sup> Prominent ceremonial centers of the Initial Period (1800 BC–600 BC), frequently consisting of U-shaped structures framing large conjoined plazas, are characterized by elaborate summit-top enclosures often adorned with painted adobe friezes of fanged, predatory supernaturals (including jaguars and spiders clutching trophy heads, among other related themes) (Burger, 1992: 96). Restricted summit chambers laden with violent imagery at massive sites such as Garagay (Rimac),



**Figure 4** Photograph of stone sculpture depicting a mutilated victim from Cerro Sechin, Casma Valley, Peru. (Source: photograph by author)

Cardal (Lurín), and Pampa de las Llamas Moxeke (Casma), all located on the desert coast of central Peru, could only have been occupied or even seen by privileged individuals (Burger, 1992; Fung Pineda, 1988; Moseley, 1992; Pozorski, 1987).

Iconography expressing an underlying ideology of ritual violence is clearly exemplified by the Initial Period temple site of Cerro Séchin (1500 BC) in the Casma Valley (Samaniego et al., 1982) of the central North Coast, Peru. Here adobe friezes within summit chambers of the oldest construction of the site depict a black feline and a sacrificial scene of a human wearing a loincloth plummeting headfirst with blood flowing from a truncated skull. Cerro Sechín is also famous for its stone carvings, incorporated into the retaining wall surrounding the main precinct of the site, depicting fierce warriors and a ghastly array of mutilated victims (Figure 4). The dismembered figures wear the same loincloth as the sacrificed individual of the adobe frieze, while the warriors are portrayed with elongated 'feline eyes' which are markedly different from the round, gouged sockets of the mutilated victims (Kan, 1972: 70). It is possible that the shaman-warriors of Cerro Sechín exercised political power by assuming the role of predatory felines in rituals of combat, sacrifice, and consumptive-reproduction.<sup>6</sup> Although the central court of Cerro Sechín could have held a considerable number of individuals, its central precinct (adorned with the sacrificial scene) is especially narrow and would have been accessible only to distinguished officiants.

Chavín de Huantar in the Callejón de Conchucos of the Cordillera Blanca (Burger, 1992), the highland ceremonial center defining the Early Horizon Period, further suggests that access to ritual power was restricted to a hieratic few and that incipient social stratification was first configured on religious authority. That is, the earliest evidence for inequality (Urabariu phase) is inferred from restricted access patterns within the massive temple structures rather than from disparities in funerary contexts or domestic architecture (Burger, 1992: 164). The snarling feline-deity of the Lanzon monument, found in a small, cruciform, and subterranean chamber in the central axis of the U-shaped New Temple, reveals the exclusive and specialized nature of politico-ritual practices at this premier center (Burger, 1992: 137). Moreover, the numerous tenon heads representing sequential frames of shamanistic metamorphosis into fanged felines demonstrate the centrality of violent transformation in the religious programs of Chavín de Huantar. The image of a fanged anthropomorphic being holding a bleeding decapitated head was also found in Yurayacu, 5 km from Chavín (Burger, 1992: 164).

Significantly, such iconographic displays in the highlands and coast of Peru are a dominant symbolic theme during the Initial Period and Early Horizon despite architectural, temporal, and cultural differences between various regions and specific sites. Although the violent imagery may vary



well have been related to specific cosmologies or related mythic histories, its widespread distribution suggests shared ideological frameworks based on consumptive-reproductive world views. It is unlikely a coincidence that centralization and the emergence of violent iconography accompanied the rise of agriculture during the Initial Period, which no doubt fostered new social anxieties and the reconceptualization of consumption, production, and notions of fertility. Interestingly, little evidence of human sacrifice has been documented in formative Peruvian contexts. Cut and gnawed human bones found in refuse at the ceremonial center of Pacopampa in northern Peru suggest ritualistic cannibalism (Burger, 1992: 108–9). Three decapitated bodies were also found beneath the floor of a destroyed temple in Shillacoto in the Upper Huallaga drainage (Burger, 1992: 118). Whether the iconic celebration of violence accompanying the rise of these proto-urban centers reflects a more metaphorical than real focus on violent ceremony is difficult to ascertain. Despite likely continuity in certain ideological themes focusing on generative violence between Initial Period and Moche political theologies, they were unquestionably different in many important respects (possibly including differential emphasis on human sacrifice). Nevertheless, social monopolization of ritual programs focusing on sacrificial themes, first evident in the Initial Period, was an enduring characteristic of Moche political structures.

## ■ THE PRIMACY OF RITUAL VIOLENCE IN MOCHE URBAN SOCIETY AND POLITICO-RELIGIOUS IDEOLOGIES

The ceremonial character of Moche urbanism is evident from the massive pyramidal platform mounds (reaching 40 m high in places) which dominate Moche centers (Shimada, 1994) (Figure 5). Bawden notes (1996: 157): ‘The platform visually signified the linkage of Earth, sky, and humanity, the control of life-giving water, and the connection between the natural and supernatural duality of Andean experience. It thus became a supremely potent setting for rituals and the individuals who conducted them’. Moreover, the pyramid mound served as a stage of sacralized violence and physically materialized Moche politico-religious ideology (DeMarrais et al., 1996).

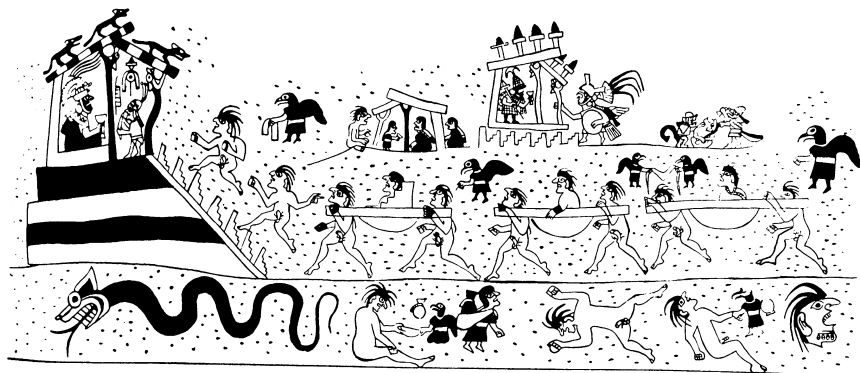
A rich corpus of art and iconography reveals that Moche power structures were founded on religious authority and monopolization of communication with the supernatural. In fact, it seems likely that the privileged control of elite cycles of warfare, prisoner capture, and ceremonies of human sacrifice constituted the basis of Moche political relations (Alva, 1988; Alva and Donnan, 1993; Bawden, 1996). As Bawden (1996) has argued, political power in Moche society was in many ways indistinguishable from ritual performance.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 5** Photograph of the adobe pyramid of Huaca del Sol, Moche Valley, Peru. (Source: photograph by author)

Moche iconography has been shown to represent several well-defined and limited themes which are replicated in various media and in a variety of different arrangements (Donnan, 1978: 158–73; Quilter, 1997). One of these, the so-called ‘Presentation Theme’ (Donnan, 1978) or ‘Sacrifice Ceremony’ (Alva and Donnan, 1993; Bawden, 1996), represents a complex ceremony involving warfare, a procession of prisoners, sacrifice, the presentation of a goblet of blood to the fanged deity or his representative, and a consistent cast of supporting characters. It is considered to be the central and most important ritual of the Moche politico-religious complex. The Sacrifice Ceremony was conducted in a pyramid precinct, where bound prisoners, presumably taken in warfare, were sacrificed and their blood ceremonially presented to distinctively dressed and masked officiants (Bawden, 1996: 152–3).

The Presentation Theme represented on fine line Moche pottery and adobe murals points to the centrality of sacrifice in Moche ideology. The discovery of adobe friezes of the Sacrifice Ceremony in the main precinct of ceremonial centers, including the pyramidal structure of Pañamarca in the Nepeña Valley and on walls of the magnificent platform structure of Huaca El Brujo in the Chicama Valley (Franco et al., 1994), strongly suggests that Moche urban monuments were designed and used as vehicles of violent ritual. It is significant that the protagonists of the Presentation Theme are important actors in other scenes – scenes which clearly make up portions of an integrated mythological and ideological narrative (Quilter, 1997). On ceramic vessels, for example, the warrior priest (or the incarnation of the fanged deity) is frequently shown seated on a dais presiding over a procession of bound naked prisoners with erect phalli (possibly signifying the reproductive goals of consumptive violence), while



**Figure 6** Iconographic representation from a Moche fineline ceramic of a procession of naked prisoners bearing litters and awaiting sacrifice. Anthropomorphized animals are sacrificing bound captives in the upper right-hand margin of the illustration (from the American Museum of Natural History, New York. Adapted from Alva and Donnan, 1993: 131)

scenes appearing in the periphery usually depict mythical or natural predators slitting captives' throats (Figure 6). The prisoners are clearly warriors, for their distinctive attire is heaped into piles or strung on the war clubs of the victors.

Ritual warfare is an integral stage of the Sacrifice Ceremony; not only are prisoners of war shown to be the main sacrificial victims, but depictions of battle scenes between Moche warriors, common on fine-line ceramics and wall murals, are often directly associated with the Presentation Theme. Like the Aztec flowery wars (Clendinnen, 1991), Moche warfare apparently aimed not to immediately kill enemies but to capture victims for later sacrifice. Indeed, only one battle scene shows a slain enemy at all (Moser, 1974: 30). Warriors are usually portrayed fighting in pairs with the victor seizing the vanquished by the hair (Benson, 1972a: 46). Moreover, the dress of the soldiers, including ear spools and ornate armor depicted in ceramic art, indicates that war was ideally an elite pursuit.

Significantly, most representations of Moche warfare on fine-line ceramics involve battles between Moche groups and rarely between Moche and foreign polities; in the few instances where foreign adversaries do appear, they are usually identified as belonging to the enigmatic Recuay culture of the north-central highlands (Bawden, 1996; Wilson, 1987). Moche warriors are distinguished by loose shirts, kilts made of metal plaques or reeds, a conical helmet with a crescent ornament, a belt, a round shield or sling, and most importantly, a large phallic club (again suggesting a connection between death/violence and genesic forces), their principal



weapon (Benson, 1972a: 45–6). Of course, depictions of elite warfare do not necessarily signal the prohibition of lower class groups from participating in combat. Indeed, success in war may have been an important means of social mobility. What is emphasized is the consistent iconographic association of both divinity and elite status with warfare and sacrificial violence. It is also noteworthy that ‘real’ war aimed at devastating rivals and usurping economic and demographic resources played a critical role in Moche prehistory, most notably in the conquest of the southern valleys at the onset of the Moche III Period (Bawden, 1996; Shimada, 1994; Wilson, 1987). The way in which such militarism differed from combat related to the Sacrifice Ceremony is difficult to assess. Wars of conquest may have been propelled and legitimated as ritually ‘reproductive’ acts, especially in terms of seized surplus and the prestige gained by ruling elites, presiding deities, and the polity as a whole.

The consistent setting of Moche depictions of warfare, in regions removed from the fertile, irrigated, and populated zones of the lower valleys, further indicates the ritualized nature of Moche militarism. As suggested by the consistent appearance of cacti in battle scenes, war was staged either in the *chaupi yunga* zone, a liminal region midway between the highlands and the lowlands, or in the vicinity of uncultivated coastal hills (Alva and Donnan, 1993: 129; Wilson, 1988: 340). Of course, the common depiction of hills and cacti in Moche battle scenes may have been more a metaphorical than literal representation of the ecological setting of combat. In fact, the cacti might be a reference to San Pedro cactus, an important hallucinogenic agent of shamans in Andean prehistory and among contemporary *curanderos* of the Peruvian North Coast (Bawden, 1996: 67; Burger, 1992; Joralemon and Sharon, 1993). Clearly, either interpretation underscores the religious constitution of Moche warfare.

The fact that fortifications were rare and situated not between independent Moche polities (at least prior to the final and tumultuous Moche V Period) but at upper valley junctures, presumably as protection from outsiders who did not embrace Moche political ideology, further suggests the ritualized character of Moche warfare (Topic, 1982: 262; Topic and Topic, 1987). Indeed, warfare among the Moche appears to have been highly formulaic and regulated by strict religious conventions and protocol; it clearly represented a critical stage in the Moche sacrificial complex.

The notion that the Presentation Theme and related narratives of this sacrificial complex were not simply depictions of myth and supernatural events but were in fact actively practiced or re-enacted by elite members of Moche society was confirmed by the discovery of the spectacular burials at Sipán in the Lambayeque Valley and the burial at San José de Moro in the Jequetepeque in the 1980s (Alva, 1988; Alva and Donnan, 1993; Donnan, 1988; Donnan and Castillo, 1992, 1994). The individuals of the lavish burials at Sipán and San José de Moro have been confidently



identified as protagonists of the Presentation Theme, including the Fanged God and the masked bird priestess. For instance, the warrior priest of Sipán wears the same metal backflaps, conical crescent helmet, bracelets, and crescent nose-piece and was buried with the characteristic sacrificial goblet and companion dog.

The implication is that political authority in Moche society was in large part defined by the control and enactment of ritual violence. The lavish and extraordinary character of the Sipán and San José de Moro burials, interred with ceramic and metal artifacts suffused with symbols of fertility, duality, cosmic balance, and especially predatory violence and sacrifice (Alva and Donnan, 1993), indicates that Moche leaders were considered sacred rulers, and that their centers were designed as instruments of power, grounded in spectacles of ritual homicide. The recent discovery of tortured sacrificial victims associated with the adobe platform mounds of Huaca de La Luna in the Moche Valley and at the ceremonial site of Cao Viejo in the Chicama Valley substantiates this view (Bourget, 1995; Verano, 2001).

## ■ RITUAL VIOLENCE, POWER AND SOCIOPOLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

Archaeologists interested in the relation between warfare and sociopolitical change in the Americas have underestimated the ritualized tenor of war in both Mesoamerica and in the Andes. The notion that a sacred violence, integrated into the larger system of religious practice and belief in the Andes, could be a causative factor of sociopolitical change is often ignored, despite considerable archaeological evidence suggesting that a ritually embedded violence, including warfare, existed in both regions before the inception of stratified society and urban social formations. Indeed, I propose that in the Central Andes (and the Peruvian North Coast in particular), violence in the form of warfare over scarce resources (a traditionally economic hypothesis elevating factors of demographic stress; see Carneiro, 1970; Daggett, 1987; Pozorski, 1987; Webster, 1977; Wilson, 1987, 1988) was often not as significant to the development of social stratification, political inequality, and proto-urban centers in Peru as was the social manipulation and elaboration of a highly ritualized violence originating from Andean cosmological and religious principles. Although I place violence center stage in an analysis of Andean urbanization, I see it not merely as a response to demographic and economic pressures but rather as a culturally mediated and ideologically delineated variable of social and political transformation.

Maurice Bloch, in his seminal work *Prey into Hunter: The Politics of Religious Experience* (1992), identifies striking structural resemblances in a cross-cultural array of different liminal rituals which focus on a

consumptive-reproductive cycle – for instance, initiation ceremonies, sacrifice, marriage, spirit mediumship, and so forth. The cycle begins with a consumption of vitality, often in the form of sacralized violence (or in a metaphorical form of violence such as a shamanistic trance), and concludes with what Bloch calls ‘rebounding violence’, in which a lost but augmented vitality from the outside is reincorporated to achieve the ultimate ritual goal of reproduction.

Bloch’s compelling construction of liminality differs from that of Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1967). The latter two contend that liminal rites entail an initial and single stage of violence (such as circumcision, seclusion, symbolic death, etc.) which permits initiates or shaman mediums to commune with transcendental forces, while the third stage, the reintegration into the social world of the ‘here and now’, is seen as a return to the conditions of the profane world. Bloch, however, duly recognizes a two-fold process of violence in liminal experiences; the third stage of reintegration into the social world is achieved through a ‘rebounding violence’, wherein an aggressive and ‘rebounding’ consumption of vitality is necessary to replace and augment vitality lost and discarded during the initial stage of the ritual (Bloch, 1992: 6). In other words, Bloch argues that the initial stage of violence entails the conquest of the vital by the transcendental and that a return to the social world can only be realized through the reincorporation of a lost but different and exterior vitality (since life in the human world necessitates a visceral vitality). Nevertheless, the transcendental element remains dominant, and the initiate or shaman is forever altered, a beneficiary of divine favor and a more powerful member of society.

Bloch argues that the innate rebounding violence of liminal religious experience is a source of considerable power which directly influences political relations in many societies (Bloch, 1992). He shows that expansionist violence against neighbors or even the domination of one group over another are manifestations of rebounding violence, thus revealing the potential power inherent in the control of consumptive-reproductive ritual.

I suggest that it may have been the monopolization of sacrificial ritual, and the attendant power such liminal rites and rebounding violence bestowed on religious specialists, which explains the emergence of religious elites and the development of particular urban social formations on the Andean North Coast by the Moche Period. Surely ecological and economic variables of sociopolitical change cannot be discounted, and struggles to monopolize or manipulate religious practice may very well have been interwoven with materialist and environmental factors. I simply stress that the search for human agency in processes of sociopolitical transformation demands an examination of the role of ceremony and ritual performance.

In light of evidence from the pre-Moche sites of Caballo Muerto, Cerro Sechín, and Chavín de Huantar that power asymmetries originated from ritual exclusion, it seems rather compelling that the control of sacrifice and



rebounding violence played a significant role in the emergence of centralized polities on the North Coast of Peru, culminating in the dramatic political theology of the Moche. Militaristic raids and involuted cycles of elite directed ritual warfare and sacrifice were certainly manifestations of rebounding violence, as was the reaffirmation of elite status and domination.

Therefore, Andean cities of the Peruvian North Coast can be understood as arenas of socially restricted, consumptive violence. The ceremonial center as a cosmogram (Eliade, 1957; Kolata, 1993, 1997; Wheatley, 1971), as an ordering principle conferring meaning to the human world, and as a materialized and naturalized testament of asymmetrical power, pivoted on violence; it was sacrifice and restricted control of rebounding violence that not only constituted the authority of elites in ceremonial centers but in fact activated the center itself. The pyramid mounds and adobe precincts of Moche urban landscapes were largely the product of these religious and ideological programs.

## ■ SACRIFICE, 'REBOUNDED VIOLENCE' AND THE PRODUCTION OF URBAN LANDSCAPES IN PREHISTORIC AMERICA

Violence in urban society is most often analyzed at the level of class or sectarian conflict (see Fumagalli, 1994: 39–46, for a discussion of violence in the Italian medieval city) or in terms of institutional and militaristic coercion wielded to enforce the brute dominance of the elite. Foucault, for instance, reveals how the built form of the city and city institutions (such as prisons, hospitals, schools etc.) perpetuate, naturalize, and reinforce – directly or obliquely through violent means – the hegemony of the dominant class (Foucault, 1980: 55–62, 146–65).

These approaches are essential to a proper understanding of urbanism both contextually and cross-culturally. However, most theoreticians interested in the violent dimensions of the city lose sight of the ritualized and ideologically 'reproductive' forms of violence which were integral not only to the physical construction of urban space in prehispanic America but also, more importantly, to the maintenance of asymmetrical power relations which socially defined the urban experience (Carrasco, 1999). Many Mesoamerican and Andean cities were founded on the institutionalization of ritual violence; ballcourts, pyramids, and temple platforms were built first and foremost to stage and encapsulate spectacular rites of sacrificial violence, rituals which formed the ideological core of elite authority and political domination.<sup>8</sup>

The examples presented below serve to identify conceivable cross-cultural and cross-temporal parallels in the role of ritual violence in urban

politics throughout the prehistoric Americas. Of course, a single framework to account for the complex ideological and political meanings of ritual violence in such varied societies is inevitably reductive. Moreover, analogical projection 1500 years into the past or between distinct cultures is fraught with peril and invites understandable criticism. Indeed, there were significant differences underlying notions of sacrifice and authority among the various societies considered in the comparison. For instance, human sacrifice was certainly more marginal in Inka conceptions of the urban experience and in the constitution of elite authority than in earlier Moche society.<sup>9</sup>

The ultimate purpose and utility of the analogies are to stress that sacrifice predicated on 'reproductive power' (cosmic, political, and economic) often fueled elite political relations and ideologically sanctioned authority. This is evident in the Inka *Capacocha*, in which the sacrifice of a family member conferred title and prestige on the donor. Such notions of sacrifice also resoundingly underscored the political theology of Aztec and Maya elite society. It is this parallel which I highlight, a parallel not meant to obscure the pronounced differences in scale and nuanced meanings of ritual violence in the remarkably distinct urban systems considered below. Whether or not the 'rebounding violence' and 'reproductive' sacrifice notable in these different urban societies can be effectively transposed to explain the emergence of socially stratified, proto-urban milieus in Formative Period Peru is perhaps impossible to determine. The examples demonstrate, however, that rebounding violence, understood ritually, militarily, and economically, was a formidable force in later urban politics in both Mesoamerica and to a lesser extent in the Inka realm. It is tempting to view the manipulation of structurally similar forms of generative violence and 'rebounding violence' by aspiring elites as having been instrumental to the actual development of many early socially-stratified centers in south central Peru.

### The Inka *Capacocha*

Although human sacrifice did not play as instrumental a role in the Inka politico-religious system as it did in Moche elite ideology, the ritual of the *Capacocha* (*Capac hucha*), which usually marked the accession of a new Inka king or the beginning or end of the agricultural year (McEwan and Van de Guchte, 1992; Schobinger, 1991; Zuidema, 1977), nonetheless reveals the importance of consumptive-reproductive ideologies and rebounding violence in the constitution of Inka power. Elites who resided in communities outside of Cuzco would send their most beautiful children to the Inka capital in peregrinations over strictly defined routes to be presented to the Sapa Inka. After feasting and ceremony in the main square of Cuzco, the young children would depart on another procession. At



sacred loci along the processional route, the children would be sacrificed (often via live burial) (McEwan and Van de Guchte, 1992; Reinhard, 1999). These important geographical sites included ritually charged *huacas* or sacred features of the socialized landscape, such as mountains associated with a deity or supernatural power. The ritual not only reaffirmed the authority of the Inka elite, it also appeased the deities and kept the cosmic and terrestrial realms in balance (Zuidema, 1977). Its most important goal, however, was to ensure the health of the reigning king and to strengthen ties between center and periphery (McEwan and Van de Guchte, 1992). The procession of *Capaccocha* children along strictly prescribed routes charged the landscaped and ritually bound the conquered territories to the capital (McEwan and Van de Guchte, 1992).

Perhaps more significantly, the *Capaccocha* also augmented the prestige and status of the sponsor or father of the sacrificial victim. For instance, a sixteenth century Spanish document reveals that the Inka emperor sent one sponsor, Caque Poma, lord of the village of Ocros in central Peru, a wooden stool, the material expression of his newly awarded lordship, in exchange for his daughter's sacrifice (McEwan and Van de Guchte, 1992: 362). Thus local elites benefited materially, spiritually, and politically by offering their children to the sun or other important huaca divinities. That is to say, the initial consumption of vitality was manifested in the obvious identification of the father with his daughter's sacrifice, while 'reproductive power' took the form of the completion of the rite, which empowered the father and brought him status and authority (a symbolic form of rebounding violence) (Bloch, 1992). Moreover, the rebounding violence of the *Capaccocha* was manifested through the ritual consolidation and reaffirmation of the power and dominance of Cuzco and its elites over the conquered territories. *Capaccocha* offerings of mummified children have recently been discovered at important mountain peak shrines at various sites in the Andes (McEwan and Van de Guchte, 1992; Reinhard, 1999).

### Ritual violence and urbanism in Mesoamerica

In the case of Aztec political culture, in which one finds the most notorious and ghastly example of institutionalized ritual homicide in history, it is evident that a consumptive, generative violence constituted the ethos of authority and framed the physical and symbolic conceptualization of the Mexica *Atepetl* (Carrasco, 1999). For the Aztec, authority derived from controlling, manipulating, and recasting in hierarchical framework consumptive-reproductive belief systems (Berdan, 1982; Bataille, 1988; Clendinnen, 1991; Hicks, 1996: 270).

Clendinnen (1991) explains that emblazoned in the psyche of participants in Mexica ritual (elite, commoner, sacrificer, and victim alike), was the notion that in order for the world to bring forth fruit, it must be kept

in motion through the payment of debt or *tequitl* (literally meaning ‘duty’ or ‘debt’ in Nahuatl) in the form of human sacrifice to the gods. Therefore, a reciprocal relationship between the cosmic and terrestrial realms was envisioned, incorporating humans in a ‘vegetal-cosmic cycle’: flesh was analogized to maize and blood to water. The consumptive sacrifice of a human would nourish the gods (human hearts were believed to feed the sun god as he traveled his daily course across the heavens) and ensure that Earth would likewise feed humanity. Hence, warfare (‘flowery wars’) was conflated with fecundity, in that the capture of prisoners provided victims for sacrifice whose death and consumption served as the source of human regeneration, cosmic renewal, and agricultural fertility.

The Templo Mayor (the great pyramid at Tenochtitlán; Carrasco, 1999: 49–87; Matos Moctezuma, 1984), which housed on its summit the twin temples dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, the tribal god of war, and Tlaloc, god of rain and fructifying waters, represented the materialization of this dialectic of production and consumption underpinning Aztec cosmology, religion, and politics. This surely represents one of the most brilliant and obvious juxtapositions of consumption and production, violence and fertility, death and regeneration, as well as a compelling statement of the central importance that reciprocal obligations transacted through the catalyst of consumptive violence played in ideal systems of natural, social, and cosmic order. In effect, the monumental core of the great city of Tenochtitlán was a stage dedicated to violence, from which the cosmic legitimacy of Aztec political power ultimately derived (Carrasco, 1999).

Notions of *tequitl* also structured the sociopolitical and economic system of the Aztecs. The commoner or *macehuali* class was in a position of *tequitl* to the elites, expected to pay tribute to the ruling class in exchange for land – a relationship which paralleled the human-divine bonds of *tequitl*. Although members of the lower classes, such as *pochteca* merchants, partook in rituals of human sacrifice (Clendinnen, 1991), ritual violence in the form of an interconnected system of warfare and sacrifice was usually the prerogative of the Aztec elite, the *tlatoani* and his entourage of priests and high-class warriors (Brumfiel, 1998; Clendinnen, 1991). Therefore, warfare was ideally the pursuit of the upper classes; elite warriors or priests achieved valor either by capturing victims for sacrifice needed for consumptive-reproductive rituals or by conducting the sacrifices themselves. Significantly, warfare was an important means of social mobility for non-elite warriors who excelled in combat (Clendinnen, 1991: 120). Thus high status, and the idiom of elite identity (or its aspiration) were associated with the successful execution of violent acts. The control and circumscription of ritual violence invested Aztec nobles with the power and prestige of mediating with the divine so as to ensure the proper functioning of the cosmos (Hicks, 1996: 267).



The election of a new Aztec king provides a remarkable example of the importance of rebounding violence in the constitution of Mexica political power. After his appointment, the *tlatoani*-elect had to endure four days of fasting, bloodletting, and atonement within the precincts of Huitzilopochtli's pyramid temple (Clendinnen, 1991: 77–9). This represents the initial consumptive violence associated with liminality. Only after completion of this liminal rite was the king considered purified and worthy to enter the palace. Significantly, however, after the royal seclusion, the king launched a raid to capture sacrificial victims for his installation ceremony. This militaristic finale constitutes the rebounding violence of the ritual sequence. Of course a symbolic rebounding violence underlay this rite and Aztec sacrifice more generally: the extraction of tribute and the right of the *tlatoani* to economically and politically subjugate others.

Sacrifice and elite directed ritual violence was also integral to Maya political and religious systems (from Preclassic to Postclassic times, as indicated iconographically and epigraphically), and a consumptive-reproductive metaphysics provided the foundation of Maya cosmology. In fact, the creation myths of both the Maya and Aztecs were based on a consumptive-reproductive dialectic: the sacrifice of divinities made possible the creation of the cosmos and human life. The decapitation of a Maya hero and the insemination of a woman by the blood of the disembodied head (as detailed in the *Popol Vuh*; Freidel, 1986, 1992; Schele, 1984; Schele and Miller, 1986) permitted the birth of the hero twins who were the architects of human life and the mentors of the Maya elite. The twins also endured cycles of death and rebirth, pitted against the lords of the underworld in heated ball game competitions. Elite ritual warfare, ball game contests, and sacrifice re-enacted the exploits of the twins and were deemed necessary to keep the world in motion and to perpetuate the cosmic and sociopolitical order (Freidel, 1986; Schele, 1984; Schele and Miller, 1986). Schele and Miller write (1986: 182):

Permeating this creation myth (*Popol Vuh*) as well as many parallel myths from other Mesoamerican peoples is the concept of a reciprocal relationship between humans and the gods. The earth and its creatures were created through a sacrificial act of gods, and human beings in turn were required to strengthen and nourish the gods. It is clear from classic Maya art and inscriptions, as well as from the *Popul Vuh*, that blood drawn from all parts of the body – especially from the tongue, earlobes, and genitals – was sustenance for the gods.

Maya rulers engaged in ritualized warfare in order to capture elite victims for sacrifice, but they also performed auto-sacrifice or the self-consumption of vitality in bloodletting rituals as depicted on the famous carved lintels of Yaxchilán in the Maya lowlands. Schele and Miller explain that blood was 'the mortar of ancient Maya society' (1986: 14), and that elites let blood on



every important occasion, most notably in rites of passage such as the birth of an heir or the ascension of a king (1986: 175–209). Stingray spines, flint blades, and obsidian perforators for bloodletting are common offerings in elite burials, while ropes drawn through perforated wounds and blood-soaked paper in special braziers are commonly depicted in Maya elite art. Indeed, it is clear from the iconography that the blood-stained paper was burned, and that the deities or ancestors were nourished and solicited by the ascending smoke. Moreover, the consumption of vitality exercised in elite bloodletting rituals was ultimately a reproductive act, closely linked to agricultural fertility and success. Iconographic and epigraphic evidence from the site of Palenque, for instance, ‘shows bloodletting to be vital to the production of maize and all other agricultural products’ (Schele and Miller, 1986: 182).

Bloodletting, sacrifice, and consumptive rites in general were integral to Maya rulership and defined the parameters of its power and authority (Schele and Miller, 1986: 185):

The ability to give birth to the gods through ritual is an awe-inspiring concept, for it means that ritual was far more than role playing. As the bearer of the most potent blood among humankind, the king was the focus of tremendous power – thus the pervasive scenes showing bloodletting in Maya art. Through his gift of blood, the king brought the gods to life and drew the power of the supernatural into the daily lives of the Mayan.

Freidel (1986) stresses that warfare and sacrifice, elements of the same ritual program, were actively confined to the elite and provided the framework for ‘peer-polity interaction’ among Maya kings. Thus, institutionalized sacrifice and concomitant rebounding violence fueled elite political relations while naturalizing social inequalities (Demarest, 1984). Human sacrifice of elites, similar in form and organization to Aztec rites (including heart excision), was practiced among the Maya in the Classic and Postclassic Periods as indicated by sculptural scenes and other artistic depictions (Robicsek and Hales, 1984; Sharer, 1994: 543–44).

Like Moche centers, Maya cities (such as Copán, Tikal, Palenque, etc.), the materialized icons of elite power and templates of the cosmos, functioned as arenas of ritual violence. The majestic and imposing stepped pyramids, as in Aztec cities, replicated the sacred landscape of the gods and functioned as stages of human sacrifice (or auto-sacrifice), enabling communication with the divine (Schele and Freidel, 1990; Schele and Miller, 1986). Ballcourts, usually located in the heart of the ceremonial precinct of Maya cities, encapsulated violent rites and were closely linked to sacrificial ritual (Gillespie, 1991: 321–2, 334). Stone reliefs from El Tajín, Copán, Bilbao, and Chichén Itzá, as well as evidence from Maya mythology, reveal that war, sacrifice, death, regeneration, and kingship were



**Figure 7** Photograph of a stone danzante sculpture depicting genital mutilation from Monte Alban, Oaxaca, Mexico (courtesy of Alan Kolata)

among the central themes of ball game ceremonies (Freidel, 1992; Gillespie, 1991: 319; Schele and Miller, 1986: 243–7; Wilkerson, 1991).

Monte Albán, the first centralized polity in Oaxaca, offers a striking Mesoamerican example of the interdependence between early urbanization and the development of political ideologies founded on ritual violence. The earliest occupation of the site (Monte Albán 1, 500–200 BC) is famous for carved gneiss blocks incorporated into Building L (*Edificio de los Danzantes*), located in the southeast portion of the main plaza of the ceremonial precinct (Flannery and Marcus, 1983; Marcus and Flannery, 1996). These ‘*danzantes*,’ a misnomer, actually depict mutilated and tortured victims (Figure 7). The prominent ear plugs of many the sculptures also suggest that victims were likely of high status. Many of these orthostats (over 300 have been discovered) were incorporated as panels into Building L and placed possibly as risers on an immense staircase (Flannery and Marcus, 1983: 80). The majority, however, were unearthed throughout the Main Plaza during the 18 field seasons directed by Alfonso Caso (1928).

Joyce Marcus and Kent Flannery argue that the *danzantes* served as ‘vertical propaganda’ to project a militaristic and powerful image of the incipient elite hierarchy (Flannery and Marcus, 1983: 89; Marcus, 1992: 391–2). In their view, the large corpus of slain *danzantes* points to the insecurity of the ruling organization and the lack of institutionalized power at Monte Albán during the earliest period following the center’s ‘synoikism’ (Marcus and Flannery, 1996). In other words, the gruesome depictions were designed to legitimate the regime and compensate for an unconsolidated power base characteristic of a ‘chiefdom’ level political organization. Thus the *danzantes*, explicit iconographic expressions of violence, are conceived simply as archaeological signifiers of unstable political formations.

This conclusion is unconvincing, for there are numerous examples that graphic displays of violence were common in fully urban, state-level societies (take the Assyrians, for example). Such a view also loses sight of the cultural and cosmological significance of violence and consumption embedded in Mesoamerican cosmovisions. Rather than serving simply as terroristic propaganda, materialized displays of violence in early Amerindian ceremonial centers likely reflected attempts to institutionalize and socially circumscribe sacrificial ritual and consumptive-reproductive belief systems. As with the sculptures at Cerro Sechín (also viewed as diacritics of chiefdom level society by Marcus), the *danzantes* of Monte Albán should be interpreted not as testaments of precarious authority but as reflections of ideologies and power strategies enabling the actual development of these early centralized polities. Interestingly, genital mutilation (at the source of vitality) is the most common form of *danzante* disfigurement (Figure 7). Moreover, propitiatory and generative sacrifice



was fundamental to later Zapotec cosmologies (Marcus and Flannery, 1996: 19, 129–30).

### Interpretive reflections

The consumptive-reproductive ideological strain present in the diverse politico-ritual systems described above represents an important overarching commonality, a commonality which seems to lie at the crux of the relationship between ritual violence and urbanism in ancient America. Despite important differences in political structure, cultural representation, and economic organization between the various cases discussed above, iconographic displays of violence and fertility at many of the earliest centers in coastal Peru are highly reminiscent of the fundamental ideological premise of generative violence readily apparent in Aztec and Maya conceptions of urban politics. Indeed the ultimate point of the analogies is to demonstrate how the 'consumptive-reproductive model' allows theoretical entrée into possible processes of urbanization. Such a model offers improved understanding of the potentials of economic realignment, social reconstitution, and political hierarchization fundamental to urbanization (evident in the mature urban systems described above).

The notion of sacrifice, consumption for generative or reproductive goals, is a compelling idea, perhaps a universal perception which assumed varied permutations and differential prominence according to cultural and historical context (Bloch, 1992). Of course, it was by no means the singular ideological characteristic or *raison d'être* of urbanism in the prehispanic Americas. Nonetheless, it seems likely that this ideological concern was very often manipulated to facilitate consensual political ascendancy and the rise of under-contested economic disparities (Godelier, 1978). Sacrifice is a powerful metaphor readily homologous and transferable to economic behavior (see above; Godelier, 1999). In other words, the operation of urban political economies could be structured and justified in parallel 'consumptive-reproductive cycles.' Such a model affords an appreciation of how groups or individuals may have been in position to subvert egalitarian principals and economic leveling mechanisms through more effective ideological (consensual) than strictly coercive means (Kolata, 1992). That is to say, the sacrifice or 'consumptive' concession of groups, in terms of labor, material production, and ritual participation was likely justified (and even accepted) as 'reproductively' beneficial vis-a-vis the community or cosmos at large.

This by no means suggests that political and economic restructuring induced by ideological manipulation of ritual violence was met with universal acceptance or submission (or thus success). The critical phase was likely marked by heightened competition and resistance by various groups and social actors. Brumfiel (1998, 2001) demonstrates that lower-class

populations of Tenochtitlán developed alternate ritual programs in the face of horrific escalation of sacrificial programs in the Aztec capital. Clearly 'dominant' ideologies were contested both overtly and indirectly on various fronts. The heightened exclusivity of elite-peer interaction among the Moche may have resulted in the de-emphasis of the larger societal objectives or mission of such ritual programs, leading to greater resentment and unrest among lower class groups. Indeed, the Moche V period, a time of ecological crisis and social conflict, witnessed the wholesale rejection of earlier religious and ideological programs (Bawden, 1996).

Nevertheless, it becomes readily apparent how such ideologies may have been developed to effectively induce individuals to surrender ('sacrifice') surplus as a way to pacify deities and ensure the health of society – surpluses which likely benefited the ritual specialists who engineered the ideological re-orientation (Hayden, 1995; 2001: 37). The metaphorical rebounding violence evident in Aztec tribute (notions of *tequitl* discussed above) is a stunning testament to the effective operation of this principle in the political economy. The surplus labor materialized in the monuments of early sites such as Cerro Sechín, Garagay, Chavín, and later centers of the Moche, redolent with iconic images of violence and fertility, seems rooted in the manipulation and politicization of consumptive-reproductive belief systems.

Indeed, the analogies permit better appreciation of how the elevation of ritual violence contributed to the production of urban landscapes and enhanced the urban experience. The construction of monumental space both to showcase materialized surplus and to stage dramaturgical rites likely resulted in spatial, geographic, economic, and sociopolitical redefinition, which led to culturally-specific notions of the urban. These notions conceivably revolved around conceptions of 'centered and de-centered', resembling categories of sacred city and hinterland (periphery).<sup>10</sup> Of course, such a perspective parallels Wheatley's (1971) 'exemplary center' paradigm, which is best understood as an ideal, elite-based cosmological construct rather than a necessary depiction of reality (Couture, 2002). The ways in which the elite conceived of and wished to project the urban experience may have diverged from the perception and motives of lower class rural groups drawn to the center.

Wheatley's notion of a centripetal effect is compelling; the conspicuous monuments and shocking spectacles served as a powerful magnet drawing pilgrims and different social groups to the center (in much the same way that modern-day cities attract a diverse array of people with the allure of cosmopolitan and supra-mundane experience). Although urban ideologies of ritual violence were ideally the exclusive prerogative of the high elite (as evident among the Moche and Maya), such ideologies were still intended to engage lesser-elite and lower class segments of the population (even if at a distance) (Brumfiel, 2001). The monumental visibility of the pyramids



and ballcourts, and the mobilization of commoner labor to construct the edifices, tend to confirm this view. The ceremonial core which anchored the city and encapsulated violent spectacle may have been inconsequential to the everyday experience of lower class individuals who inhabited the dense residential and production zones outside the monumental center of the Moche cities of Cerro Blanco or Pampa Grande in Lambayeque (Shimada, 1994). Nevertheless, the massive adobe huacas, visible from all sectors within the large Moche cities, were constant reminders of elite authority and no doubt had the force to captivate audiences even from afar. Monuments as cosmological templates and their spectacular ritual activation instilled affective, awe-inspiring experience, 'exaltation' in Lefebvre's (1991: 200) understanding of the repressive power of the monumental. Such an effect was undoubtedly the source of great power and was fiercely guarded and controlled by elite members of the population. Ideally, it was the careful balance of private and public spectacle, exclusion and inclusion, that enhanced the power of ritual theatrics; lower class groups would be effectively enthralled while simultaneously differentiated and marginalized. Indeed, the mystery shrouding controlled and exclusive rites may even have added to their power and efficacy, thus reinforcing status differentiation. Clearly, ritual violence influenced the urban experience of diverse segments of the population in a variety of ways, often the crucial audience, and not simply that of the high elite.

Certainly the important challenge for archaeologists is to determine how the center interfaced with the rural, and how non-elite resisted, rejected, or opportunistically embraced such ideologies. Ideologies based on ritual violence might in certain instances have proved an effective hegemony and elite tool of domination. In other cases, they may have been peripheral to the motives of particular individuals and groups who patronized centers for more immediate commercial and social objectives. Whether or not elite ideologies were replicated, ignored, or challenged by lower class residents (Brumfiel, 1998, 2001) in the hinterland (or rival centers) is an extremely important question bearing on the history of specific societies. Unfortunately, such questions lie beyond the scope of this short article.

## ■ CONCLUSION

Sacrifice and 'rebounding violence' cannot be relegated to mere epiphenomena – simply propaganda to legitimize the 'real' infrastructural base of economic inequality. Sacrificial ritual was inherently powerful and its control and social manipulation should be considered viable strategies of political power which enabled emerging elites to secure economic advantage and consolidate authority. Economic disparities were no doubt

intensified and legitimated by the effective politicization of ritual violence. Evidence of power asymmetries originating from ritual exclusion (as expressed architecturally) in contexts where other material diacritics of social inequality are lacking (such as the Initial Period of central Peru) (Burger, 1992) tends to support this hypothesis.

I do not mean to give the impression that the institutionalization of ritual violence can be considered the prime mover of intensified social differentiation, fueling urbanization in the Andes; rather, I propose that it was an important mechanism which enabled groups to effectively exploit pre-existing asymmetries and to take advantage of shifting economic and ecological conditions. These pre-existing asymmetries were often euphemized under the rubric of reciprocity, in which sacrifice itself can be justified (Bourdieu, 1994; Rostworowski, 1999). In other words, restricting access to the power of liminal, sacrificial ritual, which enabled individuals to benefit from a real or metaphorical 'rebounding violence', likely represented an important means of expanding authority which facilitated the extraction of surplus production and the consolidation of economic power (Bloch, 1992). Cities of violence, such as the great Moche ceremonial centers (and the surplus they accumulated), were both the product and justification of these developments.

In considering issues of sociopolitical change (such as urbanization), Andean archaeologists have a tendency to overstate structural shifts and to ignore the relevance of human agency and power relations. The elaboration and monopolization of violent liminal rites demonstrate how individual agents could have been in a position to induce structural changes, including shifts in power relations, religious practice, subsistence strategies, corporate labor organization, and politico-economic systems culminating in the development of stratified urban society.

Anthropologists must approach the consumptive-reproductive politics of the Andes, for which there is substantial supporting material evidence, not simply as an interesting facet of superstructure which explains little of the processes of sociopolitical change. Instead, we should recognize the profound cosmological and structural importance of ritual violence and its fundamental role in the history of Andean societies.

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## Notes

- 1 There are problems with both functionalist and orthodox Marxist interpretations of ritual violence, and of human sacrifice more specifically. Michael Harner's protein hypothesis (1977) represents one of the more objectionable functionalist explanations, whereby ritual violence is equated with ecological adaptation: he proposed that sacrifice and cannibalism served to alleviate protein deficiencies among the Aztec. Shelburne Cook (1946) also argued that sacrifice acted as an effective demographic control, maintaining populations in the Basin of Mexico below carrying-capacity. Even ardent cultural ecologists and materialists have rejected these particular theories. On the other hand, Marxist theorists usually perceive the institution of sacrifice as a cynical ideological device designed to terrorize, intimidate, or rally the subordinate classes to fanatically participate in their own oppression while strengthening political bonds between elites (Brumfiel, 1998; Conrad and Demarest, 1984). Thus ritual violence is often understood as epiphenomenal, a facet of superstructure that arises *a posteriori* in response to initial shifts in the economic infrastructure or material foundation underlying various social formations. Sacrifice as false consciousness, acting to obscure the realities of inequality (in other words, as an ideological practice described by Marx in *German Ideology* or *Capital*), may have credibility in certain historical contexts, but it inadequately accounts for the more nuanced and active role played by sacralized violence in Amerindian political history.
- 2 Claims of and to *function* (causality, purpose, meaning) lie at the heart of ideology, and to the conscious negotiation of power more generally. Rarely do belief systems (whether myth, political doctrine, or even anthropological theory) transcend a functionalist orientation: they cannot escape the premise of how phenomena work, ideally or practically. In considering his definition of ideology, Hobsbawm labels Marx the first 'structural-functionalist' (Morris, 1987: 40). Although this is questionable, Marx's notion that ideology functioned to maintain social cohesion while legitimating oppression demonstrates interesting theoretical commonalities with functionalist principles. This politicized functionalism underlying Marx and Engels' notion of ideology (as a tool of both the dominant and oppressed) is a valuable concept and contrasts with the positivist functionalism underscoring neo-Durkheimian thought.
- 3 This intersystemic repetition of cosmic structure is a common theme in Andean world views (Zuidema, 1992). *Huaca* is a Quecha word which refers to ritually charged entities such as divinities, mountains, mummy bundles, pyramidal mounds, etc. (Salomon and Urioste, 1991: 16–17). Sacrifice establishes reciprocal bonds between huacas and devotees (Bastien, 1978; Griffiths, 1996: 126, 201), and offerings of llamas, coca leaves, guinea pigs, etc. were expected to be reciprocated with good harvests and divine favor.
- 4 It should be noted, however, that Mauss did indeed make a connection between gifting and sacrifice in *The Gift*: 'The purpose of destruction by sacrifice is precisely that it is an act of giving that is necessarily reciprocated' (Mauss, 1990: 16). Reflecting on Mauss' work, Godelier notes that 'Mauss clearly indicates . . . the articulation between gift-giving and the practice of contractual sacrifice to the gods and spirits. Taking his reasoning a step



further, we see more clearly why, in these social and mental worlds, men who give more than they have been given or who give so much that they can never be repaid, raise themselves above other men and are something like gods, or at least they strive to be' (Godelier, 1999: 29–30).

- 5 Iconography of violence and predatory ferocity includes carvings of decapitated heads (similar to Cerro Sechin) from Sechin Alto (Casma) and Chupacoto (Huaylas); fanged creatures in clay relief at Moxeke (Casma); fanged clay sculptures at Punkuri in the Nepena Valley; a carved steatite bowl of a spider with ingested trophy heads from Limoncarro (Jequetepeque Valley); beautifully carved stone stele of fanged beings, one of which holds a trophy head, at Kuntur Wasi in the mountainous headwaters of the Jequetepeque Valley; and a likely trophy-head ceramic vessel from Shillacoto of the Kotosh religious tradition (the upper Huallaga) (see Burger, 1992).
- 6 The iconographic and archaeological evidence in both Mesoamerica and the Andes reveals that elites and divinities were associated with ferocious predators (Benson, 1998; Burger, 1992). Religious specialists experienced transformative states with the aid of psychotropic substances, metamorphosing into fanged felines in order to intercede with the divine (Joralemon and Sharon, 1993; Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1975). Since human or animal sacrifice often accompanied this process (sacrifice being the vehicle of communion), it follows that powerful shamans, who presided over acts of 'consumption' (Bloch, 1992), would be associated with jaguars and other fanged creatures, the ultimate predators and consumers of flesh and vitality in the natural world. Ferocious creatures were emblems of power and authority throughout the Americas (Benson, 1998; Coe, 1972; Kan, 1972). Maya elites, for instance, were directly associated with jaguars (Freidel, 1986: 100; Schele, 1984; Schele and Freidel, 1990; Schele and Miller, 1986: 252).
- 7 This is not to suggest that power began and ended with ritual performance (*contra* Geertz, 1980), but rather that ritual defined Moche authority structures facilitating formidable social control (Shimada, 1994). Although the definition of power is contextually contingent (as transformative capacity, coercion, etc.), in this article, I emphasize a singular meaning: the ability to control the labor, resources, and activities of individuals despite possible resistance (Mann, 1986: 6). Of course, individuals can be invested with considerable authority but lack effective power in extracting economic surplus or directing social activity (Lincoln, 1994). At the same time, great coercive power can be wielded by those who lack authority and ideological legitimacy. Manipulation of ritual production and sacralized violence was instrumental in negotiating authority, which differentially empowered agents according to historical and cultural context (Kelly and Kaplan, 1990). The power of shamans in Tupi-Guarani societies of the Amazon varied from those who commanded high prestige, but not much else, to those who exploited their prestige (as documented historically) so as to exercise considerable economic and political dominance (Viveiros de Castro, 1992: 262–3, 267). Nevertheless, I also stress that the dramaturgical effects, timeless quality, and revered character of ritual often endowed officiants with an innate and distinct 'potency' (informing but analytically separate from authority or ideology) which often influenced political relations.



- 8 Although lack of space prohibits a more extensive comparison, it is noteworthy that the Mississippian and Anasazi cultures of North America were also marked by a symbiosis of intensified ritual violence, hierarchization, and the construction of monumental centers. Numerous decapitated individuals in Mound 72 at Cahokia in the American Bottom (AD 1100–1300) (Pauketat, 1997: 34–6), and artifacts recovered from prominent mound centers throughout the Southeast exhibiting warrior and sacrificial imagery (McCane O'Connor, 1995: 83–93) attest to the pan-American breadth of this phenomenon. Purported evidence of ritualistic cannibalism at Chaco Canyon, New Mexico (AD 900–1200: Pueblo Bonito, Peñasco Blanco, Small House, various outliers, etc.) (Turner and Turner, 1999) provide additional such examples. Osteological evidence for human sacrifice and cannibalism accompanied by a sacrificial pantheon similar to the Aztec (Xipe Totec, Quetzalcoatl, etc.) also characterize the great city of Teotihuacan in the Valley of Mexico (AD 100–600) (Turner and Turner, 1999: 421–5).
- 9 The sacrifice of chosen children in the Inka Capacocha certainly differed in meaning and social significance from the capture and ritual execution of elite rivals in Moche political systems. Propitiation rites involving the sacrifice of llamas and guinea pigs were also prevalent in Andean society at the time of the conquest and were unquestionably understood and interpreted in ways distinct from ceremonies of human sacrifice (Cobo, 1990: 113–14). The right to perform ritual homicide, the ultimate testament of power in the arbitration of life and death, was no doubt a ceremonial spectacle divorced from all others. Moreover, ritual violence assumed the form of more immediate 'reproductive' goals such as providing deceased kings attendants in the afterlife or curing a sick Inka (Cobo, 1990: 112). Sacrificed female retainers (presumably royal) secure a prominent place in the Chimú ciudadela (Conrad, 1982; Kolata, 1990), the hallmark of elite urban architecture at the capital Chan Chan in the Moche Valley. The victims were found interred in burial platforms surrounding deceased kings. Certainly these Chimú rites, influencing the definition of urban space at Chan Chan, cannot simply be forced into the same explanatory framework as Moche and Maya elite ritual warfare. Nevertheless, the 'emic functionalism' evident in reproductive gain through consumptive sacrifice is a thread common to many forms of ritualized violence, including the aforementioned examples. The analogies presented in this section underscore the impact of this ideological principle in the political systems of disparate urban traditions in the Americas.
- 10 For instance, Burger explains that the word Chavín, the name of the premier highland center of the Early Horizon, may have derived from the Quechua word *chawpin*, meaning 'in the center' (Burger, 1992: 128). Tiwanaku, the great Altiplano city of the Middle Horizon, was also referred to as *taypicalla*, the 'stone in the center' from which humankind and sociopolitical hierarchy originated (Kolata, 1993: 88–9). The city of Cuzco was likewise envisioned as the navel of the universe and a template of Inka rule, social order, and political ascendancy (Zuidema, 1964, 1990). Certainly, these notions refer to Late Horizon perceptions, but they may have had some relation to how socio-spatial conceptions changed with the rise of early centers.

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