

MOCHE ARCHITECTURAL VESSELS: SMALL STRUCTURES, BIG IMPLICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

On the north coast of Peru, artisans from the Moche culture (A.D. 200-850) produced ceramic vessels with modeled architectonic superstructures. These objects are present in every Moche phase and range in their pictorial complexity from single-room constructions (Figures 1, 2) to tiered multi-room architectural complexes (Figures 3, 4, 5). While single-room vessels have long been overlooked, considered little more than generic representations of temple architecture, my recent study comparing single-room vessels with excavated full scale Moche architectural remains indicates these portable ceramic artifacts may, in fact, reference specific and identifiable structures within the Moche ceremonial precinct, or *huaca*. This article examines one single-room vessel type in particular, discussed here as the Enclosed Gabled Type, or EGT (Figures 1, 2). I will suggest that the two-dimensional imagery on the vessel chamber, once deciphered, offers additional context for the sculpted architectural structure above it. This article proposes that Moche architectural vessels provide us with stylized diagrams of sacred space and communicate information about the form and function of a distinctive architectural structure identified in Moche ceremonial architecture.

PAST INTERPRETATIONS AND PRESENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF MOCHE ARCHITECTURAL VESSELS

Architectural vessels made by the Moche have intrigued archaeologists, architects, and art historians for nearly a century.¹ Since their earliest discussion in the scholarly literature, these artifacts have been interpreted as religious sanctuaries (Pardo 1936:14-15), representations of ceremonial structures (Donnan 1978:82), elite houses and temples, and symbolic houses of the hereafter (Wurster 1982:254, 259). For years, efforts to substantiate these hypotheses were hampered by a dearth of excavated Moche architecture. However, in the past two decades, large scale and long term archaeological projects in the Moche, Chicama, Lambayeque, and Jequetepeque Valleys have greatly augmented our knowledge about the form and function of Moche ceremonial architecture (Figure 6).² These excavations, focused on monumental mud brick constructions, have brought to light elaborate architectural complexes replete with

¹ For early discussions of Moche architectural vessels, see Benson (1972:98-102), Campana (1983), Donnan (1978:79-83), Miro-Quesada (1976), Pardo (1936), and Wurster (1982).

² For excavations at Huaca El Brujo, see Mujica *et al.* (2007); for Huacas de Moche, see Uceda (1997, 2001a, 2001b) and Uceda and Mujica, editors (1994, 2003); for Sipán, see Alva (2001) and Alva and Donnan (1993); and for Dos Cabezas, see Donnan (2007).

colorful murals, expansive plazas, and decorated patios connected by corridors and ramps (Mujica *et al.* 2007; Uceda 1997, 2001b; Uceda and Mujica, editors 1994, 2003). Many of these same architectonic features can be identified on Moche architectural vessels, signaling an important correlation between small scale and full scale architecture.

Moche architectural vessels communicate information both two- and three-dimensionally as well as through an array of different architectonic forms. Some vessels employ *pars pro toto* where a single architectonic aspect or feature stands in or references the larger whole. For example, a sculpted ceramic double step motif (Figure 7) appears at first enigmatic until its full scale counterpart is identified in the archaeological record (Figure 8). At Huaca Cao Viejo, this motif marks the northern perimeter wall of a painted patio which housed the elaborate Moche burial of the Señora de Cao.

In other instances, Moche architectural vessels convey one-room constructions (Figures 1, 2). Despite their seemingly simple form, these miniature structures appear to have concrete analogs in the archaeological record. A full scale counterpart for the vessel in Figure 2 has been uncovered in an important Moche precinct, in a restricted plaza associated with deposits of sacrificed individuals, signaling that the constructions represented on Moche architectural vessels were modeled with specific full scale structures in mind and mimic architectonic forms with ritual significance. At present, all correspondence between Moche architectural vessels and full scale architectural remains has been identified within Moche ceremonial (as opposed to domestic) architecture. This relationship between architectural vessels and excavated elite architecture was first illuminated by Gordon Willey in 1953 (Willey 1953:215-218, plates 29, 60) and has since been corroborated through

ongoing excavation projects on Peru's north coast (Donnan 1978:82-83; Donnan and Cock 2002:31-35). These discoveries underscore the value that architectural vessels hold for archaeologists, as they preserve the complete form of significant structures and point us to areas of key importance in Moche ceremonial precincts.

THE RECENTLY ASSEMBLED MOCHE ARCHITECTURAL VESSEL CORPUS AND THE MOCHE ARCHITECTURAL TYPOLOGY

With the aim of determining what types of structures (ritual or domestic) were communicated through Moche architectural vessels, I assembled and systematically analyzed a large sample of these objects (Wiersema 2010). Before my investigation, an estimated 50 architectural vessels had been published (See for example, Aimi 2003; Benson 1972; Campana 1983; Donnan 1978; de Laval 1995; Tello 1938:73, 74, 77, 78-80; and Wurster 1982). My work uncovered an additional 119, bringing the present total to 169 vessels.³ Ceramic vessels with architectural superstructures are known from all Moche phases, including I-II, III, IV, and V, as well as Late (northern) Moche.⁴ However, centuries of treasure hunting on the north coast has resulted in a loss of provenience for the majority of these objects.⁵ Nevertheless,

³ Hugely important to this project was access to the Moche Archive, formerly at UCLA and now at Dumbarton Oaks, which brought to light approximately forty vessels. Research in museums and private collections in South America, Europe, and the United States uncovered another 80 Moche architectural vessels.

⁴ Architectural vessels also occur in an incipient Moche phase, or style, which I have referred to elsewhere as Proto-Moche. For example, see Figure 5. For a breakdown according to phase, see Table 1.

⁵ This project identified five architectural vessels and two fragments recently uncovered through scientific excavation. These were found in burial contexts accompanying

most of the vessels in the corpus exhibit stylistic traits attributable to the southern Moche sphere (south of the Pampa de Paiján).⁶ The fact that architectural vessels are relatively rare in the greater Moche fine ware vessel assemblage (approximately 1 in 500) suggests these objects had been the prerogative of elite or high status individuals.⁷ Corroborating this hypothesis is the fact that, when discovered archaeologically, Moche architectural vessels occur as mortuary offerings accompanying important Moche deceased who are buried within ceremonial architecture.

Type	No. in Corpus	% in Corpus
Proto-Moche (PM)	26	15%
Moche I-II (M I-II)	13	8%
Moche III (M III)	22	13%
Moche IV (M IV)	76	45%
Moche V (M V)	28	17%
Late Moche (LM)	4	2%
Total	169	100%

Table 1. Distribution of vessels in the Moche architectural corpus by phase.

As part of this study, I devised a detailed architectural typology, building upon Christopher Donnan's earlier work (1978:79-81). This new architectural typology revealed some intriguing patterns (see Table 2). For example, despite the significant quantity of architectural vessels in the corpus, only ten distinct archi-

high status individuals at El Castillo de Santa (Chapdelaine *et al.* 2005:25-28, 32, figure 10); Huaca de la Luna (Chauchat and Gutiérrez 2005:120); Huaca Cao Viejo (Mujica *et al.* 2007:212, 215); and San José de Moro (Mauricio and Castro 2008: figures 33 and 34; Rengifo *et al.* 2008:129-131, figure 38).

⁶ Examples from the northern Moche sphere have been excavated at the site of San José de Moro in the Jequetepeque Valley (Mauricio and Castro 2008: figures 33, 34; Rengifo *et al.* 2008:129-131, figure 38).

⁷ This estimate is based on vessels held in the Museo Larco, where, of an approximate 15,000 Moche vessels, only 30 are architectonic.

tectural styles or types could be discerned. Within these ten styles, the three most often discussed in Moche literature, the Architectural Complex (Type 1, Figures 3-5), the Open Gabled Type (Type 2, Figure 9), and the Open Shed Roof Type (Type 3, Figure 10), had minimal representation in the architectural vessel corpus.⁸ Instead, the architectonic style with the greatest representation was a simple single-room structure (Figures 1, 2), a form which, until now, has been largely overlooked in Moche studies. This single-room type, the Enclosed Gabled Type (EGT) occupies over one third (34 percent) of the total Moche architectural vessel corpus (Table 3). This percentage is especially significant, given that EGTs are largely limited to Moche phases IV and V, where they comprise more than half of both samples (Table 2). EGTs notably overshadow all other architectural types in the Moche architectural vessel corpus, suggesting that this particular architectural style (and its full scale counterpart) held symbolic importance for Moche ideology, or at least the Moche ideology reflected in Moche IV and V pottery.

DIAGNOSTIC FEATURES OF THE ENCLOSED GABLED TYPE AND THE CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY ANCIENT MOCHE ARCHITECTURE

The Enclosed Gabled Type is easily identified by its consistent suite of diagnostic traits. It is enclosed and square in plan with a central entrance and a gabled roof (Figures 1, 2). Its roof is supported by one or two beams, indicated by a raised circle or circles on the exterior sides

⁸ While rare in the corpus (six percent), Architectural Complex vessels offer a type of architectural key that not only corroborates the existence of different structural forms and features, but also pinpoints their approximate location within Moche monumental architecture. More frequently discussed in Moche literature is the Open Gabled Type, which appears often in Moche fineline, but comprises a small percentage of the sculpted corpus.

Architectural Types	Moche Phase (no. vessels)	# in Corpus	% in Corpus
Architectural Complex	PM (3), I-II (6), III (1)	10	6%
Open Gable Type	IV (5), LM (3)	8	5%
Open Shed Roof Type	I-II (1), IV (3), V (4), LM (1)	9	5%
Open Three Wall, Shed Roof	PM (1), I-II (1) III (1)	3	2%
Open Three Wall, Gabled Roof	PM (1), III (4)	5	3%
Open Front Gable, Back Shed Roof	III (2), IV (3)	5	3%
Enclosed Front Gable or ½ Gable, Back Shed Roof	PM (12), III (3)	15	9%
Enclosed Front Flat, Back Shed Roof	PM (4), I-II (2)	6	3%
Enclosed Gabled Type	III (3), IV (39), V (15)	57	34%
Miscellaneous	PM (2), I-II (1), III (3)	6	3%
Motif Vessels (step motif, step and wave spiral throne, etc.)	I-II (2), III (5), IV (26), V (9)	42	25%
Unclassifiable	PM (3)	3	2%
Total		169	100%

Table 2. Distribution of types in the Moche architectural vessel corpus.

Architectural Type	Moche Phase (No./phase)	No. in Corpus	% in Corpus	% in M IV	% in M V
Architectural complex	PM (3), I-II (6), III (1)	10	6%	0%	0%
Open Gabled Type	IV (5), V (0), LM (3)	8	4%	6%	0%
Enclosed Gable Type	III (3), IV (39), V (15)	57	34%	51%	53%

Table 3. Distribution of the Architectural Complex, Open Gable Type (OGT), and Enclosed Gable Type (EGT) in the Moche architectural vessel corpus, especially Moche phases IV and V.

of the sculpted structure just below the roof. Roofs on this architectural type are frequently embellished with step-shaped roof combs.⁹ If we look beyond the sculpted architectural representation itself, taking into account details conveyed in fineline on the vessel chamber (Figure 2), we get a better sense of the greater architectural context communicated to the

viewer by the potter. In Figure 2, we see a series of painted step motifs on the chamber which separate the three-dimensional building above from the “platform levels” below, conveyed through horizontal bands of alternating red and white. How might these two-dimensional details help us to identify this particular architectural type in Moche full scale architecture?

Moche IV (76 vessels total)	No.	%
With step-shaped roof comb	28	37%
With step and <i>tumi</i> roof comb	4	5%
Without roof embellishments	7	9%
Total Moche IV	39	51%
Moche V (28 vessels total)	No.	%
With step-shaped roof comb	7	25%
With step and <i>tumi</i> roof comb	2	7%
Without roof embellishments	6	21%
Total Moche V	15	53%

Table 4. Breakdown of EGT variants in Moche phases IV and V.

Our ability to read these somewhat abstracted architectural representations and find correlates for them in Moche archaeology is complicated by the fragmentary nature of Moche architectural remains. While the vessels preserve complete structures, actual Moche architecture (made of mud brick roughly a thousand years ago) preserves just fragments, and, therefore, presents us with an incomplete record of the architectural past. Excavated Moche structures, under the best circumstances, have been compromised by centuries of erosion, cataclysmic disasters, and looting. As a result, key elements are missing, including the upper portions of walls, and the roofs themselves. Without these important features, it is difficult to make a positive match between Moche architectural vessels and actual structures. Because we are forced to compare two disparate kinds of data, complete ceramic architectural representations, and eroded architectural remains, any positive identification will have to

⁹ A few examples in the corpus are decorated with step-shaped roof combs and a crescent-shaped *tumi*. See Table 4.

be based on the traits that are preserved in the architecture, that is, those of a structure that is enclosed, and square in plan, with a central entrance. Such structures are, to my knowledge, unknown in Moche excavated architecture *except* in the upper areas of Huaca de la Luna where a small structure fitting this description is found in Plaza 3c. We will return to this structure later in this article.

Further complicating our ability to compare Moche architectural vessels with Moche ceremonial architecture is that, while the vessel reflects *a single construction episode*, excavated Moche monumental remains present a *palimpsest* of architectural episodes. Today, at sites such as Huaca de la Luna and Huaca Cao Viejo, structures and features corresponding to different chronological phases appear side by side, skewing our understanding of architectural space as the Moche knew it. On the other hand, the destructive nature of archaeology can deny us architectonic details critical to our understanding of the space. For example, the outer U-shaped wall surrounding Recinto I, Plaza 3c at Huaca de la Luna is not visible in Figure 11 because it was dismantled as part of the archaeological process. The excavation plans of this plaza, however, relay that these two features, a U-shaped wall and an enclosed architectural structure, were contemporary (Figure 12). Because of the complexity presented by construction episodes, an excavation plan becomes much more useful in drawing comparisons than the site itself, because excavation plans provide us with a view of the structures and features that pertained to the same construction moment.

CONVERTING TWO- AND THREE-DIMENSIONAL IMAGERY INTO A SINGLE ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

Remaining to be explored is how two- and three-dimensional imagery on Moche

architectural vessels was manipulated by Moche potters to provide a detailed picture of represented architectural space. Moche potters worked creatively within the restrictions of their chosen medium, the ceramic vessel, using both painted imagery and sculpted forms together to communicate identifiable aspects of specific structures found in the Moche ceremonial precinct, or *huaca*.

In order to see architectural vessels as the Moche likely saw them, it is necessary to devise a two-dimensional floor plan from the vessel itself, incorporating both two- and three-dimensional elements. To illustrate this, let us work from the vessel depicted in Figure 2. If we translate the sculpted and painted details from Figure 2 into a map or plan, we end up with something comparable to the drawing in Figure 13. This plan reveals a series of walls surrounding the three-dimensional or modeled architectural structure at center. Just outside the innermost wall, in direct alignment with the structure's entrance, is a small projection, possibly an altar or a ramp. The outermost wall is adorned with a series of step motifs. Through the inclusion of these walls, the potter suggests that the EGT is set apart from the rest of the complex. Horizontal bands on the chamber suggest platform levels, indicating that this structure is additionally situated in an elevated area of the complex or precinct. One final consideration is the spherical shape of the chamber which results in circular walls surrounding a square structure. Making allowances for the fact that Moche artists were working on globular vessels and taking into account that the Moche did not appear to build circular structures, we must translate these circular forms to rectilinear ones (Figure 14). With this newly created floor plan and a more nuanced understanding of the Enclosed Gabled Type's location in the complex, we can more easily seek a full scale correlate for this architectural type in the Moche archaeological

record. Before we do, however, let us first examine another type of architectural vessel that aids us in our visual interpretation of the Enclosed Gabled Type.

CONTEXTUAL DETAILS PROVIDED BY MOCHE ARCHITECTURAL VESSELS

Within the Moche architectural vessel corpus is another vessel type, referred to as the Architectural Complex (Figures 3, 4, 5). While rare in the corpus, Architectural Complex vessels are critical to our understanding of single-room structures, including the EGT. Architectural Complex vessels unite, in a single object, distinct architectural types and architectonic features which are conveyed individually, or in isolation, on other vessels. As such, Architectural Complex vessels provide us with information about the ways distinct structures and features likely interacted within a greater, often multi-tiered space. In addition to corroborating the existence of different structural forms and features, Architectural Complex vessels also indicate the approximate locations of rooms, corridors, and architectonic features within Moche monumental architecture.

A handful of Architectural Complex vessels incorporate representations of the Enclosed Gabled Type, easily identified by its enclosed square form, central entrance, and gabled roof adorned with step shaped roof combs (Figures 4, 5). In Figure 4, the EGT is taller than the structures surrounding it and is differentiated by its red roof combs. Its location, at back left, makes it the least accessible structure in the miniature complex. In another Architectural Complex vessel, the EGT's importance is suggested by its exaggerated size (Figure 5). Here again, the EGT is also at the back left of

the complex.¹⁰ This information suggests that the EGT was a privileged, and somewhat restricted structure within a certain type of Moche ceremonial precinct. Its singular status is corroborated by the plethora of EGT examples in the Moche architectural vessel corpus, as we will see.

Of the 76 vessels in the Moche IV sample, 39 of them are Enclosed Gabled Types (EGTs). Despite this large number, no two EGT vessels are identical.¹¹ Each is differentiated by its chamber shape (spherical, cylindrical, etc.), the fineline imagery decorating the chamber, and the pictorial details flanking the structure's entrance (Figures 13, 16, 17). While these elements make each vessel visually distinct, all iterations reinforce the same message: the EGT, while depicted in isolation, is conceived as a free-standing structure occupying an important place within the Moche ceremonial complex.

To illustrate this point, let us look at the vessels in Figures 13, 16, 17, where three different Moche IV Enclosed Gabled Type vessels are presented. Each vessel exhibits the diagnostic traits of the EGTs: an enclosed structure, square in plan, with a central entrance and a gabled roof decorated with step-shaped roof combs. While the chamber shapes are distinct for each vessel, all display a series of painted step motifs just below the sculpted structure. These demarcate the EGT from the rest of the schematically-rendered precinct.

¹⁰ While not visible in the photograph, the EGT in Figure 4 has a central entrance which serves as the opening for the whistling mechanism housed inside it.

¹¹ An interesting exception is a vessel housed in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin (Figure 15), which exhibits identical architectonic features to the vessel in the American Museum of Natural History. The Berlin vessel (V A 18281) measures 13.7 by 14.2 by 20.5 centimeters. The roof has been erroneously reconstructed (a roof comb has been replaced by what appears to be a sculpted frog).

Below these step motifs are horizontal bands indicative of platform levels, which place the EGT in an upper area of a tiered complex. Through these vessels (that eliminate all subsidiary structures and give primacy of place to the EGT), potters were able to convey in a greatly simplified form the same message found on Architectural Complex vessels.

The appearance of a series of step motifs on these vessels is significant (Figure 13, 16, 17). Step motifs in series appear prominently in other Moche architectural vessels. For example, the Architectural Complex vessel in Figure 3 exhibits a series of painted step motifs which line the ramp or parapet leading from the main plaza (at bottom) to the upper, more restricted areas of the complex. This same information is conveyed in another Architectural Complex vessel published by Elías Mujica (Mujica *et al.* 2007:93). Architectural Complex vessels make explicit what is merely implied by EGT vessels, namely that step motifs in series, when depicted in an architectonic setting, delineate sacred or ceremonial space.

This same idea is also expressed in the Moche fineline scene of the Sacrifice Ceremony, where a series of step motifs delineate and separate two distinct but related ritual activities: the ritual bleeding of bound captives on the bottom register, and the presentation of the goblet to the Warrior Priest on the upper register (Figure 18). Three of these figures, identified as Figure B, Figure C, and Figure D (Donnan 2010), process along a route marked by step motifs in series. This illustration, together with the examples from the Moche architectural vessel corpus, suggests that step motifs in series (when associated with architectonic settings) served to cordon off sacred space associated with propitiatory activities. This idea is also communicated by another vessel, housed in the Museo Larco in Lima. In this image (Figure 19), two sculpted

step motifs flank a nude figure bound to a rack, placing him within sacred architectural space. Our understanding of the sculpted figure above is aided by the fineline illustration on the vessel chamber, which depicts four females with short hair and long tunics who gaze upwards toward the sculpted figure. Their open palms receive the drops of blood (a metaphor for rain?) which fall from the bound figure's severed neck. These examples from the Moche artistic record make intriguing and undeniable connections between step motifs, sacred space, and ritual activity.

Interestingly enough, a connection between step motifs and sacred space is also supported by the archaeological record. At Huaca de la Luna, a series of sculpted step motifs (made of slipped adobe) have been excavated within the ceremonial precinct where they line the ramp or parapet leading from the main plaza below (Plaza 1) to the precinct's upper reaches (Plaza 3).¹² It appears, therefore, that in both small scale and full scale architecture, step motifs in series demarcate and offset important ritual space.

PAINTED IMAGERY: A CLUE TO FUNCTION?

Continuing our visual analysis of the Enclosed Gabled Type (EGT), the final component to be considered is the imagery on the miniature architectonic structure itself. As we have seen, EGT vessels communicate information through imagery and motifs on both the chamber and the roof. There is additional information conveyed on the structure's façade, as well (Figures 1, 2, 13, 16). The painted motifs on either side of the structure's entrance provide us with clues about the likely function of this miniature structure's full scale counterpart.

¹² These motifs are associated with Building C, or the middle construction phase (Uceda and Tufinio 2003: figure 20.15).

A quick inventory of the pictorial forms associated with the entrance of Enclosed Gabled Type vessels reveals a concrete set of traits which include war clubs (*porras*), short vertical lines, chisels or scalpels, ritual jars with ties, and eared serpents (Figure 20). These same motifs appear in Moche fineline scenes illustrating the taking of captives, ritual bloodletting, human sacrifice and dismemberment. For example, war clubs (Figure 20a) are often associated with ceremonial combat (Donnan 2010; Donnan and McClelland 1999:130-136). Short vertical lines (Figure 20b) appear in scenes of bloodletting where they reference drops (or streams) of blood (*ibid.*: 62; see also Figure 19). Ritual chisels or scalpels (Figure 20c), which often appear on EGTs together with short vertical lines (Figure 21), suggest ritual violence. In Moche fineline, jars with ties (Figure 20d) are found in scenes of human sacrifice or the afterlife (Benson 1975:106-108). The eared serpent (Figure 20e) in Moche fineline is found in scenes of combat, capture, bloodletting, and sacrifice (Donnan 1978; Donnan and McClelland 1999). The frequent appearance of eared serpents in important ritual scenes has led Donnan to suggest they represent one of the primary symbols of Moche religion (Donnan 2010). The eared serpent is also conveyed on architectural vessels of the EGT, often on roofs and vessel chambers (Figure 22).

Further linking the motifs found on the façade of the Enclosed Gabled Type to Moche ritual activity is the fact that many of these symbols (war clubs, streams of blood, chisels or scalpels, and eared serpents) are key pictorial elements in the Moche Sacrifice Ceremony (Figure 18). In this scene, these motifs appear on the bottom register, where the predominant activity is the bloodletting of bound captives. The fact that these same motifs are commonly depicted on EGT vessels intimates a connection between this architectonic type and ritual

activity central to Moche IV ideology.¹³ Working with information offered by the art historical record, it seems plausible that the EGT's full scale counterpart would have functioned as a venue for ritualized acts of human bloodshed.

THE ENCLOSED GABLED TYPE IN THE MOCHE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

Now that we have analyzed the art historical data available for the Enclosed Gabled Type, let us turn to the archaeological record with the aim of seeking a full scale counterpart for this architectonic type. If we have correctly interpreted the visual information provided by architectural vessels, we should expect to find an enclosed square structure with a central entrance in an upper, restricted area of the Moche precinct, possibly in an area demarcated by a series of step motifs. It would not be surprising if this structure is located within a sector of the complex dedicated to ritual activity.

Evidence of a full scale, free standing structure exhibiting diagnostic traits shared by the Enclosed Gabled Type has been documented at Huaca de la Luna, in an upper restricted area known as Plaza 3c. This structure, known as Recinto 1, Plaza 3c, has a central entrance and is perfectly square in plan, measuring 5.8 by 5.8 meters (Figure 11).¹⁴ Excavators believe its roof, which is no longer extant, had been gabled in antiquity (Tufinio 2004:103). The plan view of Recinto 1, Plaza 3c (Figure 12) reveals it was housed within a U-shaped wall and had a small ramp or altar just outside its entrance. While only a few segments

¹³ The Sacrifice Ceremony appears for the first time in Moche IV ceramics, as discussed by Donnan and McClelland (1999:130-131).

¹⁴ Recinto I, Plaza 3c is discussed by Tufinio (2001, 2002, 2004, 2006).

remain today due to heavy erosion in this area, the northern and western perimeter walls maintain evidence of sculpted adobe step motifs (Montoya 1997:64; Tufinio 2004:102, 105, 116).

Of additional interest is Recinto I's elaborate decorative program, underscoring its importance. Adorning the building's façade is relief imagery depicting feline-human pairs, where a feline attacks a human figure wearing the short hairstyle associated with captives.¹⁵ The sides and back of Recinto I were painted in three separate episodes or renovation cycles. Imagery associated with the earliest decorative phase depicted stylized catfish (*pez life*) (Tufinio 2004:113, figures 110 and 111; Uceda and Tufinio 2003:192-195; lámina 20.2a and 20.2b), a motif associated with the onset of the rainy season.¹⁶

Archaeologists have noted the presence of two additional enclosed free-standing structures (Recinto I; Recinto II, Plaza 3b) located in an area adjacent to Plaza 3c. Both of these were built after Recinto I, Plaza 3c fell into disuse and was interred. While the similarity of these structures to Recinto I, Plaza 3c might suggest that they, too, were full scale counterparts for the Enclosed Gabled Type, I argue that, because Recinto I and Recinto II, Plaza 3b are more rectangular in plan, and have off-center entry ways, they are not the structures referenced by EGTs in the Moche architectural vessel corpus. Furthermore, neither of these chronologically later structures from Plaza 3b bears the elaborate decoration of Recinto I, Plaza 3c.

¹⁵ This structure is discussed in Tufinio (2004:113, figures 110, 111) and Uceda and Tufinio (2003:192-195; láminas 20.2a, 20.2b).

¹⁶ If the building's function remained the same over time, it may indicate that these different images, stylized catfish and felines attacking human figures, are linked, or perhaps equivalent in meaning.

At this point, Recinto I, Plaza 3c seems to be the most likely match for the Enclosed Gabled Type. If we compare the plan view of Recinto I, Plaza 3c (Figure 12) with the floor plan adapted from the EGT (Figure 23, see also Figure 13), striking similarities emerge. Both plans reveal enclosed square structures with central entrances surrounded by U-shaped walls. Directly in front of both entrances is a small ramp or altar. Given these shared traits, it appears Recinto I, Plaza 3c presents us with a full scale counterpart for the Enclosed Gabled Type.

The ubiquity of EGT structures in the Moche architectural vessel corpus would lead us to believe that enclosed square structures with central entrances were common forms in Moche ritual architecture. This, however, is not the case. At Huaca Cao Viejo, Chicama Valley, and at Guadalupito, Santa Valley, archaeologists have confirmed that, as yet, no square structures with central entrances have been found (Antonio Murga, personal communication 2008 and Victor Pimentel, personal communication 2009). Much more frequent in Moche ritual architecture are rectangular structures with lateral or off-center entrances, excavated at both Huaca de la Luna and Huaca Cao Viejo (see for example Mujica *et al.* 2007:116-119, 122-129, and 162-169 and Uceda 2001b).

THE GREATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS OF EGTs IN MOCHE FULL SCALE ARCHITECTURE

Now that we have established Recinto I, Plaza 3c, as a likely analog for the Enclosed Gabled Type, let us briefly consider the greater archaeological contexts for this full scale structure. Recinto I, located in an upper, restricted area of Huaca de la Luna, is situated along a circumscribed route (Figure 24) which begins in the main plaza below (Plaza 1) and ascends toward Plaza 3 via a zig-zag corridor.

This corridor is adorned with a series of sculpted step motifs (Figure 25), similar to those we have identified in the Moche architectural vessel corpus (Figure 3; see also Mujica *et al.* 2007:93). This trajectory is interrupted at specific points by small, elaborately decorated architectural structures which may have anchored ritual activity, while also shifting the direction of the procession. As I have argued elsewhere, these three-dimensional structures (and certainly the one located in the southeast corner of the main plaza) appear to interrupt and subsequently alter the direction of the two-dimensional polychrome procession depicted on the plaza walls, suggesting that these structures acted as stops along a directed route, similar to the stations of the cross in Christian religion (Wiersema 2010: 29, 166).

Plaza 3c, housing Recinto I, formed part of Plaza 3, the sector of Huaca de la Luna found in closest proximity to the imposing one-peaked mountain, Cerro Blanco.¹⁷ Plaza 3 has been subdivided by archaeologists into three units, Plaza 3a, 3b, 3c. These areas were operational at different moments in time, with Plaza 3c in use first (Uceda and Tufinio 2003:192-195). Plaza 3c, associated with the middle construction phase, or building C, was later interred to facilitate the construction of Plaza 3a (Tufinio 2002:57, 2004:117), one of the last construction phases at the site (Bourget 2001: 96). Therefore, Plaza 3c and Plaza 3a represent distinct structures from chronologically separate periods. Plaza 3c is associated with Moche III ceramic artifacts and Plaza 3a is associated with Moche IV artifacts.

Plaza 3a features a natural rock outcrop which was intentionally incorporated into the

complex's adobe walls (Figure 24). It was in Plaza 3a, in the context of this rock outcrop, that Steve Bourget unearthed human remains of more than 70 individuals who had been sacrificed in five distinct rituals (Bourget 2001:96; see also Verano 1998). The spectacular nature of this sacrifice has overshadowed other finds of this type, including the sacrificial human remains unearthed in Plaza 3c.

In Plaza 3c, just to the east of Recinto I, archaeologists also discovered evidence for human sacrificial activity. They interpreted this activity as distinct from that found in Plaza 3a, however (Tufinio 2006:63; Uceda 2000:93-95; Uceda and Tufinio 2003:192-195; Verano *et al.* 2007). While skeletons in Plaza 3a bore evidence of torture and dismemberment, skeletons in Plaza 3c were decapitated, dismembered, and had had their flesh intentionally removed (Tufinio 2004:111; Uceda and Tufinio 2003:195, 222; see also Verano *et al.* 2007).¹⁸ This distinction suggests that Recinto I, Plaza 3c, was devoted to sacrificial activity of a different nature (Tufinio 2006:59). Additionally, these sacrificial deposits spoke of not one, but several episodes which occurred over a long period of time (Tufinio 2004:112). According to the excavator, Recinto I, Plaza 3c was directly related to these sacrificial deposits and also experienced a prolonged period of use (*ibid.*). While it is not clear that all individuals found in the context of Recinto I, Plaza 3c were sacrificed in front of this structure, we can ascertain that the characteristics of this particular ritual included decapitation and the removal of flesh. Human remains were, at some point, deposited near this small enclosed free-

¹⁷ Many Moche *huacas* were intentionally constructed at the foot of these *cerros*, visually and symbolically connecting the *huaca* to this natural feature associated with supernatural potency.

¹⁸ I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that the skeletons in Plaza 3c formed a deposit of human remains, *i.e.* individuals who had been sacrificed or processed elsewhere and were later deposited in Plaza 3c.

standing structure which sat in the shadow of a one-peaked mountain.

This suite of traits which have been discovered archaeologically, decapitation in the context of an enclosed gabled structure in the shadow of a one-peaked mountain, are also found as an iconographic set in Moche ceramic art. This thematic group is known as the Mountain Scene of Human Sacrifice. In the next section, we will focus specifically on a subset of this theme which depicts sacrifice (specifically decapitation) in the context of an enclosed gabled structure. Information proffered by this subset of vessels lends further support to a connection between architectural structures of the Enclosed Gabled Type and human sacrificial activity.

THE ENCLOSED GABLED TYPE IN THE CONTEXT OF A ONE-PEAKED MOUNTAIN

Within the greater Moche ceramic vessel corpus is a thematic group discussed as the Mountain Scene of Human Sacrifice (Zighelboim 1995).¹⁹ Vessels in this thematic category share two key elements: a sculpted representation of a mountain, and a modeled figure draped face-down over the central peak, referred to as Bent Person. Also appearing in these scenes is a figure lying akimbo at the base of the mountain, referred to as Dead Person (Zighelboim 1995:153-154).²⁰ While mountain sacrifice scenes are most often multi-peaked, an

important subset of this group depicts a one-peaked mountain.²¹ The one-peaked vessels, in particular, contain information relevant to our discussion.

One-peaked mountain sacrifice scenes differ from multi-peaked scenes in a few important ways. First, the center of the mountain houses a form resembling the façade of the Enclosed Gabled Type (Figures 26, 27).²²

Second, Dead Person appears directly beneath this structure, his head separated from his body. In other words, Dead Person in one-peaked mountain sacrifice scenes lies decapitated in the context of an EGT structure. Also particular to one-peaked depictions are jars (rendered in low relief) which flank the entrance of the enclosed gabled edifice, though the way they are rendered suggests they sit just below the structure (Figures 26, 27). Jars are another motif associated with the Enclosed Gabled Type, as we see from an EGT vessel in the Museo Larco, where ritual jars appear on either side of the structure's central entrance (Figure 22).

The one-peaked mountain scene provides valuable information as it unites, on a single vessel, the Enclosed Gabled Type, human sacrifice via decapitation, and a towering one-peaked mountain. These same elements occur together in the archaeological record at Huaca

¹⁹ Bourget has also discussed these vessels in connection with Cerro Blanco, Huaca de la Luna, and human sacrifice (1994). The link between mountains and Moche sacrifice is also noted by Donnan (1978:144-148). Zighelboim proposes that the one-peaked depictions reference Cerro Blanco (1995:157).

²⁰ One of the most frequently published examples of the Mountain Scene of Human Sacrifice depicts a five-peaked vessel where Bent Person is connected to Dead Person by a river or a stream of blood (Donnan 1978: figure 2.25).

²¹ Two one-peaked mountain scene vessels are housed in the Museo Larco (Figures 26, 27), two are published in Zighelboim (1995: figures 2b, 2c), and one is housed in a private collection. Both one-peaked mountain sacrifice scenes from the Museo Larco are Moche IV, as is evident by both their long, straight spouts and their exaggerated stirrup-shaped handles.

²² Zighelboim acknowledges the form, describing it as "terraces flanked on the top, with two half-pyramids facing each other . . ." (1995:64, 81, figure 2.b), a reasonable description given the scarce attention given to EGTs in the past.

de la Luna in Plaza 3c, where an EGT (found in association with human sacrificial activity) was constructed in the shadow of a one-peaked mountain (Cerro Blanco).²³ Imagery found on one-peaked mountain vessels, then, provides us with visual evidence supporting the hypothesis that the EGT represented a specific structure, most likely Recinto I, Plaza 3c. That a ceramic architectural vessel mimicked the form of a full scale structure supports Donnan's early proposal that everything depicted in Moche art is eventually corroborated in the archaeological record (1978:82). This correspondence underscores the importance of architectural vessels to our continued understanding of Moche ritual architecture. Through a methodical visual deconstruction of Moche sculpted vessels, used together with archaeological data, scholars can arrive at surprisingly detailed and nuanced interpretations for Moche art and archaeology.

IDEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENCLOSED GABLED TYPE

We are left to question why the Enclosed Gabled Type, one of ten architectural types in the vessel corpus, and an architectonic form uncommon in the Moche archaeological record, came to dominate the Moche IV architectural vessel sample. What might this architectonic type have symbolized for Moche ideology and ritual during this chronologically late Moche phase?

At present, our understanding of spout type and its relationship to Moche chronology is being revised. As a result, Moche phases I-II, III, IV, and V are no longer seen as reflecting a

chronological development from early to late (Castillo and Donnan 1994:143-144; Castillo and Uceda 2008:710-714). Nonetheless, Moche IV and V spouts are still viewed as reflecting the later phases of Moche occupation in the southern Moche sphere, from the Chicama Valley southwards. Decades of excavation at Huaca de la Luna have turned up substantial amounts of Moche IV ceramic ware, indicating that Moche IV was an important ceramic style for this site in its later phases of occupation. As such, it makes sense that fine ware ceramic vessels mimicking the form of a symbolically important structure at Huaca de la Luna would be fashioned with Moche IV spout types. What remains perplexing, however, is that Recinto I, Plaza 3c and its related contexts were associated with Moche III rather than Moche IV ceramics. Might this suggest that the EGT reflected the memory of an earlier ritual structure which had been interred by the time Moche IV ceramics began to appear? Because none of the seventy-six EGT vessels in the corpus was excavated scientifically, we are left to speculate.

I have suggested here and elsewhere that architectural vessels represent in miniature full scale structures of sacred significance to the Moche (Wiersema 2010). If true, *all* of the architectural types documented through ceramic vessels would have been ideologically important. However, the EGT as a likely analog for a structure like Recinto I, Plaza 3c, located in a restricted area, decorated with elaborate and explicit imagery, and associated with human sacrificial activity, would have taken on special status or symbolism.

Scholars believe that the Moche undertook human sacrifice for political, social, and ideological reasons (Uceda 2000:92, 99). In addition, such activity strengthened the sacred bond between powerful individuals and deities (Tufinio 2008:461). Sacrifice appears to have taken on particular importance in Moche IV, a

²³ Acts of human sacrifice in the context of a sacred mountain were likely undertaken in an effort to venerate and appease mountain deities, forces which the Moche depended upon for water and agricultural sustenance. For more on this, see Donnan (1978:148), Hocquenghem (1987:80), and Zigelboim (1995:171-173).

phase associated with the height of Moche power and influence in the southern Moche valleys.²⁴ This fact is corroborated by Moche art, as well as by the archaeological record.²⁵ For example, in Moche IV fineline painting, certain themes proliferate and become codified, most notably images of warfare, capture, arraignment, bloodshed, captive sacrifice, and the presentation of a goblet to an elaborately dressed Moche priest or lord (Donnan and McClelland 1999:136).²⁶ Evidence of ritualized human sacrifice on a significant scale at Huaca de la Luna is apparent in the archaeological record at this time, culminating in Moche IV with activity in Plaza 3a. It is in this same phase that the EGT (and its associated imagery referencing human blood-shed) first emerges in force in the architectural vessel corpus, overshadowing all other architectural types.

The predominance of the Enclosed Gabled Type in the Moche IV sample suggests it emblemized a structure of key political and ideological significance. As we have seen, the archaeological record confirms the EGT was a

structure of some consequence. It is, however, the overwhelming presence of this architectonic type *in the artistic record* that signals its important ideological role during Moche IV.²⁷

CONCLUSIONS

This study, focused on a single architectural type in the Moche vessel corpus, aims to shift our perception of ancient Andean ceramic vessels from decorative objects to decoding objects. Here I have proposed that Moche architectural vessels, once deciphered, aid us in our understanding of excavated structures and direct us to full scale structures of great ritual significance. Our ability to identify correspondence between architectural vessels and Moche architectural remains suggests that these often abstracted vessels present us with specific and explicit depictions of full scale Moche architectonic structures and features. Contexts provided by Moche art and corroborated in the Moche archaeological record suggests that architectural vessels mimic key aspects of full scale structures which were intimately tied to ideology, power, and religious ritual. As such, these objects act as key tools in our quest to interpret and identify ceremonial architecture built by this fascinating, but often enigmatic, pre-Hispanic Andean society.

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²⁴ While Moche chronology is presently being reconsidered, it is largely agreed that Moche IV reflects the height of Moche power and influence in the southern valleys, especially evident at Huaca de la Luna. This power was likely demonstrated through large spectacles of ritual violence. See for example Swenson's discussion of this for the Jequetepeque Valley (2003, 2008, in press).

²⁵ While the construction and ritual use of Huaca de la Luna spanned more than a century (450-650 A.D.; Uceda 2000:92), evidence for human sacrifice at this site is especially strong in the later phases of occupation, corresponding to Moche IV ceramics.

²⁶ This interrelated and sequential complex of images, referred to as the Warrior Narrative, is believed to have occurred within circumscribed architectural space, most likely the Moche ceremonial precinct (Donnan and McClelland 1999:130-136). Of the many events comprising Moche religious ritual as it is depicted in the Warrior Narrative, human sacrifice is viewed as the most crucial (Donnan 2010).

²⁷ In Moche V, the EGT continues to have a significant presence, but becomes more stylized in its representation, decorated with geometric motifs rather than pictorial ones. As of yet, there is no evidence of mass ritualized human sacrifice found in Moche V contexts.

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Figure 1: Moche architectural vessel of the Enclosed Gabled Type (EGT), Moche IV, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología, e Historia del Perú (C-54620), Lima, 24.4 centimeters high.



Figure 2: Moche architectural vessel of the Enclosed Gabled Type (EGT), Moche IV, Courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York City (AMNH B4857), 20.3 centimeters high. Vessel from the Adolph Bandelier collection, acquired by the AMNH in 1894.



Figure 3: Moche architectural vessel of the Architectural Complex Type, Moche I-II, Eugenio Nicolini Collection (12836), Lima, 14 centimeters high.



Figure 4: Front (left) and top (right) views of Architectural Complex Vessel, Moche III, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología, e Historia del Perú (C-61802), Lima, 16.7 centimeters high. A vessel sharing similar morphology (Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology, 4-3262) was excavated by Max Uhle from grave 26, Site F, Huacas de Moche in 1899, height unknown (Donnan 1965: plate 1, number 10; see also Kroeber 1925: plate 561).

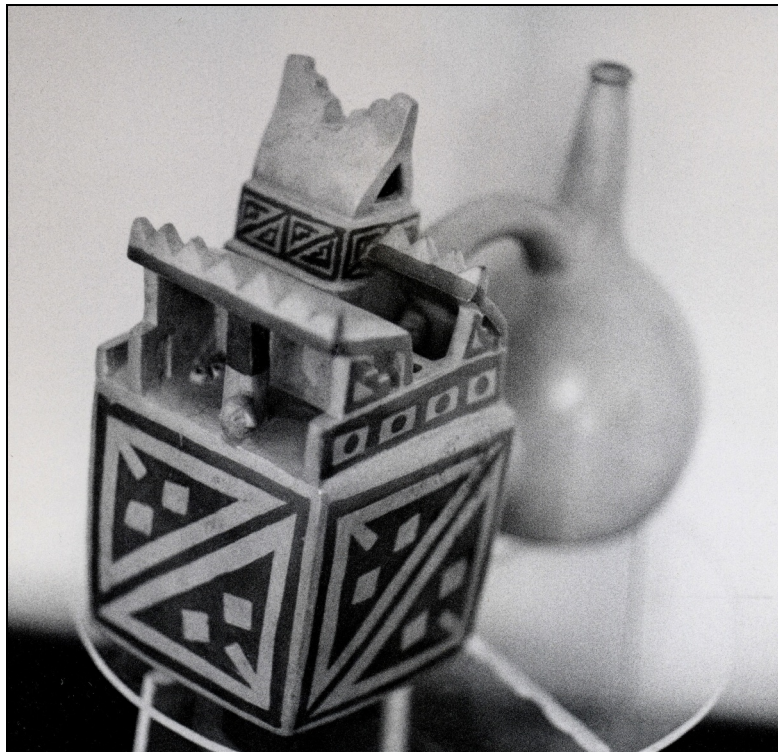


Figure 5: Moche Architectural Complex Vessel, Proto Moche, location unknown, height unknown. Photograph courtesy of Christopher B. Donnan.

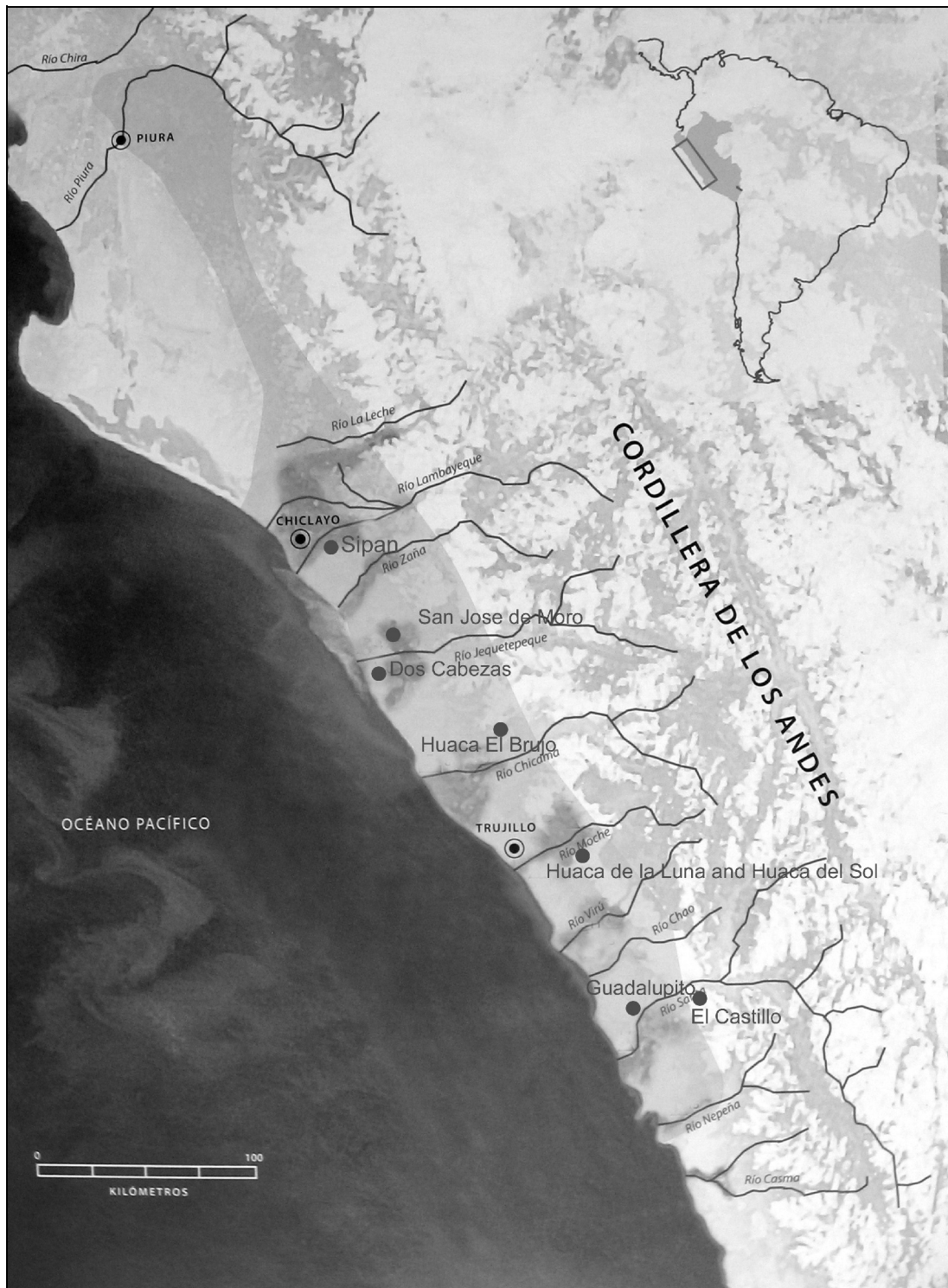


Figure 6: Map of archaeological sites on Peru's north coast (from Mujica et al. 2007).



Figure 7: Double step motif vessel, Moche IV, © Museo Larco, Lima, Peru ML012936, 21.3 centimeters high.

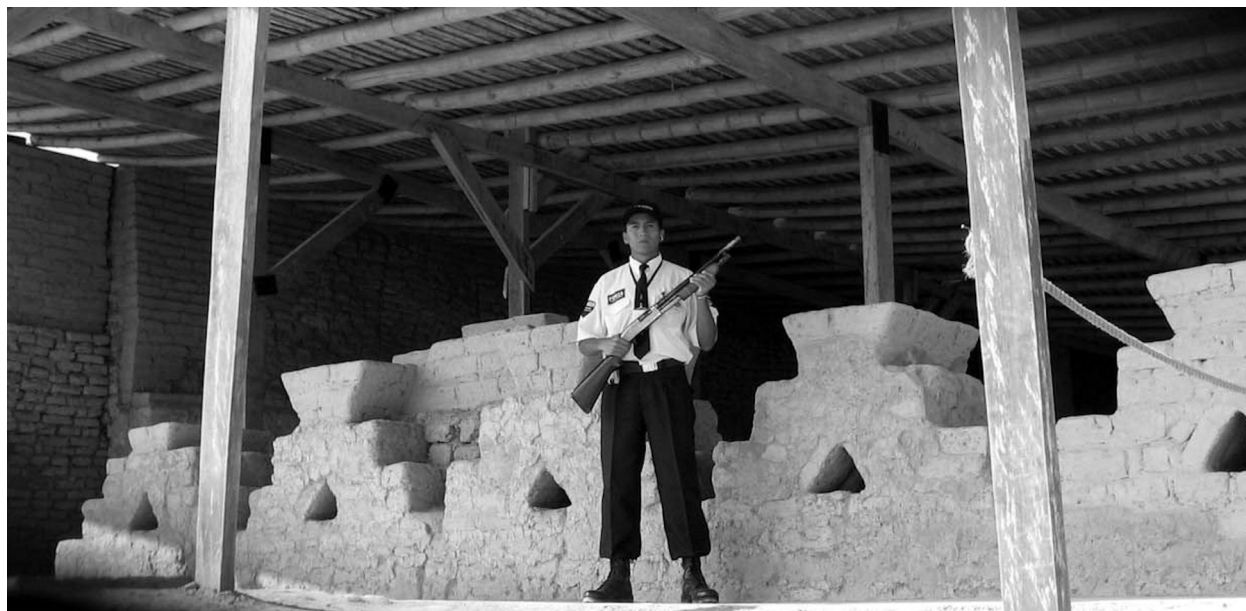


Figure 8: Double step motif along northern perimeter wall of the Decorated Patio, Huaca Cao Viejo

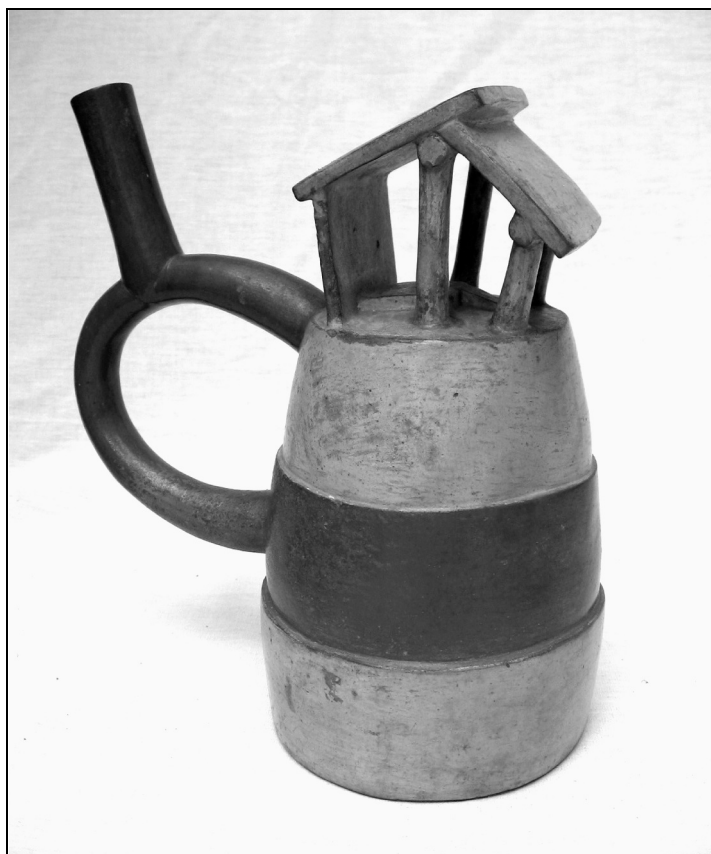


Figure 9: Open Gabled Type, Moche IV,
Eugenio Nicolini Collection (12808),
Lima, 22.5 centimeters high.



Figure 10: Open Shed Roof Type, Moche IV,
Museo Nacional de Antropología,
Arqueología, e Historia del Perú (C-03340),
Lima, 22.7 centimeters high.

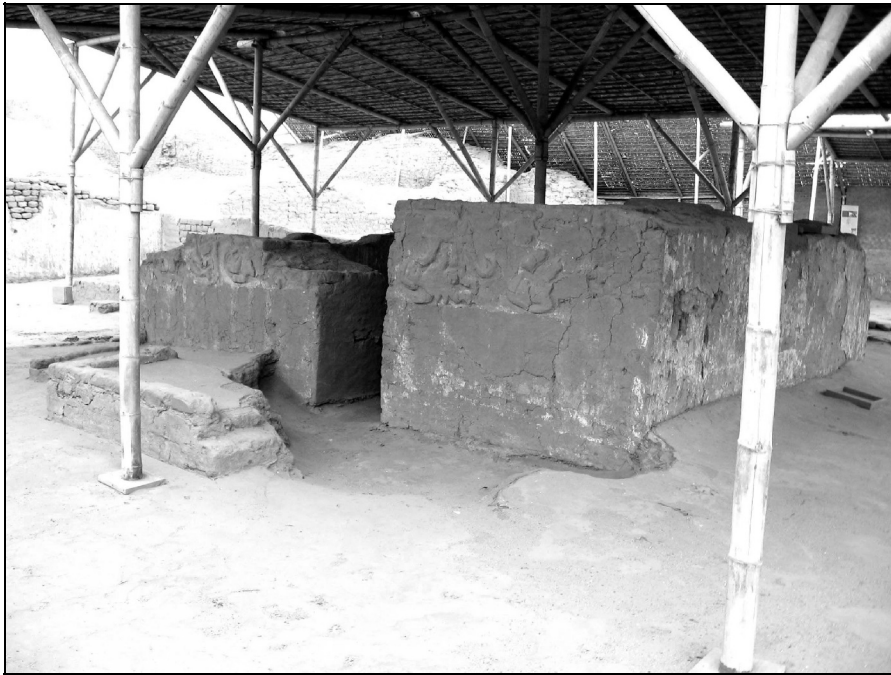


Figure 11: Recinto I, Plaza 3c, Huaca de la Luna. On either side of the entrance is relief imagery of felines attacking human figures.

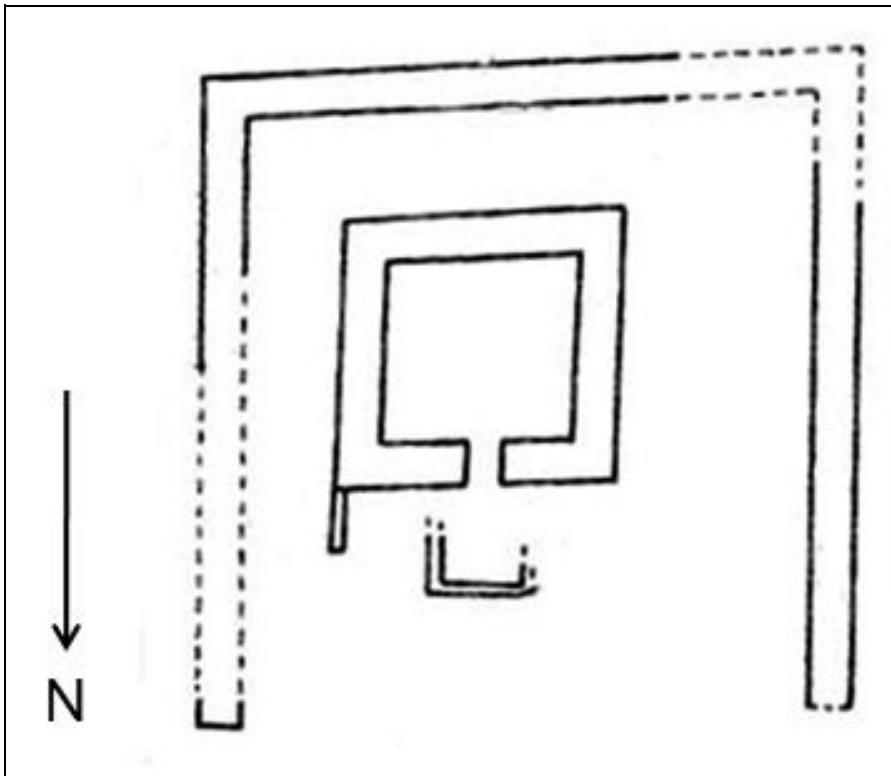


Figure 12: Plan view of Recinto I, Plaza 3c, Huaca de la Luna. An enclosed square structure (Recinto I) sits within a U-shaped perimeter wall. Just in front of the entrance is a small ramp or altar (from Tufinio 2004: figure 109).

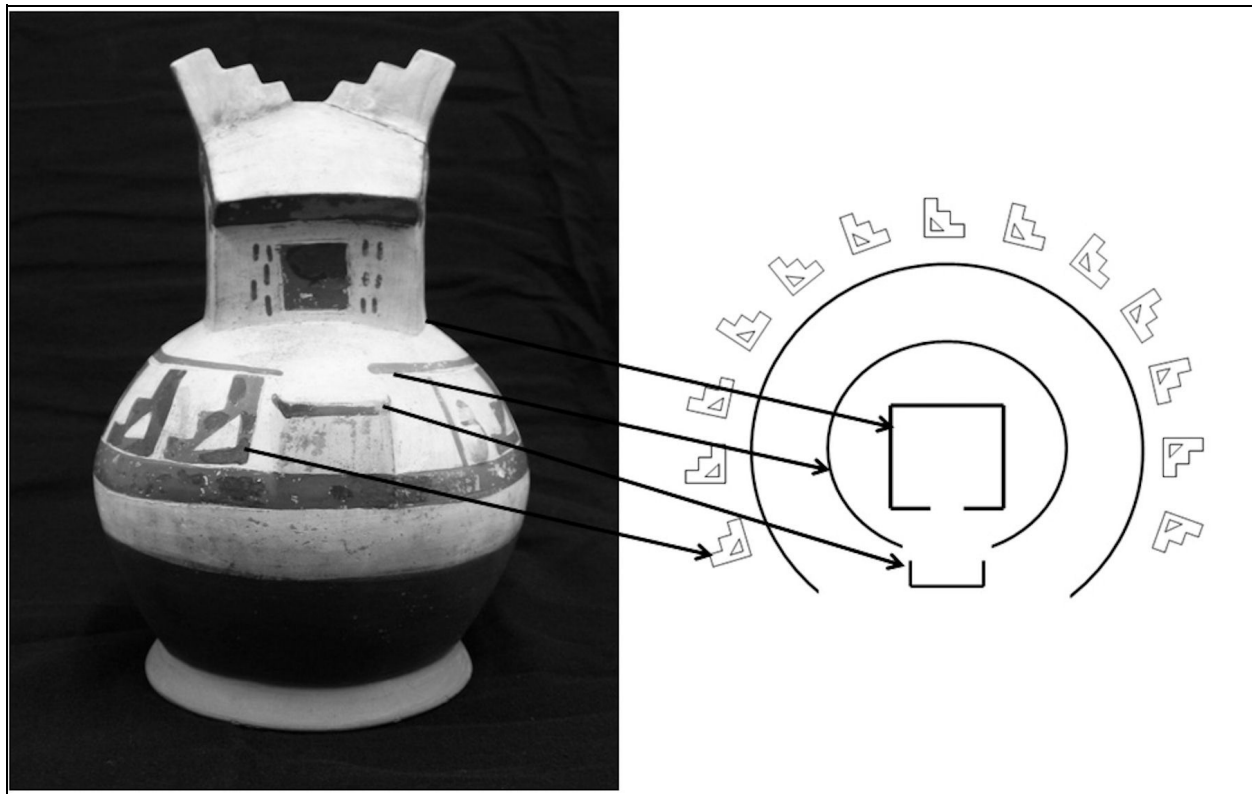


Figure 13: Floor plan created from fineline on Enclosed Gabled Type, Photograph courtesy of the Division of Anthropology, American Museum of Natural History, New York City (AMNH B4857).

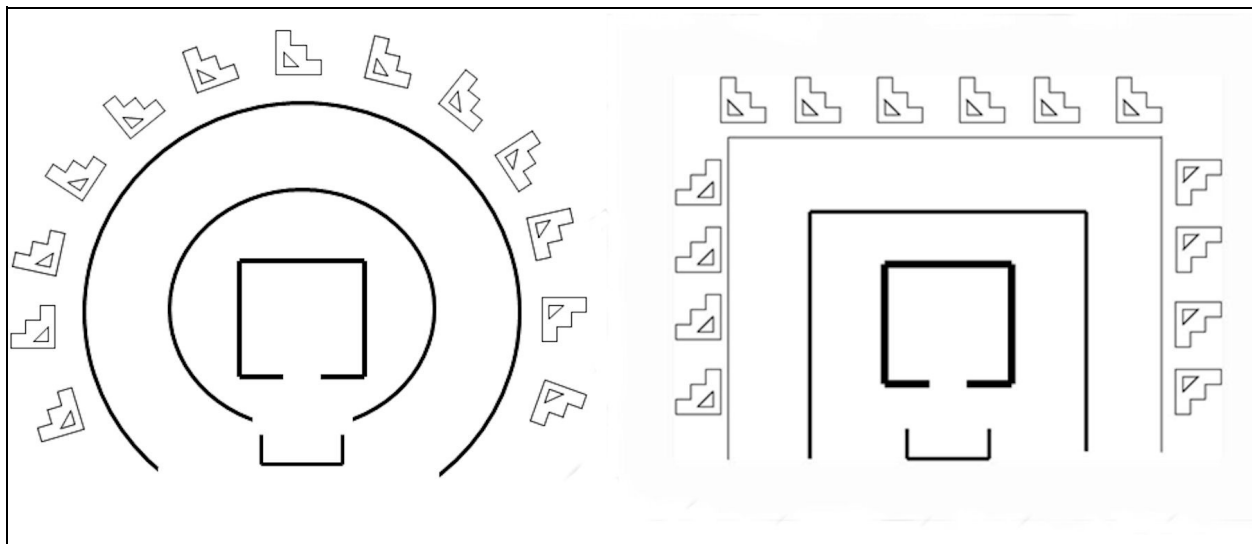


Figure 14: Circular structures from Figure 13 translated into rectilinear ones which better reflect forms found in excavated Moche architecture (both plans are based on AMNH B4857, Figure 13 above).



Figure 15: Enclosed Gabled Type, Moche IV, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum (VA-18281), formerly Arthur Baessler collection, 20.5 centimeters high.



Figure 16: Enclosed Gabled Type, private collection, height unknown Photograph courtesy of Christopher B. Donnan.



Figure 17: Enclosed Gabled Type, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Arqueología, e Historia del Perú (C-54615), Lima, 22 centimeters high.

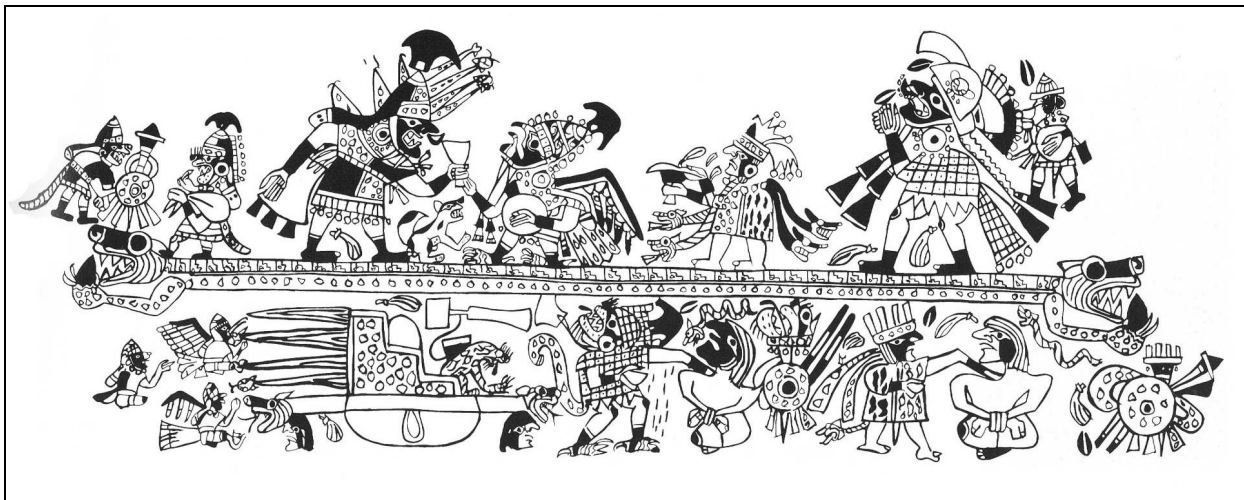


Figure 18: Fineline illustration by Donna McClelland of the Moche Sacrifice Ceremony (from Donnan 1978: figure 239b and Donnan and McClelland 1999: figure 4.102). The bottom register maintains pictorial elements (chisel, streams of blood, war clubs, and eared serpents) also found on Enclosed Gabled Type vessels.

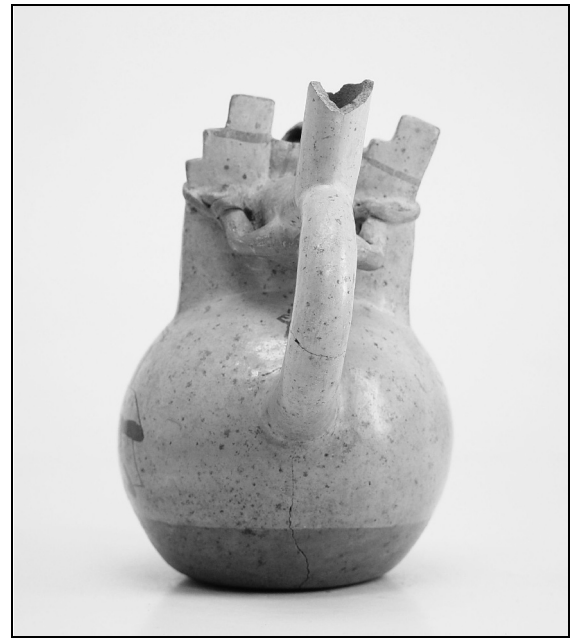


Figure 19: Front and back of Moche IV vessel depicting a sculpted figure bound to a rack and set between two step motifs. Blood from the figure's neck falls to the women painted in fineline below, © Museo Larco, Lima, Peru (ML001474), 19 centimeters high.

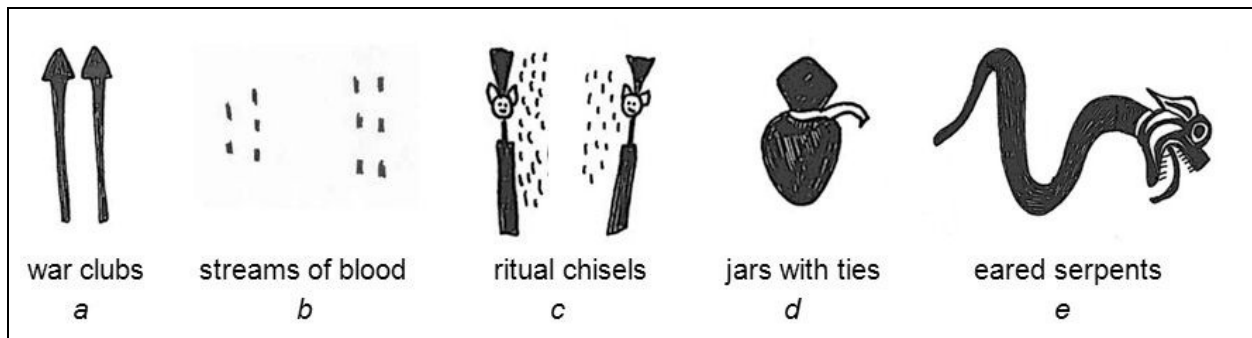


Figure 20: Pictorial imagery found on vessels (often flanking the entrance) of the Enclosed Gabled Type (EGT).



Figure 21: Enclosed Gabled Type, Moche IV, depicting two chisels or scalpels with drops of blood, at either side of the structure's entrance, Museo Amano, Lima (469), 21 centimeters high.



Figure 22: Enclosed Gabled Type, Moche IV, © Museo Larco, Lima (ML002903). Note painted vessels on either side of entrance, 20 centimeters high.

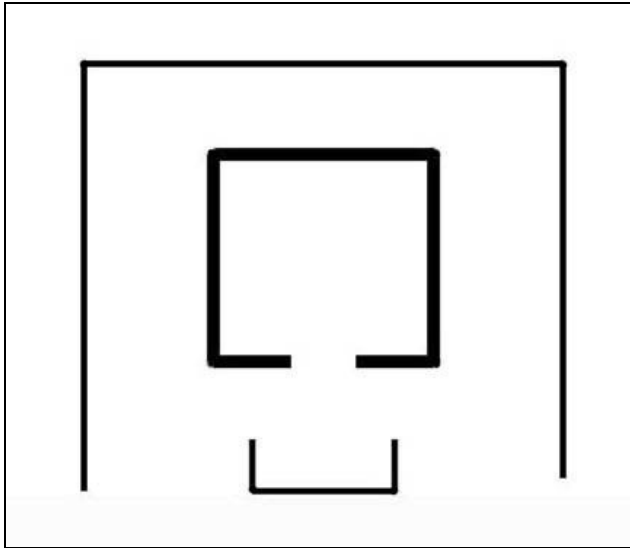


Figure 23: Schematic plan of the Enclosed Gabled Type, adapted from AMNH B4857, (Figure 2).

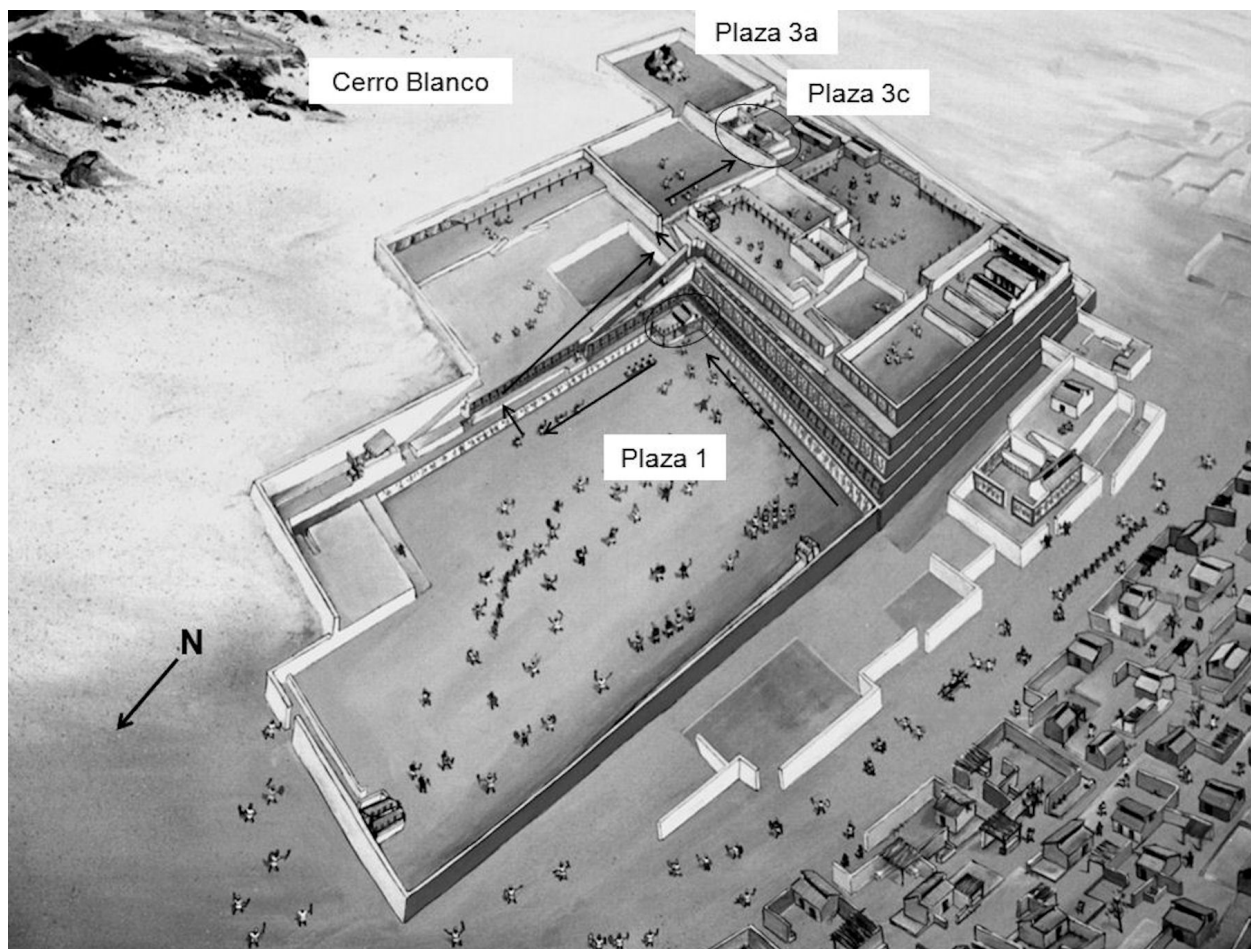


Figure 24: Artist's reconstruction of Huaca de la Luna showing direction of proposed processional route, beginning in Plaza 1 and leading up to Plaza 3c (from image courtesy of Santiago Uceda).

Circles indicate structures which likely anchored ceremonial activity at the site.

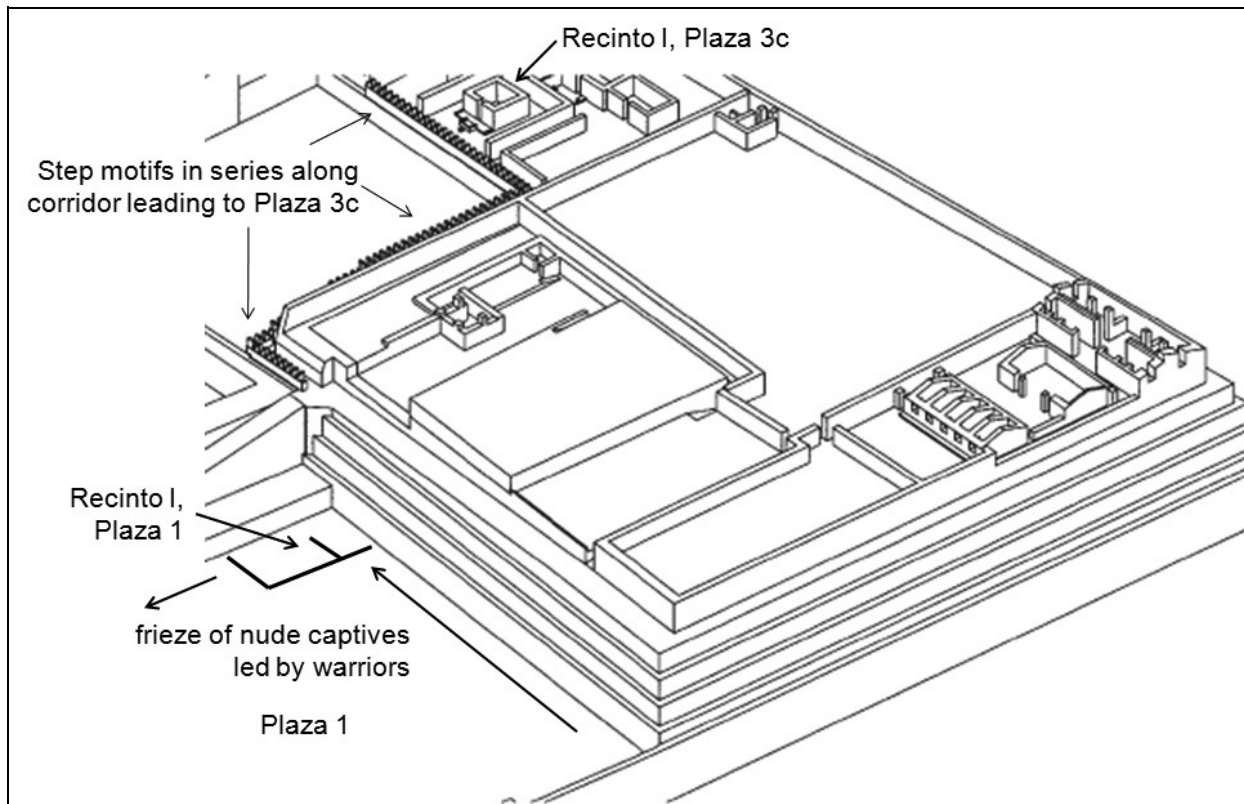


Figure 25: Isometric image of south western section of Huaca de la Luna showing the direction of processing captives on the south and east walls. The series of step motifs that marks the route from Plaza 1, below, to Plaza 3c, above, can be seen at top left (after Tufinio 2004: figure 12).

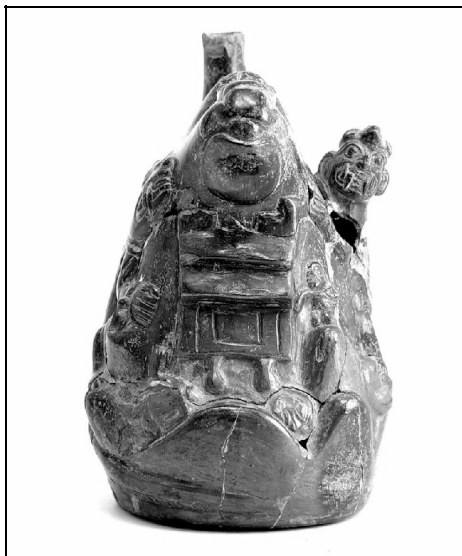


Figure 26: Mountain Scene of Human Sacrifice, Moche IV
© Museo Larco, Lima (ML003104), 15 centimeters high.

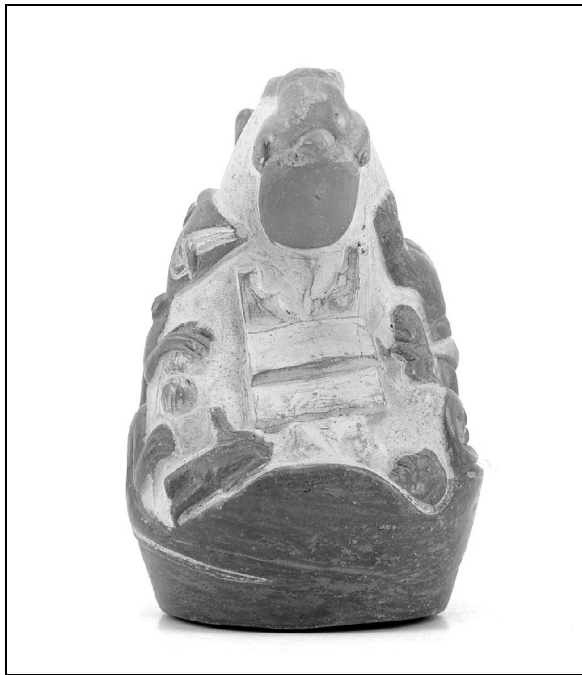


Figure 27: Mountain Scene of Human Sacrifice, Moche IV
© Museo Larco, Lima (ML012998) 18 centimeters high.