Andean Archaeology and Ethnohistory - Anthro 326: Class 15

The Early Intermediate Period: What did the Moche rulers rule?

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- The Moche (same as Mochica) (about 1 to around 800 cal AD)
 - Site of Cerro Blanco (aka Moche) (continuing from last class)
 - between the Huaca de la Luna and Huaca del Sol, a large (500 m wide) space full of residences and craft shops
 - an urban center: completely different concept from earlier monumental centers that featured huge empty plazas
 - funerary platforms and ground-level high-status cemeteries
 - said to show three levels of residential quality
 - closest to Huaca de la Luna
 - on the slope of Cerro Blanco and towards the middle of the space
 - stone and adobe construction
 - storage bins and niches
 - more fancy goods: decorated pots, copper tweezers and knives, beads
 - suggestion that the most elite lived at Huaca de la Luna itself?
 - middle of space
 - similar but less fancy
 - closest to Huaca del Sol
 - small, irregular rooms of cane on stone and mortar bases
 - least fancy artifacts, less storage
 - Chapdelaine's findings (in the Reader):
 - dense, urban layout with straight streets at right angles
 - population of at least 5,000, probably more
 - large, walled many-roomed compounds with just one or a few doors to the street
 - at least some of these compounds seem to contain living quarters for several nuclear families
 - some seem to have specialized in certain crafts
 - but few fishing tools and no farming tools at all, even though they are very common at other Moche sites
 - suggests that most or all of the city residents were craft workers: a "middle class"
 - farmers and fishers may have lived in separate areas, on the outskirts, or in other towns altogether
 - highly variable burials in the residential area
 - Chapdelaine suggests that some burials with few goods in otherwise high-status households might have been servants…?
 - that is, at this site (Cerro Blanco) there were evident social status differences:
 - highest status people, very few, lived right on the ritual monument of Huaca de la Luna
 - high status "middle class" lived closest to Huaca de la Luna
 - moderate status "middle class" lived midway between the Huacas
 - lowest status "middle class" lived closest to the secular, administrative Huaca del Sol

- lower class of farmers and fishers lived on outskirts or at other sites entirely
- evidence of craft work
 - beads, raw material (lapis), and drills
 - metalwork
 - many copper objects with traces of gold finish
 - cylindrical furnace with chemical evidence of having been used to melt gold
 - ceramic tips for blowtubes used to increase heat of fires used for metalworking
 - ceramics (evidence is not specified)
 - there is evidence of industrial-scale ceramic production at other Moche sites, such as Cerro Mayal
 - maybe shell work
 - lots of spindle whorls (for spinning yarn for textiles)
 - concentrated more in some compounds and less in others
 - suggests that most households made some textiles, maybe for their own use
 - while others made a lot more, maybe both for their own use and as specialists producing for clients or for exchange
 - this craftwork would mostly have produced fancy items that would have been for the elite
 - as opposed to utilitarian goods like tools for farming or fishing, or for cooking or household storage
- evidence of long-distance trade
 - Spondylus shell from Ecuador
 - lapis (a blue stone) from northern Chile
 - (if it is really lapis and not some other blue stone that is misidentified)
- While Cerro Blanco is the biggest Moche center, numerous other Moche sites also have big adobe platform mounds, often with painted relief murals
 - At least one, Huaca Cao Viejo, has many features that strongly resemble the Huaca de la
 - clearly sharing virtually identical religious ideas
- the growth of Cerro Blanco was accompanied by the cultural and political unification of the Moche valley and the neighboring Chicama valley
 - Chicama is much bigger than Moche, yet the biggest, most important site is in the Moche valley
 - this multi-valley state was centered at Cerro Blanco
 - most of the north coast eventually became culturally Moche, may or may not have been politically unified under Cerro Blanco
 - marriage alliance(s)?
 - religious or ritual success?
 - conquest?
 - something else?
- Moche art
 - sophisticated, highly standardized style (but with lots of individual variation within it)
 - clearly implies manufacture by trained specialists

- mold-made ceramics
 - sculptural ceramics
 - many are realistic human heads, so individualized that they presumably represent specific people
 - recent work by Chris Donnan shows that most or all of these portraits represent the same few individuals, shown at all stages of life
 - were these real people, or highly specific myths?
 - ceramics with fine-line painting
- iconography may represent parts of a set of myths
 - the parts would have implied the whole to people who knew the stories
 - like a baby in a manger or three wise men represent parts of the story of the birth of Christ
 - "Presentation theme"
 - a recurring scene in which a character called the "warrior priest", surrounded by other distinct and identifiable characters, receives blood from sacrificed prisoners in a goblet
- more on Moche iconography next time
- Drastic variation in richness of burials
 - ordinary burials with nothing or just a few pots
 - medium-status burials
 - extended body in a cane casket
 - a few pots, sometimes other goods
 - high-status burials
 - such as the "Warrior Priest"
 - similar position and casket, but piles of pots, ornaments, staffs, etc.
 - Extremely rich burials at numerous Moche sites
 - some in platform mounds (although this was apparently not the main function of the mounds)
 - Looted from Huaca del Sol
 - Already mentioned at Huaca de la Luna
 - in small funerary mounds between the Cerro Blanco huacas
 - Sipán "royal" burials
 - several separate burials
 - in a mud-brick platform mound
 - lots of copper, silver, gold, ceramics, beadwork, human and animal sacrifices
 - specific burials correspond to specific figures depicted on Moche pots, based on the unique ornaments and paraphernalia they are always depicted with
 - thought to be specific ritual roles in ceremonies, occupied by a series of people like political offices
 - so far, two burials have been found of people who played the central figure's role
 - Other sites with similar burials
 - Señor de Sicán, similar to the Lord of Sipan

- at San José de Moro, one burial was of a high-status woman, also clearly linked to a specific character shown on Moche pots
- implications:
 - the scenes on Moche pots really happened, or if mythical, were reenacted in reality by the people in these tombs
 - these people presumably comprised a powerful ruling class, based on or supported by their standardized roles in these religious reenactments
 - they must have commanded huge resources of skilled labor and food production to produce the things in their tombs and elsewhere
- large-scale specialized production
 - inferred from great quantities of very fine craft goods
 - and from actual workshops found at several sites
 - Cerro Mayal, at Mocollope:
 - industrial-scale pottery factory with molds, kilns, piles of ash and misfired potsherds meters deep...
 - copper processing and fabrication shops
 - special furnaces for smelting copper
 - special grinding stones for breaking up slag to get the copper droplets out
 - metalworking shops with polished stone tools for hammering and working sheet metal
 - pot that illustrates a hearth with a copper axe in it being operated by four men
 - weaving centers shown on ceramics, maybe one found at Pampa Grande
- all these elites and the craftspeople who made stuff for them must have been supported by surpluses generated largely by farming
 - large, planned field complexes, some with regularly-spaced mounds thought to have been for administrative purposes
 - uniform-sized rectangular plots
 - dependent upon water delivered by gigantic canal systems
 - one of which actually brought water from the Chicama valley to the Moche valley (an inter-valley canal)
 - more total area was irrigated in Moche III and IV than ever again until this century (and some Moche field areas still have not been reclaimed)
 - this agricultural system must have been built and operated under the direction of an overseeing authority: the Moche state
 - which would have gotten a share of the product to support its activities
 - but note: these planned farms appeared no earlier than 300 AD (Moche III), well after both Gallinazo and Moche were established
 - so administered farming would have contributed to increasing complexity, but not to its beginning
 - or maybe we just can't detect the earlier, less well-organized stages
- Warfare
 - debated how much was "real" and how much was ritualized
 - iconography
 - on pots and big murals

- maces, shields, battle scenes, bound prisoners being shown to an enthroned figure, sacrifices
- but some suggest that the hand-to-hand battle of overdressed warriors may be ritual, not literally warfare in our sense
- weapons in burials
 - spear throwers, spear heads, maces, decorative armor, etc.
 - again, mostly highly decorated, maybe more for imagery than heavy use
- some ceremonial and high-status areas are surrounded by walls
 - for defense, or to restrict access for social reasons?
- but once Moche style was well established, defensible sites went out of use
 - ineffective against a standing army?
 - maybe the Moche state forced people to abandon them, as the Inka did?
- Writing: none
- Moche expansion
 - Moche style ceramics, etc. are found on most of the North Coast of Peru
 - plus offshore islands, even far to the south
 - whether this represents several separate polities, or one unified state, how it evolved, etc. is hotly debated
 - Moseley suggests that the large valleys of the northern area were indirectly ruled, through existing elites, while the smaller valleys of the southern area were directly ruled after military conquest, with the imposition of state centers and administrators
- Bawden's vision of how the "rise of Moche" could have been the result of the use of ideology by elites
 - he sees a contradiction between
 - traditional Andean social organization, based on community membership, consensus, authority derived from kinship, especially closeness to specific (maybe mythical) revered ancestors
 - "holistic ideology"
 - and individual, exclusive power in the hands of particular members of the elite
 - "individualizing ideology"
 - so emerging elites have to justify themselves, make their role seem appropriate and legitimate
 - they could do this through creating authority based on myth and public ritual, in which they assume shamanistic roles
 - and by making a big deal of funerals, thus projecting their status into the supernatural realm
 - the elites maintained exclusive control over the manufacture and use of objects symbolic of high status
 - supporting a huge staff of craft specialists to do so
 - thus requiring more agricultural production under their control
 - this need for more agricultural surplus required the smaller valleys to unite and conquer their neighbors to the south
 - the larger northern valleys had enough resources that they could support plenty of craft production for their elite without having to conquer other valleys

- so Bawden sees the northern valley elites as remaining more religiously-based, with their status secure as occupiers of ritual roles
- while the southern valley elites (particularly at Cerro Blanco) became more secular and "individualizing" because they had to control a military and administer a small empire in order to maintain their status
- which is why (he suggests) the southern valleys began producing portrait vessels, which were never common in the north
 - these expressed the importance of individuals, rather than ritual roles
 - and were used almost exclusively in burials, which were opportunities to highlight the importance of individuals and their successors
- Bawden's view of "the southern Moche polity of the Middle Period"
 - we will take this to stand for "typical Moche", although Bawden's whole point is that different parts of the North coast developed differently
 - by 300 cal AD, Bawden sees
 - the Moche and Chicama central area
 - unified by a single political leadership, based on the ritual role of the elite
 - in the larger valleys to the north
 - elites in some Gallinazo groups had successfully adopted the Moche ideology, other Gallinazo groups resisted it
 - resulting in a patchwork of contemporary groups, possibly with different political structures
 - in the smaller valleys to the south
 - the Moche ideology had not taken hold; the people were still basically Gallinazo without the new ideology and exaggerated elites
 - although the huaca del Sol and Huaca de la Luna were started earlier, Bawden puts most of the construction in his "Middle Period"
 - maximum expansion of the canal system occurred at this time
 - lots of platform complexes, workshops, etc. in both valleys (Moche and Chicama)
 - the Moche-Chicama polity based at Cerro Blanco set about conquering the southern valleys
 - because the resources of these two valleys were insufficient to maintain the elites in the style that they desired
 - while this did not happen to the north, were the valleys were big enough to support an
 - Bawden argues that the Moche conquerors did *not* set up administrative centers, barracks, etc.
 - instead, they built ritual centers that would have legitimated the Moche leaders through their supernatural roles in ritual
- but Bawden argues that in the long run, without formal administration, a standing military, etc., they could not maintain the legitimacy of their rule over such a large area in the face of the communal Andean ideology
 - so the multi-valley state collapsed; Cerro Blanco lost power and was being abandoned by around 700 cal AD
 - there could be other explanations for this decline, of course...

- the Moche elite apparently retrenched to a new center: Galindo
- which was even more sharply divided into sectors occupied by different classes, separated by tall adobe walls
- but this arrangement lasted only a few generations at most
- Galindo, and with it Moche, lasted only until perhaps 800 cal AD