Moche Cosmology, Religion, and Rituals:

Iconographic Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses ancient Moche cosmology, religion and rituals as reconstructed primarily from iconography on their ceramics. This is a difficult task, given that the Moche culture, like the rest of the ancient Andean civilizations, did not possess writing and thus did not leave behind any accounts of their beliefs written in their own words. Further, the major cultural and demographic changes that have occurred over the 1200 years since the collapse of the Moche culture make it difficult to rely on available information from later cultures for insights into Moche cosmology. Consider, for example, impacts of the Spanish conquest of Peru (1532-5) and subsequent tremendous depopulation and intensive efforts during the late 16th and 17th centuries by the Catholic church to eradicate native beliefs and rituals. The latter was the Andean version of the infamous "Spanish Inquisition" that sought and suppressed heresy, often by means of severe punishments and destruction of idols and ritual paraphernalia.

How can we, then, reconstruct the intangible, unwritten Moche cosmology and religion? When we speak of cosmology, we are interested in understanding how the Moche people conceived the origin, evolution, form, content, and organization of their universe, as well as their place within it. As in many other religions of the world, the Moche religion was in essence a system of beliefs and worship of supernatural powers, both benevolent and malevolent, that were embodied in a variety of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic beings, as well as worship of deceased ancestors and their spirits. It appears that these powerful and mythical forces and beings existed simultaneously in their own dimension as well as that of living mortals, influencing, if not controlling, the latter. Rituals are visible expressions or acts of mortals recognizing the above inequality and dynamic but binding relationship. Rituals are much more than an expression of deference; they serve therapeutic functions for the worshipped and worshippers and affirm and strengthen their interrelationship. Further, many aspects of and participants in rituals have been depicted in art and/or left behind material remains such as offerings placed in sacred locations that can be recovered through archaeological excavations. Thus, closely interwoven cosmology and religion can be investigated through iconography and archaeology. We rely on these two sources for our reconstruction.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MOCHE ART STUDIES

Let us first consider how we may extract relevant information from iconography. At least from the end of the 19th century, many scholars have taken a serious interest in the Moche culture, particularly in its art. Modern investigation of the Moche culture owes much to the pioneering efforts of German scholars. Excavation by Max Uhle, the father of Andean archaeology, at the base of the Temple of the Moon at the site of Moche in the Moche valley in 1899-1900 established the relative chronological position of the Moche culture in ancient Andean civilization. Shortly thereafter, the availability of many looted Moche ceramics with realistic modeling and painting depicting diverse subject matters spurred efforts to decipher cultural meanings or messages encoded in them. Path-breaking in this regard was the work of Uhle's contemporary compatriot, Arthur Baessler. In 1902-3, Baessler published his 4-volume set illustrating and describing the artistic and technical mastery and rich information content of Moche ceramics. To be sure, before and even after Baessler's publication, there were casual examination of ceramic representations for their apparent meanings. However, it was Baessler who properly recognized that the deeper meanings or metaphysical visions of the Moche people might be gleaned from *a systematic compilation and comparison of artistic images*. In essence, Baessler pioneered the basic approach to Moche art by which different levels of its meanings might be ferreted out. Though refined by later scholars, this approach remains in use to this day.

Rafael Larco, a rich Peruvian landowner and a devoted amateur Moche archaeologist, pushed the frontiers of knowledge opened by Uhle and Baessler. Through a systematic analysis of artifacts he amassed from excavations of tombs on his own land and purchases of other collections (some 40,000 vessels by the time of his death in 1966), Larco established a five-phase (I-V) Moche ceramic chronology and elucidated various other key aspects of the culture, including its subsistence and territorial extent. His reconstruction of the Moche lifeway and world has been called "Moche ethnography." Larco also identified various cultures that were antecedent to (Cupisnique) and partially contemporary (e.g., Salinar and Gallinazo [also known as Virú]) with the Moche culture, helping to clarify the cultural setting in which the Moche evolved. Larco's collection can be appreciatedat the *Rafael Larco Herrera* Museum (named in honor of his father) in Lima.

When it came to the subject the matter of the Moche religion and cosmology, Larco relied on the uncritical use of analogy, imposing his own unverified ideas derived from historical and ethnographic descriptions of traditional beliefs and customs on the north coast. He made the questionable assumption that there was strong cultural and biological continuity between the Moche and later peoples. Though much more circumscribed and cautious, analogies with later Andean cultures continue to play a critical role in modern attempts to decipher Moche cosmology and religion.

Today, influenced by the works of art historians, G. Kubler and E. Panofsky, and the archaeologist, J. H. Rowe, many modern scholars, such as E. Benson, C.B. Donnan, and A.M. Hocquenghem see the task of reconstructing Moche cosmology and religion from its iconography to be analogous to reading symbolic texts without appropriate dictionaries; that art is a form of communication and structured much like languages and can thus be analyzed as such. Abundant Moche ceramics were perhaps the most important means of artistic expression and symbolic comunication in this nonliterate world. Thus, some scholars have adopted a "linguistic method of analysis" that seeks to identify the "vocabulary" (different units and levels of meaningful motifs) as well as the "grammar" and "syntax" of Moche symbolic text by means of systematic comparison and contrast of contexts and forms.

In succeding decades, iconographic studies became much more common than archaeological fieldwork to the point that Mochica archaeology became synonymous with iconography. Even archaeological fieldwork often meant tombs or temple excavations that would yield new iconographic information or confirm iconographic interpretations. With much of the iconography derived from funerary objects and temples, it was thought that its interpretation could be best tested by more excavations of the same. Clearly, an impressive body of literature on Mochica iconography has been published during this same period by scholars from some dozen countries. The effort to compile an inventory of Moche artistic motifs and themes initiated by Baessler was inherited by Larco, G. Kutscher, O. Klein, A.M. Hocquenghem and others. Today, it continues in a most exhaustive manner in the hands of C.B. Donnan, an American archaeologist specializing in the Moche. The Moche Archive in the Fowler Museum of Cultural History at the University of California, Los Angeles under Donnan's direction now has the largest corpus of Moche images: over 125,000 photos of some 10,000 objects. At the same time, today, we are in dire need of a more broadly based Mochica archaeology; excavations of

tombs and temples should be complemented by those of residences and workshops and iconography and excavation linked in a feedback relationship rather than one dictating the other.

TECHNIQUES, ORGANIZATION, SUBJECTS AND CHARACTER OF MOCHE ART

Before we turn our attention to considering interpretations resulting from systematic iconographic studies, let us briefly consider the techniques, organization, subject matter, and character of Moche art, particularly its expression in ceramics.

Major features of Moche art are its representational character and naturalistic style. The realism was achieved through high relief or full sculptural modeling. The full sculptural modeling found on ceramic vessels was unsurpassed in the prehispanic Andes with the possible exception of earlier north coastal Cupisnique examples. Many subjects were modeled in naturalistic proportions and exhibited salient features that readily allowed their identification. You can appreciate this, for example in Objects #____. Usually, the head of a human figure was made disproportionally large so as to show details and capture its subtle expression and mood (e.g., Objects #___). In some cases the artists apparently used real life objects to make molds. Larco was able to identify numerous plants, animals, fish and crustaceans down to their specific taxonomic classifications, testimony to the observational powers of Mochica artisans, as well as to the diversity of domesticated and wild resources that were valued for food and religious reasons. There is, in fact, good correspondence between the inventory of animal and plant remains recovered from excavations at Mochica sites and that Larco compiled from ceramic representations.

Probably the best example of realistic modeling is what Larco considered to be portraits of real life Moche leaders (see Objects #___). Though these "portraits" are only about 2/3 of the size of real-life human heads and made using a pair of vertically bisected molds, the physiognomy is indeed realistic, down to facial scars and skin texture. The molds may have been made directly from the heads of real-life individuals or at least been modeled after them. Larco recorded where specific "portraits" were found, arguing that their distribution reflected the extent of territories that these individuals controlled.

Painting on ceramics was usually limited to two colors, dark red and beige, with occasional use of black and orange colors for facial features or other important

details (see Objects # ___). On the northern north coast, potters employed a purplish color as well (Object #___). Dark red paint was prepared from the ground powder of an iron oxide (hematite) mixed with fine clay as a binder, while the beige paint was made of a mixture of fine clays. Some fine ceramics used shell and mineral (e.g., turquoise) inlays and even miniature metal ornaments (see Objects # ___), thereby adding more colors, glitter, movement, and realism. In other artistic media such as textiles and murals, we find a wider range of colors used but rarely exceeding four or five. The emphasis on naturalistic, sculptural modeling which in essence rendered the use of many colors unimportant, if not unnecessary, was a widespread stylistic tradition of the north coast of Peru that long preceded the emergence of Moche art. It persisted up to the time of Spanish conquest of the Inca Empire in the 16th century. This tradition constitutes a striking contrast with the southern Peruvian emphasis on multiple (sometimes over ten) colors and two-dimensional representation.

Fine-line drawings, filled-in silhouettes and profile views are found alone or together with sculptural modeling (e.g., Objects # ___). Fine-lines were most likely drawn with brushes composed of strands of human or animal (e.g., llama) hair inserted in thin cane shafts. Continuous movements of the flexible hairs would yield smooth, flowing fine-lines, which in turn conveyed a sense of movements. Unlike wall paintings where fine scribed guidelines are sometimes found, the ceramic artist drew freehand. Many artists took adavantage of the spherical surface of the stirrup-spout bottles in composing their drawing. Object # ___ with a concentric composition encircling a supernatural personage is a fine example. A series of runners in a spiral composition is another example of how Moche artists skillfully adapted to the specific medium of expression.

The ability to compose and draw freehand taking full advantage of the curvature and shape of the available surface comes with many years of experience. In the hands of experienced artists, most fine-line drawings probably took only a few hours to complete. It appears that each drawing was done by a single artist. When one spends many hours examining Moche fine-line drawings, it is possible to recognize not only where one stroke of the brush started and ended, but whether the artist was right- or left-handed. Though Moche artists left no "signatures" that allow ready identification of their products, one can recognize the different styles of individual artists in the way body and facial details are drawn. In fact, given the way certain deities and monsters were drawn, one wonders whether some drawings

were not meant as "caricatures" as opposed to respectful representations of powerful beings.

Though frontal views are common on metal and modeled ceramics, the fine-line drawings emphasize profile view. This emphasis is likely to have been a solution to displaying three-dimensional subjects on a two dimensional medium. This adjustment explains why in some drawings it is difficult to understand limb arrangements. Depth of field seems lost in this style of drawing. However, placing the subject in the upper portion of the drawing appears to have been their way of indicating distance. Depiction of background also gives a sense of perspective. For example, a xerophytic plant called ____ and sandy ground (stippled area) are shown in a running scene (Object # ___), while maize plants and *algarrobo* trees with bean pods (*Prosopis pallida*) are shown in a deer hunt scene (Object # __). Relative size and placement within a given composition also relate to the relative importance of subjects. Usually the principal subject is drawn largest and placed at the center of the compositon.

A recently excavated Moche ceramic workshop (estimated date of A.D. 450-550) offers some insights into Moche potters and their production. It was situated some 150 m southwest of the Temple of the Moon at Moche and was excavated by a University of Trujillo team. The workshop appears to have been part of a larger complex of craft workshops that included metalworking and bead making. Production debris, implements and other evidence indicate that all pottery manufacture steps, from preparation of the clay mixture and vessel formation with molds to painting and eventual firing, were undertaken within the workshop. Further, molds and production debris indicate that this workshop produced vessels (e.g., bottles), musical implements (e.g., trumpets), and figures for use in elite ritual activities and tombs. In fact, what were excavated at the nearby Temple of the Moon, including large unfired figures used in human sacrificial rituals (see Objects # ___ and the chapter by S. Bourget, pp. ___) appear to have been products of this workshop.

Besides proximity to this prestigious Temple, there are various lines of evidence that suggest that potters in this ceramic workshop enjoyed relatively high social status. A mature woman (ca. 40-50 years of age) with arthritis in her hands buried in the workshop floor was accompanied by an unusually large amount of grave goods including 42 ceramic vessels. Another burial, an adult man (ca. 40 years of age), also with extensive rheumatism in the hands, probably work-related, had fine

grave goods such as gilded copper plaques. It is not a surprise that potters who had to have had a detailed knowledge of elite ritual activities and religious dogma would have been trusted by the elite and thus given relatively high status.

The same cannot be said about potters at another but much larger workshop (ca. A.D. 500-600) established near Mocollope, the regional Moche capital in the Chicama valley just north of the Moche valley. Here, the workshop was surrounded by literally tons of production debris. A recent excavation by Glenn Russell and his team revealed that, though this workshop produced a wide array of ceramic vessels, musical instruments, and figurines, most did not match the technical and artistic qualities of products at the aforementioned workshop at Moche. In fact, there were hardly any remains of bottles with fine-line drawings. Clearly, there were important status differences among potters, in accordance with what they produced and how closely they worked with the elite. This conclusion is important to our reconstruction of Moche cosmology and religion. We must always keep in mind that the fine-line drawings that form the main source of information for our reconstruction were found on fine ceramics from high status tombs and thus we are likely to be dealing only with elite visions and dogma.

The second major feature of Moche art is the impressive range of subject matter, showing objects and creatures, both human and non-human, found in different worlds and their activities. Yet, subjects were carefully selected and *not* exhaustive in coverage. In fact, certain aspects of Moche life and world were not depicted at all or depicted only rarely; for example, mundane, daily aspects of ordinary people such as food preparation, household maintenance, and children at play. Many food plants are represented but not their cultivation or processing. A child appears in the company of an adult, never alone. Individuals who appear to be ordinary, on close inspection, prove to have some unusual physical feature such as a congenital deformity. For example, it is believed that a blind person who often has keen nonvisual senses was viewed in the Moche world as possessing supernatural power.

Kutscher, and later, Donnan and Hocquenghem showed independently that the overwhelming portion of subject matter in Moche art can be subsumed into one of a finite number of "themes" or "scenes," such as "combat" (e.g., between two warriors or deities; Objects #___), "hunting" (deer or land snail hunt by elite individuals or sea lion hunt by fishermen; Objects #___), "presentation" of a goblet containing blood from sacrificedprisoners to a deity (Objects #___) or a warrior

leader, "running race" of warriors (Objects #___), "navigation" of two deities in tule boats (Objects #___), and "funeral" of an important personage. In general, each theme is believed to illustrate important aspects of Mochica religion and associated rituals. A theme may be defined as part of a narrative translated into a visual form by recurrent configurations formed by a given set of elements, each with specific symbolic meaning. Donnan suggests some 12 to 15 themes, while Hocquenghem specifies 19 themes. Each of these themes have a complex composition and various constituent parts (e.g., humans and/or nonhumans engaged in some activity and its physical setting). Rarely one ceramic vessel or any other artifact displays the entire composition and all constituent parts. What is represented on most vessels then is a short-hand representation or a selected portion of a given theme rendered in fine-line drawing, sculptural modeling or both.

Donnan believes that the basic messages underlying these themes and their constituent parts were known well enough among the beholder so that even their partial representations were sufficient to convey the whole messages or mentally reconstruct the entire themes. The method of using a selected component to stand for the whole is widely used even today, e.g. in modern commercial art. For example, Object # ___ illustrates a portion of deer hunting theme. Note how a buck is being chased by two simply dressed men (drawn quite small) toward a net held by another two simply dressed men, while a group of well-dressed men (drawn relatively large) await nearby. Though the actual hunting with clubs or darts is not shown in this drawing, such activity is shown on Object #___. On Object #____, we see a series of runners each wearing an elaborate headdress and holding a pouch in hand. On the other hand, Object #___ shows how the runner upon reaching the end opens his pouch to reveal a set of beans. In this exhibit, we have various depictions of warriors fighting and men (often naked) with their hands tied behind their back. On Object # __, below the sculptural representation of a well-dressed, seated warrior, we see three fully attired warriors pulling three naked men by a rope tied around their necks. In fact the warriors carry with them extra armor presumably taken from the captured men. The fate of the naked prisoners is not clear from this drawing. However, Object # ___ illustrates how the neck of a captured, naked warrior is cut so that his blood can be collected in a goblet, which a priestess or female deity wearing an elaborate headdress and a robe offers to a waiting deity.

How do we know that we can read these two depictions or, for that matter, any set of themes in a sequence? Fortunately, though very rare, there are Moche

ceramic vessels that show various known themes in a sequence (in a spiral layout) or in different horizontal levels. What these representations make clear is that seemingly discrete themes in reality connect to form one or a few lengthy narratives; that Moche art had a storybook-like format and that each representation constituted only a portion of one or a few complex narratives, only a page or two of the "storybook," so to speak. The narration is made effective by the naturalistic rendering of the subject matter.

The above characterization of Moche art is based on inspection of tens of thousands of ceramic vessels. In general, the overwhelming majority of subjects and scenes represented on Moche ceramics relates to aspects of religious rituals and reproduction in a general sense, allowing us to attempt a reconstruction of their cosmology and religion. At the same time, let us not forget the important fact that informative artistic representations are found on relatively fine ceramic vessels found in tombs and religious architecture. Such representations also appear on fine textiles, although such preserved specimens are rare. Considering the context in which it occurs, the oft-heard characterization that Moche art is sacred is a foregone conclusion. Those items found in tombs *should* be imbued with some religious meaning, The "sacred art" characterization appears to be appropriate for Moche art, but we cannot forget for a moment that so much of our knowledge of the Moche art remains speculative and tenuous.

MEANING IN MOCHE ART: COSMOLOGY, RELIGION AND RITUALS

With the preceding background information, let us consider possible meanings hidden in Moche art. Motifs, themes, and narratives yield different meanings and generate different questions at different levels of analysis. For example, we may ask why Moche artists drew warriors fighting. In reference to the combat theme, we realize that it led to the capture of sacrificial victims. This leads to the question why captives were sacrificed. What we are interested in here is understanding the basic story line and messages underlying motifs and themes, i.e., the cultural significance of the Moche art.

The thematic approach, while allowing us to identify component parts of Moche art, does not offer understanding of how the themes interrelated to form bigger pictures or yield deeper meanings. The total meaning of a given theme cannot be definedwithout understanding the systemic relationships among themes. Even multi-thematic representations integrate only a few of all the known themes.

Nor is the direction in which we should "read" linked themes apparent. Further, there is no *a priori* reason that all themes should connect to form a single narrative. There may well have been a number of narratives or different versions of the same narrative(s). Afterall, we are looking at a corpus of artistic depictions collected from the entire Moche territory and history that spanned over 600 years.

One of the few comprehensive attempts to elucidate the cultural meaning of Moche art has been made by Anne Marie Hocquenghem. She relates themes she identified to shamanistic traditions, mythologies and rituals historically and ethnographically recorded in various regions of the Andean coast, highlands and *selva* (Amazonian jungle). These themes together are seen as forming a ceremonial calendar that defined astrological-astronomical (particularly the movement of the sun, moon and Pleiades), agricultural, and human life cycles and associated rituals. In other words, she believes ceramic representations depicted participants (both natural and supernatural) and their roles in each phase of the calendar. Rituals, including propitiation in the form of human sacrifice, were seen as critical in advancing from one phase of the calendar to the next in the agricultural cycle. Thus, in her conception, Mochica iconography expressed concern for and appreciation or celebration of the successful maintenance of life cycles and cosmic order.

More specifically, the 19 themes she has defined in Moche art, are said to relate to specific rituals conducted at different times of the year according to the ritual calendar. For example, she believes that the beginning of the Moche ceremonial calendar and life cycle at the time of the spring equinox is represented in art by the themes of purification rituals and sexual union (e.g., Objects #65, 143, 144, 206). Next comes the period of expiation coinciding with the sun's passage over the zenith. This is represented, for example, by depictions of a tied man being eaten by vultures (Object #140). The third period is the invocation of the dead or ancestors, represented, for example, by depictions of deer hunted by warriors and subsequent offering of the deer to an important personage (Objects #83, 106). Also related are depictions of the dead (skeletons) dancing and playing musical instruments (Object #67).

Sometime after the summer soltice, come combat and human sacrifice as acts related to the establishment of social harmony and bountiful harvest. She suggests that combat scenes show annual ritual combat combining features of a rite of passage and an agricultural rite, fought between young elite members of the inferred moieties known as *hanan* and *hurin* occupying coastal and inland zones, respectively.

Further, captured young warriors were sacrificed to mythical ancestors so that they, in turn, would concede to their living descendants an abundant harvest. Following the battle and sacrifices, the victorious warriors celebrate by dancing with a rope.

Her view of Moche themes are based on close analogy with Inka rituals and worldviews described in Spanish Colonial documents and, more broadly, on ethnohistorical and ethnographic data from the Andean region as a whole (Ecuador to Bolivia). She sees known ecological and cultural differences between the coast and highlands and northern and southern areas of little consequence based on her belief that both areas shared "pan-Andean" structural principles and religious ideologies. As seen below, Hocquenghem's reconstruction, in spite of a number of striking parallels between Moche and Inka rituals, has various weaknesses.

Yuri Berezkin, a Russian scholar, posits that Moche art was essentially a graphic representation of mythologies or narrative histories. He also notes that there are, in fact, significant differences between the mythologies of southern and northern Peru. For example, human acquisition of cultivated plants is explained in the south as having been unintentionally brought from the sky by a fox, while in the north, a culture hero is said to have taken them from a toad or the stolen child of the mother-goddess transformed into the desired plants. Thus, the validity of the basic premise underlying Hocquenghem's iconographic analysis comes into question.

According to Craig Morris, an American archaeologist specializing in the Inka culture, the annual Inka ritual combat known as *kamay* was a way by which different social groups settled disputes and established or confirmed their rank in the larger social order. Loss of life sometimes occurred, but neither massive killing nor human sacrifice was the intent of combat. If so, this further brings into question the analogy that Hocquenghem employs to interpret Moche combat and attendant human sacrifice.

Insights from Bourget's aforementioned excavation of the scene of human sacrificial ceremonies are valuable here. His excavations showed that sacrificial ceremonies involving men of varied age were conducted during or immediately after torrential rains accompanying El Niño events. Bourget found a similar outdoor ritual settings at the major Moche regional political-religious centers of Mocollope (Chicama valley to the north) and Huancaco (in the Virú valley to the south).

Excavations at other areas of the Temple of the Moon by Santiago Uceda, a Peruvian archaeologist, and his team showed that each of the 4 major renovations and/or expansions of the temple was immediately preceded by torrential El Niño

rains. Severe El Niño events are not only unpredictable, but, with the intrusion of warm ocean currents and torrential rains, cause massive deaths of marine creatures and flooding. Rains are often accompanied by omnious low hanging, dark clouds, thunder and lightening that readily frighten people. In this regard, at least one function of the human sacrifice was most likely propitiation of the deity or deities that were deemed to control water and life (closely interrelated on the arid coast). Renovation or expansion of the Temple can also bee seen as a celebration of the return of the normal life and a symbolic expression of continuing, if not reinforced, faith and dedication to the deities and ruling elite.

As pointed out by German ethnohistorian and ethnologist, Jürgen Gölte, one major weakness of the above thematic and analogy-based approaches to Moche art is that both focused on activities or actions and *not actors* such as deities and their animal and supernatural attendants. Thus, the same actions by different actors - for example, combat between paired human warriors and between animals - could be considered aspects of a single theme. Berezkin has long argued for the importance of accurate identification of all key members of the Moche pantheon for understanding of the narrative meaning of Moche art. Like Dorothy Menzel, an American scholar, Berezkin believes that Moche religion had a wide range of mythical beings who may be classified into several general categories (e.g., deities, anthropomorphic, supernatural personages, animal assistants, and deceased ancestors). Their hierarchical positions and functions, as well as changing character over time should also be identified. Though working only with a limited corpus of published images, Berezkin identified four principal deities. He felt that the hierarchy and different functions of these beings in some ways reflected Moche social reality. In his conception, in each of the major regions of the north coast, there were two opposing but complementary groups of "shamans" and "warriors," each worshipping their own patron deity. He believes that the shaman-warrior distinction reflected asymmetrical upper and lower "moieties" (dual social divisions) within the Moche society. He further suggestes that, reflecting the northward shift and increasing centralization of political power during Moche Phase V (that was documented through archaeological research - see the chapter by S. Masuda), the earlier complex Moche pantheon of Phases III and IV correspondingly transformed to one dominated by just a competing dyad or triad of principal deities.

Taking a cue from Berezkin, the young German scholar, Baerbel Lieske made a more complete inventory of "actors" for a total of 20 deities, supernatural,

anthropomorphic creatures and animal attendants in Moche art. Her method of identification focused on recurrent attributes of the actors, particularly head and facial ornaments (e.g., nose and ear ornaments, and helmets and their ornaments). She also considered their clothing (including belts they wore) and companions or assistants. Systematic comparison showed that certain actors are consistently associated with a set of attributes. For example, Deity A, who other scholars have called "sun deity" (Objects #156, 209) does appear to have been the deity of daytime and is typically shown with a conical helmet with radiating rays on his back or a semi-circular head gear decorated with radiating rays. The female deity or "priestess" called C hands a goblet containing the blood of a sacrificed captive to the male deity of the night, called B. Deity C is always shown wearing a knee-length garment, a long trailing scarf, and a head ornament with flaring appendages (Objects #71, 95, 155). Deity B appears in different apparel but is often shown seated receiving or holding a globlet or shown standing under the arching sky serpent that represents the night sky (Objects #77, 95, 148). He is sometimes shown against a dark background. In fact, he is characterized variously as the deity of darkness, or night or the Milky Way. The deity of the ocean called D is invariably shown wearing head band with a V-shaped extensions and holding a long oar (see Object #155, 157, 194). Deity E is of questionable validity and is not described here. Perhaps the most frequently depicted deity, called F, is usually shown with impressive fangs, wearing a serpentine belt on his waist, holding a *tumi* knife in one hand and fighting a supernatural adversary (see Objects #89, 122, 154, 162). As the creator deity of the natural world, F is often shown emerging from cultivated plants or vice versa (Objects #176, 177). However, like Deity B, F seems to assume many roles and wear different apparel, making it difficult to identify him in many settings.

Gölte argues that the interrelationship between living mortals and supernatural beings can be detected by similarities in their appearance; that the clothing and headdresses of human warriors reflect their allegiance to specific deities. Thus, he points out that in depictions of paired warriors in combat, invariably one side wears head gear related to Deity A and the other, to that of Deity B. Even the warriors' facial paintings are said to resemble those of either Deity A or B. Gölte's view of the significance of the combat theme, which is well-supported by iconographic data, constitutes a striking contrast to that widely held by archaeologists. To many archaeologists, the frequent depictions of combat reflect the importance of warfare and conquest as the means of Moche political integration and

territorial expansion; that the warrior class and its coersive authority became ever more important in Moche politics. This is an unsupported, superficial interpretation of the combat theme that fails to consider how this theme fit into the overall narrative.

Of the five definite deities, A and B appeared to have held the highest rank and competed with each other. They both had spotted dogs as pets and were assisted by various animals. Deity A had various attendants including the eagle, hummingbird (see Object 151) and most importantly, fox (Objects #174, 201). Deity B had most numerous courtiers and assistants, including priestess C, owls (Objects #82, 90, 100, 103) and bats (Object #99). The priestess served him food and drink, including human blood, while the owl who is inferred to have had the ability to commute between the worlds of the supernatural and the living brought sacrifices and offerings from the latter to the former. The bat was in charge of sacrificing human captives (see Object 95). Deity B also appears to have commanded an army of beans (Object #75) and war clubs. Deity D commanded various monsters of the ocean, including the crab, jellyfish, sea urchin, ray, moray eel, and bonito (see Objects #162, 194). He may well have been an ally or a subordinate of Deity B.

Building on advances made by earlier investigators, particularly those of Berezkin and Lieske, Gölte recently presented perhaps the most coherent to date actor-centered reconstruction of the narrative encoded in the Moche art. The following is an annotated summation of Gölte's reconstruction of the Moche narrative with relevant themes indicated within parentheses:

> *The two principal deities of the Moche pantheon, the diunal deity, Deity A, and nocturnal deity, Deity B, were both worshipped by the Moche people, who presented the deities with sacrifices and offerings of prisoners, animals, produce and craft goods (The Deer Hunt and Warrior Combat themes). Even the animals of the l iving world made similar sacrifices and offerings. But, Deity A, with the aid of his animal assistants, surpassed Deity B in capturing prisoners. This imbalance caused rivalry between these deities. Frustrated, Deity B unsuccessfully tried to defeat the animals by sending his troops of bean warriors. Angered, Deity B brought darkness to the living world by vanishing Deity A. The darkness brought monsters out of the ocean depths which were part of his domain. These monsters attacked humans. In order to pacify Deity B, humans prepared offerings, which were collected by two servants of Deity B,*

the female Deity C (deity of the moon) and supernatural owl, Personage G. Meanwhile, directed by Deity C and G, objects (mostly arms and shields) also rebelled against humans, attacking and capturing them (The Rebellion of Objects Theme). Deity C and Deity D, the deity of the ocean, took these prisoners away in boats to the house of Deity B, where these deities celebrated their victory (The Navigation Theme). Deity C offered Deity B a goblet containing blood from human prisoners (The Goblet Presentation Theme). Later, Deity B and G conducted a divination ritual with sticks (The Divination Theme).

The principal Moche culture hero, Deity F, learned from his faithful fox assistant of the death of a one-eyed woman and found vultures devouring the woman's body (The Burial Theme). Angered by what he saw, Deity F and his iguana assistant captured and sacrificed the vultures. Deity F and his animal assistants buried the woman with sumptuous offerings. Following burial, Deity F with help of the iguana conducted a divination ritual and became a butterfly (or moth). Once again, Deity F conducted a divination ritual with a help of the owl. Eventually, Deity F descended to the world of the dead. The dead celebrated his arrival and helped him regain his strength.

Deity F embarked on a trip across the ocean on a tule boat and along the way, fought against a crab monster, monster fish and a ray (The Marine Combat Theme). But, he was battered by a monstrous ocean wave. His ordeal was not over yet. He had to fight a moray eel, Strombus (conch) shell monster, sea urchin monster, jellyfish monster, and finally, a octopus monster and he was badly injured.

His faithful assistants, fox and iguana, organized a rescue and had a sea bird carry Deity F back to the land. Deity F dried his hair and his body in the safety of a bird temple. To pacify Deity B, F offered Strombus shell to him, while animals of the living world also made sacrificial offerings of animals.

Deity B, having been appeased, transformed into a crab-centipede creature and carriedweakened Deity F to the sky, where a curer brought him back to good health. Rejuvenated, F defeated the "monster of the darkness."

With the help of F and offerings of human sacrifices, Deity A left his hiding place, a mountain cave (The Mountain Sacrifice Theme), and went to defeat the rebellious objects. Again, with the help of F and a ladder built by spiders, Deity A finally returned to the firmament. Meanwhile, F was

transformed into the creator of food plants. His sexual union with women resulted in abundant harvests (The Sexual Act Theme). With Deity B paying due respect to Deity A, a stable, harmonious universe returned. In the world of the living, the Moche people celebrated the return of the peaceful order and expressed their worship of Deities A and B by dancing with a circular rope (The Rope Dance Theme). Finally, the Moche people presented offerings to Deity F, their cultural hero.

CONCLUSION

Gölte's reconstruction is reasonable given what we know of Moche art. His reconstruction is derived largely from analysis of Moche images on their own terms. He consulted ethnohistorical and ethnographic writings only to gain insights into the general structure and character of Andean mythology and folklore. Thus, he avoided problems stemming from the use of specific analogies from which most earlier reconstructions suffered. In a way, his reconstruction should be perceived as the culminative product of the long-term efforts of an international community of scholars who have compiled and identified numerous images, themes, and "actors" in Moche art, as well as relevant mythology and folklore in ethnohistorical documents and ethnography.

At the same time, it is a personal and rather subjective reconstruction. For example, is the presence of fangs enough to identify a particular figure as a deity as opposed to a "venerated mythical ancestor" (as Hocqueghem thinks)? Why should the priestess (who does not have fangs) in the human sacrifice scenes (Objects #71, 95) be considered the moon deity and not just a human priestess thought to have been able to mediate between the supernatural and natural worlds? In this sense, earlier cautions about narrative reconstruction should be kept in mind; i.e., questions about the accuracy of the actors identified, the number of narratives to be reconstructed, the criteria for linking themes in a particular way, and the direction in which interlinked themes should be read.

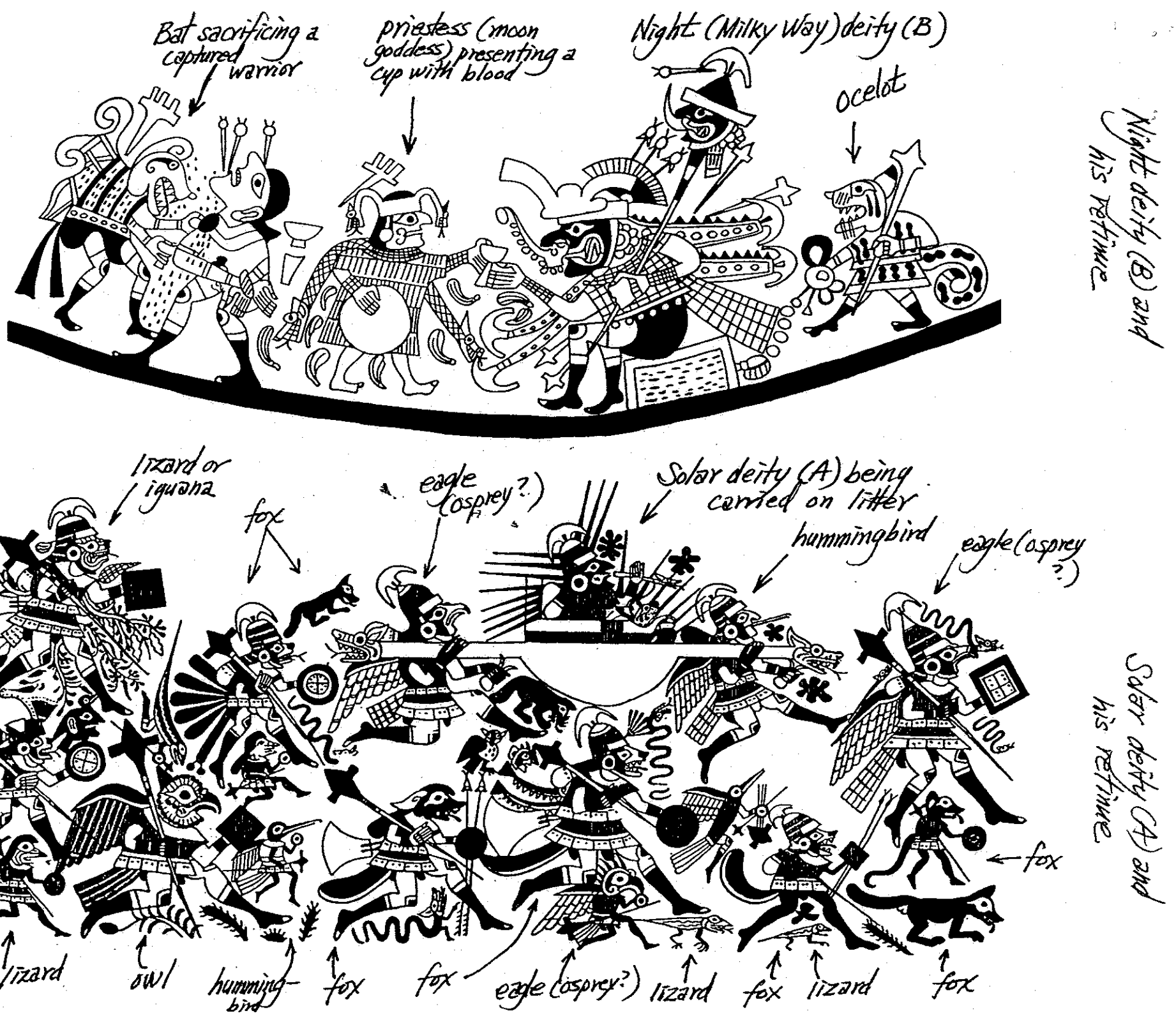
The reader may find some parallels between the structure and actors and their actions in Gölte's reconstruction and various folktales and myths from ancient Japan, Greece and other parts of the world. This is not unexpected as these cultures all held similar interests in and preoccupations with their existence and natural phenomena. Supernatural beings, animals, and humans all played important roles in the Moche narrative. The crucial role played by Deity F or the cultural hero aided

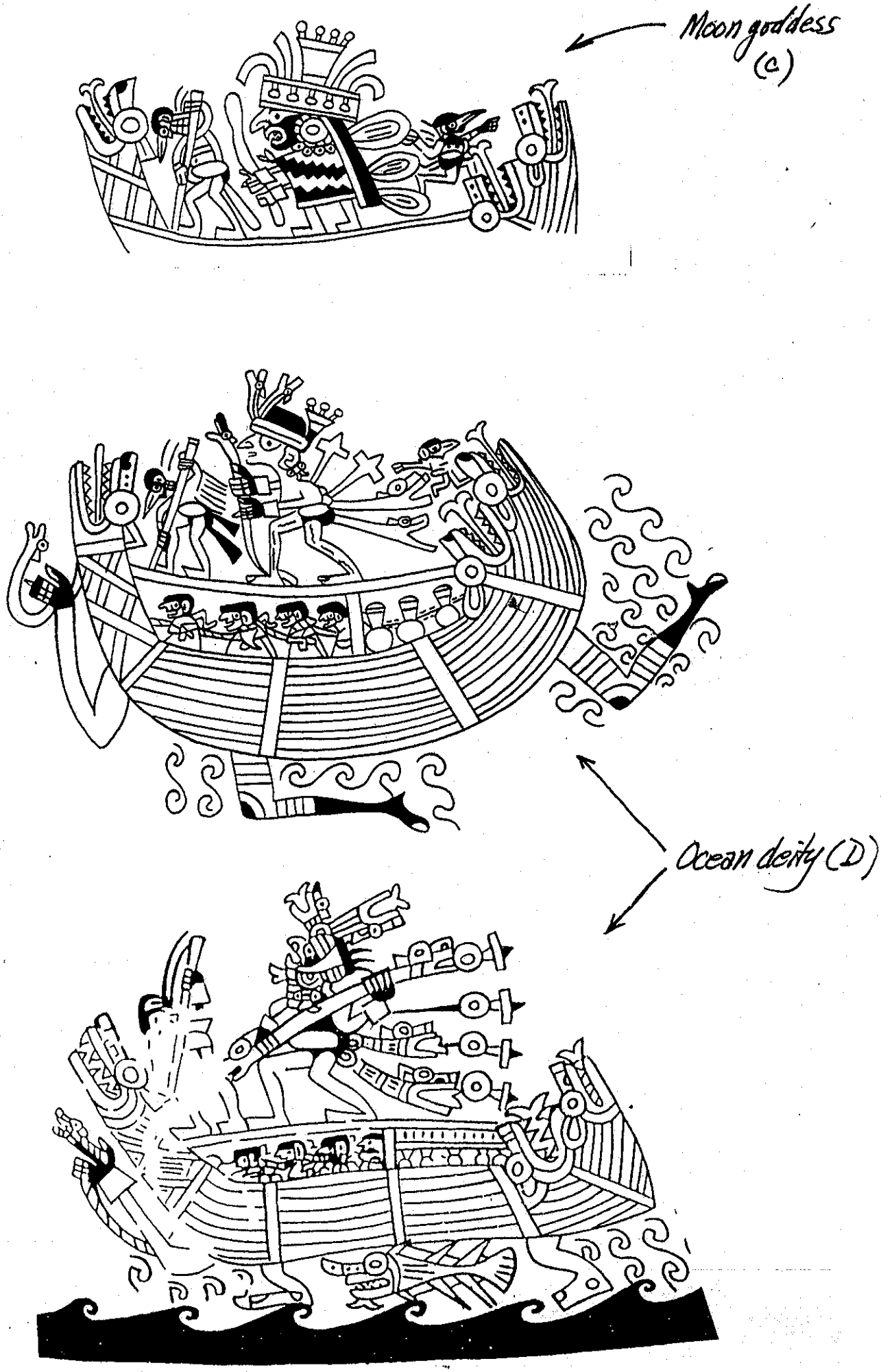
by a group of faithful animal assistants in re-establishment of a harmonious world order reminds us of the tale of *Momo-taro*. In both cases, there is no clear separation between real/physical and mythical/metaphysical worlds.

For the Moche people, there were at least three complementary and interacting worlds: one of supernatural beings, another of living people, animals and plants, and a third, of the deceased. The Pacific Ocean and its depth may have been conceived as yet another world. Supernatural beings and their servants were seen as capable of bridging these worlds. Humans, though confined to their own world, were able to influence the inhabitants of the other worlds through their allegiance, offerings and sacrifices directed at inhabitants of other worlds.

There are other ways of looking at the universe. There is no doubt that Moche art embodied the concept of dual opposition: day and night, wild and domesticated, life and death, and male and female. Berezkin and Hocquenghem spoke of dual social divisions of shaman and warrior and *hanan* and *hurin*, respectively. Even the adobe pyramids and associated plazas may be seen as symbolic representations of the mountain-sea duality. Life giving water is derived from the mountains and ends up in the sea to be carried back as clouds and seasonal rain in the mountains. In some ways, Gölte's reconstruction may be seen to reflect Moche concern with the interaction of the wild and domesticated worlds or forces of nature beyond human control and understanding. For example, wild, not domesticated animals (e.g., dog and llama), played important roles in the Moche art. However we may interpret the significance of human sacrifice, there is no denying that it was carried out during times of torrential El Niño-related rain. In fact, Gölte considers the possibility that the Moche narrative may have been based on a major societal upheaval caused by a severe El Niño event early in Moche history and the long struggle people faced in regaining their normal life.

The search for hidden meanings in Moche art will undoubtedly continue. To be productive, the search needs to integrate both iconographic and archaeological data. It is hoped that this essay provided the reader with an understanding of this fascinating topic and the culture called Moche that produced it.


Bat sacrificing a captured warrior
priestess (moon goddess) presenting a cup with blood
Night (Milky Way) deity (B)
ocelot
Night deity (B) and his retinue
lizard or iguana
fox
eagle (osprey?)
Solar deity (A) being carried on litter
hummingbird
eagle (osprey?)
fox
lizard
owl
hummingbird
fox
fox
eagle (osprey?)
lizard
fox
lizard
fox
Solar deity (A) and his retinue


Moon goddess (C)
Ocean deity (D)

Creator deity (F) and his battles with monsters

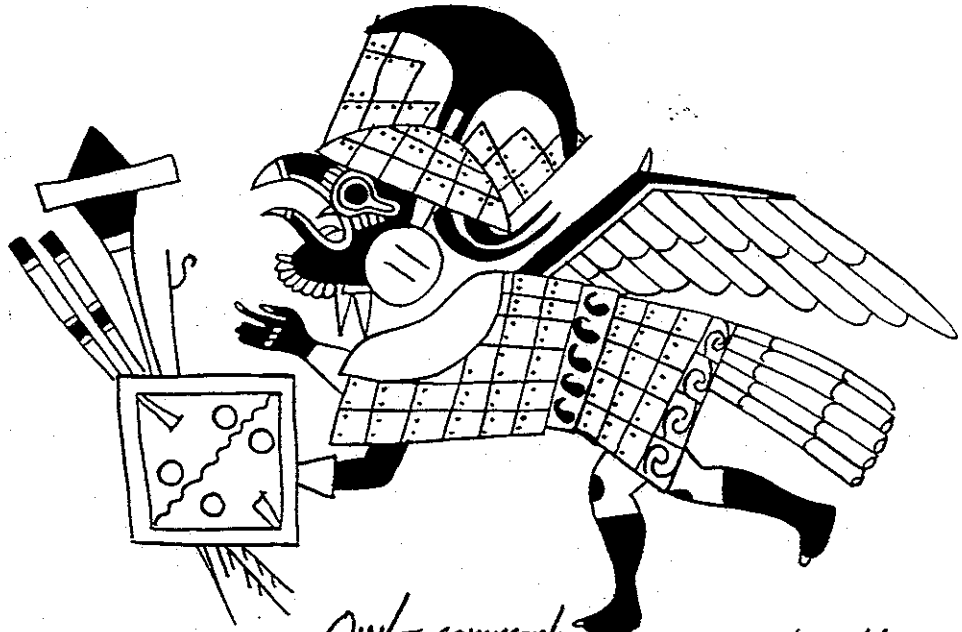
Creator deity (F) transformed into a crab monster He fights a fish monster

Faithful lizard moray eel monster Creator deity (F)

Faithful assistants of the Solar deity (A)

"eagle" (osprey?)

"Eagle" (osprey?)

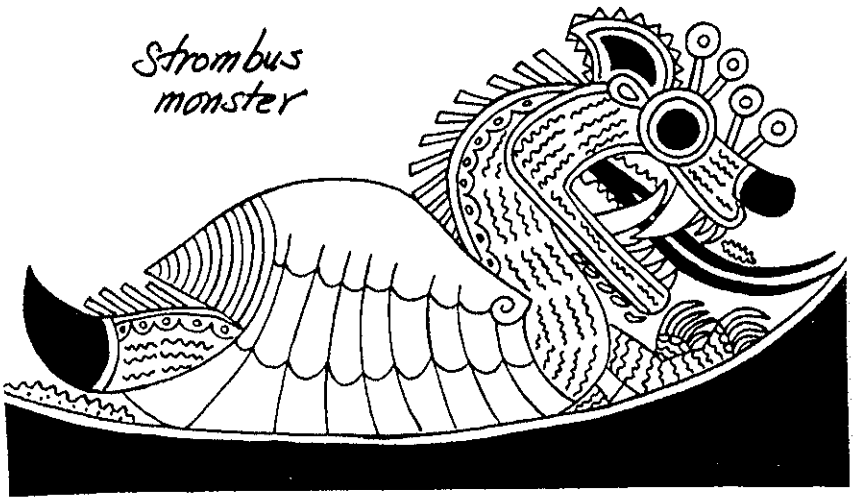


Owl - commonly shown assisting the Night deity

Anthropomorphic fox – dressed as a warrior

Night or moon monster

Strombus monster



Fish monster