

SAN ILDEFONSO AND THE «POPULARIZATION» OF MOCHE IDEOLOGY IN THE JEQUETEPEQUE VALLEY

Edward R. Swenson*

The lower Jequetepeque Valley witnessed an expansion in settlement accompanied by the widespread construction of ceremonial architecture in the hinterland of prominent centers during the Late Moche Period. These marginal ceremonial loci exhibit site-specific architectural variability, indicating that ritual practice was decentralized, the prerogative of local communities and lineage groups. Nonetheless, iconographic, ceramic, and architectural data reveal that the celebration of Moche religious traditions and the performance of feasting rites commonly defined rural ceremonialism in the region. In this article, I focus on the large ceremonial site of San Ildefonso, located on the north side of the Jequetepeque Valley, and offer interpretations on its ritual functions and overarching sociopolitical significance. I argue that the striking redundancy of ramped platforms at this rural settlement represents in microcosm the decentralization of ritual practice and political power in the region. Ultimately, the archaeological record of San Ildefonso, considered within the context of the greater Jequetepeque Valley, points to the inventive «popularization» of Moche religion and to the propagation of «multiple» Moche ideologies in the Late Period. Numerous Jequetepeque social groups appropriated the symbolic capital of urban elites and constructed locally-inflected Moche political subjectivities as a means of self-empowerment. Although the peculiar spatial configuration of San Ildefonso indicates that relatively «autonomous» social groups congregated at the site, the architectural and ceramic data nonetheless suggest that its inhabitants were in the process of creating a more inclusive political community associated with Moche culture and the specific social ideology of the San Ildefonso settlement. This variant construction of Moche identity differed markedly from the urban political systems of neighboring valleys, despite reliance on similar religious symbols and practices.

Durante el periodo Moche Tardío la parte baja del valle de Jequetepeque experimento una expansión en los asentamientos, acompañada por una intensa construcción de arquitectura ceremonial al interior de los centros más prominentes. Estos sitios ceremoniales marginales exhiben una variabilidad arquitectónica específica, lo que indica que la práctica ritual se descentralizó una prerrogativa de las comunidades locales y grupos de linajes. Sin embargo, los datos iconográficos, cerámicos y arquitectónicos revelan que la celebración de las tradiciones religiosas moche y la realización de ritos de banquetes comunmente definieron el ceremonialismo rural en la región. En este artículo analizo el sitio ceremonial de San Ildefonso, ubicado en la parte norte del valle del Jequetepeque y presento interpretaciones de sus funciones rituales y su significado sociopolítico general. Además, propongo que la sorprendente redundancia de plataformas con rampa en este asentamiento rural representa, en microcosmos, la descentralización de las prácticas rituales y del poder político en la región. A la larga, el registro arqueológico de San Ildefonso, considerado dentro del contexto del gran valle de Jequetepeque, apunta a la «popularización» inventiva de la religión moche y a la propagación de «múltiples» ideologías moche en el periodo Tardío. Numerosos grupos sociales de Jequetepeque se apropiaron del capital simbólico de las elites urbanas y construyeron subjetividades políticas locales moche como medio para incrementar su poder. A pesar que, la configuración espacial peculiar de San Ildefonso indica que grupos sociales múltiples y relativamente «autónomos» se congregaron en el asentamiento, los datos arquitectónicos y cerámicos sugieren que sus habitantes estaban en proceso de crear una comunidad política más inclusiva, asociada con la cultura Moche y la ideología social del asentamiento de San Ildefonso. Esta otra construcción de la identidad moche se distinguió marcadamente de los sistemas políticos urbanos de los valles vecinos, a pesar del énfasis en símbolos y prácticas religiosas similares.

The lower Jequetepeque Valley witnessed an expansion in settlement accompanied by the construction of ceremonial architecture in the hinterland of prominent centers during the Late Moche Period (ca. A.D. 550-750) (Swenson 2002, 2004).

These multiple ceremonial loci, which defy placement in traditionally conceived settlement hierarchies, exhibit site-specific architectural variability, indicating that ritual production became the prerogative of local communities and rural

* Universidad de Lethbridge. Correo electrónico: edward.swenson@uleth.ca.

lineage groups. Nevertheless, iconographic, ceramic, and architectural remains reveal that feasting and the celebration of Moche religion became widespread in the Jequetepeque hinterland. Such ritual practices appear to have been integral to the propitiation of mountain *huacas* and to the establishment of political ties related to the coordination of agricultural production and the organization of ritual warfare. The evidence suggests that feasting rites mediated competitive and heterarchical political relations in the lower Jequetepeque Valley during the Late Moche Period. This scenario contrasts notably with neighboring valleys, which experienced rapid urbanization, the elite monopolization of ceremonial space, and political centralization during Moche Phase V (Bawden 1996, 2001; Shimada 1994).

In this article, I focus on the large ceremonial site of San Ildefonso, located on the north side of the Jequetepeque Valley, and offer interpretations of its ritual functions and overarching sociopolitical significance. I argue that the striking redundancy of ramped platforms at this rural settlement represents in microcosm the decentralization of ritual practice and political power in the valley as a whole. Ultimately, the archaeological record of San Ildefonso, considered within the context of the greater Jequetepeque Valley, points to the inventive «popularization» of Moche religion and to the propagation of «multiple» Moche ideologies in the Late Moche Period. Numerous Jequetepeque social groups appropriated the symbolic capital of urban elites and constructed locally-inflected Moche political subjectivities as a means of self-empowerment. Although the peculiar spatial configuration of San Ildefonso indicates that multiple, distinct, and relatively «autonomous» social groups congregated at the settlement, the architectural and ceramic data nonetheless suggest that its inhabitants were in the process of creating a more inclusive political community associated with Moche culture and the site as a whole. This variant construction of Moche identity differed markedly from the urban political systems of neighboring valleys, despite reliance on similar religious symbols and practices.

Theoretical Context: Reassessing Architectural Emulation, Political Hierarchy, and Ideological Practices in the Archaeological Record

The analysis of mimetic architectural styles is essential for reconstructing power relations linking different communities, social classes, and elites in prehistoric urban societies. Surprisingly, however, processes of emulation are often disregarded in Andean archaeology. The adoption of corporate architecture in varied social settings and construction media continues to be interpreted as reflecting rigid site hierarchies and the organization of state-coordinated information and resource flows (in the tradition of Wright and Johnson 1975; see, for instance, Keatinge and Conrad 1983). In other words, the spatial diversification of «great traditions,» which are thought to index power as a monolithic but systemically functioning entity (denoting «Moche» or «Chimu» in the singular), is often uncritically homogenized and hierarchized. The widespread dissemination of prestigious architectural styles and religious symbols in the Jequetepeque Valley was not imposed from above, however; rather, the unprecedented proliferation of Moche material culture reflects the cooption of esteemed ideological systems by diverse social groups disassociated from the direct intervention of state authority.

The archaeological data from San Ildefonso, discussed below, reveal that archaeologists must approach architectural mimesis in the material record not simply through the lens of state administration, but from the vantage point of local ideological strategies. Analysis of rural ceremonial architecture (whether mimetic or particular) holds great potential for archaeologists interested in reconstructing complex power relations and ideological struggle. Such reconstructions improve our understanding of both the functioning of hierarchical political economies and the ideological practices of diverse social groups constituting a particular polity (Ashmore 1989; Bawden 2001; Brumfiel 1998; Joyce 1993; 2000; Joyce *et al.* 2001; Miller and Tilley 1984; Patterson 1986; see Ringberg, this volume).

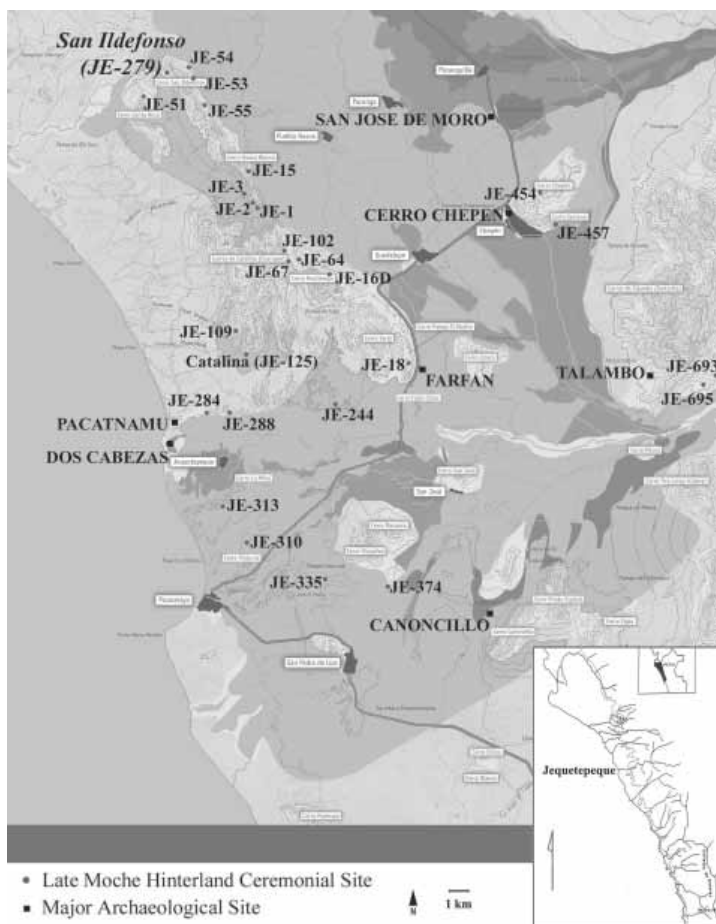


Figure 1. Map of the Lower Jequetepeque Valley illustrating the location of San Ildefonso and other ceremonial sites dating to the Late Moche Period.

An important theoretical implication of this article is that the celebration of corporate religious programs by rural groups (including both chiefly *curacas* and non-elites) does not automatically signal the force of a «dominant» state hegemony. Instead, the manipulation of state ideology is often implicated in the creation of *local* political subjects and sectarian social relations. The horizontal propagation of Moche material culture and religious symbolism mediated widespread political competition that counteracted the centralizing power of a privileged administrative class.

The Late Moche Period and the Anomaly of the Jequetepeque Valley

The Late Moche era represents a time of dramatic transformation in cultural norms, settlement patterns, and belief systems throughout the North Coast of Peru (Bawden 1996, 2001; Castillo 2000, 2001, 2003; McClelland 1990; Shimada 1994). These changes have been interpreted as responses to social discord and environmental catastrophe and, indirectly, to influences from the encroachment of highland cultures. Scholars have argued that new

religions were adopted during the Late Moche Period to cope with ecological disruption and sociopolitical realignment (Bawden 1982, 1996). This phase is further distinguished by the collapse of the Middle Moche state based at the Huacas de Moche in the Moche Valley (Bawden 1996).

Rapid urbanization is the hallmark of the Late Moche or Moche V transformation. The large centers of Galindo and Pampa Grande emerged at the valley necks of the Moche and Lambayeque valleys, respectively, while settlement generally collapsed in the lower portions of these two regions (Bawden 1996, 2001; Moseley 1992; Shimada 1994) (figure 1). Shimada notes that Galindo and Pampa Grande, unlike the long-term development of earlier urban centers such as the Huacas de Moche, «were unprecedented in the abruptness of their establishment, scale, and complexity» (Shimada 1994: 119). These developments have been interpreted by Bawden (1982, 1996: 206-207, 2001) and Shimada (1994) as symptomatic of heightened insecurity, conflict, and intensified social inequalities. The nucleation of settlement at the valley necks reflects elite attempts to exert greater control over the distribution of irrigation water and to facilitate surveillance of aggregated populations (Shimada 1994: 119).

The Jequetepeque region, however, deviated from this trend toward centralization (Swenson 2006: 116-117). Rural settlement and population expanded in the lower valley during the Late Moche Period (figure 1; Castillo and Donnan 1994a: 171-172; Dillehay 2001: 268-274; Dillehay and Kolata 2004a: 4328-4329; Hecker and Hecker 1987, 1990; Swenson 2004: 406-411). Indeed, the unfortified cult center of San José de Moro on the north side of the valley represents one of the premier Late Moche sites on the North Coast, but lacks the urban characteristics (i.e., agglomerated populations and dense and diversified city architecture) of Pampa Grande and Galindo (Castillo 2000, 2001, 2003; Castillo and Donnan 1994b; Donnan and Castillo 1994). The elite Priestesses interred at the site and supported by a retinue of skilled craft specialists appear to have secured the religious devotion of far-flung communities, possibly attracting pilgrims and

valued gifts from neighboring polities located both within and perhaps outside of the Jequetepeque region. However, the numerous forts and ceremonial locales dating to the Late Moche Period, including the massive nearby settlement of Cerro Chépén, indicate that the Priestesses exercised little direct coercive or economic control in Jequetepeque beyond the confines of San José de Moro. In other words, the location of forts, as identified in recent survey projects, signals the prevalence of intra-valley conflict and sectarian strife during the Late Moche Period (Dillehay 2001: 271-273; Dillehay and Kolata 2004a: 4328-4329, 2004b: 275-276; Swenson 2004: 408-412). This evidence points to the lack of both pan-valley political integration and the monopolization of coercive force by a singular central power. Nevertheless, the explosive and unprecedented propagation of Moche ritual practices in the Jequetepeque Valley suggests that shared (though differently deployed) religious ideology delimited a common playing field of social interaction, community identification, and political negotiation (see below). The Priestesses of San José de Moro likely exercised considerable but fluctuating influence within this heterarchical sociopolitical milieu (Castillo 2004; del Carpio, this volume; Donley, this volume). Indeed, the Jequetepeque Valley resembles in microcosm Moche sociopolitical organization at the macro-regional level – multiple independent polities defined themselves through celebration of a widely respected religious worldview (Bawden 2004). Although my use of the term «decentralization» refers both to political fragmentation and to unregulated ritual practice by rural communities in the Jequetepeque Valley (i.e., Moche symbols and spaces were not strictly monopolized by a centralized authority), this scenario, nonetheless, unfolded in a framework of complex and free-wheeling ideological interchange. As evidenced by the high status of San José de Moro's priestly elite, the unrestricted reformulation of Moche ceremonialism in the Jequetepeque Valley indicates political balkanization rather than pronounced religious sectarianism (see Castillo 2004; Johnson, this volume).

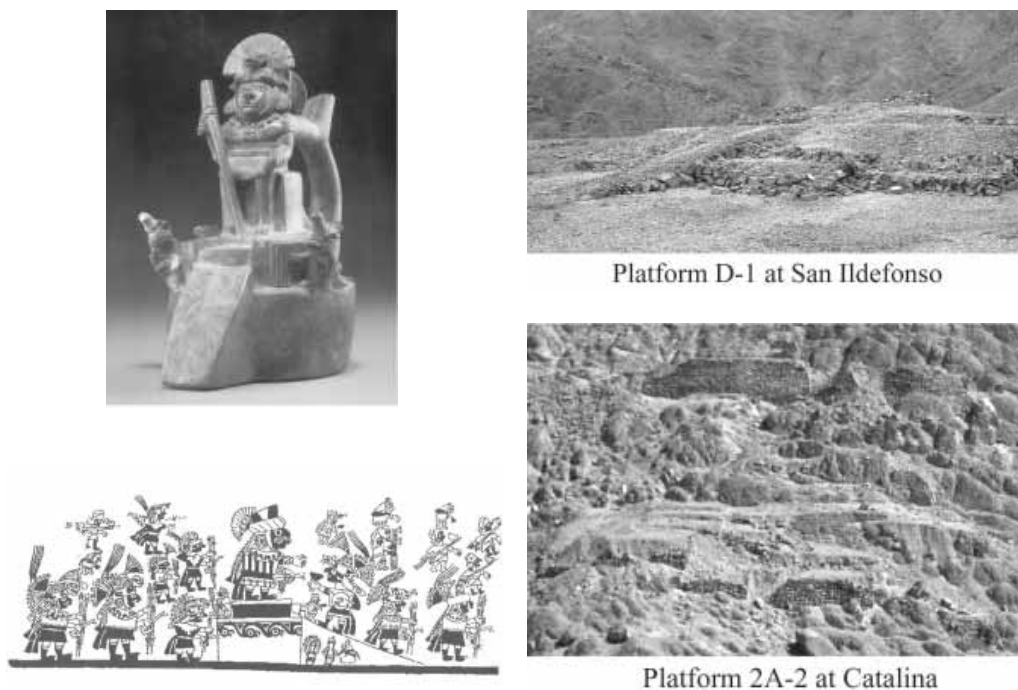


Figure 2. A Moche molded vessel (Makowski 2000: 139) and a fineline illustration (Hocquenghem 1989: fig. 2C) portraying the Fanged Deity situated on a platform with ramp and dais. These structures depicted in Moche iconography are similar to platforms found in the Jequetepeque hinterland (photographs, lower register).

The Late Moche Period in Jequetepeque is marked by the emergence and proliferation of intermediate-scale ceremonial sites in the hinterland of prominent centers, including San José de Moro and Cerro Chapén (figure 1; Swenson 2002, 2004). These sites were rare prior to the Late Moche Period, and are usually found in close proximity on coastal hills overlooking productive infrastructures such as canals and field systems. The intermediate-scale ceremonial sites are readily distinguishable by their size, but could not be hierarchically classified in terms of architectural distinction. The numerous platforms in the large settlements of San Ildefonso or Catalina (see below) were comparable in scale, elaboration, and quality to structures within smaller sites (e.g., JE-1, JE-64, JE-54, JE-102). The lack of salient architectural variability reflecting status differences or privileged control of large public gatherings demonstrates that power relations were more fluid

and fragmented in the Jequetepeque Valley during the Late Moche Period (Swenson 2004). Indeed, the widespread replication of symbolically charged religious architecture exhibiting overarching commonalities in quality and ritual function (see below) reveals that the hinterland ceremonial sites were not locked into rigid settlement-social hierarchies subservient to the directives of a centralized state administration. In other words, these rural ceremonial loci clearly represented more than ranked cogs serving simply to channel center-driven ideological programs to the subjugated masses of the Jequetepeque countryside (with labor exactions and material tribute flowing back toward the center).

The most common form of ceremonial architecture identified at the large site of San Ildefonso and other hinterland settlements in the Jequetepeque Valley are multi-terraced platform

mounds with prominent ramps (figure 2). Bawden (1982: 302) refers to such structures at the contemporaneous urban center of Galindo as «*tablados*». Despite their diminished size in comparison to urban temples, these ramped structures were important symbols of religious and political authority (Bawden 1982; Shimada 1994). The dais-like platforms appear to be miniature versions of the massive pyramids that dominated Moche cities, and structures of this kind are commonly portrayed on Moche pottery (Bawden 1982: 302-304). For instance, a masculine fanged deity (variably referred to as the Rayed God, Wrinkle Face, *Mellizo Terrestre*, and *Dios de las Montañas*, among other designations; Benson 1972: 72-80; Castillo 1989; Giersz *et al.* 2005: 17-23, 65, 83; Makowski 2000: 139; Uceda 2001; see Przadka and Giersz, this volume) is often portrayed presiding over ritual acts such as the presentation of a goblet from dais-ramp complexes. In other depictions, dignitaries are shown supervising ceremonial and redistributive activities from the summit of such platforms (see Donnan and McClelland 1999: 19, 59, 167). Other representations underscore the symbolic importance of this architectural form as a stage of ritual and administrative performance. For instance, a U-shaped ceramic model recovered from a burial at San José de Moro is strikingly similar to structure C at JE-1 (Portachuelo), located several kilometers to the northwest of San José de Moro (Castillo, Nelson, and Nelson 1997; Swenson 2004: 426, 2006: 121; Johnson, this volume).

Comparable ramped platforms were among the most important architectural forms at Galindo and Pampa Grande, the great urban centers of the Late Moche Period (Bawden 1982: 302; Shimada 1994:144). However, they are restricted to the civic-ceremonial core of these principal cities, within or at the juncture of elite precincts (Bawden 1982: 302-304, 1996: 286-291, 2001; Shimada 1994: 144, 154-157, 2001: 182-185). In contrast, ramped structures in the Jequetepeque Valley are more accessible and widely distributed. Unlike the adobe *tablados* of contemporaneous urban centers, they are constructed of stone and rubble and are usually found independent of elite architectural contexts.

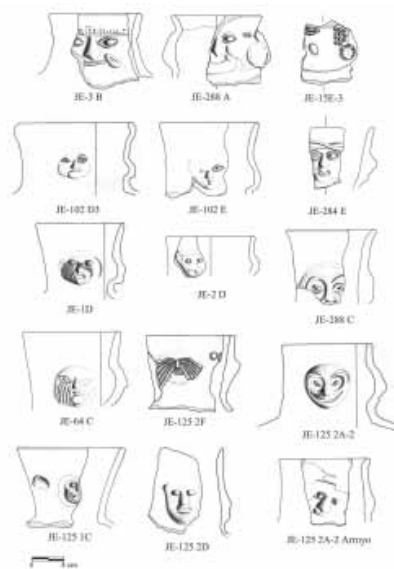


Figure 3. Decorated face-neck jars in Moche style collected from ceremonial sites of the Jequetepeque hinterland.



Figure 4. Figurines, musical instruments, and talismans recovered from San Ildefonso and other ceremonial sites of the Jequetepeque hinterland.

That is, the intense ritualization of the Jequetepeque landscape defied the centralized exclusivity of ceremonial space evident in neighboring valleys (Swenson 2006: 122).

The ramped structures at Pampa Grande were associated with decorated face-neck jars used to prepare and decant maize beer or *chicha* (Shimada 1994: 221-224, 2001: 187, 192). In fact, a large quantity of mold-impressed face-neck jars was discovered at ceremonial sites in the Jequetepeque hinterland (figures 3 and 10). These face impressions often distill Moche religious imagery, such as depictions of male fanged deities, wrinkle-faced gods, and elite warriors (figure 10). Statistical analysis reveals that the ramped platforms were associated with a significantly high proportion of *chicha* jars and decorated ware at several sites in my study (Swenson 2004).

Figurines, talismans, and clay flutes were further collected in the vicinity of ceremonial structures at San Ildefonso and other ceremonial loci in the region (figure 4). Music likely accompanied ritual spectacles orchestrated on these platforms. Clearly, activities central to ritualized commensalism, involving the use of decorated jars and generous consumption of *chicha*, were staged on the platforms of both Pampa Grande and the numerous sites in the Jequetepeque hinterland (see Delibes and Barragán, this volume). This interpretation is further corroborated by the excavation of various platforms, which demonstrated that they served as stages for the preparation and consumption of comestibles including corn (Swenson 2004, 2006: 132-134).

San Ildefonso

San Ildefonso represents one of the largest and most complex of the ceremonial settlements of the Jequetepeque hinterland. It is located on the northern end of Cerro San Ildefonso, directly south of the Chamán river drainage (figure 1; Eling 1987: 396). San Ildefonso was built on the slopes of the *cerro*, with stone constructions nearly reaching the summit of the massif. Five major *quebradas* bisect the site, a feature of the natural topography that aided in defining broad sectors of the settlement (figure 5). These *quebradas* undoubtedly served as

highways of traffic connecting lower portions of the site to constructions perched along its high slopes.

Due to San Ildefonso's considerable size of over 50 hectares, it could be interpreted as a small urban settlement. However, its location on a defended coastal *cerro* and the nature of its constructions reveal important commonalities with the smaller ceremonial sites in the hinterland. For instance, terraced constructions made of stone and earth predominates at San Ildefonso, while adobe buildings are lacking. Unlike at the urban centers of Pampa Grande and Galindo, no one construction unequivocally dominates the settlement as the focus of political authority or religious preeminence. In fact, the configuration of space at San Ildefonso was evidently dictated by an aesthetic that deviated significantly from the spatial ideologies inscribed in the physical layout of typical Moche urban and ceremonial centers (including Pampa Grande, Galindo, and San José de Moro).

The San Ildefonso site possesses four nested stone perimeter walls that survive to nearly 3 meters in height in several sectors. Piles of sling stones were placed at varying intervals on the surface of the ramparts, and it is clear that the settlement had a defensive function (figure 6). The walls roughly but inconsistently delimit functionally distinct architecture at San Ildefonso. The majority of narrow storage terraces are found in the highest reaches of the site, and low-lying platforms commonly front the first perimeter wall. Sizeable compounds and *batanes* are concentrated in the northern half of the site (mainly in Sectors F and G).

A contiguous series of precincts in Sector G to the north are characterized by convoluted access patterns and well-preserved stone and rubble-filled benches (figures 5 and 7). In fact, this zone represents one of the few sectors of the site that may have served as the residence of local elites, although the architecture lacks the scale and prominence of the cercaduras of Galindo or the massive adobe compounds of the civic-ceremonial core of Pampa Grande (Swenson 2004: 486-490). Several diminutive ramped structures were found enclosed within two precincts of Sectors F and G, suggesting that restricted «consultative» rites (Moore 1996: 156)

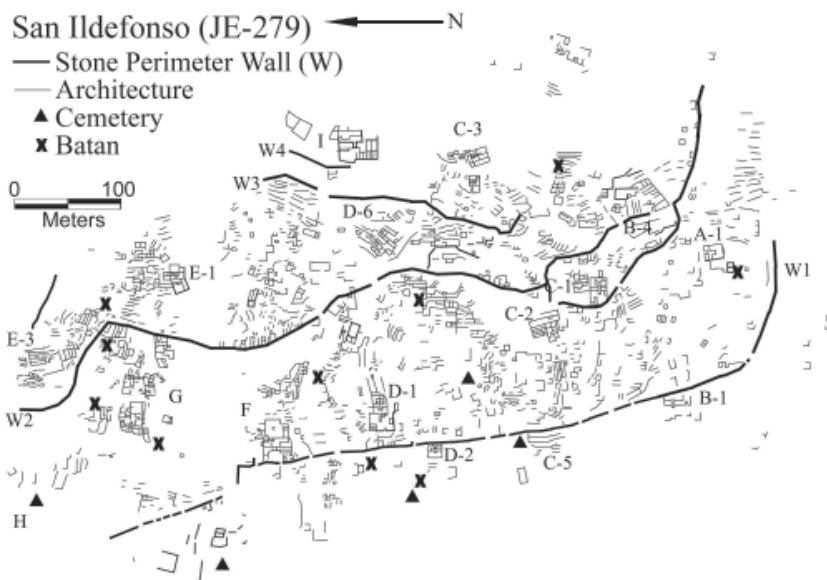


Figure 5. Site map of San Ildefonso (JE-279). Labeled sectors contain one or more ceremonial platforms.

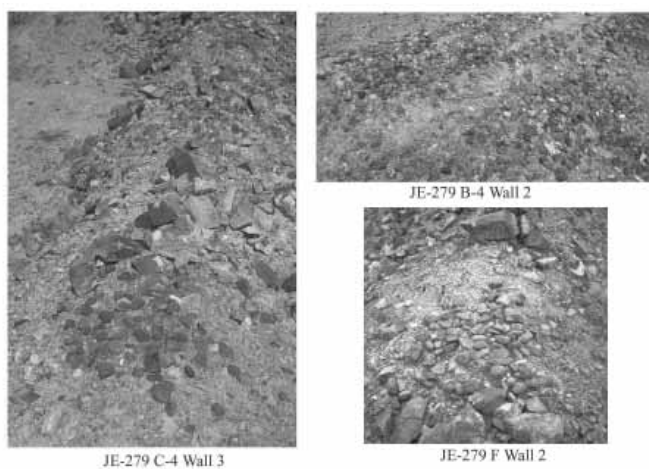


Figure 6. Sling stone piles found in close association with ceremonial architecture at San Ildefonso and a Moche iconographic depiction (lower register—adapted from Donnan and McClelland 1999: 56, Fig. 3.29) of warfare occurring in a mountain setting that resembles the coastal hills of San Ildefonso and other ceremonial sites in Jequetepeque.

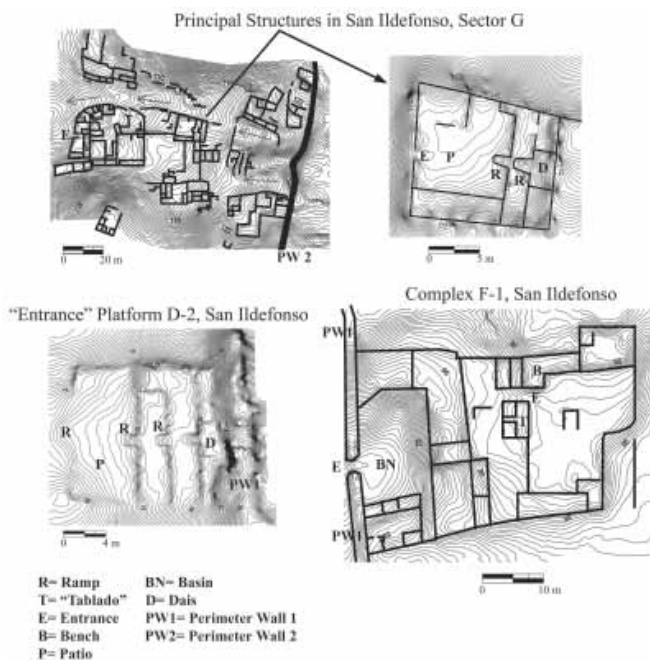


Figure 7. Architectural plans of compound structures and of an «entrance» platform at San Ildefonso. Note the small ramp and dais complexes constructed within the irregular precincts of Sectors G and F.

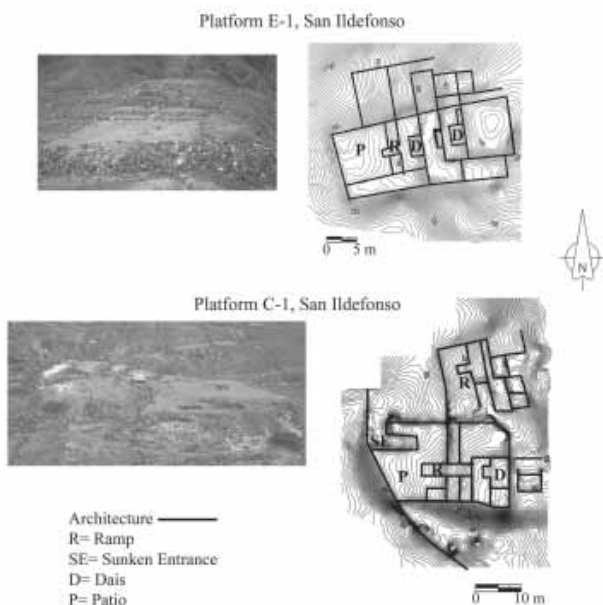


Figure 8. Architectural plans and photographs of Platforms E-1 and C-1 at San Ildefonso.

and political exchanges occurred within these irregular stone compounds (figure 7). San Ildefonso is further characterized by expansive domestic zones distinguished by residential terraces or contiguous and free-standing room-block units. A dense spread of utilitarian ware, Donax shell, and other organic remains in these sectors reveals that large populations resided at the site either permanently or episodically.

The replication of ceremonial platforms in different sectors of the site is San Ildefonso's most remarkable characteristic. Seventeen such structures were recorded here. Structure C-3, located behind the third perimeter wall, is equally as elaborate as Structures E-1 and C-1, situated behind the second and first perimeter walls, respectively (figures 8 and 9). This distribution indicates that prestigious architectural forms were not restricted to any one zone of the site. The platforms are comprised of low patios, ramps, ascending terraces, and daises, with several complexes reaching nearly 6 meters in height (figure 9). The architectonic configuration of these platforms resembles ramped structures depicted in Moche iconography (figure 2; Donnan and McClelland 1999: 270; Hocquenghem 1987: figure 2C; Makowski 2000: 139).

Three low-lying platforms with ramps (Sectors D-2, C-5, and B-1) were found in front of the first perimeter wall in the central zone of the site (figures 5 and 7). They are spaced roughly 100 meters apart (running along 300 meters of the first rampart) and likely served as official and highly formalized «entrances» to the settlement. Indeed, their formal layout and integration with the first defensive wall indicate that movement in and out of San Ildefonso was highly scripted and controlled, a feature also characteristic of Pampa Grande (Shimada 1994: 154-157). Perhaps these platforms with ramps represented specific nodes in circuits of peregrination, channeling pilgrims into the main precincts of the site. Of course, the ritual aspects of their use may have been more subtle, linked rather to staging formal political encounters, such as the presentation and exchange of people, goods, and services among various actors.

Although each platform located behind the first rampart exhibits subtle architectural differences, they

do not appear significant enough to suggest functional variation (figures 8 and 9). In fact, architectural features distinct to San Ildefonso, such as sunken entrances, point to intra-site commonalities in design and function. Excavation also confirms that the multiple platforms served as stages for feasting rites (Swenson 2006: 132-135). Specialized hearths were often identified on lower patios or adjacent to ramps. They were filled with diverse food remains, such as llama bone, pepper, maize, fish, and other comestibles. Moreover, decorated face-neck jars used to decant *chicha* are found in significantly higher percentages within the numerous *tablado*-like structures than within domestic architecture and rectilinear precincts (figure 10; Swenson 2004: 784-792). Evidently, small-scale feasts, most likely sponsored by patrons or lineage groups in charge of a specific platform, mediated political and economic relations within the site.

The seeming redundancy of ritual architecture at San Ildefonso suggests a pluralistic social and political milieu that is paralleled by the multiplicity of ceremonial sites in the lower valley as a whole. Significantly, the most prominent platform mounds are spaced well apart, by at least 100 meters or more (figure 5). Whether or not the site can be partitioned into discrete «*barrios*,» centered on a platform mound and its surrounding domestic zone, is difficult to determine. Distinct ceramic assemblages indexing specific communities did not differentiate sectors within the site (Swenson 2004: 787-789).

Nevertheless, the unusual replication of platforms suggests that diverse groups congregated at San Ildefonso for joint ceremonial activities centered on small-scale but numerous feasts. These practices likely remained the prerogative of local group performance and negotiation. Each platform could have accommodated a relatively small number of participants and observers (no more than 50 to 75 people), the majority of whom would have occupied the open space of the lower, front patios (figures 8 and 9). This spatial configuration contrasts with the great adobe pyramids and monumental plazas of Moche cities that orchestrated large-scale public spectacle and ritual events (Gamboa, this volume).

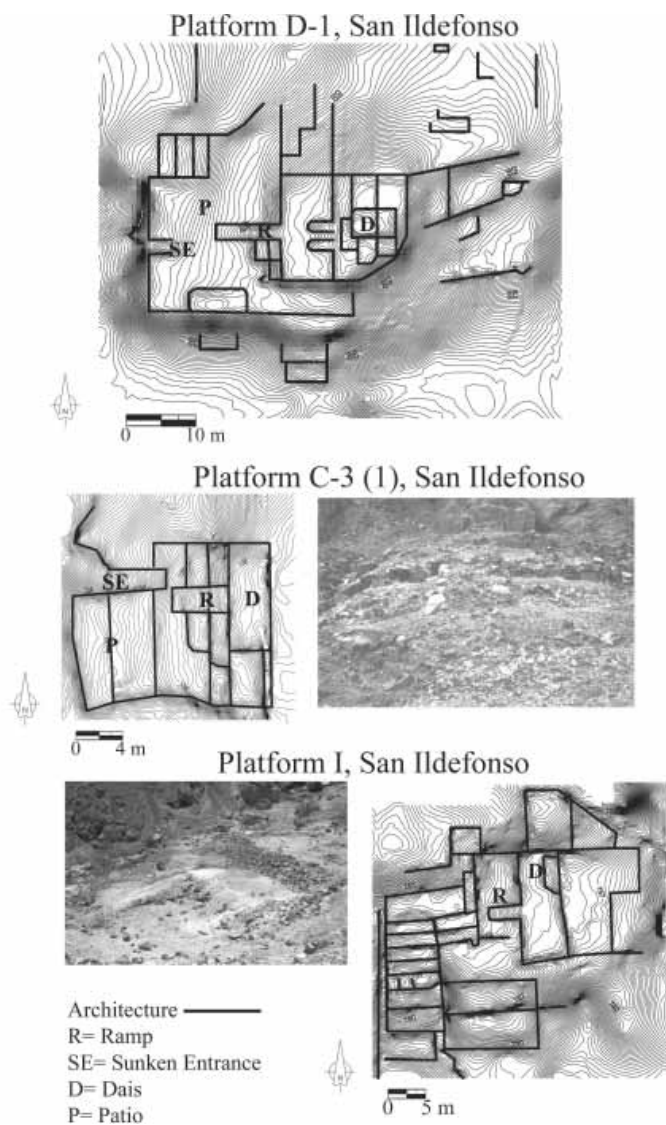


Figure 9. Architectural plans and photographs of Platforms D-1, C-3-1, and I at San Ildefonso.

An important function of San Ildefonso might very well have been to create a political and ideological arena for inter-group social exchange and reciprocity. Such practices possibly reaffirmed the identities of sub-groups while promoting the ideological goals of the larger society. Therefore, San

Ildefonso appears to represent the union of several lineages who assertively maintained distinct theaters of ideological self-expression, perhaps in commemorating a more inclusive or regionally revered deity associated with the coastal hill upon which the site was constructed.

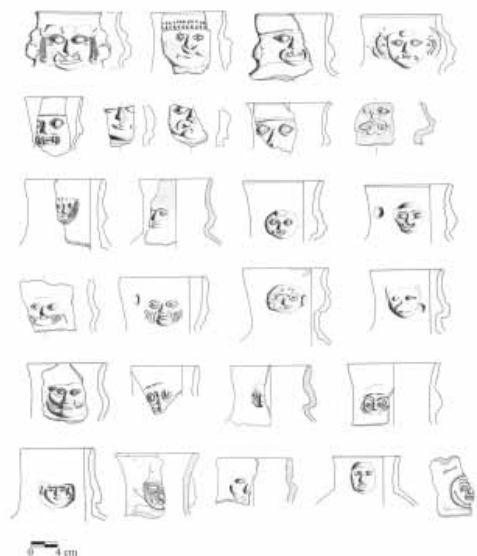


Figure 10. Decorated face-neck jars in Moche style collected from San Ildefonso.

Ritualized Warfare at San Ildefonso

The fortification walls and abundant sling stone piles suggest that ritualized warfare, likely euphemizing real social conflict, constituted an important function of San Ildefonso. In fact, a distinction between «real» and «ritual» warfare was likely never made by Moche communities (*contra* Quilter 2002), and the religious framing of armed struggle was undoubtedly critical to both the coordination and legitimization of military aggression (whether over scarce resources, ideological disputes, political competition, capture of sacrificial victims, or a likely combination of these features).

The predominance of masculine and warrior imagery on molded face-neck jars and figurines found in close association with religious architecture further suggests the importance of ritualized warfare at the site. Although unlikely, different warrior organizations at San Ildefonso (who possibly maintained separate platforms and feasting circles) might have waged battle amongst themselves within the confines of the site. That is, lesser chiefs feted their warriors at particular platforms in preparation

for combat with rival groups celebrating at neighboring shrines. Conflict (both ritualized and real) most likely occurred at the inter-site level, however, and the vanquished may have been offered to the Priestesses of San José de Moro, who were ultimately dependent on the political machinations of warring lineages residing in the countryside. Inter-group warfare may have decided rights to resources, reshuffled social alliances, or propitiated mountain divinities, perhaps in a manner similar to the practice of *tinkuy* (kin-based ritualized battle) documented ethnographically in the Andean highlands (Rappaport 1992: 205-228; Skar 1982).

Indeed, the close association of ceremonial space and defensive constructions at San Ildefonso and at other rural sites suggests that intra-valley hostility was cloaked in the mantle of religious legitimacy. Communities and their respective chiefs may have justified war against rivals through the manipulation of Moche rituals of «violent» cosmic ordering, ceremonies originally realized through the sacrifice of elite warriors and the ceremonial consumption of human blood (see Swenson 2003; Tufinio, this volume). In other words, the deployment of traditional religious precepts clearly shaped and legitimized violent political struggles in the Jequetepeque Valley during the Late Moche Period. Interestingly, representations of warfare in Moche art often occur against a backdrop of coastal mountains, an environment that parallels the hilly terrain of many of the hinterland sites, including San Ildefonso (figure 6). The iconographic evidence reinforces the interpretation that the ceremonial settlements in Jequetepeque served closely related ritual and militaristic functions.

Nevertheless, there is currently no evidence to suggest that chiefs sacrificed war prisoners and subsequently consumed their blood on the numerous hinterland structures (i.e., *tumi* knives, goblets, and sacrificial victims – the latter commonly associated with elite Moche ceremonial constructions – were absent from excavated platforms at San Ildefonso and elsewhere). Instead, the rich organic remains, hearths, and decorated *chicha* vessels signal the primacy of feasting events. Therefore, dramatized spectacles of human sacrifice appear to have been

de-emphasized in the Jequetepeque countryside, unlike at San José de Moro. As mentioned, it is also possible that hinterland communities offered vanquished prisoners of rural warfare to the Priestess of San José de Moro, perhaps as a means to win the favor of the center and assert the newly established authority of the hinterland polity in question. Therefore, the act of war itself (along with feasting), which likely legitimized political hostilities and internecine social conflict, seems to have displaced sacrifice in the countryside as the preeminent ritual spectacle. The sling stones and massive defensive walls at San Ildefonso (associated with «real» combat as opposed to the characteristically fragile wooden clubs and shields of the Moche elite; Bourget 2001) suggest that Jequetepeque communities creatively adapted Moche ritual violence to reinforce «pragmatic» warfare and advance local political interests.

Discussion: Ceremonial Architecture, Ritual Performance, and Identity Politics at San Ildefonso: The Diversification of Moche Religious Ideology in Jequetepeque

Although the replicate platforms of equal elaboration at San Ildefonso point to the maintenance of sub-group identity within the site, the architectural evidence also indicates that its inhabitants were in the process of forging a broader political community associated with the larger congregated population. In other words, a specific spatial aesthetic defined ritual practices at this settlement and materialized the emergence of a new social unity transcending sectarian identity politics. That is, the platforms at San Ildefonso share important architectural commonalities that distinguish them from ceremonial constructions recorded at other sites.

For instance, the multiple platforms at San Ildefonso structured axial movement along centrally-placed ramps (figure 11). Movement progressed from lower patios to higher landings, and the experiential change in elevation, almost always proceeding east toward the hilltop, was undoubtedly integral to the performance of ritualized acts. Sight lines within

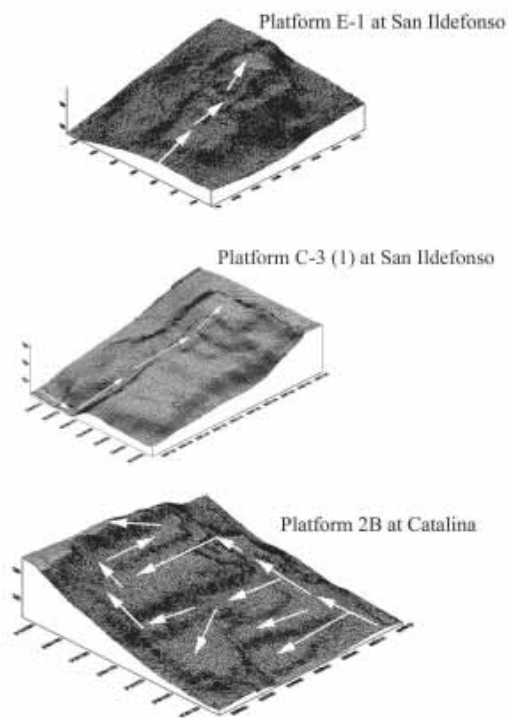


Figure 11. Three-dimensional plans of Platform E-1 and C-3-1 at San Ildefonso and Platform 2B at Catalina. Arrows illustrate access patterns within the structures.

these structures were unobstructed, indicating that activities conducted at different elevations of the platforms were fully visible and synchronized. Ritual feasting at San Ildefonso, predicated on integrated suites of presentation, procession, and supervision, was clearly shaped by an overarching spatial ethos specific to the settlement.

Significantly, architectural forms at other ceremonial loci in the Jequetepeque Valley vary remarkably from the typical San Ildefonso style, suggesting that inhabitants of particular sites differently interpreted Moche religious practices and ceremonial space (Swenson 2006: 125-132). For instance, at the site of Catalina, located on the south side of the Kanchape range (figure 1), multiple ceremonial platforms built on the hillside are separated by a large perimeter wall from the expansive domestic zone occupying the lower pampa

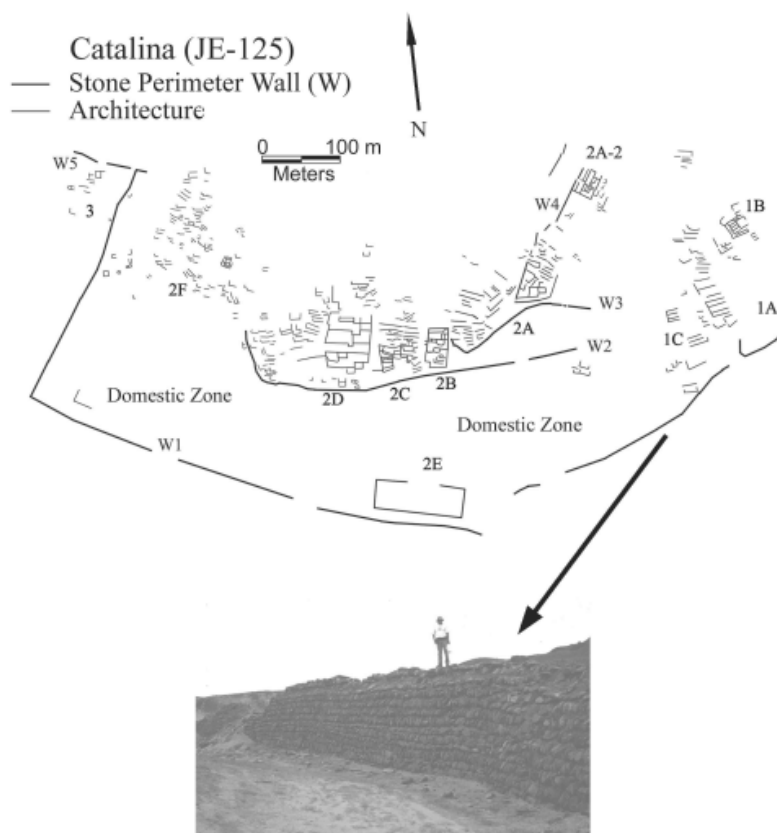


Figure 12. Site map of Catalina (JE-125) and photograph of Perimeter Wall 1 (lower register).

(figure 12). This configuration differs notably from San Ildefonso, where ramped platforms were found distributed throughout the site near residential areas. Radiometric analysis of charcoal samples procured from ceremonial platforms of the two settlements points to their contemporaneity (ca. A.D. 600-750; Swenson 2004: 699).

Moreover, the ritual platforms at Catalina consist of elongated landings which lack the crescendo of narrowing terraces and long ramps. Many of the terraces were designed for movement along lateral rather than perpendicular axes (figure 13). At Catalina, ritual performance was predicated on more obstructed sight lines and compartmentalized flow patterns. The proxemic differences between these sites are immediately evident – as demonstrated in

an examination of three-dimensional maps of structures from these sites (figure 11; see Hall 1966 and Moore 1996 for an explication of proxemic analysis of the built environment). Nonetheless, excavation reveals that feasting rites were orchestrated on the individual platforms at both San Ildefonso and Catalina, notwithstanding their idiosyncratic forms. Thus, the substantive content of staged ceremonies appears to have varied little between these ceremonial settlements, despite divergent experimental frameworks structuring ritual performance. Other platforms built several kilometers away from San Ildefonso also exhibit pronounced differences in form and ritual proxemics (figure 14) (Swenson 2004: 441-701, 2006). The site-specific architectural differences in Jequetepeque underscore the local

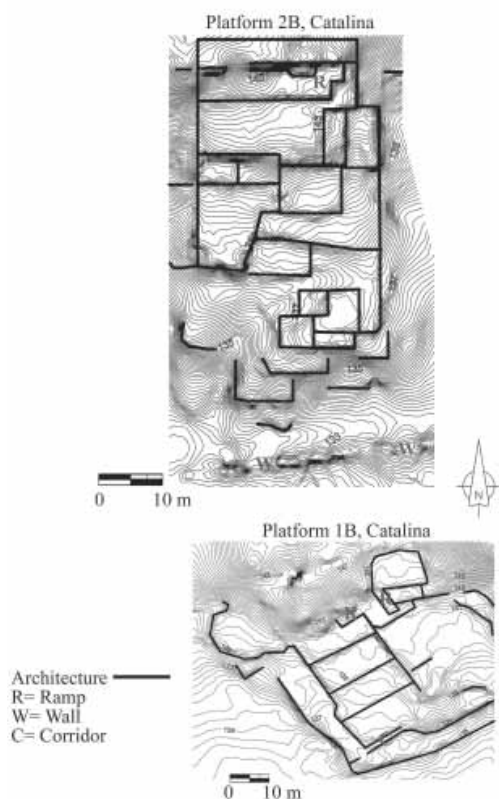


Figure 13. Architectural plans of two platforms at Catalina.

determination of ritual politics during the Late Moche Period.

In summary, the archaeological evidence points to an interesting paradox at San Ildefonso. Communities appear to have maintained sub-group identity while participating in and contributing to a larger political association. The rather marked uniformity in the architectonics of ritual performance at the site, especially in contrast to neighboring settlements, indicates that its inhabitants were constructing a more inclusive community grounded in a particular interpretation of Moche religion and founded on the specific ritual, economic, and military associations peculiar to San Ildefonso. The unique spatial configuration of the site suggests that the «invention of tradition» constituted a viable ideological strategy at San Ildefonso (Hobsbawm

1983). Such practices entailed the strategic redefinition of Moche identity, and undoubtedly contributed to the creation of variably conceived religious and political communities in the Jequetepeque Valley.

Of course, the religious architecture and ritual ceramics at San Ildefonso share certain parallels with elite material culture from San José de Moro and Pampa Grande, and processes of emulation and political interchange shaped ideological practices and power relations within the site. However, emblems of elite status at San Ildefonso, expressed in face-neck jars with ear spools and nose ornaments (figure 10), and the celebration of Moche religious authority more generally, actively forged parochial and possibly even communal political associations as opposed to strictly hierarchical social relations. For instance, Moche Phase V fineline ceramics (figure 15) are distributed throughout the site, and like prestigious architectural forms, are not enclaved in any one particular sector. Although similar religious symbols were manipulated by inhabitants of both Pampa Grande and San Ildefonso, they mediated contrasting political subjectivities and different systems of social organization.

Finally, evidence of segmentary sociopolitical integration at San Ildefonso finds possible analogy with North Coast society at the time of the conquest. The parcialidades documented by Spanish chroniclers consisted of nested, ranked, and homologous groups of moieties that were counterpoised in dual and quadripartite social divisions, some of which were differentiated by economic specialization (Cock 1986: 174-175; Netherly 1984: 229-230, 1990: 463, 1993: 15-16; Ramirez 1990, 1996; Rostworowski 1989, 1990: 448-449; Zuidema 1990). Netherly (1984: 229-230) refers to this form of telescoped social order as a «dual corporate organization,» which structured all levels of society from the state to the lowest-level lineage. In this system, smaller lineage groups (often referred to as micro-ayllus in the Andes) generally maintained their identities, ancestral rituals, usufruct rights to fields, and chiefly representatives while ascribing to larger political, ethnic, and kinship associations (Janusek 2004: 28-36; Ramirez 1996).

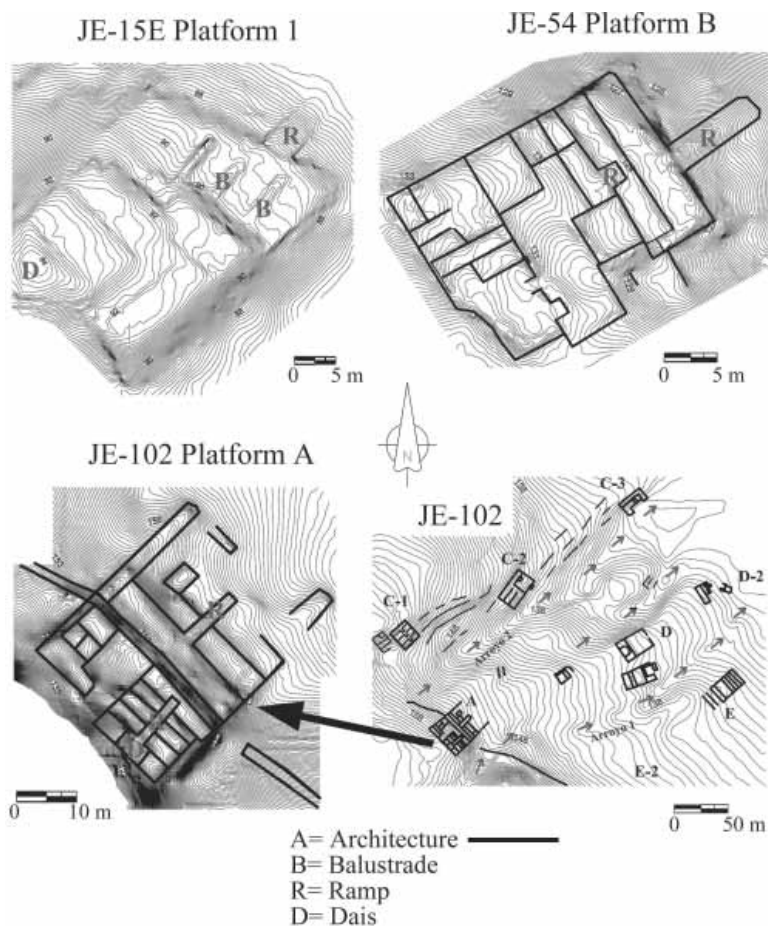


Figure 14. Architectural plans of platforms at JE-15, JE-54, and JE-102.

Local curacas headed lineage groups in complex kinship networks and were hierarchically ranked vis-à-vis other lords despite overlapping duties and privileges. As alluded to above, it seems that the multiple platforms at San Ildefonso represented the shrines of semi-independent lineages (and their respective caciques) who lived in the settlement, either episodically or on a more permanent basis, as part of a more inclusive community defined by shared religious observation, possible kin ties, and economic and military cooperation.

It is worth noting, however, that at the time of the conquest the parcialidad system underwrote

rigid class distinctions, instituted power asymmetries, and even monarchical rule (Cock 1986: 174-175; Netherly 1993: 15-20; Ramirez 1990: 516-520, 1996: 12-15). Indeed, colonial sources indicate that the most powerful lords presiding over large parcialidades served as the premier political leaders and religious specialists of territorially expansive polities (Means 1931: 51-52; Netherly 1993; Rowe 1948: 47; Zuidema 1990). Their authority was recognized in part through their spiritual intercession with ancestral divinities and through sponsoring hospitable feasts (Netherly 1990: 469; Ramirez 1996: 26, 42-60,

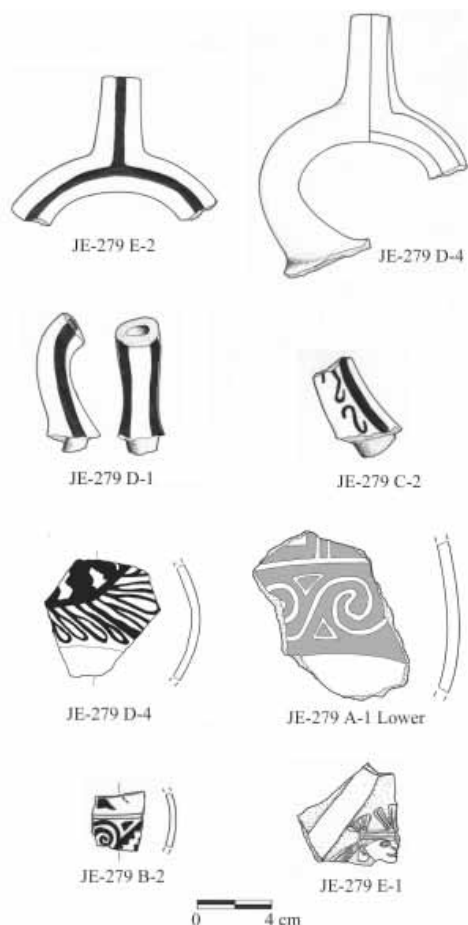


Figure 15. Fineline ceramic sherds recovered from San Ildefonso.

222-223). Indeed, prominent leaders of this sort were bedecked in precious ornaments symbolizing elite status, were paraded in litters, and were buried with lavish offerings in monumental adobe temples (Cock 1986: 172-177; Ramirez 1996: 21-25). Although the stone compounds with benches in Sector G may have represented the residence of a distinguished rural lord in San Ildefonso (see above), there is little archaeological evidence for the presence of a powerful *primera persona* that served as the highest ranked authority of the hypothesized segmentary collective. In fact, the same can be said for many other hinterland cere-

monial sites in the Jequetepeque Valley, including Catalina. The overall parity of the plural religious constructions at San Ildefonso diverges from the historical model with its emphasis on homologous but unmistakably stratified kinship groupings. This is all the more surprising given the hierarchical nature of traditional Moche polities. Ultimately, the peculiar social landscape of San Ildefonso suggests that Moche ideology was differently enacted and politically recontextualized by rural communities during the Late Moche Period.

Conclusion

The construction of numerous platforms at San Ildefonso and neighboring settlements underscores the creative appropriation of urban spatial templates and Moche symbols of power by rural populations. The lack of standardized corporate architecture as well as the extraordinary redundancy of rural ceremonial loci (and individual platforms within San Ildefonso alone) point to the deregulation of ritual authority in Late Moche Jequetepeque.

Numerous communities in the Jequetepeque Valley differently embraced Moche values as a means of ideological self-definition and political advancement. Therefore, the horizontal dissemination of Moche material culture does not point to the force of a hegemonic ideology mystifying inequalities and duping subaltern groups into accepting disadvantageous social conditions (*contra* Abercrombie *et al.* 1980; Asad 1979: 620-621). Unlike neighboring valleys, the competitive propagation of «multiple» Moche ideologies suggests that power asymmetries were fluid and heterarchical in the Jequetepeque Valley (see Crumley 1995). This evidence is further corroborated by the decentralization of agricultural production and the expansion of intra-valley militarism during the same period (Dillehay 2001; Dillehay and Kolata 2004a, 2004b: 227-230). For instance, the proliferation of dispersed, piecemeal agricultural installations in the lower Jequetepeque Valley reveal that subsistence production became locally directed by rural communities during the Late Moche Period (Dillehay and Kolata 2004a: 4328).

In fact, numerous chiefs appear to have taken advantage of sociopolitical and ecological disruptions in the late sixth century to elevate their status to that of Moche lords and religious specialists. This is evident at San Ildefonso, where a parity and pluralism in religious structures distinguishes the settlement from Late Moche urban centers. A veritable «competition between stages» is apparent at this site, as it is elsewhere in the valley (Lincoln 1994: 138).

The widespread promotion of feasting rites and ritual warfare to coordinate local political relations and agricultural production represents an unprecedented innovation in Moche religious practice. Feasts in particular are important arenas «for the representation and manipulation of political power» (Dietler 2001: 65; see also Bray 2003; Dietler 1996, 1999; Lau 2002; Moore 1989; Swenson 2006: 134), and it is evident that such arenas were not restricted to large urban centers or exclusive monumental complexes within San Ildefonso and other ceremonial loci of the Jequetepeque hinterland.

Scholars have noted that Moche material culture perdured longer in the Jequetepeque Valley than in other regions of the North Coast (ca. A.D. 800-900) (Castillo 2000, 2001, 2003; Castillo and Donnan 1994a; Hecker and Hecker 1987). Donnan even proposes a closing date of around A.D. 900 (Donnan 1997: 12). It seems reasonable to conclude that the reinvention and popularization of the Moche ideological complex (divested from the exclusive realm of state elites) contributed to its persistence into the final years of the ninth century. Interestingly, recent research indicates the later continuation of Moche material culture in the Chicama and Moche Valleys to the south (ca. A.D. 800; Chapdelaine 2002; Russell 1998; Lockard, this volume). Whether similar processes of ideological appropriation and «popularization» occurred in these regions merits further archaeological investigation in the future.

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