

The Embodied Sacrifice

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The interest in the study of the body that is emerging in European archaeologies has not yet penetrated Americanist approaches to prehistoric iconography. Nevertheless, American materials provide an excellent data base with which to work. This article employs the complex human representational imagery of the Moche (Peruvian North Coast, c. AD 100–800) to explore how the body was situated within the context of ritual sacrifice. Employing both the Foucauldian concept of the disciplined body and the work of Mary Douglas, two forms of bodily representation are discussed: the naked male prisoner and the spread-eagled female sacrifice. These bodies are defined iconographically not only by their sex, but also by their qualities of anonymity or individuality. While the sacrificed female represents an individual who is notable because of who she is (i.e. who she embodies), the male prisoners represent an undifferentiated and anonymous group. These two examples suggest that the body can be read as an individual symbolic field (the female body) and, alternatively, can serve as an undifferentiated forum (the bodies of prisoners) for sacrificial discourse. Despite these differences in representation, both forms of the body present potentially liminal sites within the context of sacrificial ritual. This liminality is essential for the discursive re-ordering of the body politic to occur.

Only recently has the discipline of archaeology begun to engage in a fruitful examination of the prehistoric body. Notably, studies that concentrate on the body have been those with a focus on the Mediterranean (e.g. German 2000; Montserrat 1998; Wyke 1998; Knapp & Meskell 1997) and northern or northwestern Europe (e.g. Thomas & Tilley 1993; Yates 1993). In contrast, Americanist research has largely ignored the work of social theorists, whose observations are directly relevant to the study of archaeological bodies.¹ This marginalization of the work of social theorists is due in part to the deep-seated conviction among many North American scholars that archaeology is essentially a scientific, rather than interpretive discipline. As such, the body and the discourse that surrounds it are not considered suitable sources of information about the past. British and Scandinavian archaeologists tend to be more closely allied with theoretical developments in philosophy and sociology and integrate these materials more

readily in their work than do their North American counterparts.

Nevertheless, American materials provide a rich data base upon which to exercise theories of the body. This study employs the representational art of the Moche culture of the Peruvian North Coast (c. AD 100–800) in order to determine how the human body was conceptualized in the past. Below, I discuss the intersection of Foucauldian formulations of the disciplined body and anthropological perspectives of the body as a social metaphor (e.g. Douglas 1996). Then I employ examples taken from prehistoric Peruvian art to demonstrate how the Moche body, in sacrifice and in death, functioned as the medium through which transformation of the *social* body occurred.

The focus here on the body as transformational arena privileges its liminal features, dissolving both Foucauldian and anthropological concepts into an approach that is especially appropriate for discuss-

ing the role of the body in sacrifice. Liminality is central to sacrificial ritual as a conceptual state in which an individual's position is ambiguous and in a state of flux. A liminal state may occur during major life-cycle transitions in which social status is altered (Turner 1967; 1969; van Gennep 1960). The transition from life to death is often liminal, as is the act of sacrifice, in which the living body is consecrated, becoming an offering through which the relationship between humans and the supernatural is renewed. What is particularly significant for the argument presented here is that the *human body* often functions as the site upon which this transformation from sacred to profane occurs. Likewise, the body serves as the physical medium of communication. These liminal functions are represented by the sets of images examined below.

In the following sections I examine: 1) perspectives of Foucault and Douglas as they relate to the body; 2) the body as a potentially liminal entity; and 3) the body as sacrifice.

The disputed body: Foucault and Douglas

In Foucauldian formulations, the body generally functions as a discursive field. It is literally the site upon which power relations are mapped in the same way that a tattoo represents the aesthetic crystallization of personal and social values upon the body's surface (Mascia-Lees & Sharpe 1992). To Foucault, the body is socially constructed through the exertion of power (Foucault 1977, 47–50). The body is transformed into a malleable, 'docile' entity upon which codes of conduct can be inscribed. Institutions engage in the 'calculated manipulation of elements (of the body), its gestures, its behaviour' in order to increase its utility (Foucault 1977, 138; see also Foucault 1978, 47–9, 139–47). The docile body is tractable, productive, programmable (Lingis 1994, 59).

One of the fundamental feminist criticisms of Foucault has been that he reproduces the male body as the focus of discursive practice. Female bodies are also manipulated by power apparatuses, yet this manipulation often occurs in more insidious and less graphic ways (Bartky 1990, 65). The feminine body in the modern West is manipulated by medical practice, restricted by shoes and clothing, painted, polished and plucked. Foucault does not engage these qualitative differences (McNay 1992; Sawicki 1991, 95–109), focusing instead on the manipulation of the (male) body by social institutions or apparatuses of power.

As Meskell (1996) has noted, 'the body is not

merely constrained by or invested with social relations . . . it also forms a basis for these relations and contributes to them' (Meskell 1996, 8; see also Meskell 1998, 148–51). This bodily contribution to ongoing social relations is missing from Foucault's formulation. For Foucault, the male body is the discursive centre; even so, this body is essentially passive and acted upon. By discounting the action of the individual in the body, Foucault (naturally) discounts the female body as well (Grosz 1994, 156–9). Meskell's observation highlights the tensions that exist between alternative views of the body, which include the body as site of resistance and/or discipline, the body as organism, as lived experience, and as representational metaphor. Frank (1991, 48–9) has distilled these tensions into a tripartite bodily structure composed of discourses, institutions and corporeality. *Discourses*, the cognitive aspects of the body's limits and potentialities, exist within the context of temporally and spatially constituted *institutions*. *Corporeality*, the third dimension of the body, is the human physiology, the fleshly composition of the body (Frank 1991, 48–9). For Frank, these three components, to which Meskell (1996) alludes, constitute 'the body' (Turner 1992, 60).

One of the most influential anthropological formulations of the body is that of Mary Douglas (1966; 1996). Douglas has suggested that the body and its exuviae are the primary metaphors for social tensions — bodily symbols of the social order. Thus, bodily fluids are imbued with meaning and become potent symbols of purity, pollution, and danger. So too does the intactness or violation of bodily orifices become powerful material representations of the social body. Douglas (1966; 1996; see also Rappaport 1999, 260–62) provides multiple examples of how blood, semen, and excrement serve as metaphors for the social, pulling apart aspects of bodily functions in order to discern their individual meanings. A recent and more integrated version of Douglas' perspective is offered by Bordo (1988), who applies the Foucauldian perspective on the disciplined body to her discussion of anorexia nervosa and concludes that the individual body expresses cultural distress through psychopathology.

From these diverse perspectives, I have distilled an approach to the body that is applicable to the Moche evidence. I present Moche bodies as sites upon which social institutions inscribed culturally-specific symbolic meanings. At the same time, bodies in Moche society contributed to the inscription of meaning through their own corporeality. Variables such as sex, class, and ethnicity, as embodied by the

individual, also formed part of the symbolic equation. This intrinsic tension between institutions and discursively-laden corporeality is represented in depictions of Moche sacrifice.

The liminal body

One of the features fundamental to institutional manipulation of the body is its liminality (Turner 1967; 1969). As the site upon which a series of ongoing transformational dynamics are resolved, the body has vast liminal 'potentials'. These 'potentials' are vested in bodily variables including dress, ornamentation, alteration, and decoration. Transformational dynamics include the tensions between the individual and the social bodies, and the corporeal issues relating to individual bodily identity, an issue that Meskell (1996; see also Knapp & Meskell 1997) has suggested belongs at the forefront of archaeological discourse on the body. These tensions may crystallize around issues of gender and sex. Many other factors, however, revolving around the intersection of the individual with the social, create arenas in which social relations are negotiated and transformational dynamics occur. These loci of difference include race, ethnicity, class, age and (non)reproductive status (Meskell 1999; Moore 1994, 8–27).

These differences serve to position the body within society, creating ambiguities between the individual and the social group. Such ambiguities allow the body to function as a liminal entity. The liminal body is pregnant with dialogue, dialogue to which the body itself contributes as both the site of discourse and the medium through which the internal agent acts. This discourse revolves around the loci of difference discussed above: sex, race, class, age and (non)reproductive status. Turner (1984) and Frank (1991) have probably best characterized this multiplicity of bodily tensions. Turner (1984) argues that the body is a historically contingent social phenomenon, and thus cannot be examined strictly from the perspective of the lived body of the individual. He locates the body at the intersection of four social tasks: 1) the reproduction of populations in time; 2) the regulation of bodies in space; 3) the restraint of the 'interior' body through discipline; and 4) the representation of the 'exterior' body in social space (Turner 1984, 93–114). Although Turner's formulation acknowledges approaches presented by both Foucault and Douglas, it moves considerably beyond them in the development of an articulated *theory* of the body. Turner's work is also sensitive to the sex/gender implications inherent in the study of the

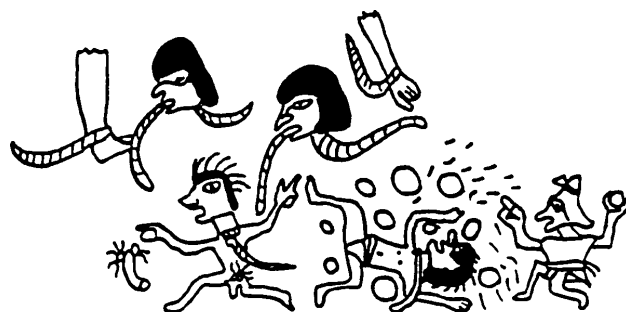


Figure 1. Detail of captives, disembodied limbs, and organs. (Redrawn from Moser 1974, 33.)

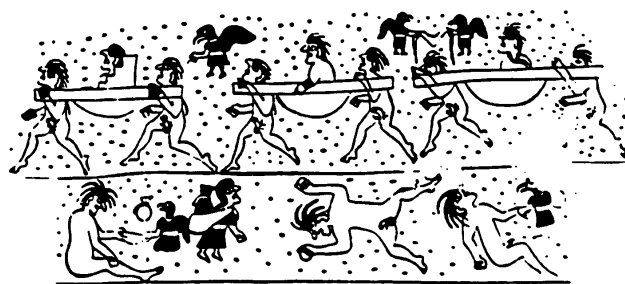


Figure 2. Detail of prisoners going to a ritual event. Vessel housed at the American Museum of Natural History, New York. (After Moser 1974, 33.)

body, as well as to the potential for embodied action.

In the examples below, I focus on the conceptualization of the body as a potentially liminal site upon which the individual and the social intersect. I have dissolved both the Foucauldian formulation of the body as discursive site (Foucault 1977) and the position that the body and its parts function as metaphors for the social being (Douglas 1996) into this perspective. The examples I use come from images of sacrifice depicted in the representational art of the Moche from the North Coast of Peru (c. AD 100–800). The Moche had a long tradition of elaborate mortuary practices and ritual human sacrifice (Alva & Donnan 1993; Bourget 1997; Moser 1974; Shimada 1997). The treatment of the body, either living or dead, was a primary concern of the Moche, as exhibited both in burial remains and in representational art.

The sacrificial body

Two categories of bodily representation in Moche art are considered here: the male prisoner and the female body consumed by birds. I interpret both sets of images as representations of human sacrifice, whilst recognizing that there are qualitative differences between the sacrifices on the basis of sex and



Figure 3. Fine-line drawing of a naked prisoner/defeated warrior juxtaposed with warriors engaged in combat. Note the elaborate backflaps, headdresses, and markings on the knees, calves and possibly the faces of some of the warriors. Note also that the naked defeated combatant is represented upside-down, or reversed. (Drawing by D. McClelland, reproduced from Alva & Donnan 1993, 128. Vessel housed at Museo Nacional Bruening, Lambayeque, Perú.)

individual social role. I locate these differences within a matrix of intersecting interests that correspond to the quadripartite formulation presented by Turner (1984). I argue that class and group membership are the primary variables determining the iconographic treatment of both the prisoners and the women and that such variables should not be considered secondary to sex.

The image of the prisoner occurs frequently in Moche art and iconography. He appears both in two-dimensional, painted form (Figs. 1, 2 & 3) and in modelled (mould-made) form (Fig. 4). The prisoner is generally depicted as a naked male with clearly represented genitalia. Usually, only general facial features are depicted: eyes, nose, and mouth. Occasionally, painted or tattooed facial markings are also shown. The rest of the body receives relatively little detailing. The prisoner is generally represented with a rope encircling his neck. Often, an individual is shown holding the rope and walking either before or behind his captive. In contrast to the prisoner, this figure is fully dressed, often with an elaborate headdress; he is generally interpreted as a victorious warrior who is parading his captive prisoner in public (Alva & Donnan 1993, 131). In other scenes, prisoners are shown being sacrificed. Their throats are cut by elaborately dressed figures or they are (apparently) being stoned (Fig. 1).

Many Moche scenes represent combat either between human and mythic creatures or between two humans juxtaposed with representations of pris-

oners (Fig. 3). It is unclear whether the prisoner/captive warrior is Moche; he may be either a defeated combatant from another group or a member of Moche society whose status has changed dramatically following defeat in combat (Bawden 1996, 159–61). Note that in Figure 3, the prisoner is represented upside-down next to a pair of warriors. This visual reversal symbolizes his altered status (*sensu* Turner 1969). All markers of his status as a warrior — headdress, backflap, club, shield — have been removed.

Through the process of defeat in combat, the body of the prisoner becomes both liminal and ‘docile’ — an object to be acted upon by the victor. In Foucault’s terms, the body of the combatant has become subject to disciplinary institutions; that is, the body has become that of the prisoner as opposed to the active body of the warrior. This ‘docile’ body is naked and restrained, often splayed so that the genitalia are exposed. In contrast, the body of the warrior is actively engaged with his opponent. In defeat, the body of the prisoner is qualitatively altered — *becoming* passive and tractable, as symbolized by nakedness and the restraint of the rope.

Another symbol of defeat and docility is the warrior’s hair, which is grasped in combat to represent defeat and to hold the head in position for decapitation (Fig. 2; see also Donnan 1997, fig. 2; 1978, figs. 228 & 270). Donnan (1978, 151), observing that the hair of the prisoner appears short and in disarray, suggests that it may have been cut intentionally. Hair and its manipulation may symbolize the altered status of the prisoner/defeated warrior in Moche representations. Cross-culturally, hair is removed or otherwise manipulated during rites of passage (Olivelle 1998). Enforced hair-cutting represents even more dramatically the change in social status that the prisoner undergoes; it may be likened to castration (i.e. loss of power or control) (Eilberg-Schwartz 1995; Lang 1995), which the Moche imply in their depiction of disembodied sexual organs (Fig. 1; Bergh 1993, figs. 1 & 2). In docile form, symbolically castrated, the prisoner becomes useful to the institutions of Moche society. This perspective on the body is Foucauldian in the sense that the corporeal existence of the prisoner is appropriated and manipulated by the social body. Appearance and behaviours are altered to meet institutional requirements, rather than those of the individual.

The predominance of the institutional over the individual is also apparent in some representations of the prisoner in painted form, where he is depicted devoid of any individualizing characteristics. In Figure 2, all prisoners appear interchangeable, with the

exception that some are being carried in pole-transport. Yet even those being carried are indistinguishable on the basis of physical features alone. The portrayal of prisoners in an anonymous, systematized manner suggests that the prisoner *as an individual* is not central to the sacrifice; rather, the prisoner as an outsider or liminal entity is the significant variable as is his membership in a group, that of defeated combatants. One apparent exception to this rule is the depiction of prisoners with facial or body marks (e.g. facial paint/tattoos).

Figure 3 depicts a cross-shaped mark on the chest of the defeated combatant/prisoner, while in Figure 4, the prisoner has four elongated triangles marking his cheeks, chin, and forehead. There are three possible explanations for these marks in the context of prisoner treatment and sacrifice. First, these marks may function to further remove the prisoner from the context of Moche society by signalling his 'otherness'. In other words, the marks may signal to the Moche viewer that this person is ethnically non-Moche or not a member of the group performing the sacrifice (i.e. the individual is from another valley or settlement). Second, Moche artists may simply be representing prisoners as accurately as possible. Tattoos could not be removed; therefore, realistic representations of the naked prisoners include permanent facial or body markings. A third possibility is that marks are imposed upon the defeated combatant by the Moche. Therefore, the marks are symbolic of the individual's status as a prisoner. Given the number of examples in Moche ceramic art in which individuals are depicted with facial markings (see, for example, Donnan 1978, figs. 8, 9, 36, 51, 53, 166 & 189), I interpret the marks on the faces of the prisoners as pre-existing. That is, marking the face and/or body with tattooed or painted designs was probably a common practice among North Coast groups. Therefore, Moche artists were representing prisoners accurately. It follows from this interpretation that tattoos or other marks were basic to group identity (i.e. basic to the category 'prisoner'), and therefore had to be represented even when clothing or head-dresses were not.

An alternative interpretation is suggested by Foucault, who has demonstrated (1977) that institutions visibly mark the bodies of their subjects to illustrate how and to what extent power has been exerted. Such practices have been well-documented among the Greeks, Romans (Jones 1987), and early Christians (Gustafson 1997). In a Moche context, facial paint or tattoos could represent the power of disciplinary apparatuses in the same way that tat-



Figure 4. Modelled stirrup-spout vessel depicting a prisoner with a tattooed/painted face with crouching feline captor. (Drawn by Steven Wallace from photo in Donnan 1978, fig. 246. Vessel housed at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University; height 27.3 cm.)

toos functioned to identify slaves, criminals, and prisoners of war among Mediterranean peoples.

The second image that I examine in this analysis is the sacrificed woman. She appears on several painted ceramic jars from the Late Moche Period spread-eagled, naked, and with vultures pecking at her body. Figure 5 shows details of six different examples of the sacrificed woman. She appears once on each vessel (the vultures are only reproduced here in two cases), and always as one component of a larger, more complex scene called the Burial Theme, which depicts an elaborate interment and several ritual attendants (Donnan & McClelland 1979; Hill 1998). Like the bodies of the prisoners, the woman's body has clearly defined secondary sexual characteristics — a pubic triangle often accentuated by an inverted triangle over the stomach. The woman is not shown before sacrifice, at least not in any form that has been identified. Rather, she is presented in the midst of the sacrificial ritual.

Although the physical position of the sacrificed woman is constant, certain features, such as her hair and face, are depicted differently depending on the representation. Often she is shown with what appear to be facial markings on her cheeks and chin. Furthermore, the woman is depicted by herself, as



Figure 5. Details of sacrificed women represented individually on six different vessels; reproduced and redrawn from various sources (Donnan & McClelland 1979; Golte 1994, 109; Shimada 1994, 231).

an individual rather than as part of a group, while the prisoners are depicted with their fellows. The individualization of the woman's body may be a product of the artist's style; however, this is not a convincing explanation for her differential treatment. Other anthropomorphic figures in the scene are highly regularized, indicating that Moche artists were able to reproduce images according to a representational standard. The individualized features of the woman are therefore probably the product of some variable other than style.

Significantly, in the state of sacrifice, the bodies of both the prisoners and the women are shown devoid of clothing. In Moche imagery, clothing and ornamentation signify social status and role. Thus, in their sacrificial form, the bodies are literally stripped of their identifying markers. In exchange for markers of living status, their bodies are marked in death — the prisoners' by amputation or decapitation, the women's by the vultures. Additionally, the genital organs are clearly and prominently depicted in the representations. In scenes depicting

prisoners, as in Figure 1, the genitalia are often shown separated from the body, as *disembodied* organs. In addition to genitalia, disembodied heads and body parts may surround the prisoner (see also Kutscher 1983, fig. 124).

The logic of bodily fragmentation in pre-Hispanic Peru has not been explored in detail, although disembodiment appears to be a common motif in Peruvian art. The monumental sculpture of the Initial Period site of Cerro Sechín and the iconography of Nazca (Silverman 1993) depict disembodied heads amid combat. In Moche art, heads, as well as organs and limbs, are represented 'floating' or separated from the human body. *Disjecta membra*, or disjointed body parts, are symbolically significant to the cultural traditions of medieval (Bynum & Gerson 1997) and early modern Europe (Hillman & Mazzi 1997), Pharonic (Meskell 1999, 114–19), Coptic Egypt (Wilfong 1998), and Mesoamerica (Joyce 1998) as well as Peru. As Hillman and Mazzi have observed, '[b]ecause corporeal parts have individuated functions, locations, and differentiated relations to the body as a whole, they can become concentrated sites where meaning is invested and . . . stabilized' (1997, xii).

The head is consistently meaningful within a Peruvian context. Trophy heads have been recovered at Paracas and Nazca sites (Verano 1995), and the iconographic records of both coastal and upland cultures depict heads in the contexts of both combat and sacrifice. The representation of disembodied limbs and organs found in Moche art is comparatively rarer. While the removal of the head may function synecdochically (i.e. the part represents the whole), the removal of the genitalia, arms, and legs may serve another purpose. This latter form of bodily fragmentation may represent the disintegration of the individual and his dispersal in lesser form. In contrast, the removal of the head may function to preserve that portion of the body for sacrificial offerings or as a trophy.

Mutilation of a different sort is represented in the depiction of the female sacrifice. Her genitalia are prominently displayed to the viewer. The vultures pecking at her body further emphasize the fleshly composition of the body and the ease with which tissue and membrane may be breached. In their natural habitat, vultures, which, as carrion-eaters, have a natural association with death and the consumption of flesh (Schaffer 1983), consume exposed mucus membranes first; thus, the eyes, lips, and female genitalia are initial targets. The depiction of this behaviour within the context of the female sacrifice may represent a form of violation and pen-

etration of bodily borders in addition to the process of consumption (*sensu* Douglas 1966; 1996). Penetration of the human body is a potent symbol of the violation, both physical and metaphorical, of social borders or boundaries. Violation is depicted in both scenes of sacrifice. In the penetration of the woman by the vultures, the Moche are creating a disempowered body — one that is ripe for the inscription of institutional meanings. In the removal of the sexual organs in the case of the prisoners, the Moche are creating unsexed bodies by violating the intactness of the corporeal. Like haircutting, castration is symbolic disempowerment.²

In both cases, the bodies are depicted as liminal — betwixt and between, violated but not dead, naked, restrained, and upside-down. The bodies of both the prisoners and the female sacrifices have been appropriated by institutions to participate in socially-ordained sacrificial ritual discourse (Frank 1991). Their liminal qualities permit this appropriation. The similarities among the bodies of the prisoners are especially telling in this respect. No individualized features are apparent; one body could be interchanged with another. This suggests that the corporeal body itself was the central feature of the ritual, not the individual within the body. In contrast, the sacrificed women have notably different styles of hair; even the ways in which the bodies are represented are distinct. In some cases the breasts are represented as dotted circles; elsewhere as pendant-shaped. The faces are also depicted differently: they may be circular or trapezoidal; facial marks may or may not be present. Furthermore, the women are individualized by being represented singly, unlike the prisoners, who are represented in groups. The sacrificed woman is never represented with other women. She is only found in the upper register of the Burial Theme. Based on this set of iconographic features, I would tentatively suggest that *who* was being sacrificed was a central feature in the sacrifice of the woman, whereas in the prisoner sacrifice, class or group (that of defeated combatants) was the pertinent variable.

Unlike the prisoners, the women are individuals who may have played a specific role in Moche ritual. Perhaps they embodied a Moche divinity or represented a specific mythic figure. Some women in Moche society held prominent positions, as clearly evidenced by burial evidence, such as that of the 'priestess,' who was interred in a rich tomb at San José de Moro (Donnan & Castillo 1994). I am not suggesting that the women in the representations are priestesses (although they may be). Rather, I believe that the sacrificed woman represents a ritual

participant who engaged in ritual practice through bodily sacrifice. She embodies an *individual social role* that was recognized and, apparently, reproduced.

While the prisoner's body can be likened to Foucault's disciplined, anonymous body upon which institutions inscribe meaning, the female sacrifice is fulfilling a specific, predetermined role in sacrificial ritual. Her sacrifice represents the intersection of an individual with the institutional requirements of the social body. In contrast, the individuality of the prisoners is of no consequence iconographically. All individual characters are eliminated in favour of an anonymous group identity. Both of these examples conform to Meskell's assertion (1999) that sex is only one dimension of subjectivity, and so may, or may not have been the organizing principle in prehistoric social organization and representation. Clearly, in the case presented here, the individualizing characteristics of the woman seem at least as significant as the fact that she is female, just as the anonymous qualities of the prisoners and their maleness seem to be of equal import. Sex, then, is not the central variable, but rather is one of a constellation of features that comprise the discursively-constructed body.

This inference is supported by the archaeological evidence. The sacrificed woman is depicted on fewer than ten highly detailed, fine-line painted vessels. She is always shown as part of a complex scene of sacrifice and burial. In contrast, the prisoners are depicted far more frequently, in both painted and modelled form, and in several different representational contexts. They are shown being sacrificed, carrying sedan chairs or pole-transport, seated with crossed legs, or attended by feline captors (Donnan 1978, 160–69; Moser 1974). Elsewhere (Fig. 3), prisoners are juxtaposed with scenes of combat. In contrast to the depiction of prisoners, the combatants are shown clothed, often with distinctive facial or body markings (Alva & Donnan 1993). In Moche representational vocabulary, the prisoners are being shown *before* and *after*. In the process of becoming prisoners, their bodies are depersonalized, with distinctive markers of status or role removed.³

Both suites of characteristics — individualized female identity and anonymous male group membership — function within the ritual context of sacrifice. Both classes of sacrificial victim function as liminal entities within a ritual space between the social body and the supernatural world. We may interpret the sacrifice of prisoners not only as a performance by the social body, but also as an offering *on behalf* of the body politic. The death of the sacrificial victim serves to renew the social body as the

ultimate offering (Valeri 1985, 4). In the case of the prisoners, individual identity is irrelevant to the performance of the sacrifice. Defeated warriors represent an entire class, devoid of internal differentiation (but see note 2); thus, the bodies of the prisoners are anonymous, without meaning beyond their group identification. In contrast, the body of the woman, as a ritual sacrifice, is more efficacious because she embodied an identified social role — that of the woman consumed by birds.

In sum, what I believe was significant for the Moche was not so much the sex of the sacrificial offering, but the intersection of the sexed body with the institutional discourse of sacrificial ritual. The social role of the woman is what mattered, in contrast to the anonymity of the male prisoner. While the woman's body is actively engaged in the sacrifice at the level of the individual, the prisoners' personal identities are not significant factors. The prisoner is one of many, a group member. The woman is not; she is a singular entity. Thus it is the intersection of two forms of social identity — sex and individuality/group membership — that structures the representation of the body in these examples of Moche iconography.

Conclusions

I have presented a brief overview of how the body has been conceptualized by recent social theorists, including Foucault, Douglas and Turner. For prehistorians, for whom the bodies of the dead already form an extraordinary data base, examining the body itself as socially constituted requires only the re-orientation of research questions. As it is already commonly acknowledged that the burial treatment of an individual is largely a product of the social body, rather than strictly a reflection of the deceased individual's interests (Brown 1995), it should hence be possible to incorporate insights on archaeological bodies into the discipline at a more theoretical level. I have chosen to present an analysis of bodies in Moche iconography. In the contrasting treatment of the anonymous bodies of male prisoners and the individualized female body sacrifice provided an arena for institutional discourse. The diverse approaches to the body provided by social theory promise to expand our understanding of the prehistoric body to include not only the actions of mortuary participants in their treatment of the deceased, but also the extent to which the living body, the sacrificed body, and the corporeal body were constituted, engaged, and disciplined in the past.

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Notes

1. A notable exception to this general rule is the work of Mesoamericanists such as Joyce (1998) and Lesure (1997; 1999).
2. Stone (1988, 79) has noted a similar overlap in the representations of women and captives in Classic Maya art.
3. Figure 2 depicts some prisoners being carried in litters by other prisoners. While this may represent status differentiation, an alternative reading of the image suggests that a status reversal is represented. This image may represent a paradoxical juxtaposition in which an incongruous situation produces a humorous reaction from the observers while at the same time humiliating the object of the 'joke'. Bergh (1993) has interpreted Moche phallic vessels as a form of visual humor based on incongruities in representation. See also Apte (1985, 156–7), who discusses contrary behaviour and status inversion as components of ritual.

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