Artistic themes depicted on domestic artifacts are reflective of larger social and cultural ideologies and provide us with a valuable window into everyday social dynamics (Bawden 1982; Gero 2001). Although representations of women are rare in Moche elite-sponsored art, they are abundant in household artifacts throughout all time periods and sites in the Moche region. Feminine identities are sensitive to cultural change and reflect sociopolitical institutions that shape the status of women and the meaning of gender within a particular society (Costin 1996, 1998; Hastorf 1991; Tringham 1991, 1994). Gender is created in the household, both directly by observing social roles, divisions of labor, and familial interactions and indirectly by being exposed to cultural symbols embedded in household items (Ashmore and Wilk 1988; Blanton 1994; Deetz 1982; Hastorf 1991; Hendon 1996, 1997, 2009; Wilk and Netting 1984; Wilk and Rathje 1982). In this way, domestic artifacts provide an important window for understanding household-state relations because they take on ideologies and symbolism disseminated by the state, while at the same time, states must build on the ideas and practices of households to maintain their legitimacy (DeMarrais et al. 1996; Halperin 2014; Shimada 1994). Households can also challenge state ideologies by engaging with alternative representations and practices to satisfy domestic needs not addressed by the state (Halperin 2014). Different activities depicted on male and female figurative artifacts reflect ideologies related to public and private gender roles. The ubiquity and quantity of female figurines in domestic contexts at Moche settlements indicate their consumption as
Gender-infused objects reflecting the concerns of the lower-class majority as they went about their daily lives.

In this chapter, I present my analysis of 645 figurines and 152 figurative whistles, including artifacts excavated from the ancient settlements of Pampa Grande, Huacas de Moche, and San José de Moro, coupled with collections from the Museo Larco and the UCLA Moche Archive. I also incorporate data from Alexandra Morgan’s (2009) analysis of Moche figurines from numerous museum and private collections from around the world. I combine a contextual analysis of excavated artifacts with an iconographic comparison of key visual elements and an ethnographic investigation of female shamanism in South America to construct a holistic viewpoint of the role these objects played in the daily lives of ancient Moche people.

Contextual analysis of ritual artifacts such as figurines can shed light on their use as personal or public ritual objects (Flannery 1976). The figurines and whistles excavated from household contexts at Pampa Grande and Huacas de Moche provide especially important insights into gender ideologies and domestic concerns not expressed in state-sponsored media. Moche figurines almost always depict females as indicated by dress, hairstyle, or genitalia, whereas figurative whistles typically depict male warriors, musicians, and supernatural beings (figure 5.1). Female figurines are found with great frequency in lower- and middle-class households and are absent from public and religious buildings, suggesting they were used in personal household rituals (Hubert 2010; Johnson 2010; Limoges 1999; Ringberg 2008). Although whistles are also found in household contexts, the fact that they depict state-sponsored icons and were used to play music suggests that they were stored in houses but used in communal rituals related to calendric ceremonies or rites of solidarity. Female figurines are found in Moche households of all time periods; however, whistles disappear from domestic contexts during the Late Moche Period (AD 600–900). This change corresponds with major iconographic shifts in the region, including the disappearance of many of the icons commonly found on whistles (McClelland 1990). Figurines continue to be common domestic objects in later periods, and the Labretted Lady found on figurines at Pampa Grande (figure 5.2) continues to be an important female religious figure in the subsequent Lambayeque culture (Cordy-Collins 2001; Johnson 2010).

**FIGURINES, IDENTITY, AND MATERIALITY**

Analysis and comparison of household figurative artifacts illuminate the nature of gender identities within the urban context of Moche cities. Urban environments form and are formed by the individuals who inhabit their space, meaning that households reflect social ideologies while at the same time constructing them (Deetz 1982; Hendon 2009; Janusek 2004; Smith 2003). City inhabitants share
Figure 5.1. Left: female figurine; right: male whistle. Artifacts from the Huacas de Moche; author photos.

Figure 5.2. Map of the Moche region showing archaeological sites discussed in this chapter.
a common urban ethos, physical surroundings, sense of culture, general religious knowledge, and participation in city-wide festivals and rites (Smith 2003). At the individual, family, and community levels, however, people have different social and economic statuses, access to state religion, ethnic affiliation, gender roles, specializations or occupations, and household organization. These identities are both actively and unconsciously expressed in material culture. The urban environment and, more specifically, the domestic contexts within them provide a rich opportunity to understand the construction of social identity in relation to others within a shared and circumscribed space (Janusek 2004).

As objects that linked home to society, figurines highlight an important dialectic between subject and object. Their creation, use, and discard all reflect vital aspects of their significance in Moche society and the role they played in constructing human experience. Figurative representations on household objects allow us to contextualize social practices according to the groups that were producing and consuming them (Hendon et al. 2013). Figurines were part of a dynamic system of belief, ritual, and performance integrated into the daily experiences of household inhabitants (Halperin 2014). They represent past agency and reflect socially meaningful practices, actions, and interactions at a very personal level (Hendon 1996).

Figurines have a pervasive presence in Moche domestic assemblages and likely played an important role in the construction of female identities and interactions in relation both to other women and to Moche society more broadly. Figurines have been interpreted as effigies, votives, or amulets used by women for household and fertility-related ceremonies (Marcus 2000). They thus represent powerful symbols of female rituals, ideologies, and social roles within Moche society. Figurines were likely used during individualistic or shamanistic rites carried out within the household related to curing illness, ancestor veneration, and rites of passage, such as menarche, pregnancy, and childbirth (Zeidler 2000). Female shamans involved in these ceremonies were likely regarded as bearers of knowledge and healing powers not available to men (Chavez Hualpa 2000). As physical representations of female animism, figurines shaped private, gender-specific activities oriented toward ritual healing. These symbols would have constructed cultural notions of femininity from an early age and had important implications for Moche society as a whole.

**FEMALE SHAMANISM ON THE NORTH COAST OF PERU**

Numerous Spanish accounts from the seventeenth century mention the presence of high-status female leaders, known as *Capullanas*, on the north coast of Peru (Cruz Villegas 1982). This practice can be traced back at least to the Late Intermediate Period (AD 1000–1400) when females ruled provinces while men went off to battle
Thirty-two Capullanas have been documented in the Piura region between AD 1500 and 1781, and many more are known to have existed in the Lambayeque region as well. There are a few significant parallels between the powerful females of the Colonial Period and the females depicted on figurines during the Prehispanic periods. Pedro Pizarro (1571) noted that many of the Capullanas had pierced lips near their chin (labret piercing), and they filled the holes with gold and silver jewelry. Labret piercings were first depicted in Moche iconography at several northern settlements such as Pampa Grande and San José de Moro and continued to be symbols of high female status in the subsequent Lambayeque culture (Cordy-Collins 2001). In addition, Capullanas often wore their hair loose on their shoulders without braids, which distinguished them from lower-status women (Fernández Villegas 1989). Several of the female icons depicted on Moche figurines also wear their hair loose, while simple female figurines are often depicted with head coverings or braids.

The themes present on Moche figurines reference female concerns—such as fertility, childbirth, and childrearing—and include elements from religious ceremonies such as the Presentation Theme and Coca Chewing Ceremony. This suggests that they were used (at least in part) as ritual items associated with shamans and midwives. Numerous modern and Prehispanic ethnographic accounts have documented the role of female shamans and curers on the north coast of Peru and offer us glimpses into cultural practices that can be traced back to Chimú and possibly even Moche time periods. In the modern-day Moche village community located near the ancient ruins of Huacas de Moche, John Gillin (1945) observed the practice of a prominent female shaman who specialized in curandismo. Gillin found two classes of curanderas: shamans who were more esoteric and focused on illnesses of the body and mind, and midwives who focused more narrowly on the health of pregnant women and children. The female shamans typically handled specialized (culture-bound) illnesses such as El Susto (when a person suffers from constant fear because the soul has left the body), La Admiración (intense emotion stemming from viewing a deformed person), and El Ojeo (the bad energy that results from being envied by someone else; i.e., the evil eye). Midwives assisted with childbirths and tended to women’s prepartum and postpartum needs (Chavez 2000; Gillin 1945).

Fabiola Chavez Hualpa (2000) conducted a more recent and in-depth ethnographic study of curanderas in the provinces of Ayabaca and Huancabamba in the Department of Piura. She found that midwives do more than help with childbirth; they cover the entire vital reproductive cycle from menarche to menopause. The moon, a powerful feminine symbol and deity among the Moche, continues to play an important role today in the shamanic practices related to menstruation, conception, pregnancy, and childbirth—with different lunar phases relating to beneficial
or ominous prognostications for women and their children (Chavez Hualpa 2000, 193, 207). Midwives are charged with helping women with healthy lactation, and they perform rituals to help cure “bad,” “cold,” or “sleepy” milk (Chavez Hualpa 2000, 212–214). They also attend to infants in the first years of life to help those who “cry in the womb” or those born with “delicate shadows” (Chavez Hualpa 2000, 214). Chavez Hualpa found that the main difference between midwives and shamans was their use of supernatural entities. The midwives cured illnesses and culture-bound syndromes that commonly afflicted women, while shamans were considered to be “master healers” who offered more elaborate therapies and directly called upon the supernatural world for help with their healing (Chavez Hualpa 2000).

This distinction between midwives and shamans helps us understand the differences between simple and elaborate figurines found at ancient Moche sites. The simple figurines depict connections with midwifery such as genitalia and infants and emphasize notions of femininity, procreation, and childrearing. In contrast, the elaborate figurines with identifiable individuals holding prescribed items contain links to supernatural elements and religious ceremonies. These individuals may have called upon supernatural forces during shamanic rituals related to metaphysical concerns affecting women and their particular needs.

Another connection between modern shamanic practices and Moche artifacts is with the use of pendants as ritual talismans. Chavez Hualpa (2000) found that the most widespread syndrome among women was La Envidia, when a pregnant woman becomes the victim of envy by a sterile woman. This can result in suffering during childbirth, disease or deformity in the child, or death of the mother. Women employed a variety of talismans to protect themselves and their babies but most commonly used a charmed pendant in the shape of a cross around their neck (Chavez Hualpa 2000, 182). Excavations in the domestic sectors of Pampa Grande and Huacas de Moche revealed significant quantities of miniature figurines with holes at the top so they could be suspended on cords and presumably worn as necklaces. Since Moche figurines show strong connections to notions of fertility and childbirth, they may have served a similar purpose as protective charms for expecting mothers. The continuity of practices between the Prehispanic and modern time periods suggests a long-standing tradition that has been altered by social and religious changes brought about by the introduction of Christianity in the sixteenth century (e.g., the use of crosses instead of figures).

FIGURES IN MOCHE ART
Female figurines and pendants are ubiquitous in Moche households across the North Coast and are typically encountered broken in trash deposits and hearths.
The fact that they are so numerous and fragmentary suggests that they were used often and may have been deliberately broken as part of particular domestic rituals or shamanic interventions (Limoges 1999). Simple female figures are depicted without detailed headdresses or clothing and can be found in three poses: with their hands on their torsos, holding a baby, or playing a drum (figure 5.3). Fifty percent of the figurines analyzed indicated sex through visible genitalia, while another 20 percent indicated feminine gender through hairstyle, dress, or activity. In addition to the generic female figurines, three prominent female icons were identified during my analysis. Two have been previously identified and investigated: the Priestess and the Labretted Lady (Castillo Butters 2005; Castillo Butters and Rengifo 2008; Cordy-Collins 2001). The third icon is the Feline Headdress Female, for whom there is no precedent. She is typically depicted with a double-chamber rattle and is associated with coca chewing (table 5.1).

In contrast to female depictions on figurines, males are most commonly depicted on decorative whistles and reflect a distinct masculine identity embedded in warrior-related themes (table 5.2). Whistles are common in households at Huacas de Moche (Limoges 1999; Uceda Castillo and Armas 1998) and hinterland sites, such as Ciudad de Dios (Ringberg 2008). They depict scenes typical of state-sponsored art related to public religion and rituals. Many of the whistle figures are musicians playing flutes and trumpets, similar to fineline representations of ceremonial processions (figure 5.4). This similarity suggests that they were used during public events and allowed nonelites to actively take part in ceremonies, thereby fostering a sense of inclusive identity for participants. Several supernatural beings are
### Table 5.1. Counts of figurine types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Hands on Torso</th>
<th>Holding Baby</th>
<th>Playing Drum</th>
<th>Labretted Lady</th>
<th>Feline Headdress</th>
<th>Priestess</th>
<th>Pendants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moche Archive</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museo Larco</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huacas de Moche</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pampa Grande</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San José de Moro</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>472</strong></td>
<td><strong>42</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>645</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morgan (2009)</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5.2. Counts of whistle types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Supernatural</th>
<th>Warrior</th>
<th>Musician</th>
<th>Figure with Bag and Rope</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moche Archive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museo Larco</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huacas de Moche</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pampa Grande</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San José de Moro</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>36</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>152</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
also represented on whistles, including the Strombus Monster, the Bird Priest, the Owl Deity, and Ai Aipec (Warrior/Sun Priest) (figure 5.5). The depiction of these popular and identifiable icons further supports the interpretation of whistles as accoutrements for use in public communitywide rituals and festivals. The Priestess
was the only female depicted on whistles, and she is typically shown wearing high-status regalia and bearing symbols of the Presentation Theme. This theme in Moche fineline art depicts the culminating ceremony of the Warrior Narrative, where the blood of sacrificed prisoners is presented to Ai Aipe (Donnan 1976). It is possible that ceremonies such as these were performed in visible spaces, where community members could attend and watch while at the same time participating with whistles, rattles, drums, and other musical instruments.

The Priestess
The Priestess is the best-known female figure in Moche art (Castillo Butters 2005; Donnan and Castillo Butters 1992, 1994; Hocquenghem and Lyon 1980), and figurines depicting her iconic features have been found in museum collections and limited archaeological contexts. The Priestess is one of the few females with a prominent role in Moche public rituals. She is a key figure in the Presentation Theme, where she presents a disc and a goblet (presumably of blood) to Ai Aipe at the culmination of a series of ritual bloodlettings and sacrifices involving captured prisoners (Bourget 2001a, 2001b; Donnan 1978). She is also closely related to the moon and is often depicted with lunar imagery or riding in a crescent moon-shaped boat (McClelland 1990). The moon has a deep history in the Andes of being associated with menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth and may indicate that the Priestess also served as an important deity related to the realm of women and reproduction.

In figurine form, she is depicted with or without a plumed headdress but always identified by two long braids, a goblet, and a large disc (figure 5.6). She is often shown with a snarling fanged mouth, suggesting that her role in Moche ritual involved transformation to a supernatural state. Most examples of the Priestess come from museum collections, but figurines have been found archaeologically in the elite residential sector at Galindo (Lockard 2005), in a grave on the north side of Huaca de la Luna (Morgan 2009), and above the chamber tomb of a Priestess burial at San José de Moro (Saldaña 2014).

Although figurines are most common in household contexts, fourteen figurines were included as burial offerings in Late Moche Period graves at San José de Moro. Of the skeletons whose sex and age could be determined, nine were child or infant graves, while four were adult females (figure 5.7). We have long suspected that figurines were important ritual items related to the female life cycle, but the discovery of figurines exclusively in female and child graves shows a strong connection between figurines and religious beliefs related to female-child life cycles and death. The inclusion of figurines in individual graves suggests that they were ritual items imbued with supernatural power specific to a particular person. Perhaps they were
Figure 5.6. Priestess figurines. Left: with plumes; right: without plumes. Courtesy, Museo Larco, Lima—Perú, ML013881, ML013933

Figure 5.7. Female grave and figurine from San José de Moro. Courtesy, Archive Programa Arqueológico San José de Moro
meant to protect the individual beyond the grave or honor the specific way they died, such as during childbirth or due to postnatal issues or illnesses.

The Labretted Lady

The Labretted Lady was an important icon to the inhabitants of the northern Moche region, as evidenced by the large number of representations found on figurines in households and mortuary contexts. The conspicuous display of key identifiable features, such as the heart-shaped head, beaded jewelry, and labret piercing, points to the emergence of a new feminine cultural icon during the Late Moche Period that may have replaced earlier icons as the predominant figure associated with feminine shamanism (figure 5.8). The Labretted Lady is often depicted playing a large hand-held drum, which is a continuation of an earlier theme portrayed on non-labretted figurines. It is significant that men in Moche art are always shown playing flutes and trumpets, which provides an interesting juxtaposition to our current gender ideologies, where percussion is considered masculine and wind instruments are often associated with femininity (Donna Nash, personal communication, 2014). Female drummers continue to be prominent figures in the Lambayeque and Wari cultures and are often depicted in state-sponsored media such as fineware pottery and textiles (Cordy-Collins 2001; Rowe 1979).
The Labretted Lady has been found in mortuary contexts at San José de Moro (Cordy-Collins 2001), Cerro Campana (Ubbelohde-Doering 1966), and Úcupe (Bourget 2007), as well as in domestic contexts at Huaca Colorada (Swenson and Warner 2012). The most widespread documented use, however, comes from Pampa Grande, where these figurines were ubiquitously found in household contexts on the Southern Pediment (Johnson 2010). The fact that the Labretted Lady was only depicted on figurines at Pampa Grande and is absent from all state-produced art suggests that she was a cult icon used by nonelite inhabitants of the city, outside the realm of state-created and state-mandated religion. This is reinforced by the recovery of mold fragments for the production of Labretted Lady figurines in the middle-class domestic complexes at Pampa Grande, indicating that they were produced, distributed, and used by inhabitants of the Southern Pediment independent of the governing infrastructure (figure 5.9) (Johnson 2010).

At Pampa Grande, figurines were most often found in general-purpose living rooms, indicating that they were used alongside or in conjunction with other domestic activities (figure 5.10). The figurines were also found in the same contexts as spindle whorls and needles. Since weaving is typically associated with females in Moche iconography (Arsenault 1991) and in burials (Donnan and McClelland...
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1997), this association suggests that they were used by women and were important cultural icons linked to the domestic sphere and specific feminine interests. In later periods, the role of the Labretted Lady shifted to a more prominent position in the iconography of the Lambayeque (Sicán) culture, signifying a further elevation in status for this iconic figure during the Late Intermediate Period (Cordy-Collins 2001). In addition, the labret jewelry and loose hair continued to be a symbol of powerful female identity and were used to signal high status and rulership by Capullanas during the late Prehispanic and Colonial time periods (Fernández Villegas 1989; Pizarro 1571).

The pervasiveness of Labretted Lady figurines at Pampa Grande provides evidence for independent specialized production of nonutilitarian items with important cultural messages attached to them (Costin 1996, 1998). Figurines were used and produced in household settings and reflect the desires and concerns of the producers, not the state superstructure. The conspicuous display of key identifiable features, such as the heart-shaped head, beaded jewelry, and labret piercing, points to the emergence of a feminine cultural icon that played an important role in gender identities and domestic ritual (Johnson 2010). These items were produced and

**Figure 5.10.** Living room with figurine fragments and spindle whorls; author photos
distributed at the household level and were likely used for personal rituals related to the female life cycle. They may have been used by midwives attending to women and infants in their homes or as part of individualistic rites performed by the women themselves in response to specific needs, wants, or fears.

The Feline Headdress Female

During my analysis, I came across a previously uninvestigated female icon with a set of identifiable features depicted on household figurines. This female is found depicted on both figurines and figurative stirrup-spout bottles and is symbolically linked to rituals related to childbirth and coca chewing. The fact that this icon is found in everyday domestic contexts and is associated with ritual childbirth vessels suggests a possible ritual institution in Moche society related to female concerns. The figure has several key identifiable features, most notably a headdress consisting of a horizontal band with a feline head on the front. Variants of the headdress include multiple feline heads or feline paws on each side of the band (figure 5.11). Felines are one of the most common animals invoked in Amerindian rituals and often communicate with shamans (Alva 2000; Stone 2011). They also often merge with humans during trances or hallucinogenic experiences brought about by the use of medicinal plants such as coca. In addition, modern-day curanderas employ jungle animals like the puma to cure and prevent La Llacama, or postpartum depression and illness (Chavez Hualpa 2000). Pumas are considered strong animals charged with mythological power, and eating the meat of the puma will infuse the woman with its power. Since the meat is scarce, curanderas often keep the bones of pumas for use in cooking or bathing (Chavez Hualpa 2000, 211).

The Feline Headdress Female also typically carries a double-chamber rattle with a rope and less frequently is depicted holding a lime container and stick (figure 5.11). Both the feline headdress and the lime container are also associated with male and female individuals in figurative representations on stirrup-spout bottles found at the Museo Larco. The females are shown with long dresses and loose hair, holding a lime container in one hand and a rattle in the other. Males are shown with short tunics, holding lime containers or gourds and a variety of different types of rattles. In addition, feline heads and paws and lime containers are common symbols in the Coca Chewing Ceremony in Moche fineline art; however, to date, no female figures have been identified in depictions of that particular ceremony. Coca was one of the most sacred plants in ancient South America and was used by curers for healing purposes and by shamans to enter trances and transfigure into felines (Alva 2000). Shamans have the power to converse with or take on the attributes of jaguars
or pumas, which are considered to be the most powerful animals on the continent and a general symbol of divinity.

At the sites of Huacas de Moche and Cerro Mayal, several figurines depicting the Feline Headdress Female were uncovered archaeologically in the ceramic workshops and general household contexts (Jackson 2008; Uceda Castillo and Armas 1998). A figurine depicting the feline headdress was also discovered in a grave at the western foot of Huaca de la Luna as part of the Uhle excavations (Morgan 2009). In addition, this grave contained two figurines of females holding babies and two figurines of seated individuals holding lime containers and sticks. This association further suggests that the Feline Headdress Female was connected with both childbirth and coca-chewing rituals.

In the Urban Zone at the Huacas de Moche, figurines with feline headdresses have been discovered in several general household contexts. In addition, the Feline Headdress Female was found in significant quantities in the ceramic production workshop associated with Architectural Complex 35 (figure 5.12). This building was a mixed-use structure that served both domestic and production purposes. It was likely inhabited by an extended family that shared production responsibilities for a variety of ceramic objects, including figurines. This workshop is believed to have been part of a much larger “potters’ barrio complex” that may have included several workshops (Uceda Castillo and Armas 1997; 1998, 107). The workshop was composed of nine main rooms, including one to mix clay with water in large storage vessels, one to form the ceramics using molds, one for drying completed forms,
and one for elaborating the pottery with applications. Over 1,000 mold fragments were uncovered for making various vessel types, such as figurines, trumpets, stirrup-spout bottles, face-neck jars, and applications. In addition to the ceramic forms just mentioned, the workshop produced whistles, ocarinas, pendants, spindle whorls, jars, and rattles. Two burials discovered in the complex revealed individuals with professional traumas related to pottery production evident on their bones and large amounts of high-quality items in their graves. This suggests that the potters of the Huacas de Moche were part of the middle class who also “had some control over the Moche ideological and cosmological realm through pottery production” (Uceda Castillo and Armas 1998, 107).
FIGURINES, SEX, AND CHILDBIRTH

At the site of Cerro Mayal in the neighboring Chicama Valley, the double-chamber rattle and rope held by the Feline Headdress Female has been found associated with birthing bowls in the ceramic workshop (figure 5.13) (Jackson 2008). Two mold fragments for the production of birthing bowls contained incised drawings of rattles on the exterior. Margaret A. Jackson suggests that the rattle is conceptually linked to giving birth either through the umbilical tail of the rope or through the shamanistic connection to fertility rituals. She goes on to identify the rattle image as a “visual vocabulary unit” used to symbolize an abstract cultural reference to the act of childbirth or rituals related to pregnancy and childbirth (Jackson 2008, 103). This indirect link between the Feline Headdress Female and birth rituals provides yet another link between the use of figurines in rites related to fertility and childbirth. The Feline Headdress Female may have even served as a prominent religious specialist (or may represent a class of religious specialists) attending to female-centric concerns, practices, and medical procedures. Other carvings on the outside of figurine molds provide us with important associations not intrinsically visible.

**Figure 5.13.** Birthing bowl. Courtesy, Museo Larco, Lima—Perú ML004355
in the symbolism of the objects. The most common carving found associated with figurines is female genitalia (sometimes with male genitalia in tandem), indicating that figurines were symbolically associated with sex and procreation (figure 5.14).

The association of the rattle and rope with childbirth and the figurines with procreation paints a dynamic picture of the roles these objects played in Moche daily life. They were simple representations with wide-reaching social implications. They reflect the lack of control Moche women must have felt over the reproductive process and the incorporation of tamable supernatural forces into the realm of feminine concerns and ideals. At the same time, they reflect the strength and power females had as the source of new life and the control female icons like the Feline Headdress Female had over a dangerous and mysterious realm.

**CHANGING FEMININE IDENTITIES IN THE LATE MOCHE PERIOD**

Moche figurines were one of the main avenues for the artistic expression of feminine identity and reflect female prerogatives, ideologies, and concerns. The Late
Moche Period marks an important transition in gender relations, with high-ranking female religious figures becoming more prominent in Moche art and visual culture. This can be seen in the disappearance of male figures in domestic contexts and the elevated importance of female icons such as the Priestess and the Labretted Lady. This period also marks the elevation of female status on the north coast of Peru as a whole, which can be seen in the increasing frequency of female depictions on ceramics (McClelland et al. 2007), the shift to female sacrificial victims in ritual contexts (Swenson 2012; Swenson and Warner 2012), and the emergence of prominent female dynasties such as the Priestess of San José de Moro (Castillo Butters 2005; Castillo Butters and Rengifo 2008) and the Labretted Lady of Pampa Grande (Cordy-Collins 2001; Johnson 2010).

Figurines were distributed locally in Moche cities and addressed the needs and desires of the popular class. Figurines allowed women to engage in activities and rituals pertinent to their unique concerns that were not addressed in the more prominent ceremonies carried out at the temples (Johnson 2010). Monumental media reflects the cultural ideals of the ruling minority and serves to legitimize the political and social ideologies essential to the maintenance of power. In contrast, household objects reflect gender and domestic ideologies of the lower- and middle-class majority, highlighting choices and concerns experienced as part of everyday life. The ubiquity of figurine fragments in Moche households suggests that these items were used frequently and may have even been deliberately broken as part of the rituals in which they were used (Johnson 2010; Limoges 1999; Ringberg 2008). They were likely used as talismans for protection from supernatural forces believed to be harmful to women who were trying to become pregnant, were currently with child, or had recently given birth. In addition, the identifiable female icons may have represented an institution of female shamans with special knowledge and abilities beyond those of traditional midwives. The iconic figurines likely had greater ritual significance and may have been used in limited, perhaps more specialized rituals. These ancient practices may have been similar to the ones carried out by modern-day female shamans who specialize in the treatment of culture-bound illnesses resulting from fears of supernatural forces.

CONCLUSION

Females are virtually absent from public art, but their absence does not necessarily indicate a lack of importance in Moche society. Moche women appropriated elements of the state religion into their own ritual realm, ones that were relevant to their personal daily experiences. In addition, the production of Labretted Lady figurines in the middle-class households of Pampa Grande suggests that the residents
engaged in the production of artifacts with important ritual significance outside the purview of state-sponsored workshops. Women developed, produced, and disseminated cult religious objects for use in private, personalized rituals related to daily feminine experiences and needs.

Although Moche society valued masculinity and ferocity, females would have been honored as the givers of life and the source of new warriors. It is no surprise, then, that figurines served as important symbols of fertility, conception, and midwifery linked to the very notion of femininity in Moche society. The Feline Headdress Female and the Labretted Lady were powerful women who were revered for their knowledge and shamanic abilities in a realm typically fraught with mystery and fear. The social messages embedded in these household objects emphasize the female power to give and protect life, reinforcing the strength and significance of female religious specialists. In a world where women were mostly excluded from prominent rituals and events, figurines express important messages with a wide distribution and daily social penetrance. These subtle messages would have affected the beliefs and practices of all community members, reaffirming social roles and gender ideologies while also serving as a vehicle for long-term changes in both female identities and social roles.

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