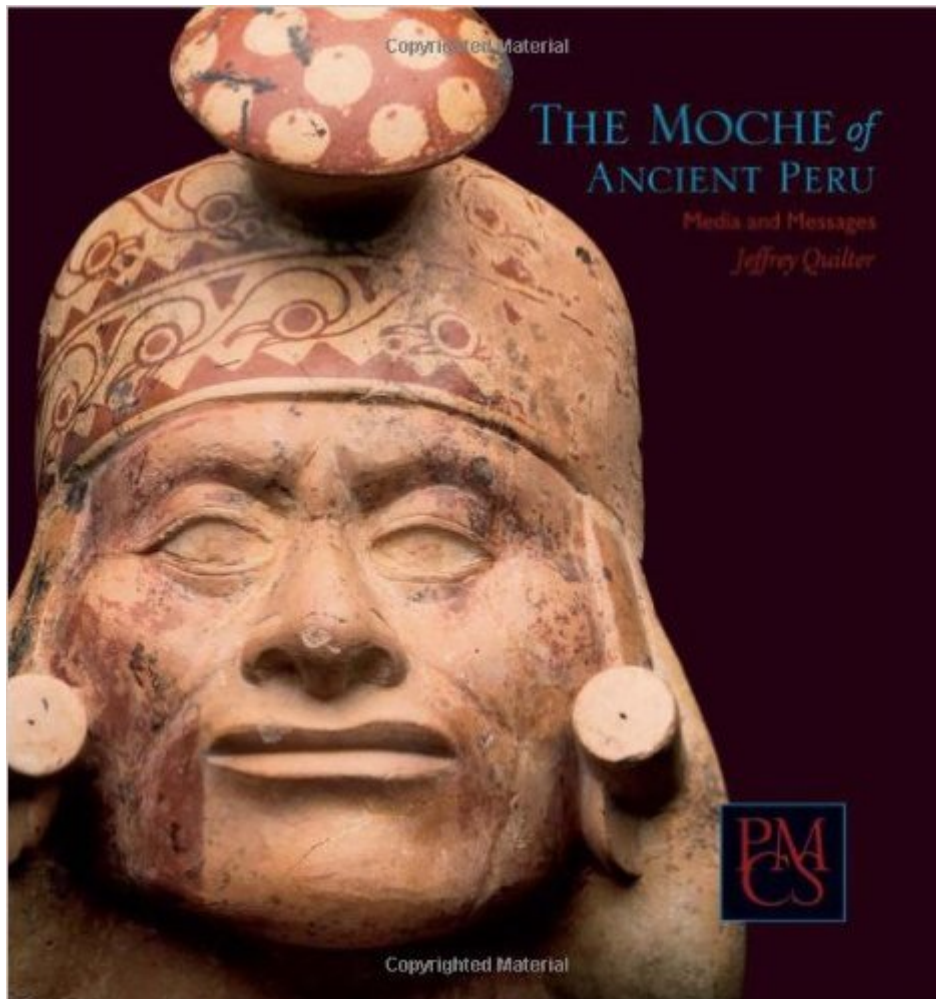


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The Moche Of Ancient Peru: Media And Messages (Peabody Museum Collections Series)



Synopsis

Peru's ancient Moche culture is represented in a magnificent collection of artifacts at Harvard's Peabody Museum. In this richly illustrated volume, Jeffrey Quilter presents a fascinating introduction to this intriguing culture and explores current thinking about Moche politics, history, society, and religion. Quilter utilizes the Peabody's collection as a means to investigate how the Moche used various media, particularly ceramics, to convey messages about their lives and beliefs. His presentation provides a critical examination and rethinking of many of the commonly held interpretations of Moche artifacts and their imagery, raising important issues of art production and its role in ancient and modern societies. The most up-to-date monograph available on the Moche and the first extensive discussion of the Peabody Museum's collection of Moche ceramics—this volume provides an introduction for the general reader and contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions. Quilter's fresh reading of Moche visual imagery raises new questions about the art and culture of ancient Peru.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Archaeologist Jeffrey Quilter provides a thoughtful high level introduction to the study of Moche, an extinct pre-Inca civilization located on the west coast of northern Peru. The book grows from an exhibition at Harvard University's Peabody Museum in Boston between 2005 and 2008 for which the author served as curator. Although only a small subset of Moche items held by the Museum

appears in this book, it contains many delightful color plates photographed by Mark Craig. The selection favors famous ceramics with figurine subcomponents. Among them are the Bird Faced Woman Healer; the Funeral Bundle tableau; and the "Wrinkle Face" character supported by two helpers. The strikingly enigmatic frontispiece photo demonstrates Moche mastery of ceramic portraiture. The figurines it depicts seem like a cross between a board of directors, a rogues' gallery, and a pantheon of deities. Julio C. Tello, the aboriginal Peruvian polymath, "directed" several of these ceramics to the Museum after he graduated from Harvard in the early years of the twentieth century *The Life and Writings of Julio C. Tello: America's First Indigenous Archaeologist*. An overview of the cultural ecology of ancient Andean societies incorporates a gentle introduction to the literature of Peruvian archaeology. One conclusion is that Moche were probably not an imperial conquest state, as first believed. Instead, Moche represents several closely related, highly stratified societies each occupying a distinct river valley, pursuing their own spin on common cultural concerns, and facing common environmental challenges.

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