



## Bound Captive Effigy Jar

### Date

ca. 100-700

### Medium

Redware

### Description

Redware Moche face-neck jar depicting a bound captive. Figure has rope around neck, legs tied together above ankles, and hands bound above the wrists behind the back. Vessel is in poor condition, broken and restored but still not complete, with pieces missing. Donnan believes that vessels such as this one represent one element or scene from the "presentation theme," a story of warfare and sacrifice which dominated Moche art and society.

Note that the captive's hands are bound behind his back.

\_\_\_\_\_ This redware Moche face-neck human effigy jar is in the shape of a bound captive. The naked figure has a rope around his neck, legs tied together above the ankles, and hands bound above the wrists behind his back. The captive warrior's nakedness is symbolic of his degradation. Christopher Donnan believes that vessels such as this one represent one element or scene from the "presentation theme," (also known as the sacrifice theme) a story of warfare and sacrifice which dominated Moche art and society. Note that the captive's hands are bound behind his back. It has been argued that many of these vessels are recognizable portraits of a single powerful ruler who rose to prominence but who was sacrificed after losing some kind of battle or contest when he was middle-aged. Moche Vessel Function-Pottery Tells A Story Moche pottery depicts a series of recurrent themes, and although each individual vessel may depict only one character, they may have served as mnemonic devices somewhat analogous to that of stained glass windows in a Christian church, where often only a single recognizable character from a familiar story is represented, with the expectation that the viewer will fill in the rest of the story from memory. When a viewer in our culture sees an image of Darth Vader, the Star Wars story will come to mind. In the same way, it appears that viewing specific images from the Moche "presentation theme" or warrior saga (also known as the sacrifice theme) may have reminded viewers of a specific story whose details are depicted (rarely) as a whole or (more usually) only in part on Moche pottery and textiles. Bottles of either the stirrup-spout type, straight-spout type, or double-spout-and-bridge type may have been used to carry and serve liquids, since the narrow-necked bottle shape would have reduced losses from accidental spills and evaporation. Although water is vital in desert environments such as those found in many parts of the Andes, alcoholic beverages such as beer are universally popular. Recent analyses of residues from Peruvian bottles and jars suggest that these vessels were used to serve corn (maize) beer or

chicha. Chicha was both an everyday beverage, made in households for family consumption, and an essential element in ritual and social interactions. Pre-Columbian Drinks-Beer Alcoholic beverages may be made from a wide variety of starchy foods, but pre-Columbian beer was most frequently made from corn or maize (*Zea mays*). The traditional method of making beer involves spitting into a large vat or olla of starchy corn and water mixture, after which the enzyme amylase (found in human saliva) begins converting the starch in the corn into sugars, some of which subsequently ferment into alcohol. Beer was an important part of rituals in the Andes at European contact, and is still used by traditional people to make offerings to the mother earth spirit or Pachamama. Beer was undoubtedly served in wooden, ceramic, or gourd cups or beakers, but may also have been put into stirrup-spout (and other) bottles, especially when carried any distance, since the narrow-necked bottle shape would have reduced losses from accidental spills and evaporation. Moche (200 BC- AD 700) Arguably one of the finest technological manifestations of the pre-Columbian potter's art, Moche ceramics have charmed generations of archaeologists and collectors with their finely executed painting and exquisite sculptural forms. Moche (formerly known as Mochica) pottery is characterized by red painting executed on a white or cream-colored slip ground. Moche stirrup-spout bottles represent a wide variety of sculptural forms, including human portraits, animal effigies, domestic scenes, or graphic human sexuality. The core area of Moche cultural influence extended from Lambayeque in the north to Nepeña in the south, and likely reflects militaristic conquest and political control by a state-level polity centered in the Moche Valley. The Moche united many coastal groups, built and controlled extensive irrigation networks, and produced ceramic vessels using molds, a technological innovation which enabled the production of vast numbers of highly detailed ceramics, including portrait head vessels so finely detailed that individual faces can be recognized. Fineline paintings depict detailed, elaborate scenes now thought to be part of the "warrior sacrifice" or "presentation theme" story central to the Moche religion. Moche metalwork also achieved remarkable levels of sophistication, with precious stones inlaid in ornaments made of copper, silver, and gold alloys. Suggestions for Further Reading about Moche: Bankes, George (1980): Moche Pottery from Peru. British Museum : London. Short, pamphlet-length booklet in English with excellent discussion of Moche pottery technology and vessel forms. Bawden, Garth (1996): The Moche. Blackwell: Cambridge, Mass. Bourget, Steve (2006) Sex, Death, and Sacrifice in Moche Religion and Visual Culture, University of Texas Press: Austin Donnan, Christopher B. (2004): Moche Portraits from Ancient Peru. University of Texas Press: Austin. Donnan, Christopher B., and Donna McClelland (2000): Moche Fineline Painting: Its Evolution and Its Artists. UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History: Los Angeles. Excellent reference with spout shapes by phase on p. 21, instructions for making stirrup-spout vessels on pp. 44-45, and attributions of various vessels to work by specific painters.

## **Dimensions**

9 3/4 x 6 inches (24.8 x 15.2 cm)