

## The Chincha Kingdom: The Archaeology and Ethnohistory of the Late Intermediate Period South Coast, Peru

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IT IS UNCLEAR EXACTLY WHEN THE German naturalist and medical doctor Ernst Middendorf first heard of the monumental ruins in the lower Chincha Valley, but by the mid-1880s, he had determined to see them for himself. Middendorf became an early authority on pre-Hispanic cultures during his 25 years of work and travel across the Andes. Apart from amateur archaeology and ethnography, he had a penchant for linguistics and published volumes on Quechua, Aymara, and Mochica—the three major indigenous languages in western South America (Reina 2008). His travels in the Quechua-speaking regions outside of Lima exposed him to a host of archaeological sites that were previously unknown to European scholars. At the same time, his appetite for Peruvian prehistory led him to the Spanish chronicles, far fewer of which were known and published than are available today. By the time Middendorf reached Chincha, he had amassed notes and drawings from archaeological sites along the Peruvian coast. While Chincha was not an exceptionally novel exercise for Middendorf, his work there gave rise to a series of south coast explorations that made Chincha a key focus for some of the earliest major works in Andean archaeology.

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Shortly after his arrival at the Chincha port of Tambo de Mora, a guide escorted Middendorf by mule to an area of what appeared to be a series of sandy hills rising out of the valley bottom. It was here that Middendorf made the first modern description of Chincha material culture:

A half-kilometer north of the port begin the ruins of an ancient city, which consist of temples in the form of pyramids, great patios and small dwellings, all quite deteriorated and crumbling. The greater part of the existing walls and slopes are constructed of compressed mud and not with adobes, and therefore belong to more ancient times like the constructions of Cañete and of the Rimac Valley, which are materially similar. . . . The smaller ruins form clusters, both to the north and the south of the swampy depression, each one around a major structure, constituting, it would appear, temples. (Middendorf 1973 [1894]:105–106)<sup>7</sup>

The sheer size of these mounds impressed Middendorf. He reported that Huaca La Centinela (one of the larger *tapia*<sup>8</sup> platform mounds near Tambo de Mora) was some 40 meters high and divided into distinct sectors (Figure 1). Middendorf noted an odd adobe brick staircase on the southern end of the mound, which appeared out of place based on his previous observa-

7. Our translation.



Figure 1. Tambo de Mora, a cluster of Chincha structures occupying an earthen mound.



tions of coastal architecture. Unknown to the pioneer, he had unwittingly stumbled across the remains of a small Inca administrative structure dwarfed within a much larger pre-Inca political center (Middendorf 1973 [1894]:106). Beginning with Middendorf's early explorations, the Chinchas would become an exemplary case in the diplomacy and geopolitics of the late pre-Hispanic Andes. The Programa Arqueológico Chincha (PACH) is a multidisciplinary program of research on the prehistory of the Chincha Valley. While the majority of our work focuses on the first regional societies of the south coast, called Paracas (see our contributions to *Backdirt* 2012: Hill et al. 2012; and *Backdirt* 2013: Tantaleán et al. 2013), we regularly encounter materials associated with the Chincha Kingdom,<sup>9</sup> the peoples who inhabited the valley during the Late Intermediate Period (hereafter LIP; ca. AD 1100–1470). The results from our first year of intensive survey in the upper valley demonstrate a nearly continuous distribution of Chincha villages, cemeteries, and refuges, showing that Chincha peoples controlled not only coastal areas, but swaths of upper valley territory as well. This is a major contribution to our understanding of Chincha political geography and settlement practices outside of lowland coastal areas.

8. *Tapia*, also known as rammed earth, is a poured mud construction technique common in coastal architecture.

9. As far back as the Spanish chronicles, “Chincha” has referred to the political entity from which the flat, coastal drainage watered by the San Juan, Matagente and Chico Rivers derives its name. Its constituents are referred to as the Chinchas.

As we continue to explore the role of the Chinchas in LIP geopolitics, we offer introduction to one of the most fascinating case studies in ancient Andean political economy. Prior to the first descriptions of Chavín de Huantar in the eastern Andes, decades before the discovery of the Paracas Peninsula cemeteries with their spectacular burials, twenty years before Hiram Bingham stumbled into Machu Picchu, and almost a century before scholars even conceived of a Wari Empire, the Chinchas were a broadly known late pre-Hispanic society and a powerful draw for early students of Andean archaeology.

#### A CASE FOR INCA DIPLOMACY

The Chinchas provide a fascinating example of Inca imperial strategies in the coastal provinces and continue to serve as a contrast to Inca imperialism in other parts of the empire (Morris 1988, 1998, 2004; Morris and Covey 2006; Netherly 1988; Patterson 1987). Unlike the general state of political fragmentation that characterized the Andean highlands during the tenth through early fifteenth centuries AD (see Arkush 2005), broad swaths of the coast were controlled by powerful, politically centralized groups (Figure 2). Early Inca strategies in the heartland that proved so successful in consolidating decentralized chiefdoms into a unified Inca state did not work against the larger, wealthier, and better organized coastal states.

Given that Inca imperial strategy was multifaceted, opportunistic, and tailored to local conditions, coastal



Figure 2. Map of western South America, showing the Inca Empire at its greatest extent and major sites discussed in text.

campaigns under the emperor Pachacuti shifted between intense martial strategies and softer forms of diplomatic pressure (D’Altroy 1992). Subjugation through military coercion remained a norm. To the north, the massive and defiant Chimu state (Moore and Mackey 2008) was reduced in a series of military campaigns, its political hierarchy dismembered and large portions of its populace forcibly resettled across the Inca realm. Similarly, and only 40 km to the north of the Chinchas in the Cañete Valley, the Incas effectively destroyed the people of Huarco in a four-year military siege (Marcus 1987, 2008:2–4), followed by a general massacre of Huarco men. In Cañete and Pisco, the two drainages directly north and south of Chinchu, the Inca built impressive way stations and administrative centers at Inkawasi and Tambo Colorado (Hyslop 1985; Protzen and Morris 2004; Protzen and Harris 2005). Inca sites such as these were integrated into the coastal road network to facilitate the movement of goods and troops. The subjugation of the coast was executed in a then-unprecedented scale of military conquest and administrative reorganization.

The ethnohistoric and archaeological story of the Chinchas does not follow this pattern, however. An atypically small Inca “palace” structure at Huaca La Centinela hides in the shadow of a much larger Chinchu politico-religious building (Morris 2004); ethnohistoric accounts attest to an intact Chinchu elite that

operated in parallel with Inca representatives, going so far as to take advantage of their autonomy for their own gain (Lumbreras 2001; Morris and Covey 2006; Rostworowski 1970); and excavations of smaller villages from the pre- and post-Inca periods suggest that Chinchu economic structures remained more or less intact (Sandweiss 1992). The fact that Chinchu political autonomy, economic organization, and demographics remained relatively untouched is a fascinating anomaly that captured the attention of Spanish vicars and soldiers at an early date. Understanding the role of the Chinchas in Inca geopolitics, then, begins with the ethnohistoric record.

### THE CHRONICLERS

Middendorf and other nineteenth-century explorers and archaeologists who described Chinchu material culture were familiar with at least some of the Spanish chronicles. Most of these early ethnohistoric accounts concerned themselves with the politics, culture, and geography of the Incas, including the formation of the empire and the subjugation of non-Inca peoples. Spanish agents and missionaries established themselves firmly in Chinchu within two decades of the conquest because it was close to Lima and highly desirable for its great agricultural potential. While we should take these writings with a healthy dose of skepticism, early discussions of Chinchu are invaluable accounts rich in detail. As the kingdom remained independent until sometime during the reign of Topa Inca (beginning around 1475 AD), only a few generations separated an independent Chinchu from the earliest Spanish writers.

Numerous chronicles reference the Chinchas, but three stand out. Pedro Cieza de León’s *La crónica del Perú* was published in Seville by 1553, making it one of the earliest records of Inca history and political geography. Cieza is recognized as reliable, though some of his information may have come secondhand through a Quechua-speaking contemporary, Juan Díez de Betanzos (Pease 2008). An account by Pedro Pizarro, a cousin of the leader of the invading Spanish forces, Francisco, provides firsthand observations of the Spanish encounters with the Inca beginning in the early sixteenth century. His *Relación del descubrimiento y conquista de los reinos del Perú* (1571) covers his time spent under the command of Francisco Pizarro and describes Atahualpa’s entourage during the 1532 confrontation in Cajamarca that precipitated the collapse of the Inca political system. Lastly, Fray Cristóbal de Castro and Diego Ortega Morejón interviewed older inhabitants of Chinchu in a document



referred to in shorthand as the “*Relación*” (1558). Originally published for Spanish authorities (Castro was a church vicar and Ortega Morejón a local magistrate), the *Relación* describes diplomacy and political maneuvering between the intact Chincha leadership and Inca representatives. From these accounts come the earliest picture of Chincha economic power, social structure, and political acumen.

Cieza describes the realm of the Chinchas as a “great province, esteemed in ancient times . . . splendid and grand . . . so famous throughout Peru as to be feared by many natives” (Cieza de León 1959 [1553]:344–345). He claims that the land of the Chinchas was highly productive and desirable, full of game, and capable of supporting large-scale agriculture and a population of 25,000 persons. He notes that the Chinchas had access to an abundance of precious metals, both gold and silver, which the Spanish found and plundered in nearby tombs (Cieza de León 1959 [1553]:347). According to Cieza’s informants, the wealth and power of the Chinchas served not only as the foundation of a regional coastal alliance, but also supported major Chincha incursions into the highlands. While the Incas were still consolidating the Cusco region, Cieza reports, the Chinchas had smashed the highland Soras and Rucanas, reaching the land of the Collas in the Titicaca Basin (Cieza de León 1959 [1553]:346).<sup>10</sup>

Part of the Chincha Kingdom’s political capital derived from access to a powerful and prestigious oracle called Chinchaycamac (Cieza refers to it as a “demon”), who received offerings and spoke to the Chincha elders (Cieza de León 1959 [1553]:345). This was likely a branch oracle of the pilgrimage center of Pachacamac, near modern Lima, which the Inca also incorporated (Uhle 1991 [1903]). If this is true, then the Chinchas held a dual alliance with both the Incas and the sponsor oracle (Menzel and Rowe 1966:68). Chinchaycamac was referred to as a “child” of Pachacamac (Rostworowski 1977:106), and legitimizing a branch oracle in this way could come at great cost. Contributions of precious metals, manufactured goods, labor, and agricultural or animal products accompanied Pachacamac branch oracles elsewhere (Burger 1988:115). Supporting the oracle would require a significant level of surplus

10. This is perhaps an overstatement on Cieza’s part. There is little physical evidence to suggest that the Chinchas carried out military incursions into the southern highlands. Nonetheless, defensive architecture in association with Chincha material culture in the upper valley suggests an active border zone and the possibility of military excursions into immediate upland areas.

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production beyond the basic subsistence needs of the Chincha population.

The popularity of the Chinchaycamac oracle and the organized wealth of the Chinchas probably played key roles in negotiating for political autonomy in the face of mounting Inca pressure. Morris and Covey (2006:147) note some ambiguity in the chronicles with regard to how much military activity, if any, was involved in the absorption of the Chinchas, but suggest that real capitulation took several generations. When the Incas finally did annex Chincha, it was apparently as vassals and not through outright domination (Castro and Ortega Morejón 1934 [1558]:135). The Inca installed their own overseers, acquired lands for Inca specialist workers (*mamacona* and *yanacona*), built a palace for Inca dignitaries, and constructed a temple to the sun to serve the state religion. Valley bureaucrats conducted a census and introduced decimal-based administration (Castro and Ortega Morejón 1934 [1558]:136–139). A sort of dual-justice system was instituted wherein the local Chincha lord could prosecute crimes against Chincha elites and commoners, while an appointed Inca magistrate dealt with crimes against Inca personnel or the Inca state (Castro and Ortega Morejón 1934 [1558]:140–141). Overall, the Chinchas retained a major degree of political autonomy, an intact leadership hierarchy, and access to the Chinchaycamac oracle and were able to maintain a broader ethnic identity in the face of Inca incorporation. This is not to mention potential costs were saved on both sides by avoiding prolonged conflict.

In his description of the events at Cajamarca, Pedro Pizarro’s observations support the idea that Chincha incorporation into the Inca Empire took place under politically amiable terms. He notes that the lord of the Chinchas accompanied Atahualpa and had access to several practices usually reserved for

Inca nobility or exclusively for the Inca himself. These included transportation by litter (while accompanying Inca nobles went on foot) and an honored position in the Inca royal procession close behind Atahualpa's person (Pizarro 1921 [1571]:180–181, 183). He was close enough to the royal party to be killed in the resulting fracas, stabbed in his litter by Juan Pizarro, Francisco's half-brother (Pizarro 1921 [1571]:184; Rostworowski 1999:130). The high position afforded to this lord and the Inca desire to keep the Chincha administration intact appear to be linked, in part, to the Chinchas' exotic economic practices. According to Pedro Pizarro, in a subsequent conversation between the Spanish and the captured Atahualpa, the Inca referred to the Chincha lord as a good friend and master of 100,000 sea-going craft (Pizarro 1921 [1571]:443). This was perhaps an obvious boon for a highland society with little regular access to large, open bodies of water or the experience and human capital to make use of them.

All in all, early ethnohistorical sources suggest that the Chinchas were fabulously wealthy and well connected. This included an unprecedented amount of maritime infrastructure, massive economic surpluses that could be mobilized for special purpose projects, a branch oracle associated with one of the oldest and most highly respected ideological centers in the Andes, a large and reliable subsistence base, and a burgeoning population. Their successful negotiation with the Inca preserved Chincha social structure and political hierarchy, at least by typical Inca standards. If anything else, the Incas testified to the importance of the Chinchas by naming one quarter of Tawantinsuyu after them: Chinchaysuyu was the largest and most populous province of the Inca Empire, extending from Chincha in the south to southern Columbia in the north.

#### CULTURE HISTORY AND THE CHINCHAS

If Middendorf was the first to describe Chincha material culture in a modern context, then Max Uhle, one of the founders of modern Andean archaeology, bears responsibility for bringing it to the attention of archaeologists. At the behest of the University of California, Uhle spent three years between 1899 and 1901 on the Peruvian coast excavating and organizing collections for a new Museum of Anthropology in Berkeley (Uhle 1924 [1901]). Uhle was familiar with references to the Chinchas in a number of chronicles, believing them to be a widely expansive state that carried out conquest throughout the sierra (likely based on a reading of Cieza de León). He placed the Chin-

Figure 3. Pottery recovered from Chincha and Chincha-Inca sites during survey conducted by the UCLA/PACH team in 2013. Images on the left demonstrate local vessel forms and motifs common to pre-Inca times. Images on the right show nonlocal blackwares introduced after the arrival of the Inca.

chas at the beginning of a developmental sequence that eventually led to the formation of the Inca Empire (Chinchas-Chankas-Incas), making them the progenitors of all later polities composed of Quechua-speaking peoples. Uhle's model was reasonable, given the methods at the time; by linking formalized pottery styles with proposed historical events derived from sixteenth-century documents, Uhle was developing a basic chronology for Andean prehistory (Lumbreras 2001; Tantaleán 2014).

Uhle conducted a series of excavations in Chincha-period cemetery lots in the northwest corner of the valley, near and within the Huaca La Centinela–Tambo de Mora complex (Uhle 1924 [1901]). Ceramics from six cemeteries allowed him to isolate a Chincha design style, later detailed and subdivided into two Chincha-period phases and a post-Chincha, Inca-related phase (Kroeber and Strong 1924). Uhle also uncovered a variety of non-ceramic artifacts, including silverwork, female figurines, spindles, and spindle whorls. This formed the basis of the Chincha reference material available to subsequent archaeological investigations.

The discovery of the Paracas Peninsula burials in the 1920s deflected much attention from the archaeology of the Chinchas, as much work on the south coast turned toward earlier periods and the beautiful ceramics and textiles recovered from Paracas and Nasca sites. Starting in the late 1950s, two major research endeavors reignited scholarly interest in the Chincha Kingdom. The first was a reevaluation of Uhle's Chincha ceramic collection (Menzel 1966, 1971, 1977; Menzel and Rowe 1966). Directed by John Rowe and his students, analysis of the Chincha materials was part of a larger program to bring together and standardize the dozens of independent Andean ceramic seriations into a single coherent chronology (our modern system of "Horizons" and "Intermediate Periods" is a product of this). In examining the Chincha collections, Menzel and Rowe (1966) and Menzel (1966) reasserted a basic distinction between pre-Inca Chincha wares and specimens associated with the period of Inca influence (Figure 3). In the former period, Chincha wares gradually incorporated traits from the broader south coast region, an indicator of growing Chincha cosmopolitanism. After the Inca incursion, Chincha-style finewares abruptly disappear in favor of foreign



styles and imitations. Menzel interpreted this stylistic shift as status imitation by Chincha elites. Menzel and Rowe (1966:67) suggested that Chincha power was increasing substantially across the south coast in the century prior to 1476, whereupon the expert tactical advantage, diplomatic pressure, and overwhelming force of the Inca led to the bloodless capitulation of the Chinchas and disappearance of Chincha styles in favor of Inca imitations.

A major survey project in the Chincha Valley by Dwight Wallace (1959, 1971), the first of its kind, contributed much to the reinvigoration of Chincha archaeology (Figure 4). Wallace's survey identified an

unprecedented number of Chincha-associated sites, roads between site clusters, and massive *tapia* mounds throughout the lower valley.<sup>11</sup> He provided direct evidence for a Chincha primary center composed of La Centinela, La Cumbe, and Tambo de Mora mounds (Wallace 1998), surrounded by secondary mound clusters and tertiary hamlets. Of these secondary sites, at least 30 were major mounds, and at least 5

11. Of 112 sites recorded by Wallace (1971), 70 are now recognized as containing Chincha occupations. An additional 30 sites have since been added to that list (Canziani 1992, 2009; Engel 2010; Lumbreras 2001; Wallace 1971, 1991, 1998).

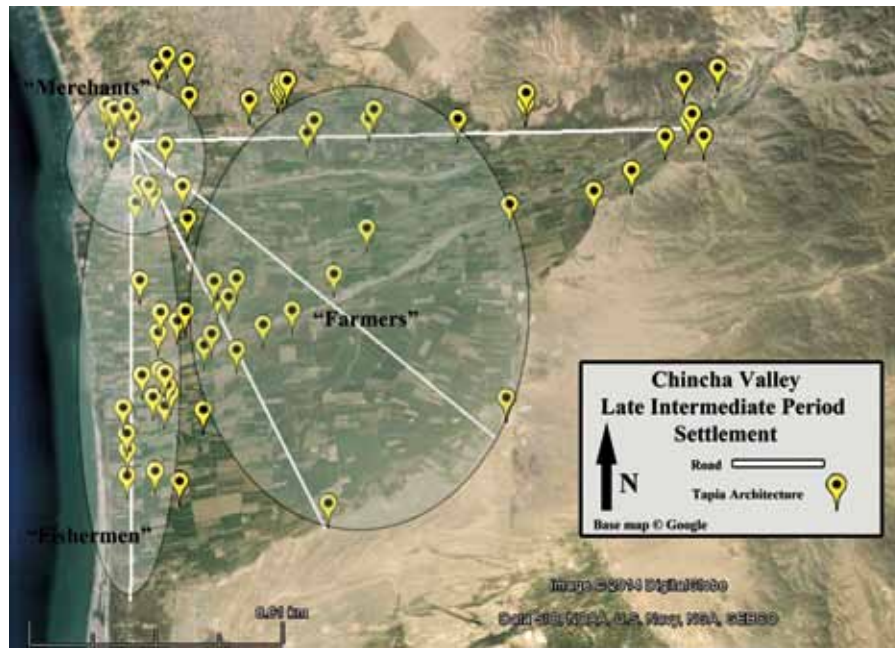


Figure 4. Map of the Chincha Valley showing Late Intermediate Period sites, infrastructure, and distinct economic communities as documented ethnohistorically and archaeologically. Synthesis from Canziani (2009), Engel (2010), Lumbreras (2001), and Wallace (1971; 1991). Base map ©Google.

major clusters contained 10 mounds apiece. A set of at least 4 straight roads radiated out from Huaca La Centinela, leading to major secondary clusters and connecting the valley to the eastern highlands and neighboring drainages to the south (Menzel 1959; Wallace 1991). Wallace distinguished between the *tapia* architectural techniques common to the Chincha and the rectangular adobe brick structures built by the Inca, clearly distinguished by double-jamb doors and trapezoidal portals (Wallace 1959).

#### THE “AVISO”

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a florescence of fieldwork across the south coast and with it, a renewed interest in the material culture of the Chinchas. Multiple reassessments of Uhle’s original collections produced a basic distinction between pre- and post-Inca assemblages, showing an increase in external contacts through time. Some core ideas taken from the chronicles were overturned in light of new archaeological fieldwork, such as the notion that the Chinchas took part in a military conquest of the southern highlands (no material evidence could be confirmed, from the Titicaca Basin or from the coast; Menzel and Rowe 1966). The first surveys of the valley concluded that the Chinchas were prosperous, perhaps even more so than was anticipated. The sheer size, number, and density of Chincha mound clusters suggested highly organized labor forces, and the clear presence of a three-tiered settlement system with linking infrastructure begged questions

of political organization and territorial sovereignty. How much of this existed before the Inca incursion, archaeologists asked, and how much was a product of post-annexation opportunities? Furthermore, new theoretical paradigms in economic anthropology juxtaposed highland forms of socioeconomic organization with distinct coastal models, called “vertical” and “horizontal” complementarities (Murra

1972; Rostworowski 1977). The Chinchas provided a perfect laboratory to study the intersection of highland and coastal economic systems.

The publication of a previously unknown Spanish document in 1970, found in a Madrid archive by Maria Rostworowski de Diez Canseco (1970),<sup>12</sup> emphasized and addressed many of these questions. By cross-referencing personnel references in the “Aviso” with other known documentary sources, including Castro and Ortega Morejón and Reginaldo de Lizárraga (1968 [1901]), Rostworowski concluded that the account dated to the early 1570s and was likely written by a Spanish clergyman stationed at the Dominican mission in Chincha. The document came at a most expedient time, linking information from the classic chronicles with emerging archaeological evidence.

The “Aviso” describes the Chinchas as managers of a massive maritime trading operation stretching from Ecuador in the north to the south coast of Peru (this articulates with Pedro Pizarro’s claim that the Chincha paramount controlled 100,000 sea-going vessels). The Chinchas traded copper from the southern Andes for Ecuadorian commodities—gold, certain species of timber, emeralds, and, most significantly, shell (Marcos 2005:158; Pillsbury 1996; Rostworowski 1970:144–146, 152). Rostworowski suggests that demand for spondylus (*Spondylus princeps*) shells, important for state-sponsored rituals under the Incas, served as a major driver. Perhaps most unexpectedly, the “Aviso” claims fixed exchange rates for weights

12. This document lists neither date nor author. Its full name—“Aviso de el modo que havia en el gobierno de los indios en tiempo del Inga y como se repartian las tierras y tributos”—translates roughly into “Notice about the rules under the Indian government during Inca times and how they shared the land and taxes.” Following common convention, we shorten it to the “Aviso.”



of gold and silver (1:10) and the presence of copper “marks,” a sort of price-fixing mechanism otherwise unknown in the pre-Hispanic Andes (Rostworowski 1970:152; Stanish 1992). It is, however, possible that early Spanish sources accidentally conflated the commodity itself, copper, with the mediums of exchange familiar to their own worldview.

Coastal traders filled a niche in the rapidly expanding Inca economy, whose centralized redistributive system was usually at odds with private trading enterprises (Rostworowski 1970:147). Patterson (1987) discusses the Chincha anomaly as an exercise in merchant capital. In this scenario merchants serve as debt financiers who mediate exchanges between independent commodity producers, in this case peoples on either side of the Inca frontier. Such a scenario is possible only when the means of production remain in local hands. Once supply and demand become rigidly coordinated through the introduction of a centralized redistributive system, such as was the case with the Inca, the role of merchant capital is reduced. Thus, merchant capital is inherently conservative; it relies on existing relations of production and the perpetuation of producer autonomy.

Such a system tends to be most effective in moving high-value, low-density goods, rather than bulk staples. Demand for gold, emeralds, and spondylus shell stemmed strongly from the central political apparatus of the Incas, yet reliable sources for these commodities lay beyond effective Inca economic control. As semiautonomous agents of the state, the Chinchas could operate efficiently in contested and unconquered areas. They commanded the seafaring skills, boats, and previously established partnerships that the Inca lacked and thus provided a more efficient vector for acquiring valued goods.

The “Aviso” suggests that specialized sea-traders existed in Chincha prior to the coming of the Inca (Rostworowski 1977:128) and that this was one component of a strictly organized domestic economy, which also included permanent fishing and farming communities (Rostworowski 1970:157). The document claims that economic specialization governed the local settlement system, with artisans, fishermen, and farmers each inhabiting distinct parts of the valley. It also provides population estimates for each major division, suggesting 10,000 fishermen, 10,000 farmers, and 6,000 artisanal specialists and merchants. Further subdivision of artisans is likely: the “Aviso” lists carpenters, pot-makers, shoemakers, and gold- and silversmiths as distinct occupations (Rostworowski 1970:158). This horizontal integration of economi-

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cally separate components in the formation of a larger paramount political entity is referred to as a *señorío* and is a common form of economic organization elsewhere in Late Intermediate Period coastal societies in southern Peru (see also Knudson and Buikstra 2007; Lozada and Buikstra 2002, 2005; Lozada et al. 2009; Nigra 2009).

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPLEX CHINCHA SOCIETY

The “Aviso” provided powerful new information on Chincha geopolitics, economic organization, and settlement, supplying new hypotheses to test with archaeological data. Whereas earlier investigations sought to describe the universe of Chincha sites, architecture, and pottery styles, expeditions over the past 40 years have focused on processes of political incorporation, resistance, and empire-building across the period of Inca influence. The 1980s saw the arrival of a major archaeological program in Chincha under the auspices of the Instituto Andino de Estudios Arqueológicos (INDEA). These scholars—Luis Lumbreras, Craig Morris, and John Murra, among others—are responsible for taking Chincha archaeology beyond descriptive culture history and into the realm of modern anthropology.

Given the tantalizing description of economically distinct communities in the “Aviso”, INDEA scholars dedicated much time to determining whether such strict occupational specialization existed before the arrival of the Inca. Sandweiss (1992) located and excavated a Chincha-period fishing community precisely where the “Aviso” predicted—along a lengthy, narrow strip of coast just west of the major Centinela mound cluster. He concluded that community members were indeed specialized fishermen who practiced no agriculture, though they likely produced some of their own basic equipment, and that economic





Figure 5. Inca “palace” at Huaca La Centinela. Tambo de Mora is in the left background.

specialization was in place before Inca incursion. Fishing peoples fell under the rule of a local lord who probably managed specialists of his own and did not participate in subsistence activities (Sandweiss 1992:145). He suggested that Inca influence would have a most profound effect on these local elites, who would articulate with Inca-installed administrators but would not affect the quotidian activities of subsistence-producing commoners (Sandweiss 1992).

While pure Chincha farming guilds have yet to be demonstrated archaeologically, Lumbreras (2001) suggests that these were located at the large mound cluster of Las Huacas, situated in the center of the Chincha alluvial plain. Far from the pre-Hispanic road system but in highly productive land between the Matagente and Chico Rivers, he argues that the site was not suited for fishing or mercantile activity (Lumbreras 2001:48–50). He supports the idea that fishing villages paralleled the majority of the coastline, identifying the Rancheria cluster as a potential candidate and suggesting that the San Pedro Complex, at the southern end of the Chincha settlement distribution, may have been a secondary center related to fishing villages (Lumbreras 2001:52). All in all, he lists three major urban centers within Chincha—Centinela, San Pedro and Las Huacas—each with its own set of satellite communities.

Menzel and Rowe’s (1966) suggestion that the triple-mound complex of Centinela, Tambo de Mora, and La Cumbe was the seat of Chincha political power is supported by Morris’s excavations and architectural analyses at Huaca La Centinela—both at the Chincha palace and the Inca installation next to it (Morris 1988, 1998). This cluster contains large residential areas in low-lying spaces between massive *tapia*

mounds, forming a core of more than 200 hectares. All available suggestions place the Chinchaycamac pilgrimage center at La Cumbe or at La Centinela itself (Menzel and Rowe 1966; Uhle 1924 [1901]; Wallace 1998). In addition to major Chincha structures, Inca influence is clearly present at La Centinela in the architecture of a small “palace” near the mound’s principal edifice (Morris and Covey 2006; Morris and Santillana 2007). Unlike Inca royal architecture elsewhere in the provinces, the La Centinela structure stands out as relatively small, off-center with regard to the mound’s main plaza, and executed in locally available mud-brick (Figure 5). The layout and placement of the Inca palace suggests a strategy of imperial control based on notions of alliance and mutual respect, rather than heavy-handed imposition of Inca building practices as found elsewhere in the Andes (Morris 2004). This dampening of the imperial reality for purposes of positive diplomacy underlines the multifaceted and reflexive nature of Inca dominance and the usefulness of an intact Chincha economy. Beyond the cluster’s role as a political nexus, craft specialists worked and perhaps inhabited the La Centinela, La Cumbe, and Tambo de Mora mounds. At Tambo de Mora, excavators recovered clear evidence of silversmithing contexts (Alcalde et al. 2002), and Morris’s excavations suggests that textile producers inhabited parts of La Centinela during Inca times (Morris 1988:110).

Curiously, only small volumes of spondylus shell—supposedly the major driver of coastal trade—have been recovered in Chincha excavations. The INDEA excavations of the 1980s recovered small amounts (Morris 1988:109), but nothing on the scale suggested by the “Aviso”. Sandweiss suggests that an emphasis on spondylus occurred quite late in Chincha times

and perhaps did not accelerate until the period of Inca incorporation (1992:23). In Uhle's early collections, spondylus appears only sporadically and only in Inca-period contexts. Sandweiss suggests that Chincha trade contacts with Ecuador did not predate the Inca; instead, he offers the tantalizing suggestion that the trade monopoly enjoyed by the Chinchas was a privilege under Inca rule, made possible by the dismemberment of more powerful maritime states (such as the Chimú) (Sandweiss 1992:148).

### MOVING FORWARD

The Chinchas are one of the Andes' best historically documented cases of a complex coastal polity and provide a unique perspective into Inca imperialism. Research on the Chinchas has advanced models of LIP socioeconomic organization, pre-Columbian maritime merchant operations, and Inca period diplomatic strategies. Yet, given the enormous amount of Chincha archaeological material packed into the valley, there is much work to be done. The upper valley, the corridor where the alluvial plain narrows to less than a kilometer wide, contains a continuous distribution of Chincha materials. This area has not been explored systematically, although Lumbreras (2001) mentions a few large sites in the area (see also Canziani 2009; Wallace 1971). No excavations of LIP sites have been conducted outside of the lower valley core. Yet current knowledge of widespread Chincha mercantile net-

works and geopolitical relations with highland groups suggests that this area may have been of great importance to the polity's territorial and economic integrity. Considering the upper valley's role as a likely avenue for coast-highland traffic in both pre-Inca and Inca times, concerted survey and excavation should further our understanding of Chincha exchange practices and the economic effects of Inca dominance.

The Programa Arqueológico Chincha (PACH) explores this transitional zone as part of a larger valley-wide research endeavor. We recently completed the first year of an ongoing full coverage survey of the upper valley neck, and we expect to cover significant ground in coming years. So far we demonstrate a continuous landscape of Chincha settlements, cemeteries, public spaces, and fortifications. We observe a decrease in settlement size and an increase in defensive measures as we progress into the highlands. We note a tighter clustering of settlements to cemeteries in contested areas. Our team is in the process of defining an upper valley mortuary tradition related to the Chinchas, the first fieldwork on Chincha burial contexts since Uhle's 1901 excavations (Figure 6). Ceramic distributions across the area suggest both pre- and post-Inca contexts, and stylistic and technological influences from other coastal groups are present in many pieces. Preservation is phenomenal, illicit activity in the area is limited, and sites are data rich. The door is wide open for an upper valley perspective into

Figure 6. The 2013 survey team documents a cluster of aboveground Chincha tombs.



the development of Chincha economic complexity. In coming seasons, we hope to add our own contribution to the archaeology of one of the Andes' most fascinating cases.

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