

Chimú Domestic Architecture on Cerro Huancha, Sinsicap Valley, Peru
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The Chimú Empire existed on the north coast of Peru between 800-1470 CE operating out of Chan Chan, approximately 40 km southwest of Cerro Huancha. Cerro Huancha sits at 1000m above sea level in the chaupiyunga ecological zone of the Sinsicap Valley, allowing for the cultivation of the coca plant, an important commodity of the Chimú. This site was economically productive and an ideal location for exchange between coastal and highland communities. This raises the question, who lived here? Were they a specialized labor force of the Chimú or an independent group? Architecture is a useful tool for assessing the of identify these people by looking for traces of the Chimú imperial style. Alicia Boswell, PhD candidate at the University of California, San Diego, and myself collected diagnostic pottery sherds and mapped architecture from 10% of the 15 hectare site to determine the identity of this group. I have developed digital renderings of the architecture plans and designed two hypothetical elevations, based on known Chimú domestic architecture, to better conceptualize the relationship between spaces within the site and within the valley. My investigation supports the presence of the Chimú at Cerro Huancha. The plan suggests an overarching concern for tracking movement through the valley and is characteristic of Chimú defensive style architecture arranged in a hierarchical layout. However, the tombs are characteristic of highland burial practices, implying the people were more likely a hybrid between Chimú and a local highland community. The ceramics also support this premise with equal representation of Chimú and an unidentified local highland style ceramic. Though the identity of these people is presently unclear, it is obvious there were competing forces trying to control the area, requiring a need for defensive architecture and explaining the variety of styles present at the site.