

ARTICLE

# Hybrid Material Culture in the Inca Empire (AD 1400–1532): Analyzing the Ceramic Assemblages from La Centinela and Las Huacas, Chincha Valley

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## Abstract

The distribution and hybridization of ceramic vessels provide insights into how local elites and imperial officials navigated imperial expansion. This article presents data on ceramic sherds from the sites of La Centinela and Las Huacas in the Chincha Valley that date to the period of Inca occupation (AD 1400–1532). In Chincha, the Inca established a style of joint rule in which Inca and local authority were closely aligned. The ceramic data demonstrate that Inca imperial designs and diagnostic shapes were most numerous in contexts associated with direct Inca presence and that the types of vessels and designs that elites used to develop their authority differed among the contexts: hybrid material culture thus varied throughout the Chincha Valley. These different hybrid material cultures include state-sponsored hybrid wares (Inca vessels, on which the Inca intentionally integrated Chincha designs) and local vessel shapes on which elites used Inca symbols and vessel shapes to assert their status to a mostly local audience.

## Resumen

La distribución e hibridación de vasijas de cerámica proporciona información sobre cómo las élites locales y los oficiales Inca interactuaron durante el proceso de expansión imperial. Este artículo presenta datos sobre los fragmentos de cerámica procedentes de los sitios de La Centinela y Las Huacas del valle de Chincha durante el período de ocupación Inca (1400–1532 dC). En esta región se estableció una administración dual y alineada entre la autoridad incaica y las élites chinchanas. Los análisis demuestran que las vasijas con formas y diseños Inca imperial fueron numerosas en contextos asociados a la ocupación directa Inca, mientras los tipos de vasijas y diseños asociados a las élites locales variaba entre los contextos estudiados. Los datos también muestran una variabilidad del material cultural híbrido a lo largo del valle de Chincha. Este material híbrido incluía combinaciones intencionales de diseños Chincha en vasijas Inca (auspiciadas por el Estado Inca), y vasijas locales con diseños incas utilizadas por las élites locales para afirmar su estatus frente a la población local.

**Keywords:** Inca; hybridity; coastal Peru; Late Horizon; ceramics; imperial expansion

**Palabras clave:** Inca; hibridación; costa del Perú; Horizonte Tardío; cerámica; expansión imperial

Studies of ancient empires often emphasize highly identifiable and recognizable material culture that served as material representations of state power (Morris 1995). Many types of objects, including ceramics, textiles, and metal artifacts, were used and distributed in specific contexts to develop authority and to establish and maintain social and administrative relationships (DeMarrais et al. 1996; Williams 2004, 2008). In addition to imperial styles, hybrid material culture, which combines characteristics from at least two cultures (Deagan 2013:261), was also associated with imperial expansion. Hybrid material culture is the product of multicultural encounters, and analyses of hybrid artifacts can provide perspectives into the distinct ways that groups of people came together and interacted (Card 2013; Costin 2016; Van Valkenburgh 2013).

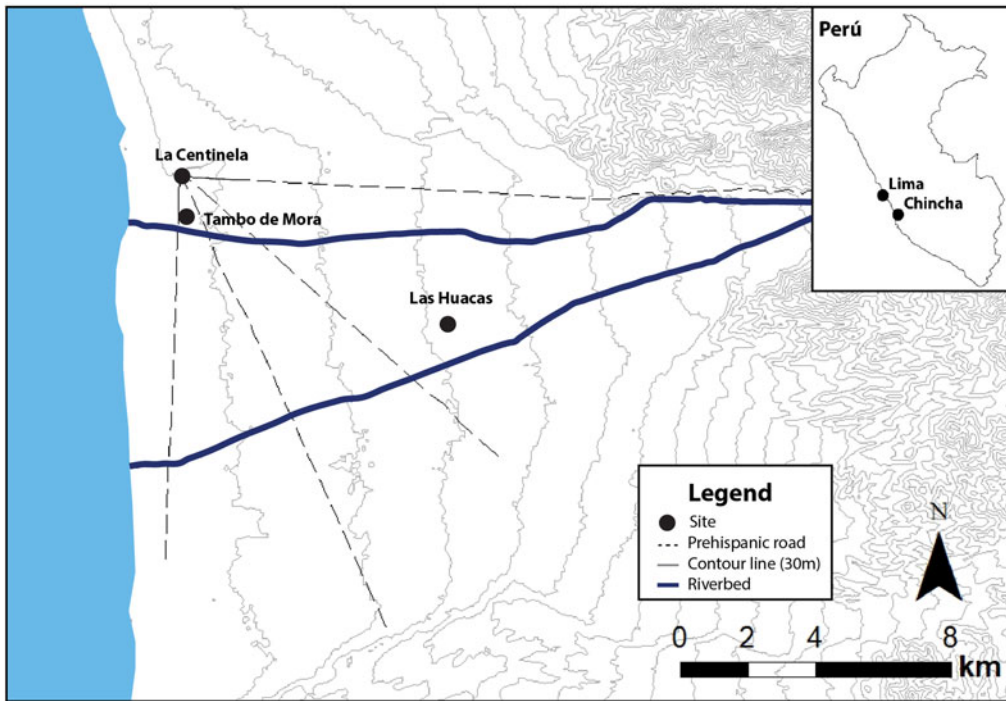


Figure 1. The location of La Centinela, Tambo de Mora, and Las Huacas in the Chincha Valley.

Through analyzing ceramic data from two sites in the Chincha Valley and evaluating the different types of hybrid material culture present, this article explores how Inca officials and local elites in different parts of the Chincha Valley (Figure 1) navigated the process of Inca expansion (Late Horizon, AD 1400–1532) and developed their authority. Studies of hybrid material culture often rely on analyses of complete vessels; however, by using ceramic data with known proveniences, this article demonstrates how studies of fragmentary sherds can contribute to discussions of hybrid material culture by adding information on where it was used and the types of artifacts it was used alongside.

This article focuses on diagnostic sherds from the sites of La Centinela and Las Huacas ( $n = 4,337$ ).<sup>1</sup> By comparing vessel shapes, production techniques, and design motifs of ceramic assemblages from different multifunctional elite complexes (Figure 2), the manuscript sheds light on the different types of hybrid material culture used in the Chincha Valley and how Inca officials and local elites used it to develop their authority.

### Hybridity

Studies of hybridity focus on how cultures can transform and combine in new ways within multicultural settings. Through studying the material culture that was produced within these settings, archaeologists can explore how people from different cultural groups interacted with each other and how technologies and symbols were used in new contexts and took on new meanings (Liebmann 2013; VanValkenburgh 2013; VanValkenburgh et al. 2017). The term “hybrid” has been used in Andean archaeology to discuss material culture and refers to objects that “systematically combined” characteristics from distinct cultural groups (Costin 2016:319). These characteristics were related both to style and production techniques (Brezine 2013; Chatfield 2013; Feltham and Eeckhout 2004; Hayashida 1999). The concept of hybridity is used most often in studies of artifacts from the Late Horizon and colonial period (AD 1532–1824), when groups came into contact with the Inca and then the Spanish. Analyzing hybrid material culture alongside research on syncretism and entanglement (Palmié 2013; Silliman 2015; Stockhammer 2013) creates a framework for understanding power dynamics within multicultural settings and the ways that each culture influenced the other.

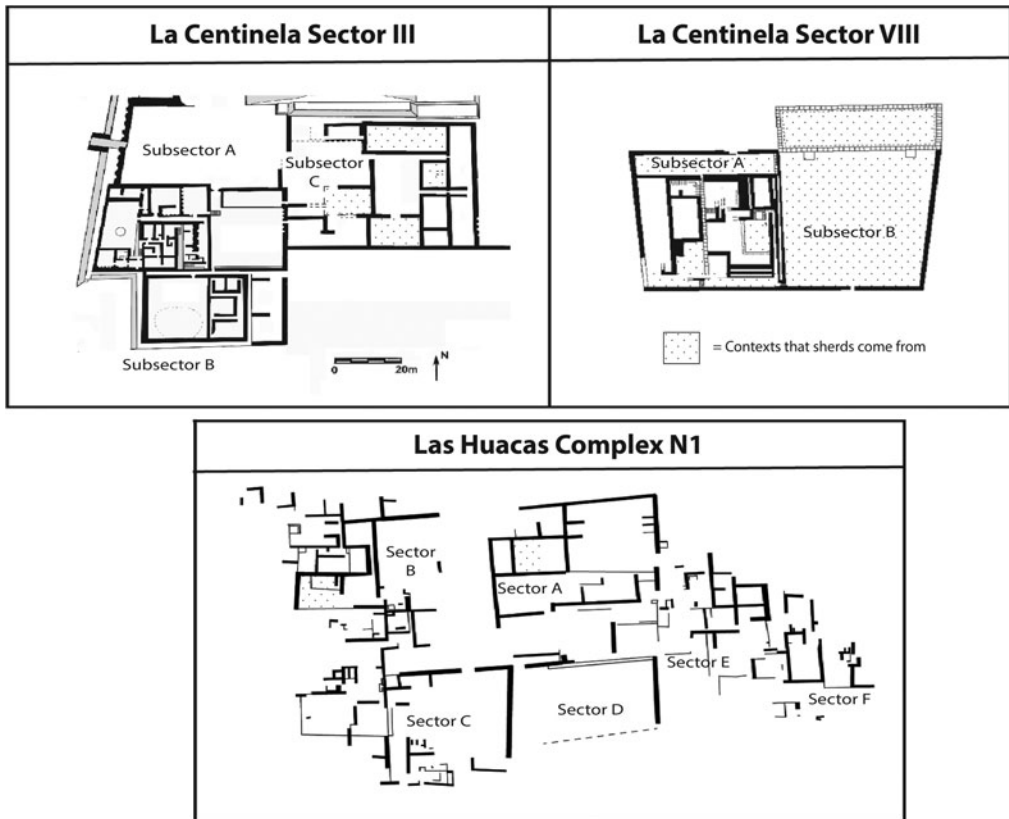


Figure 2. Maps of La Centinela Sector III, La Centinela Sector VIII, and Las Huacas Complex N1.

Studies of hybrid material culture are sometimes criticized for assuming “pure” cultures. Yet, these studies do not assume that the material culture of the two (or more) groups does not vary or change (Stewart 2011). Rather, they explore how certain characteristics of each group can become combined in new ways that are indicative of social and political relationships. Studies of hybridity do not a priori assume a directionality and can incorporate the diverse ways that local people interacted with imperial rule (Langin-Hooper 2007).

Through analyzing ceramic sherds, this article contributes information on how the Inca and the Chincha interacted with each other and how each group adapted its practices and strategies for developing authority based on the other. The traits used in these analyses are differentially related to aspects of distribution, consumption, and production. The way that these traits vary is indicative of the types of material culture that local elites and Inca officials wanted to use within the different sectors and the decisions that the artisans made or were commissioned to make (Gosselain 2000; Sillar 2000).

### *Hybridity in the Inca Empire*

The Inca created a large empire that extended north to Ecuador and south to central Chile. This territory encompassed a wide range of ethnic groups, many of which wielded a large amount of power in the preceding Late Intermediate period (LIP; AD 1100–1400). These groups included the Colla and Lupaqa of the Lake Titicaca region (Stanish and Bauer 2007), the Chimú of the north coast (Mackey 2010), and the Chincha on the south coast (Morris and Santillana 2007). When incorporating these groups, the Inca developed their authority alongside aspects of local authority. They not only used existing administrative structures but also promoted the expansion of certain local material culture and religious ideologies.

On the north coast of Peru, local Lambayeque material culture continued to be used alongside Inca material culture at Farfán (Mackey 2020), and the power of important religious sites, such as the islands of the Sun and Moon in Lake Titicaca (Stanish and Bauer 2007) and Pachacamac in the Lurín Valley (Makowski 2014), was expanded under Inca rule. This emphasis on aspects of both local and imperial authority was reflected in many practices and types of material culture. Studies of Late Horizon ceramics can provide insights into the types of relationships developed between the Inca and local people and how each developed their authority during this dynamic period.

### *Imperial, Provincial, and Hybrid Inca Wares*

Throughout the Andes, a variety of ceramics are related to Inca expansion: it is important to distinguish among imperial, provincial, and hybrid wares, which all incorporated some aspect of Inca influence. Within these types, imperial and provincial Inca ceramics are the most widely studied, and research has discovered broad patterns throughout the empire (D’Altroy 2002; Pärssinen and Siirriäinen 1997; Zasada 1985). The line between imperial (ceramics from the capital of Cuzco) and provincial (made in the provinces) wares is not always clear; they are usually difficult to differentiate by eye. Both generally follow typical standardized shapes and use specific polychrome designs. Inca vessel shapes include aryballos (narrow-mouth jars with a long neck, flaring rim, and conical base) and plates (Meyers 1975:24). Inca designs are typically polychrome and feature geometric designs; some common motifs are rhombuses and the linear fern motif (for more details, see Meyers 1975:25; Rowe 1944:47).

Inca ceramics in the provinces were most commonly plates and aryballos (Bray 2003). These vessel shapes were used for activities related to feasting: aryballos normally held chicha (corn beer), and plates were used to serve food. The prevalence of these types of vessels highlights the importance of feasting and social interactions in Inca provincial encounters. Bray (2003:21) suggests that the standardized, visible nature of these artifacts was aimed at “creating material symbols of social hierarchy and class difference.”

In addition to provincial and imperial Inca ceramics, hybrid wares were also found in certain regions throughout the empire (Costin 2016; Feltham and Eeckhout 2004; Hayashida 1999; Menzel 1976; Morris and Santillana 2007:141), such as the Peruvian north coast and the Chíncha and Ica Valleys. In Ica, Menzel (1976) distinguishes between provincial Inca wares and a hybrid Ica-Inca style. The hybrid style that she defines incorporates aspects of decoration, form, and production techniques that were influenced by both groups but also includes entirely new designs. Menzel (1959:133) states that some aspects of this style do not have “antecedents in either tradition” and that “Inca influence can be traced in the handles and spouts of these vessels but is largely absent in the painted designs.”

The Ica-Inca style is associated with new vessel shapes, decorations, and the placement of designs on vessels. Typically, Inca designs are placed on specific parts of the vessel. For example, on aryballos, designs are usually found on the “neck, the upper shoulder of the ‘back’ side, and the front panel” (Bray 2000:172). Bray hypothesizes that this is because aryballos represent people, possibly even the Inca himself, and that the placement of banded designs on the vessel reflects where decorations would be on a tunic or belt that the ruler would have worn. On Ica-Inca vessels, decoration placement follows the Ica style, in which “the principal design area is to cover the largest part of the design surface” (Menzel 1976:151). Placement of the design on the vessel is different on Ica-Inca wares than on typical Inca vessels, which could signify that they did not hold the same symbolic value as Inca aryballos in the imperial style.

In Ica, Menzel (1976) also describes a style known as Ica 9, which she defines as a local style that incorporates some references to Inca elements and new designs. I propose that some of the Ica 9 vessels and decorations, specifically those that incorporate Inca-influenced traits (flat strapped handles and flared rims) and designs (such as the hatch pattern triangles with smaller triangles [Menzel 1976: Plate 34:442, 457, 460, 461] and the reflected step motif with a white design or area separating the two steps [Menzel 1976:Plate 35:477]), are also examples of hybrid Ica-Inca material culture. This type is different from the Ica-Inca specimens designated by Menzel and likely reflects distinct contexts of use and production.

This expanded range of variation in Ica-Inca ceramics is similar to research on hybrid styles from the north coast of Peru. In this region, there is evidence for a range of hybrid styles that include (1) Inca symbols on local vessels, (2) local symbols on Inca vessels, (3) Inca techniques adapted to local vessels, and (4) north coast technologies used to produce Inca vessels (Costin 2016; Hayashida 1999; Mackey 2020). These different types further demonstrate that hybrid wares are not a homogeneous type and that the way that they vary can illuminate the complex social and political dynamics associated with Inca expansion.

Although there is variation in hybrid Inca wares on the north coast, the use of Inca symbols on local vessels followed certain patterns. Costin (2016:346) notes that “potent Inka designs [are rarely found] on local vessel shapes, at least not as entire design schemes and especially not on labor intensive, well-made vessels likely to be used in highly visible political or ritual contexts.” Although not explicitly stated in the text, these potent designs likely refer to Inca polychrome A and B (Rowe 1944:47), which were comprehensive design schemes made up of multiple elements. Costin (2016:361) hypothesizes that these Inca designs were not found on local vessels because those vessels did not have the same symbolic significance as diagnostic Inca shapes and that local people did not want to use those types of Inca symbols to develop their authority in more local contexts.

At the site of Farfán, Mackey (2020:370) describes a hybrid style in which strap handles and press-mold faces were added to local ceramic forms and earlier Chimú motifs that had been transformed. In addition to designs and vessel forms that integrated Inca and local traits, ceramic vessels on the north coast were sometimes produced using a mixture of local and Inca techniques. In the Leche Valley, workshops that produced both provincial and local wares used both local techniques in the formation of vessels and Inca firing practices (Hayashida 1998, 1999; Hayashida and Guzmán 2015). Similarly, in the Jequetepeque Valley, a ceramic workshop produced both Inca and local ceramics (Donnan 1997).

Differentiating between Inca and local techniques can be difficult, because traits used to distinguish Inca-influenced ceramics in one region do not directly translate to a different region. On the north coast of Peru, researchers interpret mold-made ceramics as a local Chimú technique and coil-made ceramics as an Inca technique (Costin 2016; Hayashida 1999). On the central coast, researchers interpret mold-made vessels as characteristics of Inca production (Feltham and Eeckhout 2004). Because of these conflicting criteria, defining Inca-influenced ceramics should focus on characterizing local techniques prior to the arrival of the Inca and then exploring how they changed under the Inca Empire. As described earlier, one region where hybrid ceramic styles have been documented is the Chincha Valley of Peru, and excavations at different contemporaneous sites in the valley present an opportunity to analyze how ceramics varied between two sites that had different relationships with the Inca.

### The Chincha

The Chincha Valley is located along Peru’s Pacific coastline in the transition between the central and south coast. Although much remains to be understood about the Chincha before the arrival of the Inca, in the LIP it was a specialized coastal polity that included both fisherman and farmers and was an important Inca province (Rostworowski 1970). In Chincha, the Inca set up a style of joint rule in which Inca and local authority were developed alongside each other (Morris and Santillana 2007). The Chincha have also been described as being in control of long-distance maritime trade to Ecuador under the Inca (Rostworowski 1970), which enabled local elites to increase their wealth and prestige (Sandweiss and Reid 2016).

During the multistage process of Inca expansion, the Inca installed state infrastructure such as roads and storehouses (Rostworowski 1999:112–116) and constructed a palace at the site of La Centinela, the capital (Morris and Santillana 2007; Santillana 1984; Wallace 1998). La Centinela is located in the northwestern part of the Chincha Valley right next to the ocean (Figure 1). It was occupied both before and during the Inca period, and although the size of the entire site is unknown, it likely covered more than 100 ha. The core of the site covers 12 ha and includes elite residences, roads, and ritual structures; constructions were made both from Inca-style adobes and the local technique of *tapia*, in which clay was poured between wooden molds.

This article focuses on ceramics from the sites of La Centinela and Las Huacas, a secondary agricultural center. At La Centinela, sherds come from two sectors that contained elite residences/palaces and were modified during the Late Horizon (Figure 2): (1) Sector III, which was the location of the Inca and the local rulers' palaces, and (2) an elite residence in Sector VIII. At Las Huacas, sherds come from Complex N1, which was a multifunctional elite residence that was transformed during the Late Horizon.

### *La Centinela*

*Sector III.* Sector III, which I refer to as Centinela III, included the Inca and Chincha rulers' palaces and contained restricted spaces that would have been used for interactions between the Inca and important local elites (Morris and Santillana 2007; Wallace 1998). In this sector, there is evidence for a mixture of Inca and Chincha architectural traits. The palace of the local Chincha ruler had a typical Inca double-jamb doorway at the entrance, whereas the Inca palace had a local Chincha-style rectangular doorway (Morris and Santillana 2007:146).

Ceramics included in this analysis were excavated in the 1980s by the Chincha-Pisco Archaeological Project led by Craig Morris. The sherds come from Subsector C, which is in the eastern part of the complex outside both palaces (Figure 2). Subsector IIIC was regarded by the excavators as a center for economic activity because of the presence of a midden and artifacts associated with textile production that included cloth and wool at various stages of production. The ceramics come from four rooms that were occupied during the Late Horizon and have evidence of reuse during the colonial period. The sherds come from floors and both intentional and natural fill.

*Sector VIII.* Sector VIII (Centinela VIII) was an elite residence: Subsector VIIIA is a truncated rectangular pyramid with terraced sides, which is typical of Chincha architecture, and Subsector VIIIB is likely a Late Horizon construction that created a large and enclosed courtyard with a small platform at the northern end. The construction of Subsector VIIIA predates the Inca, but the structure was remodeled during the Late Horizon. One of the modifications included the addition of an adobe wall that ran north to south and divided the structure in two. Morris and Santillana (2007:154) hypothesize that the Inca "had divided a local compound and created a new dual structure, allowing them to participate in newly expanded ceremonies in Sector VIII and to influence and control the people who used it."

The ceramics included in this article come from Late Horizon occupations in both Subsectors VIIIA and VIIIB: the sherds from Subsector VIIIB come from test units throughout the plaza and the platform at the northern end. Sherds from Subsector VIIIA come from a hallway, two interior rooms, and a long skinny room at the northern end (Figure 2).

### *Las Huacas*

The site of Las Huacas is in the alluvial plains of the Chincha Valley. It covers approximately 75 ha and is composed of dispersed mounds. It was occupied from at least the Early Intermediate period (AD 200–600) into the colonial period. Complex N1 is located at the northwestern edge of the site and is 2 ha (Dalton 2020:30). It comprises many sectors and has a sprawling horizontal floorplan of multiple courtyards, platforms, and rooms (Figure 2). The complex was selected for excavations because it differs from the typical Chincha construction of a compact truncated pyramid and its trapezoidal floorplan reflects Inca influence.

Ceramics included in this analysis come from both Sectors A (Las Huacas N1-A) and B (Las Huacas N1-B). In Sector A, the ceramic sherds were found in Room A2, which was remodeled during the Late Horizon. Originally, the excavation area was an open space at the base of a platform, and in its final form it was an enclosed room. AMS dates from Room A2 date the earliest occupation to approximately AD 1200 (Dalton 2020:76). Ceramic sherds from the floors associated with the LIP were included in the analyses to provide a baseline for the Late Horizon occupations (sherds are grouped under Las Huacas LIP). These LIP contexts were superimposed sealed floors and did not include many diagnostic sherds ( $n = 228$ ), but they can provide a perspective for future lines of investigation.

In Sector B, the ceramic sherds come from Room B1, which was on top of a platform. Room B1 was remodeled during the Late Horizon, and the organization of the room became more complex over time (Dalton and Damián Domínguez 2017:202). In Las Huacas N1-B, there are no AMS dates, but 2.5 m of

fill and floors are dated to the Late Horizon based on the associated material culture. The modifications to Room B1 indicate that Sector B was heavily modified during the Late Horizon, and there was no evidence for a clear LIP occupation, highlighting the possibility that the sector could have been constructed mostly during the Late Horizon.

The contexts at Las Huacas and La Centinela are all associated with multifunctional elite compounds that were occupied during the Late Horizon. Through comparing the ceramic assemblages from the different complexes, this article creates a framework for understanding how each navigated Inca expansion and the distinct ways that elites and Inca officials developed their authority in different contexts.

## Methods

The ceramic sherds from Las Huacas and La Centinela were coded by two separate projects using the same coding system (Supplemental Table 1). Data from Las Huacas were coded by the Proyecto de Investigación Arqueológica Las Huacas, and the data from La Centinela were coded by the Chincha-Pisco Archaeological Project in the 1980s. To evaluate whether the two datasets were comparable, photos of ceramics from the Chincha-Pisco Archaeological Project were consulted and the coding system was simplified to easily distinguish categories that were consistently coded similarly.

## Coding System

The different categories included in the analyses were inclusion texture, paste color, exterior surface treatment, interior surface treatment, vessel shape, lip shape, designs, and the presence of changes in paste color due to firing. Inclusion texture was recorded as fine, semi-fine, semi-coarse, or coarse. Paste color was coded as orange, brown, gray, gray-brown, reddish-brown, or other. These broad distinctions of color were consistent across the two projects and represent a simplified version of the coding system; sherds from both sites originally included categories such as red-orange, gray-orange, and brown-orange. Because these distinctions were not consistent across the sites, the color was simplified to orange. The reddish-brown category was used at Las Huacas and not at La Centinela; sherds of this paste type from Las Huacas were then excluded from the multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) described later but were included for analyses of vessel shapes and decorations. The exterior and interior surface treatments were characterized based on their texture (coarse or smooth), whether they were burnished, and the presence and color of slip. Slip colors included cream, red, and paste-colored.

Vessel shapes can be found in [Figure 3](#) and incorporate shapes published for the site of Huánuco Pampa (Morris et al. 2011) and the Chincha and Ica regions (Menzel 1966, 1976). It is important to note that the design of the coding system used by both projects was based on the system for the highland Inca center of Huánuco Pampa and was more accurate in categorizing Inca vessel shapes than local ones. This is reflected in the fact that, for Centinela III, where the Inca palace was located, there were much fewer unknown or general vessel shapes: Centinela III, 14.1%; Centinela VIII, 33.6%; Las Huacas N1-A, 28.8%; Las Huacas N1-B, 19.9%; and Las Huacas LIP, 26.8%.

Inca vessel shapes included aryballos / narrow-mouth jars, plates, keros (which were rare), pots with angular rims (Huánuco Pampa [HP] Form 7 and vessel shape [VS] 2 in [Figure 3](#)), and pots with “almost vertical walls” (HP Form 6 and VS 3 in [Figure 3](#); Morris et al. 2011:232–233). Based on descriptions in Morris and coauthors (2011), VS 2 would be similar to Form 10 in Meyers (1975:24), whereas VS 3 would be similar to Form 11. Bray (2003:16) interprets Form 10 as associated with cooking and Form 11 with the serving of soups and porridges.

Chincha vessel shapes were bowls with straight or incurving rims, plates, and cambered rim pots (VS 15). Other common vessel shapes were closed jars with reinforced rims (VS 8) and closed jars with nearly vertical necks (VS 9). It is important to note that plates were important Inca vessels and also have a long history in Chincha (Pérez et al. 2015:197). It was not clear whether the two projects had used the same criteria to differentiate between local versus Inca plates, so the categories were grouped together as “general plates.”

The shape of the lip was characterized as squared, rounded, flaring outward, pointed without facets, worked on one side, or arrow shaped. Inca designs in the final system were coded as Inca ([Figure 4a](#), [4d](#), [4h](#)), Inca red and white ([Figure 4f](#)), or triangles on the rim ([Figure 4b](#)). If there

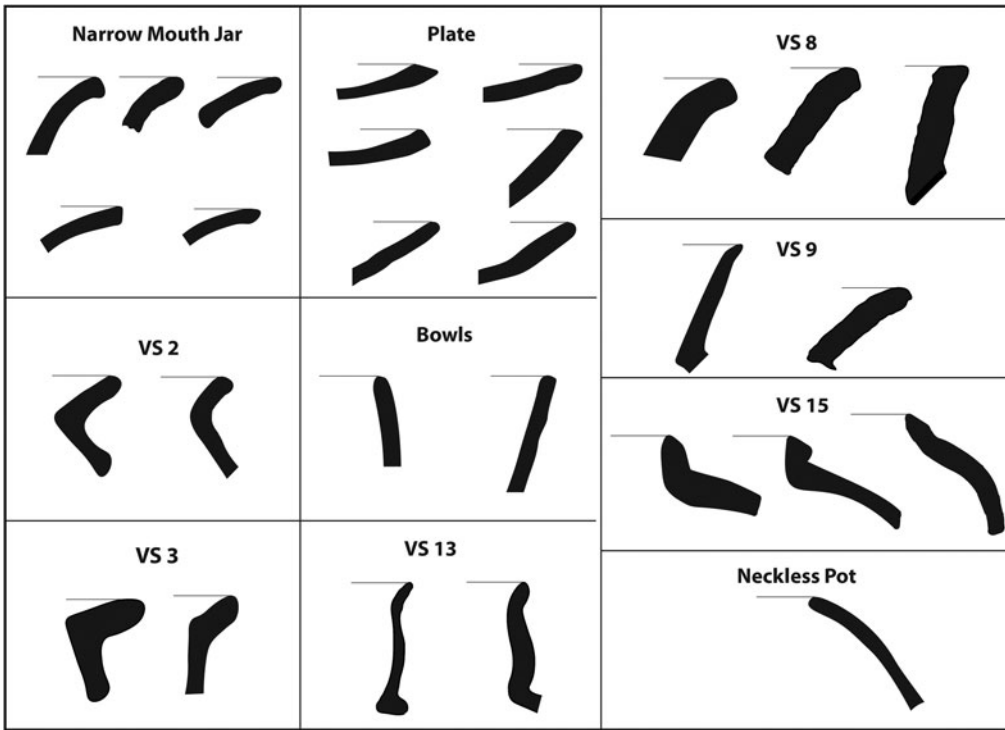


Figure 3. Important rim shapes discussed in this article. VS stands for vessel shape.



Figure 4. Plates found at the sites of La Centinela and Las Huacas (photos of La Centinela fragments shared with permission of American Museum of Natural History). (Color online)



were triangles on the rim and other Inca polychrome designs were present, it was coded as Inca, rather than triangles on the rim. Chincha decorations included white, black, and purple bands, as well as geometric designs often depicting fish or birds over a red, cream, or purple background (Menzel 1966, 1976). Chincha-Inca designs included black and red lines forming rhombuses and Xs, figures that combined Inca and Chincha traits (similar to Menzel 1976:Plate 37:502, 511–514), Inca geometric designs that incorporated Chincha patterns (Figure 5d, 5e), and reflected stair motifs that had a white area or figure separating the two sides.

When different parts of the sherd had different paste colors, the coding system also included the presence or absence of color change due to the firing process. Color change could have been due to an inconsistent firing atmosphere or an Inca firing technique in which vessels “were reduced at high temperatures, followed by a brief period of oxidation” (Hayashida 1999:347). The coding systems used by both projects did not capture this distinction, but the variable was still included in analyses because the absence of color change was significant and coded consistently.

Analyses focused on comparing vessel shapes and decorations across contexts and exploring the types of designs present on different vessel shapes.<sup>2</sup> An MCA was also conducted to explore how traits of ceramic sherds from specific vessel shapes varied across different contexts.

### *Multiple Correspondence Analysis*

To compare traits of certain vessel shapes, an MCA analysis was conducted using FactomineR in R (Lê et al. 2008). The MCA included inclusion texture, paste color, exterior surface treatment, interior surface treatment, lip shape, the presence/absence of discoloration due to firing, and the presence/absence of decoration (see data in Supplemental Table 2). Context—for example, Centinela III—was added as a supplementary qualitative variable.

### **Results**

The analyses included data on 4,337 sherds: 1,206 from Centinela III, 598 from Centinela VIII, 1,742 from Las Huacas N1-A, 563 from Las Huacas N1-B, and 228 from Las Huacas LIP. There are differences in the types of designs found across the contexts and the types of vessels on which certain designs are found (Figure 6; Table 1). At Centinela III, 38.8% of decorated sherds had Inca designs, compared to only 14.1% in Centinela VIII and 6.2% in Las Huacas N1-A. Inca designs were typically found on Inca vessel shapes (narrow-mouth jars, plates, VS 2, VS 3), but in some cases they were found on Chincha or not diagnostically Inca vessel shapes (VS 15, pot general, and jars general). Similarly, Chincha designs were typically found on bowls, VS 15, plates, and general jars and not often on Inca vessel shapes, except for one narrow-mouth jar in Centinela VIII and three VS 3 sherds in Centinela III.

### *Chincha-Inca Designs*

Overall, hybrid decorations, referred to as Chincha-Inca, were not common, comprising 6.9% of decorated sherds at Centinela III, 1.8% at Centinela VIII, and 1.3% at Las Huacas N1-A. Of these sherds, only 24 were from a known vessel shape: 12 from Centinela III and 12 from Las Huacas N1-A. At La Centinela, the vessel shapes were narrow-mouth jars, VS 3, bowls, and plates; at Las Huacas they were found on VS 9, VS 15, bowls, and the general jar category. The vessel shapes with hybrid designs in Centinela III are linked to mostly Inca vessel shapes, whereas at Las Huacas they are not associated with Inca vessel shapes and are found on some local vessel shapes.

### *Vessel Shapes*

In addition to variation in designs among the contexts, there are also clear patterns in the types of vessels present in each sector (Table 2).

*Narrow-Mouth Jars.* Narrow-mouth jars are closed vessels that flare out to nearly flat at the mouth; they include Inca aryballos and hybrid shapes with long necks and flaring rims. Consequently, not all sherds in this category should be interpreted as the highly diagnostic aryballo; however, they all showed some degree of Inca influence, and this sort of flared rim is consistently associated with Inca influence (Menzel 1976). Overall, this vessel type was much more numerous at the site of La Centinela (9.0%



Figure 5. Examples of hybrid material culture from the sites of La Centinela and Las Huacas (photos of La Centinela fragments shared with permission of the American Museum of Natural History). (Color online)

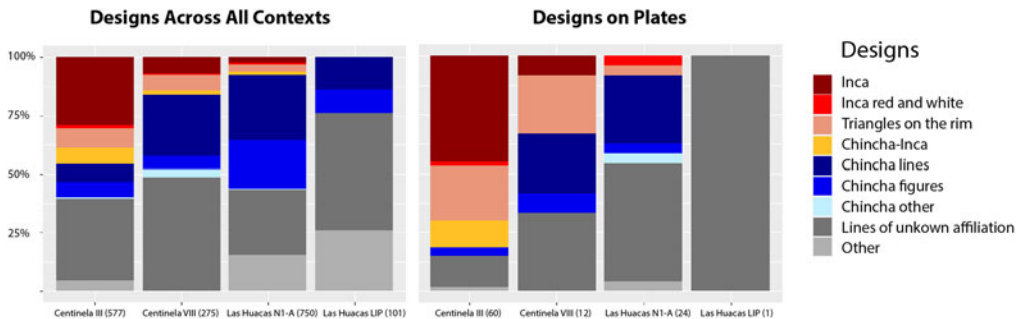


Figure 6. Bar charts: (left) distribution of designs across the different contexts, and (right) designs on plates. (Color online)

overall) and more prevalent in Centinela III (9.8%) than in Centinela VIII (7.3%). At the site of Las Huacas, they comprised 2.7% of the total assemblage and were more numerous in Las Huacas N1-B (4.4%). As described earlier, Las Huacas N1-B was possibly a later addition to the complex and was heavily remodeled throughout the Late Horizon.

**Table 1.** Number of Rim Sherds of Different Vessel Shapes Found with Chinchá, Inca, and Chinchá-Inca Designs.

	Centinela III	Centinela VIII	Las Huacas N1-A	Las Huacas LIP
<b>Chinchá</b>				
Narrow mouth jars	0	1	0	0
VS 3	3	0	0	0
Plates	2	4	9	0
Neckless pots	0	1	0	0
VS 15	0	0	6	0
Bowls	1	2	12	1
Jar general	0	2	5	5
Bottles	0	0	3	0
Other	0	3	5	2
<b>Inca</b>				
Narrow mouth jars	29	3	3	0
VS 2	7	0	0	0
VS 3	25	3	0	0
Plates	42	4	2	0
VS 6	0	0	2	0
VS 9	4	8	8	0
VS 10	2	0	0	0
VS 15	0	2	2	0
Bowls	2	0	0	0
Jar general	3	2	2	0
Bottles	0	0	5	0
Other	1	2	3	0
<b>Chinchá-Inca</b>				
Narrow mouth jars	2	0	0	0
VS 3	3	0	0	0
Plates	7	0	0	0
VS 9	0	0	1	0
VS 15	0	0	3	0
Bowls	0	0	4	0
Jar general	0	0	3	0
Bottles	0	0	1	0

In comparing the characteristics of sherds from narrow-mouth jars found at the different sites using the MCA (Figure 7), those found at La Centinela were more likely to be decorated, whereas most at Las Huacas were undecorated, except for three rim sherds in Las Huacas N1-A that had triangles on the rim. La Centinela narrow-mouth jars were also more likely to be blackware, with only one burnished blackware sherd at Las Huacas. The jars at Las Huacas were more likely to have brown paste and coarser inclusions. Except for triangles on the rim, Inca designs on narrow-mouth jars were mostly restricted to Centinela III, although there was one sherd at Centinela VIII.

**Table 2.** Percentages of Different Vessel Shapes across the Contexts.

	Centinela III	Centinela VIII	Las Huacas N1-A	Las Huacas N1-B	Las Huacas LIP
Narrow mouth jar	9.8%	7.3%	2.9%	4.4%	0.0%
VS 2	6.9%	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.0%
VS 3	9.8%	2.9%	0.4%	0.5%	0.7%
Plate	15.7%	8.7%	11.5%	7.3%	10.7%
VS 6	0.8%	0.3%	8.5%	1.4%	8.1%
VS 8	9.7%	2.9%	5.4%	4.8%	4.7%
VS 9	6.7%	13.9%	8.8%	7.8%	6.0%
VS 10	4.8%	8.1%	4.9%	8.0%	2.7%
Neckless pot	2.4%	4.5%	3.4%	5.5%	6.0%
VS 13	12.5%	6.8%	0.4%	1.6%	4.7%
VS 15	0.9%	1.6%	5.4%	1.2%	2.0%
Bowl	5.0%	8.9%	14.5%	31.3%	24.2%
Bottle	0.5%	0.5%	5.0%	5.9%	3.4%
Kero	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%
Other or general jar/pot	14.1%	33.6%	28.8%	19.9%	26.8%

*Other Inca Vessel Shapes.* The other Inca vessel shapes, VS 2 and VS 3, were not common in the Chincha Valley outside of Centinela III. In Centinela III these vessels were 6.9% (VS 2) and 9.8% (VS 3) of the assemblage versus only 2.9% (VS 3) at Centinela VIII and less than 1% combined in all the sectors of Las Huacas. The only rim sherds with decorations were from La Centinela (54 in Centinela III and 4 in Centinela VIII). Of these, the vast majority contained Inca polychrome designs (27) and triangles on the rim (8). In Centinela III, three sherds had Chincha-Inca designs, two contained Chincha figures, and one had Chincha lines. No VS 2 sherds had Chincha decorations.

*Plates.* Plates were found across all the sites and were a common vessel shape for both the Chincha and the Inca. Although this vessel shape was present across every context, they differed in production traits (Figure 7) and decorations (Figures 4 and 6). At Las Huacas, in both sectors, plates often had rough exterior surface treatments and coarser inclusions and were not decorated (Figure 4e), whereas those at La Centinela were decorated and had smoothed exterior surface treatments and finer inclusions. In addition, blackware plates were more common in the sectors at La Centinela. This supports what was previously described for narrow-mouth jars: artifacts from La Centinela were more likely to be decorated or blackware.

Although the characteristics of plate sherds were similar in both sectors at La Centinela, there were differences in designs between those in Centinela III and in Centinela VIII (Figure 8). In Centinela III, most plates had Inca polychrome designs (27), triangles on the rim (14), Chincha-Inca designs (7), or lines of unknown cultural affiliation (8). In Centinela VIII, Inca polychrome designs were rare (only 1), and designs were mainly triangles on the rim (3), Chincha lines (3), or lines of unknown cultural affiliation (4). At Las Huacas, designs were typically Chincha lines (7) or lines of unknown cultural affiliations (12). There were two Inca-inspired designs: one with triangles on the rim and one Inca red and white. The single decorated LIP plate sherd contained lines of unknown cultural affiliation.

*Bowls.* Incurving or straight rimmed bowls were common on the south coast and were found across all the different sectors, but they were most common at Las Huacas. In Las Huacas N1-B, they made up 31.3% of the sample and 14.5% in Las Huacas N1-A. At the site of La Centinela, bowls were more common in Centinela VIII (8.9%) than in Centinela III (5.0%).

In comparing the characteristics of bowls, there does not appear to be clear differences between the two sites, in contrast with narrow-mouth jars and plates that did differ. In Figure 7, the

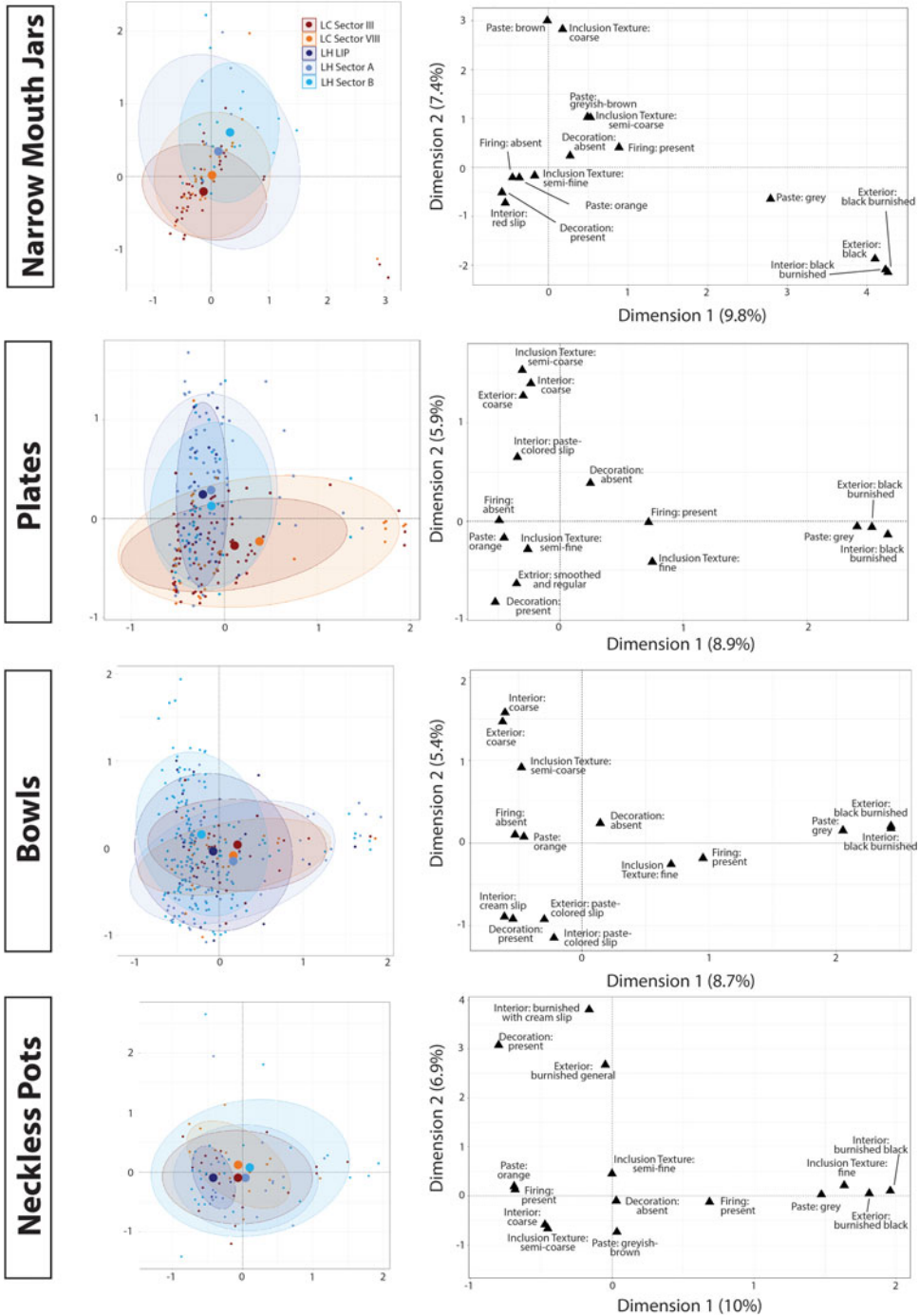
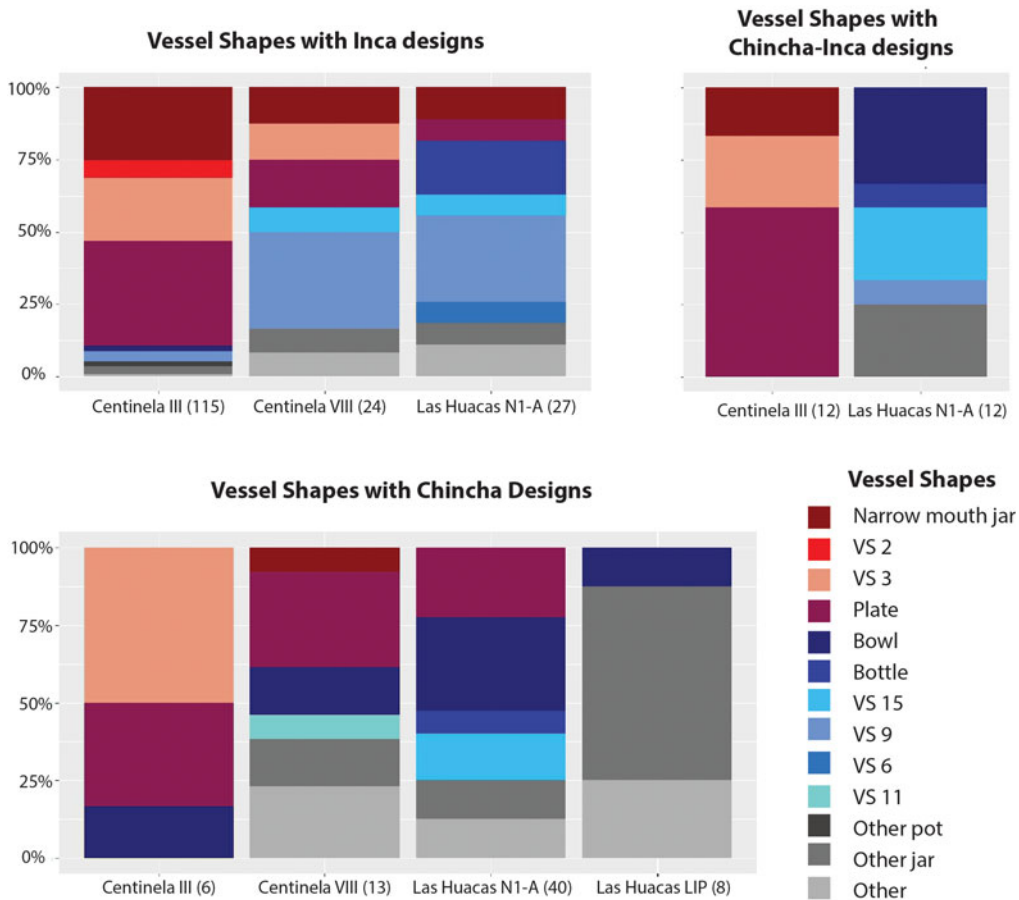


Figure 7. Multiple correspondence analyses graphs that show significant differences between the narrow mouth jars and plates from Las Huacas and La Centinela, and not significant differences between the bowls and neckless pots: (left) individual fragments with ellipses representing the different contexts and (right) different variables that contribute most to the dimensions of the x and y axes. (Color online)

centroids for the ellipse for Centinela VIII and Las Huacas N1-A are right next to each other. This means that there is no consistent pattern in the variables used in the MCA that differentiates the two sites.



**Figure 8.** Bar charts showing the types of vessel shapes that Inca, Chincha-Inca, and Chincha designs are found on. (Color online)

Decorated bowl fragments were recovered in Centinelá III (5), Centinelá VIII (7), Las Huacas N1-A (30), and Las Huacas LIP (8). Decorations on bowls were typically Chincha bands or lines of unknown cultural affiliation. Four fragments at Las Huacas had Chincha-Inca decorations.

*Other Vessel Shapes.* VS 15, a pot with a cambered rim, was not commonly recorded at La Centinelá: Centinelá III (0.9%) and Centinelá VIII (1.6%). Similarly, it was not recorded in large quantities in Las Huacas LIP (0.2%) and Las Huacas N1-B (1.2%). In Las Huacas N1-A, a large sample of 55 fragments was recovered (5.4% of the total assemblage). Common designs on VS 15 included Chincha figures over a red slip (3), triangles on the rim (3), and lines of unknown cultural affiliation (3).

Neckless pots were found throughout the assemblages but were most numerous in Las Huacas LIP (6.0%). Across the different Late Horizon contexts, no clear trend differentiates the sherds in one context from the others: the centroids of the ellipses are all relatively close to (0,0; Figure 7). The LIP neckless pots were slightly different: they were clustered farther down the *x*-axis and associated with an orange paste color, rough exterior surface treatment, and no color change due to firing. Neckless pots were not associated with a large number of decorations, so it is not possible at this time to compare their decoration across contexts.

Other common vessel shapes were VS 8 and VS 9. VS 8 is a closed jar with a reinforced rim; the majority of sherds associated with this vessel shape were likely from some sort of storage or cooking jar. The rims had an average diameter of 41 cm; many at Las Huacas could not be measured because they were too large for the rim chart, which stops at 52 cm. They were also rarely decorated (with only

three of the 155 sherds in this category containing decorations). This vessel shape was common at Centinela III (9.7%), but at Centinela VIII they only made up 2.9% of the assemblage.

VS 9 is a closed jar with a nearly vertical neck that was much smaller than VS 8, with a mean diameter of 27 cm. It was a common shape across all the contexts but was most numerous in Centinela VIII (13.9%); it was less common in Centinela III (6.7%) and Las Huacas LIP (6%). These sherds were not commonly decorated, but when they were, it was often with triangles around the rim.

### *Hybrid Vessel Shapes and Designs*

Earlier, I described hybrid Chincha and Inca designs, but there were also other hybrid ceramics that included (1) Inca vessels with Chincha designs, (2) local vessel shapes with Inca designs, and (3) complete vessels that combine local vessel shapes with flared rims and flat strapped handles.

Inca vessel shapes that had Chincha designs were not common and included narrow-mouth jars, VS 3, and plates. At Centinela VIII, Chincha figures over red were found on a single sherd from a narrow mouth jar, and at Centinela III Chincha bands and figures over a cream slip were found on three VS 3 fragments.

Chincha vessels and nondiagnostic Inca vessels with Inca designs were found across all contexts but rarely at Centinela III, where there were only two bowl fragments, four VS 9 fragments, and six others from general categories. At Las Huacas N1-A, Inca designs were found on a VS 15 sherd, a bowl fragment, bottles, and VS 9. Similarly, at Centinela VIII Inca designs were found on VS 9, VS 15, and other general categories.

There were also complete vessels from Las Huacas that included Inca traits of flat strapped handles and flared rims on nondiagnostic Inca shapes (Figure 5a, 5b). Because this analysis focused on ceramic sherds, it is likely that there were more of these types of hybrid vessels; however, because of the fragmented nature of the assemblages it is not possible at this point to compare the distribution of this type of hybrid material culture across contexts.

### **Discussion**

Based on the data from La Centinela and Las Huacas, hybrid ceramic styles in Chincha include (1) Inca vessel shapes that incorporated Chincha designs; (2) Chincha vessel shapes that incorporated flat strap handles, flaring rims, and Inca designs; and (3) new Chincha-Inca designs that incorporated elements of both Inca and Chincha designs (Figure 5c-i; Figure 4g).

The analysis of the distribution of designs and vessel shapes clearly shows that there are significantly more Inca designs and vessel shapes in Centinela III. In this sector, Inca designs are also mainly found on Inca-style vessels. The smaller number of Inca vessels and designs in Centinela VIII and Las Huacas is likely associated with a less direct Inca presence and the fact that interactions occurring in those sectors were predominantly between local elites.

At Las Huacas, Inca vessel shapes, such as narrow-mouth jars and plates, were often not decorated and, when decorated, did not have Inca polychrome designs. In Centinela VIII, sherds of these vessel shapes had similar characteristics to those from Centinela III, but Centinela VIII did not have as many fragments with ornate Inca polychrome designs. The lower frequency of highly diagnostic Inca design schemes outside of Centinela III shows either that the Inca restricted the use of these designs or that local people were not interested in introducing them into their stylistic repertoire and completely replacing local design schemes.

Inca vessel shapes registered across all the contexts would have been associated mainly with consumption (aryballos, plates, VS 3). Centinela III is the only sector with a significant number of sherds associated with Inca cooking vessels (VS 2). This likely means that in Centinela VIII and Las Huacas, local people were the ones preparing food and using some Inca serving vessel forms. In these contexts, when Inca designs were found, they were often on local Chincha or nondiagnostic Inca vessel shapes. These designs were generally not entire Inca polychrome designs, which is similar to what Costin (2016:346) describes for the north coast, where more “potent” Inca symbols were not found on local vessel shapes.

Inca and Chincha-Inca designs on Chincha vessels were likely tied to how the local Chincha elites developed their authority and were not necessarily part of direct Inca strategies to incorporate the

Chincha. This is also seen in the northern Ecuadorian highlands and northwestern Argentina, where the use of Inca and hybrid vessels was associated not with a direct Inca presence but with asserting status among local people (Bray 2021:311; Williams 2008). In this way, the use of Inca designs on local vessel shapes at Las Huacas took on new meanings and was not primarily related to the authority of Inca officials themselves.

In Centinela III and Centinela VIII, some Chincha or Chincha-Inca decorations appear on distinctive Inca serving vessels (narrow-mouth jars, plates, and VS 3). Centinela III was the site of direct Inca occupation, because it was the location of the Inca palace, and these vessels were likely part of state-sponsored hybrid wares, on which the Inca intentionally integrated Chincha symbols and motifs to develop their own claim to authority. At Centinela VIII, Inca serving vessels with Chincha and Chincha-Inca designs could also have been tied to the authority of Inca officials, even though, based on the architecture and entire ceramic assemblage, it does not appear to be a site of direct Inca occupation. Sector VIII was located only 200 m from the Inca palace in Sector III.

The studies of ceramics across the different contexts demonstrate that local elites and Inca officials used different types of material culture to develop their authority and that Inca and Chincha traits were mixed in different ways based on their context of use. The data also show that there was not a wholesale adoption of Inca traits: local vessel shapes and designs were still a central component of local authority. At the same time, certain traits of Inca ceramic traditions were sometimes used by local elites to assert their status and position, most likely to a local audience.

In addition to variation in designs and vessel shapes across the contexts, there is also evidence for differences in the characteristics of sherds associated with Inca vessel shapes (narrow-mouth jars and plates) between the sites of La Centinela and Las Huacas. Overall, sherds from La Centinela typically had finer inclusions, more uniform surface treatment, and decorations. For local vessel shapes, such as neckless pots and bowls, there were not significant differences in the characteristics of the sherds from different contexts. The differences in plates and narrow-mouth jars could be due to different production centers or exchange networks. The generally coarser inclusions, rougher surface treatments, and lack of decorations in the Las Huacas sherds could signify that elites there only had access to less high-quality versions of Inca vessel shapes, but more research is needed on craft production centers in the Chincha Valley. Geochemical analyses of sherds would also yield important information.

Excavations at Tambo de Mora and Las Huacas found evidence of craft production tied to local elite households. At Tambo de Mora, Alcalde and coauthors (2010) found a workshop producing both ceramics and metals associated with the LIP and early Late Horizon that was then abandoned during the later Inca period. Researchers postulate that it was abandoned when metallurgical production moved to a more tightly controlled state workshop.

Similarly, at the site of Las Huacas, there is also evidence for craft production attached to elite households and for the reuse of that space in a new way under the Inca Empire. Excavations of Room A2 in Complex N1 discovered kilns similar to those found at Tambo de Mora, unfired clay, and waster sherds associated with Floor 1. After the occupation of Floor 1, the kilns were largely abandoned and partially dismantled (Dalton 2020:68, 102). The space was then reused and ultimately became the burial location of at least 76 individuals (Dalton, Gómez Mejía, et al. 2022; Dalton, O'Shea, et al. 2022). At both Las Huacas and Tambo de Mora, there is evidence for craft production centers attached to elite households that were abandoned during the later Inca period, but more research is needed throughout the valley to better reconstruct the organization of craft production in Chincha under the Inca.

Studies of Inca ceramic production in the provinces find that the Inca relied on centralized state-run craft production (D'Altroy and Bishop 1990) and also tapped into preexisting local craft production networks (Davenport 2020; Donnan 1997; Hayashida 1999; Williams 2004). In Chincha, to better understand the production of ceramics in the Late Horizon, future petrographic and geochemical analyses are needed to elucidate the relationship between the contexts of use and production networks by enabling a more refined understanding of the different types of clays and inclusions used across different sites and compounds.



The ceramic studies from the sites of La Centinela and Las Huacas provide an opportunity to understand the distribution of vessel shapes and designs across different contexts and explore how it is related to sociopolitical strategies. Within the multicultural setting of Inca expansion, the use of Inca and local designs was flexible to a certain degree, and Inca officials and local elites at different sites used their own blend of traits to develop their authority. However, the distribution of entire Inca design schemes, like polychrome A and B on plates and aryballos, was mainly limited to the site of direct Inca presence in La Centinela Sector III.

At Las Huacas, it was important for local elites to show their status by emulating Inca traits and designs, but there is no evidence that they were trying to be Inca. At La Centinela, in a few cases, the Inca put Chincha designs on important Inca vessels, likely as part of explicit state strategies to bring the Chincha into the empire.

## Conclusion

The data presented in this article offer three important contributions to the study of Late Horizon material culture: (1) it supports previous studies that Inca vessels and decorations were mostly restricted to the area of direct Inca contact, (2) hybrid material culture varied across the different sectors, and (3) this variation is due to the strategies that local elites and Inca officials used to develop their authority. Furthermore, the characteristics of ceramic sherds from narrow-mouth jars and plates from La Centinela and Las Huacas differ. It is possible that these differences are related to access to different production networks, but more research is needed.

The data highlight that elites at three complexes in the Chincha Valley navigated Inca expansion differently and emphasize that hybrid material culture needs to be interpreted in context. Hybrid styles are not necessarily a homogeneous ceramic tradition but rather a category of vessels that can integrate traits from multiple cultures in distinct ways. These differences contain rich information on the types of strategies that elites at various sites used to develop their authority, particularly when analyzed along with the entire assemblage and associated with specific provenience data. This study demonstrates how fragmentary sherds with known proveniences can create a deeper understanding of how hybrid material culture was used and how it reflected the sociopolitical strategies employed by both Inca officials and local elites. In Chincha, Inca officials and local elites used different types of material culture to develop their authority, and local elites still relied on largely local material culture to develop their authority to a local audience.

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Supplemental Table 1. Coding System Used for the Analyses.

Supplemental Table 2. Coding Data for Sherds Included in the MCA.

## Notes

1. Diagnostic sherds included all rim sherds, base sherds that could be assigned to a diagnostic vessel shape, all decorated fragments, and blackware sherds.
2. Analyses of designs do not include Las Huacas N1-B because they were analyzed during the first year of the study and we did not yet have a strong grasp of the different designs.

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