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### **Local ideological strategies and the politics of ritual space in the Chimú Empire** *Edward R. Swenson*

#### **Abstract**

This article examines the politics of ritual space in the Jequetepeque Valley, Peru after the conquest of the region by the Chimú Empire (A.D. 1200–1450). Interpretations are based on detailed analysis of ceremonial architecture located in the rural hinterland of urban centres. Despite imperial incorporation, the proliferation of ceremonial sites in the Jequetepeque countryside indicates that ritual production remained the prerogative of local groups. Architectural archaism, syncretism and the emulation of Chimú space in Jequetepeque demonstrate that rural communities adopted diverse ideological strategies to defend indigenous political identities and manipulate imperial authorities. The analysis improves understanding of the effects of Chimú conquest on local populations and suggests that imperial administration relied on indirect rule. Local communities were not passive consumers of state ideology but actively participated in the propagation of both corporate and indigenous religious systems. Ultimately, the article intends to advance archaeological interpretation of the political significance of patterned variability in the construction and experience of ceremonial space.

#### **Keywords**

Chimú; imperialism; architecture; ritual politics; ideology; social memory

#### **Introduction**

Archaeologists working on the North Coast of Peru tend to privilege the study of dominant ideological structures and the organization of elite political systems. This focus is evident in the disproportionate attention given to the excavation of high-status tombs and monumental architecture in coastal Peru. In such perspectives, power asymmetries are identified in the material record but are often inadequately explained or contextualized. Political hierarchy, however, must be examined in a more holistic framework of power which emphasizes the totality of the social, as comprising diverse and often competing factions (Brumfiel 1992; McGuire 1992; Scott 1985). Since ritual practice is fundamental to identity politics, it provides an archaeologically accessible domain for the investigation of differing value systems that may have coexisted in a particular prehistoric society. The analysis of divergent ritual regimes can disclose the ideological strategies of the majority non-elite

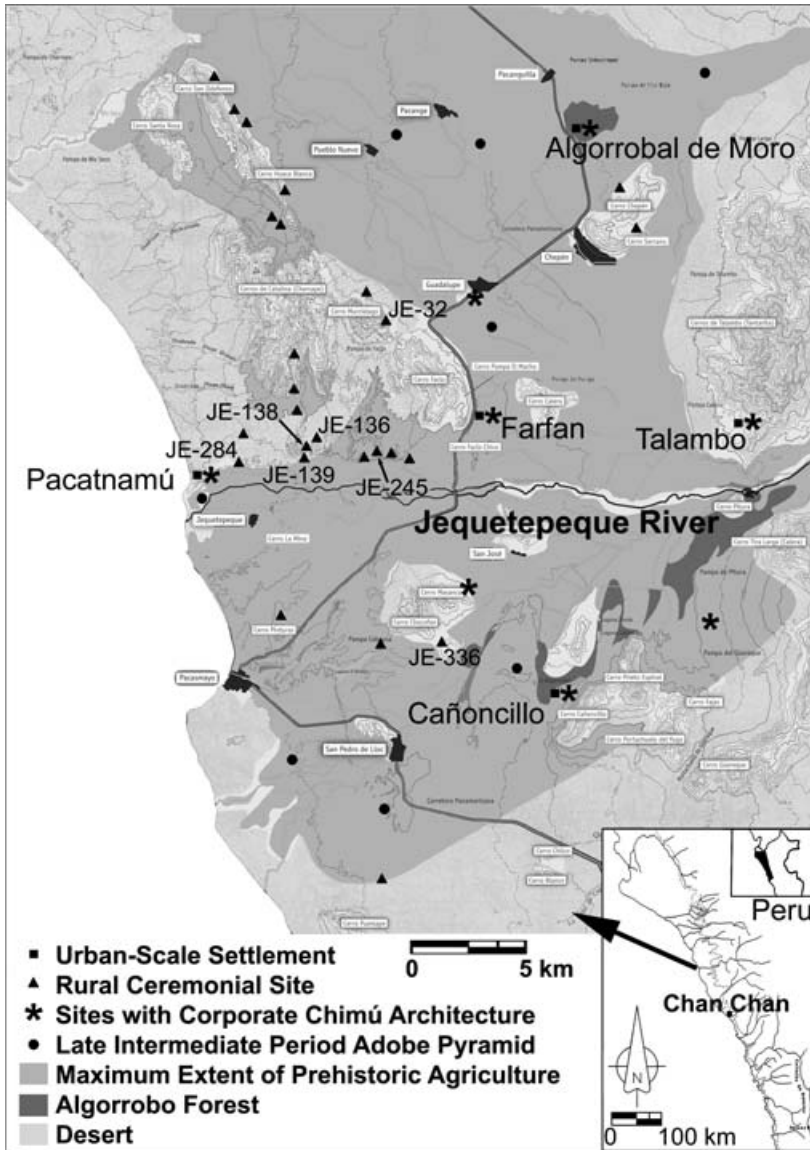
and allow for a more probing interpretation of their essential role in complex power relations (Brumfiel 1998; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Joyce, Bustamante and Levine 2001; McGuire 1992; Miller and Tilley 1984; Miller, Rowlands and Tilley 1989; Plunket 2002; Swenson 2006a; Wylie 1992).

The Lower Jequetepeque Valley (the Pacasmayo region), located 100 kilometres north of the Chimú capital of Chan Chan, was conquered by the Chimú Empire at some time in the early 13th century (Dillehay 2001; Dillehay and Kolata 1997; 2004a; 2004b; Eling 1987; Hecker and Hecker 1985; 1990; Keatinge and Conrad 1983; Kosok 1965) (figure 1). The imperial incorporation of this region (A.D. 1250–1450) was accompanied by rural demographic expansion and the continuation of widespread ritual production in the hinterland, a tradition which first became prevalent in the Late Moche Period (as early as A.D. 550) (Dillehay and Kolata 2004a; Swenson 2004). Little is understood, however, concerning the actual political relations linking rural communities with imperial administration, indigenous elites and the many urban centres in the Jequetepeque Valley.

During the course of my research on Moche ritual politics (Swenson 2004; 2006a; 2006b) I had the opportunity to examine ceremonial architecture at 15 Chimú sites in the Jequetepeque countryside under the auspices of Proyecto Pacasmayo directed by Tom Dillehay and Alan Kolata. These observations allowed me to interpret long-term historical transformations in rural religious practices and identity politics as well as to explore the impact of Chimú administration on Jequetepeque sociopolitical arrangements. The comparison of ideological programmes in the hinterland illuminated the political dispositions of local populations and their participation in regional power structures.

Different ideological strategies in rural Jequetepeque are reflected in the conservative continuity of indigenous Late Moche (A.D. 550–800) and Lambayeque (A.D. 800–1200) architectural styles as well as in the emulation of Chimú built aesthetics. In fact both the mimesis of corporate Chimú architecture and the selective continuation of Late Moche templates point to different 'strategies of ritualization' (Bell 1992) deployed by communities to maintain indigenous traditions, secure urban favour and possibly subvert exploitative conditions. My study reveals that ritual practice in Jequetepeque was determined largely by local initiative, thus indicating that Chimú administration operated primarily through indirect mechanisms.

In this paper, I argue that popular emulation of imperial religious architecture in the hinterland should not be interpreted as an archaeological measure of Chimú hegemony in Pacasmayo. Rather, the differential adoption of elite ritual practice and corporate architecture in the countryside reflects non-elite ideological strategies that were instrumental to the maintenance of local political structures. Another important objective of the article is to critically assess how architectural mimesis, archaism and syncretism in prehistoric contexts can be effectively interpreted to infer the political subjectivity and contested social memories of diverse communities. Ultimately, this comparative study of ceremonial architecture in Jequetepeque aims to advance archaeological analysis of prehistoric imperialism and its impact on local religious practices.



**Figure 1** Map of the lower Jequetepeque Valley, Peru, illustrating the location of Chimú Period ceremonial sites. Sites mentioned in the text are indicated.

### Ceremonial architecture in the Jequetepeque countryside during the Chimú Period

*Chimor and the Jequetepeque Valley in the Late Intermediate Period* The Chimú Empire conquered much of coastal Peru, from the Vicús region in the north to the Fortaleza Valley in the south, during the Late Intermediate Period (A.D. 1000–1400). Power was invested in kings who ruled from

elaborate walled compounds in the massive adobe city of Chan Chan, the capital of Chimor located in the lower Moche Valley (Conrad 1982; Day 1982; Klymyshyn 1987; Kolata 1982; 1990; Moseley 1975; Topic 2003). Chimú society was highly stratified and characterized by class division and specialized craft production founded on a subsistence base of irrigation agriculture (Dillehay and Kolata 2004a; 2004b; Mackey 1987; Rowe 1948; J. Topic 1982; 1990). Elaborate interregional hydraulic systems were built under the direction of state administration, and the Chimú state appears to have played a direct role in the management of agricultural production and the redistribution of economic resources (Eling 1987; Keatinge 1982, 198; Keatinge and Conrad 1983; Mackey and Klymyshyn 1990; Pozorski 1987).

Ñançenpinco, the third ruler of the Chimú Empire, is mentioned in the *Historia Anónima* as directing the imperial conquest of the Jequetepeque and Zaña Valleys in the north as well as several valleys to the south (Conrad 1990; Klymyshyn 1987; Kolata 1990; Pozorski 1987; Rowe 1948; T.L. Topic 1990). General Pacatnamú is famed as the great warrior under Ñançenpinco who effectively subdued the Jequetepeque *señorío* (lordly domain) after fierce battles, and he subsequently became the respected governor of the region (Calancha 1977 (1638), 1227; Conrad 1990; Means 1931, 57).

The Lower Jequetepeque became one of the most urbanized regions in all of Peru during the Late Intermediate Period. Farfán, Talambo, Cañoncillo, Algarrobal de Moro and Pacatnamú occupied more than several square kilometers each and were characterized by dense configurations of ceremonial, administrative and domestic architecture (figure 1) (Briceño 1996; Donnan and Cock 1986; Hecker and Hecker 1985; Keatinge and Conrad 1983; Ravines 1982). Hydraulic and agricultural infrastructures also expanded considerably, which possibly entailed regional coordination and the periodic regulatory intervention of the Chimú state (Dillehay and Kolata 2004a; Eling 1987; Keatinge and Conrad 1983).

The Chimú conquest of the Jequetepeque region (*ca* A.D. 1150–1250) did not end the tradition of building ceremonial architecture in the hinterland of the lower valley (mainly on coastal hills, in desert plains, and within or adjacent to agricultural fields) (Swenson 2004). Although settlement patterns and architectural styles changed between the two periods (Dillehay 2001; Dillehay and Kolata 2004a), widespread ritual practice in the countryside, a phenomenon which first became prevalent in the Late Moche Phase (A.D. 550–800), continued into the Transitional/Lambayeque Periods (A.D. 900–1250) and perdured through the era of Chimú domination (Swenson 2004).

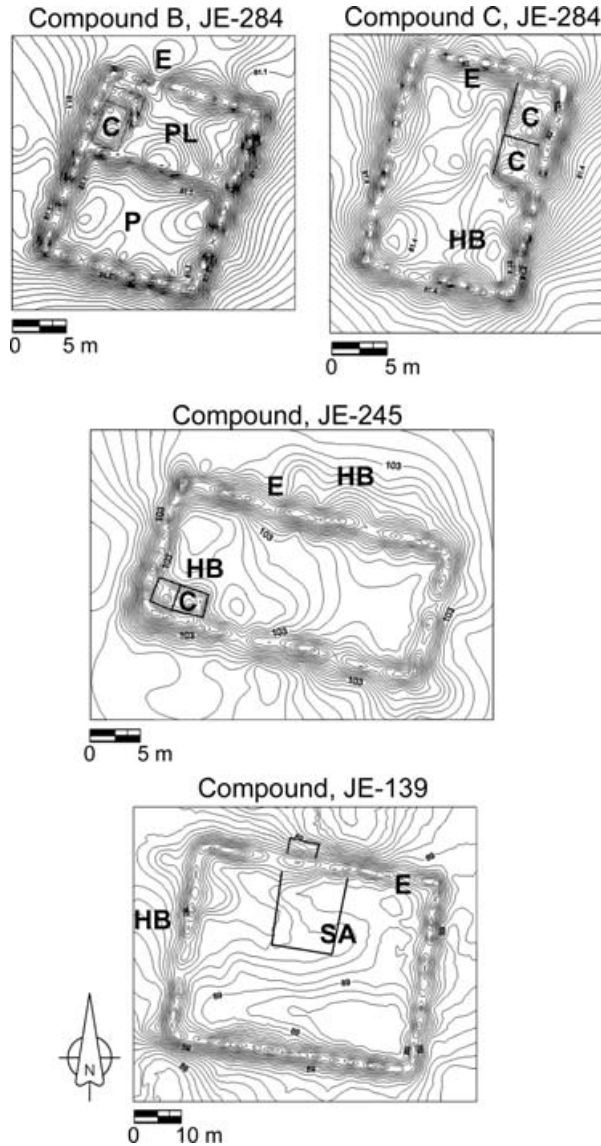
Although several of the 15 sites in my study were first constructed in the Lambayeque Period, much of the ceremonial architecture exhibits Chimú influences and was significantly rebuilt after the subjugation of the region by Chimor (post-A.D. 1250) (Dillehay and Kolata 2004a; Swenson 2004, 874–79). Indeed, it is highly relevant to the analysis that ceremonial sites founded before the conquest continued to thrive into the era of Chimú occupation, exhibiting both the guarded maintenance of time-honoured spatial ideologies and the selective emulation and synthesis of Chimú architectural styles. In fact, Sapp (2002) argues that the indigenous elite site of Cabur continued as a ‘Lambayeque’ religious and political centre with few alterations well into the

Chimú and Inka Periods. This also seems to be the case at several of the rural settlements. The admixture of ‘Chimú’ and ‘Lambayeque’ utilitarian wares at many sites further suggests that Jequetepeque ceramic traditions did not abruptly cease with the Chimú conquest but continued to be produced by local populations (Dillehay and Kolata 1997; Dillehay *et al.* 1998; Dillehay, Kolata and Swenson 2001; Dillehay and Kolata 2004a, 4327; Hecker and Hecker 1988; Swenson 2004, 877). Significantly, radiocarbon dates obtained from four of the rural ceremonial sites (JE-32, JE-336, JE-619 and JE-339) fall after the projected date of Chimú control in the region (after A.D. 1250) (Conlee *et al.* 2004, 216–17; Dillehay and Kolata 2004a; Swenson 2004, 877).

***Rural mortuary precincts and hillside temples in Jequetepeque*** The following exposé on mortuary precincts and hillside ceremonial platforms in rural Jequetepeque provides examples of the local emulation of Chimú architectural canons as well as archaic and syncretic spatial practices. The subsequent section then synthesizes the sociopolitical implications of this brief study. The analysis presented here is intended to demonstrate the great potential in archaeological research to reconstruct past ideological strategies through the comparison of distinct regimes of ceremonial space.

Diversity characterizes Chimú Period ceremonial sites in the Jequetepeque hinterland. Local emulation of corporate architecture is readily apparent; the horizontally oriented compound, a hallmark of elite Chimú architecture, became one of the most prevalent forms of ritual construction in the Pacasmayo region. The northern entrances, baffled access points, open patios and lateral corridors of rural mortuary compounds constructed crudely of cobbles parallel Chimú corporate and urban architecture built of adobe (Moore 1996a; 1996b). Corridors and baffled entries in particular are closely associated with Chimú public architecture in the Moche and Lambayeque Valleys (Tschauner 2001, 44, 131, 630). Many of the precincts in the Jequetepeque countryside are rather simple, delineated with mounded river cobbles and lacking internal partitions (figure 2). Others are more complex, with interior platforms, mounds and corridors which exhibit similarities with architecture at Chan Chan, Farfán and Talambo (Swenson 2004). However, their construction in stone and earth contrasts with the adobe edifices of many of the large centres such as Farfán, and it is clear that they were built by non-elite communities.

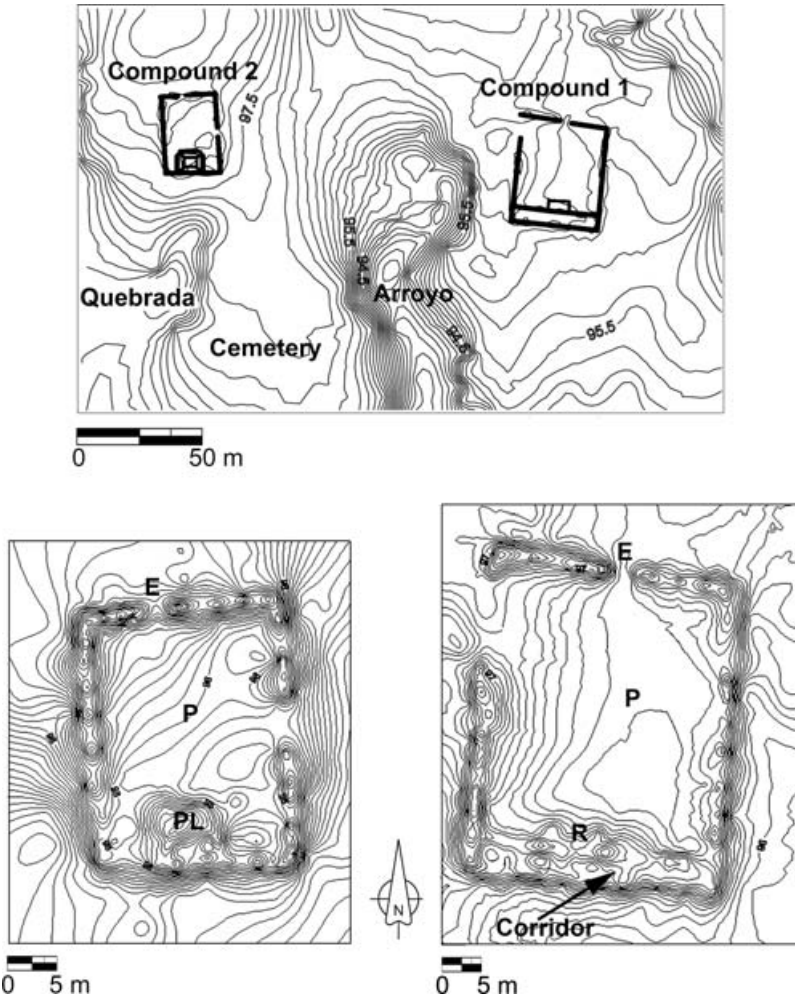
A multiplicity of mortuary constructions associated with cemeteries, formalized architectural plans (clearly transcending quotidian structures) and disinterred human remains occupies the Pampa de Faclo and Pampa de Playa Vieja directly overlooking the north bank of the Jequetepeque River (figure 1). These numerous constructions did not serve merely as mausolea, however, as intense domestic activity characterized these settlements. The compounds are littered with considerable quantities of marine shell, ash, sherds of cooking pots and other organics. Therefore these precincts likely staged communion ceremonies engaging living social actors with deceased ancestors. Feasts that occurred within these structures served to incorporate the dead in important ritual events, a practice common in the Andes at the time of the conquest (Isbell 1997; Jackson 2004, 314–16; Valcárcel 1964).



**Figure 2** Architectural plans of rural ceremonial compounds located on the Pampa de Faclo and Pampa de Playa Vieja, Jequetepeque Valley. E = Entrance, C = Chamber, SA = Stone Alignment, P = Patio, PL = Platform, HB = Disinterred Human Bones. Note the differences in scale.

The precincts on the Pampa de Faclo are characterized by stone walls enclosing spacious patios, narrow chambers and diminutive platforms. For instance, the two compounds of JE-136, situated approximately five kilometres north-east of Pacatnamú, consist of cobble perimeter walls which surround ample patios (figure 3). As is typical of Chimú Period precincts, a narrow entrance bisects their north walls. A stone alignment within

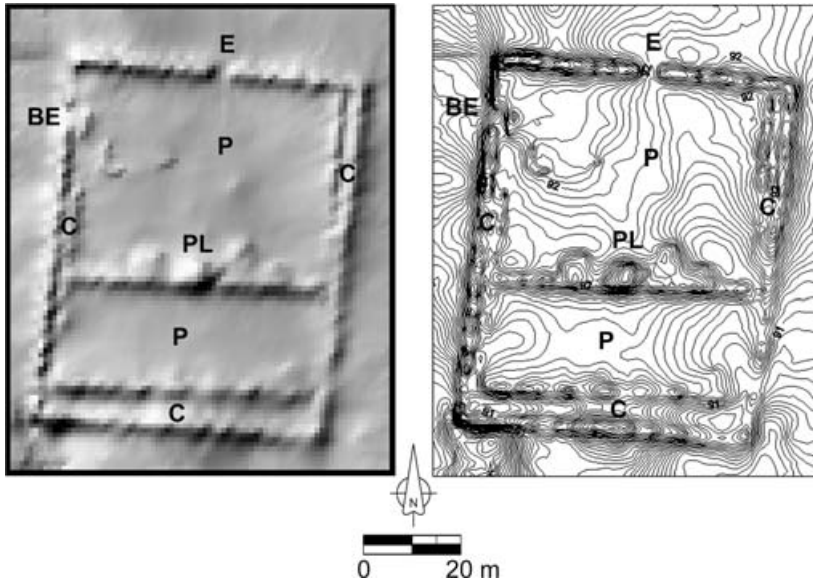




**Figure 3** Site map of JE-136 (above) (contour interval: 0.25 m) and detailed architectural plans of Compounds 2 (bottom left) and 1 (bottom right). E = Entrance, P = Patio, PL = Platform, R = Ramp. Note the differences in scale.

Compound 1 demarcates a narrow chamber or corridor at its south end, while a small dais and the remnants of an eroded ramp lead to this back corridor (figure 3). A similar chamber–corridor occupies the southern extreme of the neighbouring precinct of JE-138 (figure 4). The presence of narrow chambers and daises at one end of a compound is a common characteristic of Chimú ceremonial architecture (figure 3) (Sapp 2002, 99, 102; Moore 1996a, 216–17; Swenson 2004). In fact, analogous forecourts with ramps, daises and narrow corridors provided restricted access to the monumental burial platforms of the Chimú kings at Chan Chan (Conrad 1982, 94–96).

The architectural configuration of many of these compounds closely resembles a Chimú wooden model (maquette) discovered in a burial of



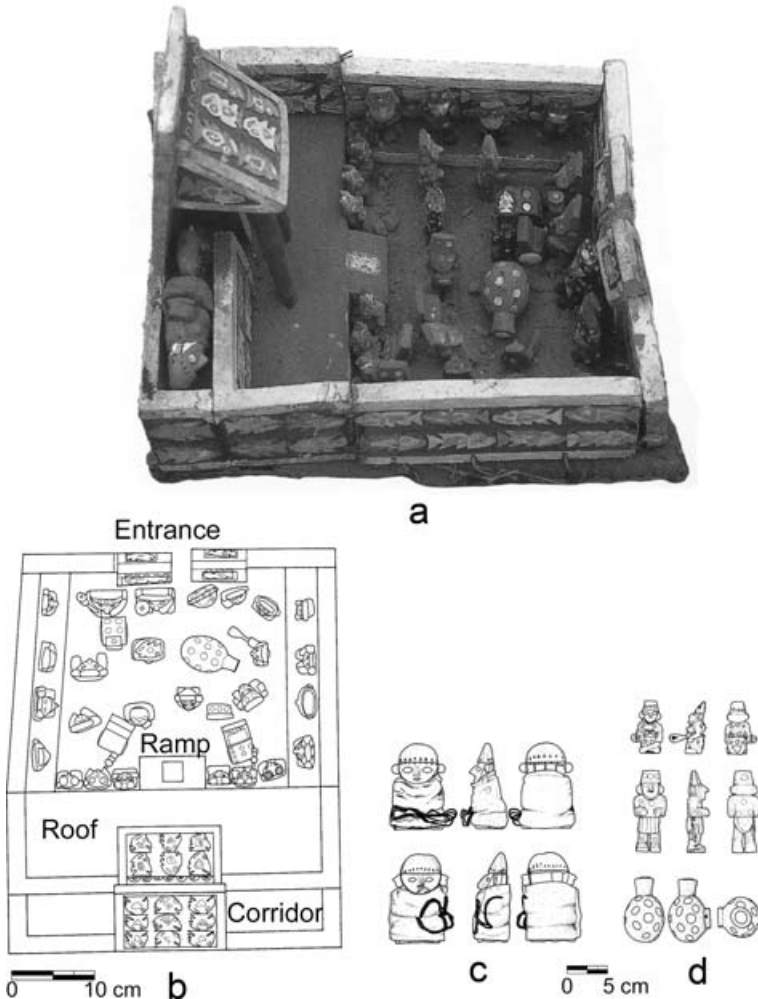
**Figure 4** Shaded relief map (left) and architectural plan (right) of the principal compound at JE-138 (contour interval: 0.05 m). E = Entrance, BE = Baffled Entry, P = Plaza, PL = Platform, C = Corridor.

Platform 1 at Huaca de la Luna in the Moche Valley (figure 5) (Uceda 1997; 1999). The three-dimensional model depicts a highly formalized ceremonial event encompassing integrated spectacles of feasting, musical performance, offertory rituals and the burial of elite figures (Jackson 2004; Uceda 1997; 1999). The exquisite work of art from Huaca de la Luna (measuring 40.5 cm long) represents a compound with 26 human figures. Ten additional objects, including ceramic vessels, drums, baskets and tiny architectural templates were part of the furnishings of this miniature ensemble. The wooden figures are sewn onto a cloth base and are carefully positioned within the maquette.

The modelled structure consists of an open plaza, lateral benches and a posterior corridor fronted by a small platform which connects to the plaza via a central ramp. A steeply gabled roof was built over this central dais and covers the front end of the posterior hallway. The roof and the walls surrounding the precinct are carved with fish designs in low relief, simulating the adobe friezes gracing the adobe walls of Chan Chan. A characteristic entrance is located in the central portion of the anterior wall of the wooden model (presumably representing the north wall).

The posterior platform and corridor of the sculpture parallel the narrow chambers and daises of the Jequetepeque compounds built on the Pampa de Faclo. The southern chambers or corridors of JE-136 and JE-138 likely served to display and commemorate deceased ancestors, as plainly indicated by the wooden miniature. That is, the posterior corridor of the model was stashed with wooden figures representing deceased individuals wrapped in burial shrouds of spun cotton (figure 5). In fact, the model from the Moche Valley offers an extraordinary fount of interpretation which effectively

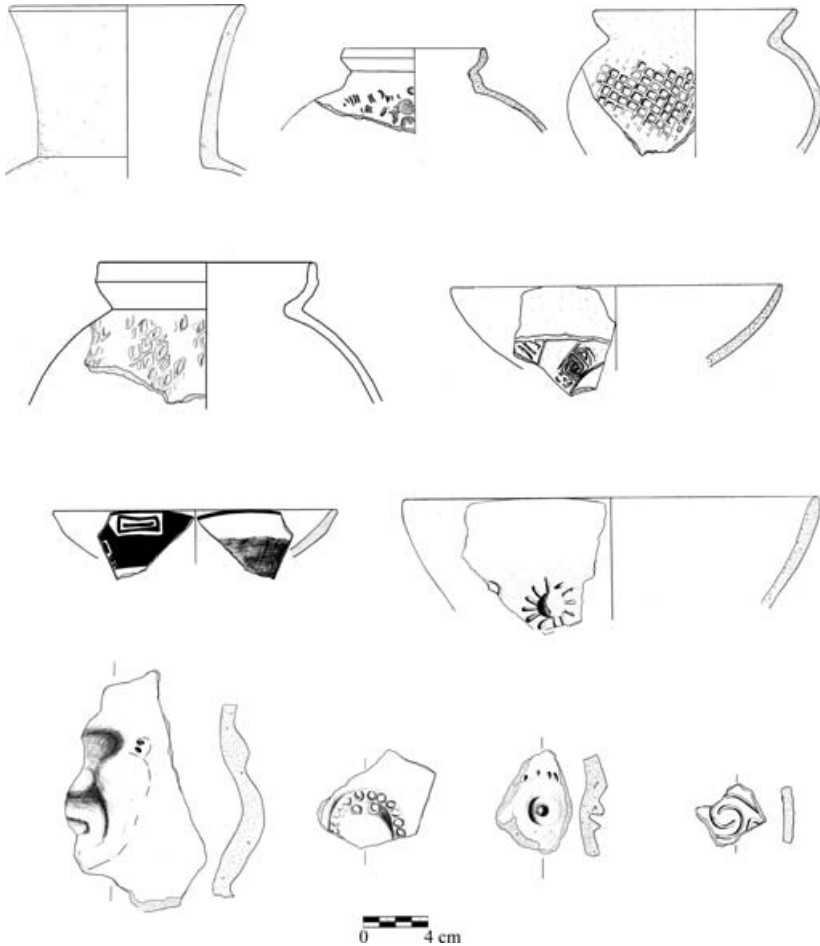




**Figure 5** Photograph and drawing of a wooden architectural model (a, b) and accompanying wooden figures (c, d) recovered from a Chimú burial at Huaca de la Luna; c = two mummy bundle figures from corridor; d = chichero and chicha vessels from the model's plaza (adapted from Uceda 1999, 266, 269, 274).

animates the crumbling enclosures of the Pampa de Faclo in Jequetepeque. Santiago Uceda writes that the Huaca de la Luna sculpture provides a three-dimensional 'vision' of Chimú ceremonial practices and their relationship with architectonic space (Uceda 1997, 169).

Three groups of musicians are positioned in the plaza while the serving of corn beer (*chicha*) also occurs in this space. The presentation of a cup occurs near the ramped dais, and individuals with mutilated hands and drums are positioned on the lateral benches (Uceda 1997, 157) (figure 5). The *chichero* (server of corn beer) is identified by a large spoon with which he is ladling *chicha* from a fermenting jar. In fact, fragments of similar jars



**Figure 6** Sherds of jars, serving vessels and decorated wares recovered from various funerary compounds of Pampa de Faclo, Jequetepeque Valley.

were ubiquitous in the interior of the compounds in Jequetepeque (figure 6). Decorated miniatures of boxes, baskets and textile equipment appear to be offerings presented to the dead resting in the corridors.

This extraordinary model from Huaca de la Luna strongly corroborates the hypothesis that the stone enclosures of the Pampa de Faclo in Jequetepeque were the scene of elaborate ancestral rites, likely involving the production and consumption of comestibles, feasting, lively music and dance, and complex rituals involving the preparation and commemoration of the dead (Jackson 2004, 299, 304). It seems probable that deceased figures were fêted in the corridors of the compounds by devoted relatives who performed mainly on the plazas and small adjacent platforms. Perhaps certain rites were conducted within the precinct, followed by actual burial elsewhere, in other structures or in one of the numerous neighbouring cemeteries. Other wooden figures

discovered in the burial at Huaca de la Luna appear to form part of a funerary procession (Uceda 1997, 159–67). One of the wooden figures holds a shovel, perhaps to dig the grave of the defunct honoree.

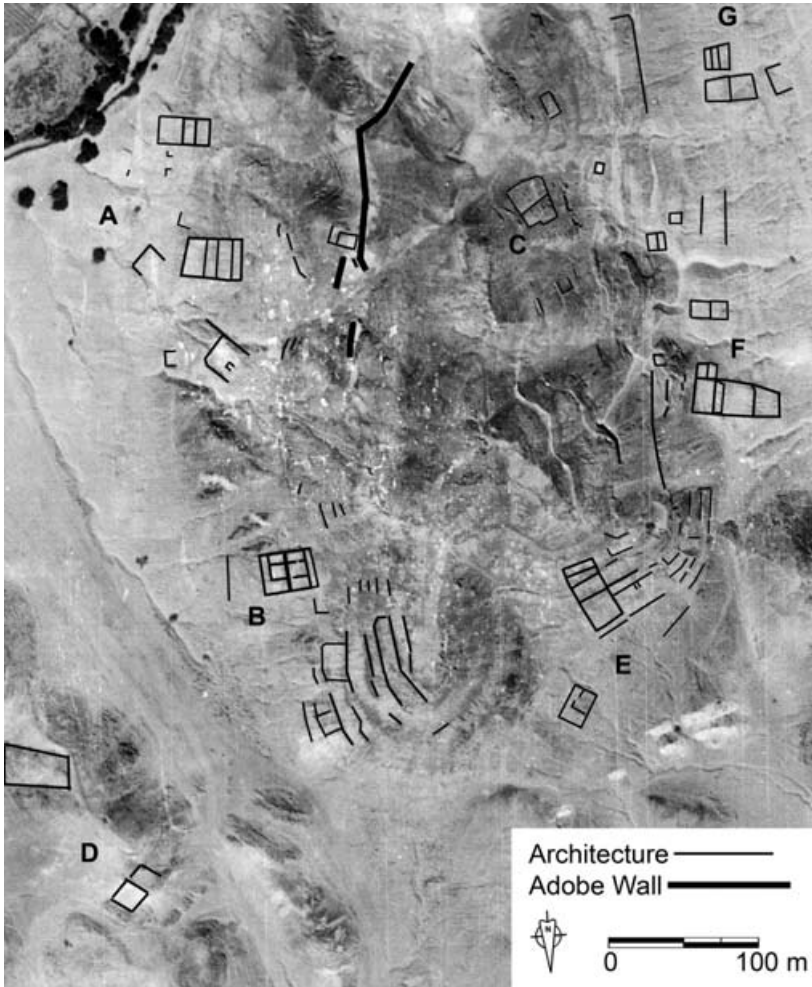
JE-138 exhibits many features of the models in slightly modified form (compare figures 4 and 5). Nevertheless, the model depicts a lordly setting, resembling architecture at Chan Chan (Jackson 2004; Uceda 1997; 1999). The high adobe walls adorned with fish designs contrast with the rough cobble perimeters of the *Faclo* precincts. Uceda (1997, 175–76) even speculates that the male mummy represents a Chimú king and that the two female figurines served as sacrificed attendants.

The data point to an interesting fact: lower-class groups and less powerful lineages in the Jequetepeque Valley emulated the architectonic spaces and ceremonies of the Chimú urban elite. In other words, various ritual programmes were not restricted to the highest class but were appropriated by numerous groups within the valley. Lower-class communities forged social ties and negotiated political relations in elaborate funerary rituals which strategically reproduced the religious practices of elite sectors of society.

This leads to an important question: why did groups bury their dead in the cobble structures rather than in larger adobe *huacas* (ceremonial platform mounds) or in the mortuary centre of Pacatnamú, a site characterized by expansive satellite cemeteries associated with both higher- and lower-class interments (Donnan and Cock 1986)? Certain lineages may have been prohibited from venerating ancestors in this sacred city or on lordly pyramids in the hinterland. However, the construction of hinterland sites (mimicking prestigious urban forms) likely asserted the religious aspirations and social identities of marginalized groups. It is possible that certain communities expressly chose to maintain their own ancestral shrines (thus evading the city) as a way to avoid manipulation by more powerful social groups or Chimú lords.

Bell's notion of 'redemptive hegemony' effectively explains the mimesis of corporate ritual practice and architecture in Pacasmayo (Bell 1992). Less prestigious social groups in the valley did not attempt to subvert or radically challenge imperial religious systems. Instead they coopted and deployed such programmes to advance local social agendas while defending the honour (and collective identities) of deceased dignitaries and their living descendants. It is certainly remarkable that rural *curacas* (lineage chiefs) in Jequetepeque appear to have had bestowed on them equivalent ceremonial honours as the kings of Chimor.

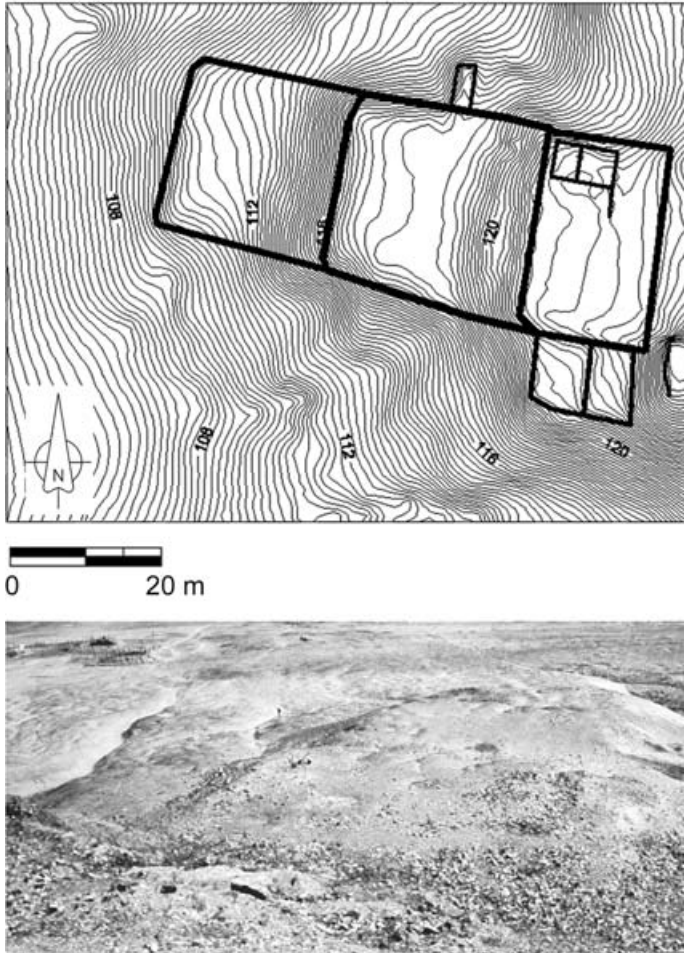
Late Intermediate populations in the Jequetepeque Valley continued the Late Moche and Lambayeque practice of constructing terraced platforms on coastal hills (figure 1). These rural ceremonial structures were related to the worship of supernaturals associated with venerated peaks and to regulating usufruct rights to neighbouring agricultural lands (Swenson 2004). The Chimú Period platforms assume rectangular configurations and consist of ample ascending terraces delineated by walls of stacked stones (see figure 8). Long and centrally placed ramps, common in the Late Moche Period and in urban Lambayeque architecture, generally fell out of favour. Unlike earlier constructions, Chimú Period platforms are characterized by substantial



**Figure 7** Aerial photograph of JE-336 (El Molino de Chocofán) illustrating ceremonial platforms and principal architectural constructions of the site.

stratigraphy and intense remodelling (Dillehay *et al.* 1999; Swenson 2004). Data on two of the larger hillside settlements of the Chimú Period, JE-336 and JE-32, are briefly discussed here.

JE-336 (Cerro el Molino de Chocofán) is built around the slopes of Cerro el Molino de Chocofán in the southern valley (Dillehay *et al.* 1999; Eling 1987, 382; Hecker and Hecker 1990, 43) (figure 7). This site comprises ten platform mounds (*huacas*) consisting of wide earthen terraces constructed on the lower slopes of the hillside. Domestic terraces and sizeable cemeteries surround the principal ceremonial platforms, several of which also contained burials (as indicated by looting). The massive platforms, often measuring more than 50 metres long and ten metres high, are built of formidable quantities of earth, adobe and stone (figures 7 and 8). These characteristic Jequetepeque

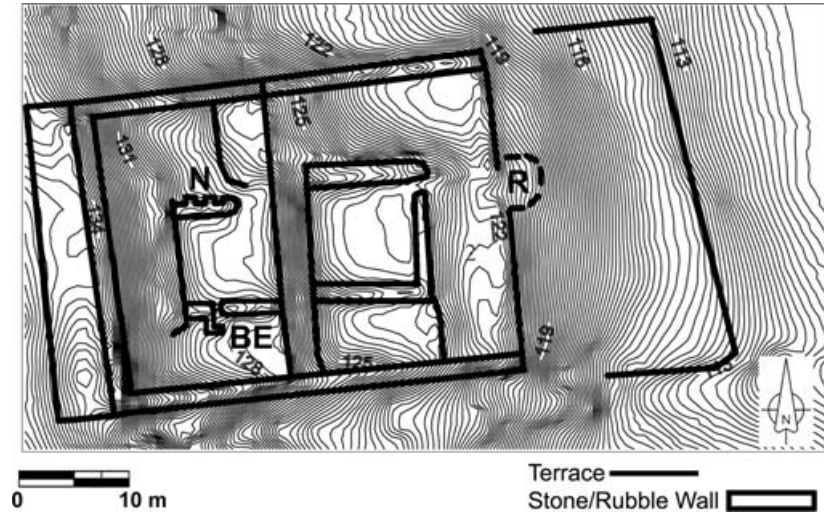


**Figure 8** Architectural plan (contour interval: 0.2 m) and photograph of Platform F at JE-336.

structures differ significantly from Chimú architecture and served primarily as stages for public ritual spectacles (Swenson 2004). The replication of platform mounds around the hill, without one structure dominating in scale or elaboration, recalls the spatial configuration of Late Moche ceremonial sites in the Jequetepeque hinterland (Swenson 2004). The arrangement suggests that different social groups maintained their own ritual constructions, conceivably as part of a larger kinship or political system (Silverman 1993). JE-336 clearly represented an important residential and cult centre in the Late Intermediate Period; local groups likely identified with a *huaca* divinity associated with the *cerro* by constructing monuments and burying their dead on its sacred ground.

The baffled (indirect) entryway and niches built of stone on a high terrace of Platform B at JE-336 demonstrate local emulation of Chimú architectural





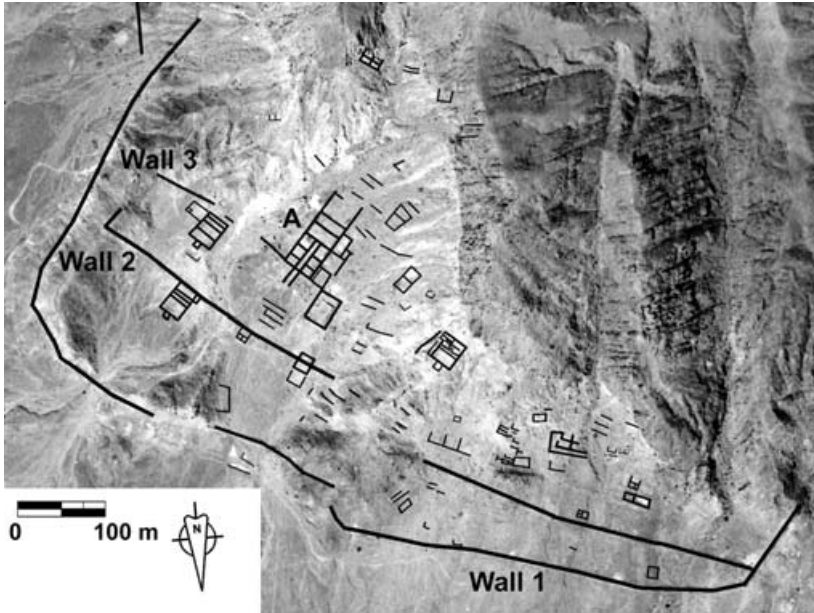
**Figure 9** Architectural plan of Platform B at JE-336 (contour interval: 0.15 m). BE = Baffled Entry, R = Ramp, N = Niches.

features and their synthesis with indigenous architectural styles (figure 9). Indirect access points and niches are hallmarks of Chimú elite architecture and are most often built of well-plastered adobe (Day 1982; Reindel 1993). They are usually found in horizontal compounds within cities such as Chan Chan or at provincial administrative centres including Farfán (Keatinge and Conrad 1983; Tschauner 2001, 115–17). The formal ensemble of niche and indirect entry seems strangely out of place on this terraced platform mound and points to syncretic architectural practices. The incongruous building material (uncut stone) and architectural context of these features deviate from equivalents documented at Farfán or Chan Chan. The syncretic spatial forms indicate that indigenous lords at JE-336 recontextualized urban architectural symbols traditionally associated with imperial authority or religious power. However, the meaning and function of these features were undoubtedly modified to conform to local religious perceptions and political relations.

Huaca B was clearly not commissioned by an official of the Chimú state (implying that JE-336 was a low-level administrative site). Had this been the case, the complex would more closely follow the canons of Chimú administrative architecture, examples of which abound throughout the region and neighbouring valleys (Dillehay *et al.* 1999; Tschauner 2001, 114). Structure B conveys a sense of bricolage, wherein experimentation and selective reformulation of known architectural styles (and the spatial ideology they encapsulated) took place.

JE-32, or Huasi Huaman, is a large site located in an ample basin on the east flank of Cerro Murcielago (Kanchape Range), several kilometres north-west of Farfán (figures 1 and 10) (Dillehay and Kolata 1997; Eling 1987, 397; Hecker and Hecker 1990, 13–14). It exhibits continuities in location and layout with many of the Moche settlements constructed along the Kanchape



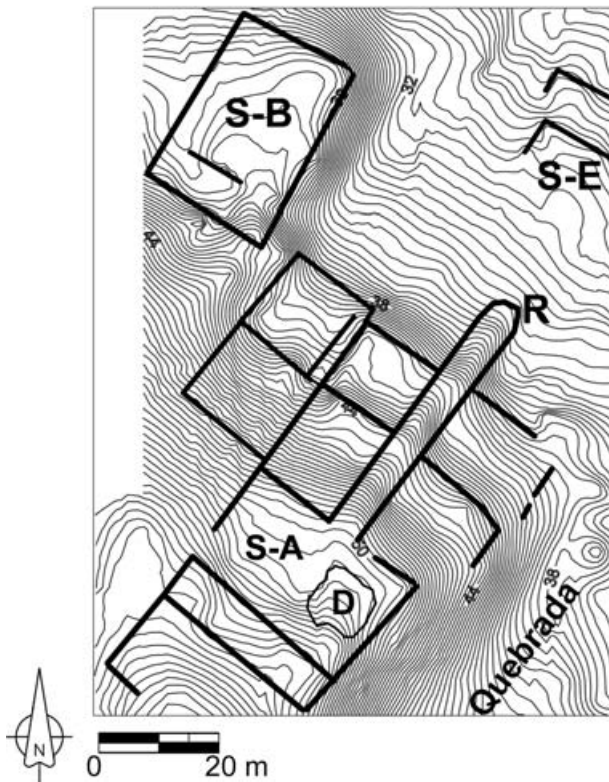


**Figure 10** Aerial photograph of JE-32 (Huasi Huaman) illustrating ceremonial platforms and principal architectural constructions of the site.

Range, such as massive perimeter walls and terraced platforms with central ramps. Similar to JE-336, Huasi Huaman is characterized by the replication of ceremonial structures surrounded by numerous terraces and domestic units (figure 10).

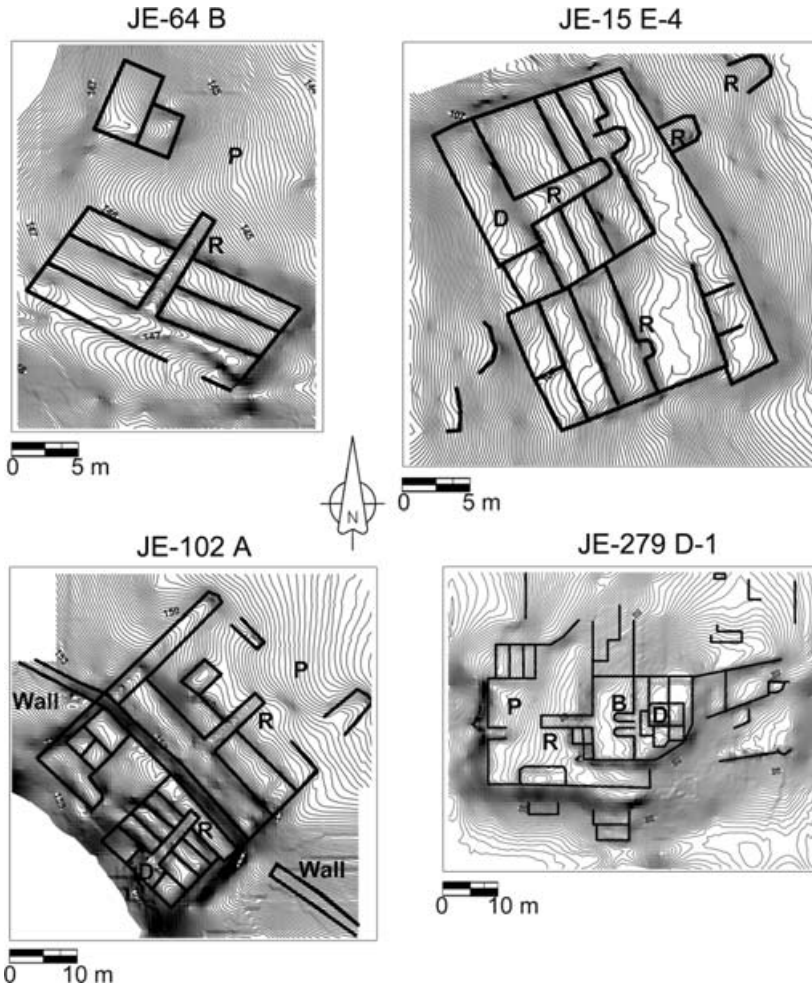
Huaca A at JE-32 is an enormous platform ( $80 \times 50$  m and nearly 20 m high) with a massive ramp bisecting the ascending terraces of the construction (figures 10 and 11). It is built of a formidable quantity of mounded earth and required a considerable investment of time and labour to construct. Notably, this platform is one of the few Chimú Period settlements in the hinterland distinguished by a prominent central ramp characteristic of earlier Moche feasting shrines in the hinterland (figure 12). In other words, a Moche-inspired structure dominates this Late Intermediate Period site as deduced from surface ceramics, radiometric analysis and the Chimú characteristics of neighbouring architectural complexes. A carbon sample obtained from an excavated hearth near the summit of the structure was dated to cal A.D. 1285–1445 ( $580 \pm 70$  B.P.,  $2 \sigma$ , Beta-143882, wood charcoal; Dillehay *et al.* 1999).

Moreover, Huaca A differs in many important respects from the ramped platforms identified at sites dating to the Late Moche Period. In the first instance, the *huaca* is considerably larger than the average Moche structure and dominates JE-32 in terms of scale, location and architectural elaboration. Indeed, this complex runs counter to the prevailing pattern at Late Moche ceremonial sites in the countryside (and, interestingly, JE-336), wherein no one structure unequivocally overshadows any other. The Moche shrines served as feasting platforms for relatively intimate groups



**Figure 11.** Photograph and architectural plan of Platform A (contour interval: 0.3 m) at JE-32. S-A = Structure A, S-B = Structure B, S-E = Structure E, R = Ramp, D = Depression.

of officiants and spectators (between 25 and 75 individuals) (Swenson 2004; 2006a). Such ‘consultative’ and ‘public-near’ staging of ritual events (Moore 1996a, 156) contrasts with the potential for more inclusive and larger ceremonial spectacles on Platform A, whether based on feasting, choreographed procession (as part of a pilgrimage rite) or the veneration of a revered *huaca*.



**Figure 12** Architectural plans of Late Moche ramped platforms from various sites in the Jequetepeque hinterland. B = Balustrade, D = Dais, R = Ramp, P = Patio. Note the differences in scale.

The amplified and monumental size of the massive platform suggests that it symbolically memorialized the ubiquitous ramped platforms which cluttered the same sacred hills during the Late Moche Period (compare Huaca A at JE-32 with plans of smaller Moche platforms found several kilometers away – illustrated in figure 12). In other words, this central structure likely commemorated time-honoured religious cults, thus fortifying indigenous political identities. Therefore the *huaca* may have been complicit in reproducing Jequetepeque religious traditions and in materializing ideologies that shaped group-specific social memory. Sahlin's argument (1992, 21) that the conscious defence of 'tradition' is realized through the intensification and elaboration of cultural practices (thus an ironically dynamic process in the end) can compellingly account for the magnified monumentality of

Huaca A at JE-32. This structure likely honoured Jequetepeque-specific spatial and religious ideologies. Maintaining archaic architectural traditions and celebrating immemorial ritual practices may have asserted the political precedence of local populations and lords (perhaps vis-à-vis Chimú latecomers to the valley).

At the same time, selective emulation of Chimú corporate architecture is also apparent at JE-32. The baffled entry and niched chamber of Structure D (a Jequetepeque-style platform) reveals the liberal use of architectonic symbols of authority associated with the Chimú ruling class (figure 10). Patterns of both architectural emulation and ‘innovative’ archaism at JE-32 attest to local mediation of religious production in the Jequetepeque hinterland.

### **Theoretical implications of the Jequetepeque data: architecture, ideology and social memory**

The above analysis reveals that architectural archaism, syncretism and mimesis of imperial Chimú monuments characterize the Jequetepeque hinterland, pointing to the diverse ideological strategies of rural communities in the Late Intermediate Period. Archaism is reflected in the continued construction of platforms on coastal hills, following indigenous Late Moche and Lambayeque templates (JE-32), while syncretism is apparent in the incorporation of Chimú features (i.e. baffled entries associated with niched chambers) within locally conceived terrace constructions (at JE-336 and JE-32). Mimetic practices are reflected in the numerous stone precincts echoing elite religious and administrative architecture. Therefore differing strategies of ritual appropriation, avoidance, reformulation and possibly resistance (Joyce, Bustamante and Levine 2001) constituted local-level engagement with Chimú religious ideology. This is particularly interesting given that the very different structures, inspired by distinct cultural and religious traditions, often staged identical rituals, mainly feasting ceremonies and ancestral rites (Swenson 2004).

Of course, these three principal architectural practices and their ideological significance warrant careful scrutiny, an exercise which should advance the archaeological study of prehistoric ritual politics and imperialism. In this analysis, architectural practices refer both to the planned construction of symbolically charged buildings and to their physical activation and reception by individuals who performed (or witnessed) ceremonies staged within their confines. Indeed, one cannot underestimate the political implications of the sensual experience of these monuments (Bradley 1987; Tuan 1974). The affective, multi-sensory properties common to ritual events no doubt accompanied formal spatial encounters with ceremonial architecture in Jequetepeque. These spatialized ritual practices certainly played a vital role in inculcating particular values, concretizing and legitimizing accepted social memories and political obligations (Bloch 1989). The prescribed procession along the axial ramp of the Moche-inspired platform of JE-32 (perhaps to pay respect to a local ethnic divinity), regulated passage through elegant baffled entries at JE-336 and the formalized dancing and festive corn beer consumption that occurred in the mortuary precincts reified competing social identities and articulated ideological perspectives. Although in this

section I concentrate on the political significance of architectural mimesis, syncretism and archaism at the expense of a detailed phenomenological analysis, the study nonetheless demonstrates the spatial specificity of ritual experience and ideological production (Thomas 1993; Tilley 1996). The built environment represents more than an inert stage for human activity or a passive reflection of sociopolitical reality. Rather, as the comparison of rural Jequetepeque architecture reveals, it was directly complicit in shaping political consciousness, social memory and community association (Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996).

It is worth stressing that mimetic, archaistic and syncretic architectural designs were not mutually exclusive programmes, nor can they be unambiguously correlated with a singular political disposition. Rather, these design plans formed a continuous spectrum of techniques which ‘constructed’ (in a literal sense) overlapping and at times competing ‘visions’ of social memory and collective identity (Alcock 2001; Bradley 1993, 129; Connerton 1989). Architectural mimesis, defined here as the calculated imitation of the built aesthetics of social others (higher-class religious specialists, foreign conquerors, mythological ancestors) – and by extension the prestigious religious and organizational systems they materialized – were often complicit in the propagation of parochial social histories, as seems to have been the case with the Jequetepeque mortuary precincts. Therefore mimetic architectural practices cannot be explained simply in terms of submissive ‘borrowing’ or ‘diffusion’. In certain instances, perceived emulations even served to insulate community identity in a manner similar to archaistic traditionalism. The rural mortuary precincts exemplify this phenomenon given that the imitation of elite, imperial space served to memorialize decidedly local ancestors.

Archaism in turn does not always correspond with rigid adherence to convention and time-honoured customs (architectural or otherwise). Rather, it more accurately signifies the dynamic commemoration of past events that actively forged historical consciousness while shaping present social conditions and future ideological programmes (Alcock 2001, 324–25). The perseverance of indigenous Late Moche architectural styles at Huasi Huaman (JE-32) suggests the relative independence of local communities to sponsor historically charged religious ceremonies and thus promote the construction of particular social memories and political relationships. Such celebrations of the past were likely ‘recognized not as mere “flight” from an unpleasant present, but as a deliberate response to the present, a form of vital self-representation and prideful self-assertion’ (Alcock 2001, 330). The particular context of the ‘amplified’ ramped platform (Huaca A) reveals that its political significance was far from static and that its meaning transcended subversive conservatism.

In fact, archaism is intimately related to ritual itself, and it is unsurprising that ceremonial architecture is commonly imbued with antiquarian and historical symbolism (including mimetic and syncretic forms) (Bell 1997; Lincoln 1994; Renfrew 1994). Ritual is usually perceived as timeless, transcendent and rule-governed, and its conservative framework explains its intrinsic connection to political power (Bloch 1989; Kelly and Kaplan 1990, 140). Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983) claim that ritual is actively complicit



in the ‘invention of tradition’, by which novel and possibly subversive social practices are invested with legitimacy through their effective ritualization and hence traditionalization. Kertzer (1988, 42) similarly remarks that ‘ritual can be important to the forces of political change just *because* of its conservative properties. New political systems borrow legitimacy from the old by nurturing the old ritual forms, redirected to new purposes’ (original emphasis).

In fact, the eclectic admixture of architectural styles at many of the rural settlements in Jequetepeque parallels the varied forms of ideological archaism evident in Roman-occupied Greece. As Alcock argues (2001, 338),

Presentation of the Hellenic past did not seek to escape the imperial present, but was continually and deliberately admixed with it, fitting the Roman elements into a Greek matrix, establishing a new amalgam of what was memorable in Greek eyes. Recollection of the past involved the synthesis and re-creation, not the isolation and protection, of memories.

Indeed, such creative and fluid ideological ‘recollections’ were undoubtedly at play among rural communities in Jequetepeque.

The political significance of syncretic architectural practice is perhaps the most difficult to infer from prehistoric contexts, for it juxtaposes the conventional and novel, conflating the archaistic and mimetic. A perennial challenge in archaeological interpretation, it is admittedly difficult to differentiate ideologically meaningful combinations of architectural elements from inconsequential variations of form within a given stylistic tradition. Although the blending of architectural styles has been interpreted by Andean archaeologists as evidence of local influence in state-directed architectural construction and, by extension, political decision-making (Mackey 1987; Mackey and Klymyshyn 1990; Narvaez 1995, 89–90, 192; Wilson 1988), these syncretic practices remain undertheorized in terms of their more nuanced sociopolitical implications.

The incorporation of baffled entries and niched rooms on platform *huacas* at JE-32 and JE-336 seems to provide an unambiguous example of cultural syncretism given the symbolically charged nature of such features as emblems of administrative and religious authority (Tschauner 2001, 43–44). These structures are unusual in that elevated platform mounds (associated with elite Moche and Lambayeque traditions) are adorned with authoritative symbols most commonly found in horizontally configured compounds associated with Chimú ‘administrative’ architecture (Tschauner 2001). In other words, the structures exhibit an intriguing combination of the spatial ideologies of separation and inclusion. The former is characteristic of Chimú architecture (high-walled, horizontal structures with obstructive features such as baffled entries), while the latter identifies more closely with urban Moche and Lambayeque traditions (exemplified by large, visible and elevated public spaces) (Conklin 1990; Moore 1996a, 218; Shimada and Cavallaro 1986, 46; Tschauner 2001, 332). The seemingly inconsistent placement of the baffled entries on ceremonial platforms suggests an almost inflated investment in potent symbolic imagery. Such symbolic ‘overcompensation’ was possibly intended to enhance the legitimacy and ideological resonance of the rural monuments and to elicit comparable degrees of deference from diverse target



audiences. Rural religious specialists and lineage organizations laid claim to authority by amalgamating political symbols that drew from both indigenous and imperial traditions.

In fact, syncretic ideological practices inhere in both the perceptibly mimetic and the archaic. For instance, ritual performances orchestrated in the rural compounds on the Pampa de Faclo obviously diverged from Chimú royal mortuary rites, despite interesting parallels in spatial form and funerary function. In other words, emulative ritualism (mimesis) by definition entails a spatial, social and experiential recontextualization and is therefore fundamentally mutable and syncretic. Composite ceremonial forms of this kind provide evidence that ritual practices are often reconceptualized in the face of changing historical realities (reciprocally revising historical perceptions and social memory – see Meskell 2003, 36; Trouillot 1995). In his analysis of the African-based religions of the Caribbean, Mosquera (1996, 227) defines syncretism as ‘something that corresponds more to the concept of “appropriation,” in the sense of taking over for one’s own use on one’s own initiative the diverse and even the hegemonic or imposed elements in contrast to assuming an attitude of passive eclecticism or synthesis’. As alluded to in the analysis, ‘appropriation’ is equally apropos in describing archaic and mimetic practices in Jequetepeque, further demonstrating their inextricable syncretistic and dynamic characteristics.

The above discussion reveals the complexity of the political topography in Jequetepeque, characterized by a seeming cacophony of ideological symbolism. Certainly the perception and experience (Lefebvre 1991) of the numerous ceremonial structures varied through time and possibly differed among distinct social groups. Indeed, archaeologists stress that monuments must be understood not as static monoliths but as palimpsests of contested meanings (Alcock 2001; Bradley 1993, 129; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003). Of course, this makes the archaeological identification of non-elite ideological strategies exceedingly difficult, not to mention the interpretation of their complex relationship with state political and economic programmes. Nevertheless, the Jequetepeque case study demonstrates how ritual practice and ceremonial space were implicated in the creation of political subjectivity in the valley (Smith 2001). The ‘struggle for the possession of the sign’ (Comaroff 1985, 196) likely underscored the intense ritualization of the Jequetepeque countryside.

It is noteworthy that the pluralistic religious activity of rural groups in Jequetepeque – reflected in diverse traditions of ceremonial architecture dispersed throughout the valley – parallels the ideological strategies of indigenous lords in the region. Sapp’s study (2002) of the provincial elite centre of Cabur on the south side of the valley (figure 1) suggests that provincial Jequetepeque elite tenaciously adhered to traditional Lambayeque architectural plans and, by extension, long-established politico-religious modes of authority. Sapp (2002, 144) interprets the pronounced architectural archaism at Cabur as signalling the indirect nature of Chimú administration (corroborating my analysis – see below). Evidently, the construction of authoritative space through the manipulation of mimetic, archaic and syncretic practices occurred at many levels of the indigenous sociopolitical

hierarchy, ranging from low-level lineage heads in the countryside to local lords residing at Algarrobal de Moro, Talambo and Cabur.

In fact, rural communities who built cobble precincts mimicking Chimú architectural forms may have attempted to identify more closely with imperial officials, perhaps to circumvent the more immediate influence of traditional Jequetepeque elites who demanded labour services and other obligations from subject rural communities. The Chimú-inspired funerary precincts (undoubtedly constructed by individuals hierarchically junior to indigenous lords) defy the entrenched conservatism of religious and political practices that occurred at elitist, ‘Lambayeque’ sites such as Cabur and Pacatnamú. This comparison alone suggests that ideological practices – complicit in the delineation of shifting social identities and the articulation of competing authority structures – were fluid and locally negotiated in Jequetepeque. The competitive jockeying for political entitlement by lesser chiefs or lineage groups, which first became prevalent in the Late Moche Period (Swenson 2004), continued into the Chimú era. In fact, one might even ask whether Chimú officials manipulated this local political milieu to their advantage.

### Local sociopolitical structures and indirect rule in Jequetepeque

The preceding discussion demonstrates how the archaeological study of ceremonial architecture can aid in the reconstruction of past value systems, ideological strategies and political identities. Indeed, the research sheds considerable light on Jequetepeque sociopolitical organization during the Chimú Period, providing important evidence on how the region was administered within the larger imperial system. Significantly, the ceremonial landscape in Late Intermediate Period Jequetepeque corroborates ethnohistoric documents which allude to Chimú Period social structures.

At the time of the conquest, hierarchical kinship orders structured political relations on the North Coast. Colonial documents commonly reference sizeable social groups as ‘*parcialidades*’, an ambiguous term usually designating a maximal, kin-based, territorial unit (Netherly 1990, 463). The term also seems to have been synonymous with ‘polity’ or *señorío*, headed by a dyad of paramount lords. The *parcialidades* consisted of nested, ranked and homologous groups of moieties that were counterpoised in dual and quadripartite social divisions, some of which were differentiated by economic specialization (Netherly 1984; 1990; Rostworowski de Diez Canseco 1989; 1990, 448–49; Zuidema 1990). Netherly (1984, 229–30) refers to this form of social order as a ‘dual corporate organization’ which structured all levels of society from the state to the lowest-level lineage.

The lord or *curaca*, distinguished by a crown, litter and staff (the symbols of office), occupied the highest level of this social order and seems to have been in charge of more than a thousand subjects (which usually included the nested lineages of lower elites). Ethnohistoric accounts reveal that the mobilization of labour through rituals and feasts was the primary means of economic aggrandizement for coastal lords (Ramirez 1996; 1998). In Jequetepeque the tradition of working chiefly land in exchange for ritualized hospitality likely originated before the Chimú Period (Ramirez 1990, 524). Ethnohistoric records also suggest that ritual mediation was fundamental to

the legitimization of *curaca* authority (Netherly 1990, 469–70; 1993; Ramirez 1998, 218–19).

Examination of early colonial *visitas* and court documents (16th to 18th centuries) confirms that the region was organized into a unified *parcialidad* (i.e. a single Jequetepeque province) in both Inka and Chimú times, with the largest moiety partition determined by the dividing line of the river (Burga 1976, 50–55; Eling 1987; Ramirez 1990). The accounts further indicate that the population was organized into smaller groupings of *cacicazgos* (Cock 1986; Ramirez 1990), and such chiefly hierarchies, based on nested, homologous units, are thought to have characterized Pacasmayo from at least the period of Chimú ascendancy (Cock 1986; Ramirez 1996). Colonial archives also document that many of the smaller *cacicazgos* were highly competitive and only loosely confederated (Burga 1976; Cock 1986, 172–73). Significantly, the relative political autonomy of kin groups at the time of the conquest seems to have characterized the era of Chimú dominance, as suggested by the widespread distribution of diversified ceremonial architecture.

Of course, it is misguided to assume that the colonial situation was similar to the Chimú era, especially given the highly urbanized character of the Late Intermediate Period and the traumatic cultural collapse and demographic catastrophe wrought by the conquest. Nonetheless, the archaeological record indicates a comparable plurality of semi-autonomous chiefs and lineage groups during the Chimú occupation. It is reasonable to hypothesize that the powerful *curacas* occupying the apex of the kinship hierarchy presided over the large centres of Talambo, Cabur and Algarrobal de Moro, while smaller lineage units commissioned and maintained many of the impressive ceremonial sites in the countryside. The polyphony of architectural symbols in rural Jequetepeque highlights the relative independence of rural lineages in promoting a particular set of political values. The unbridled construction of religious monuments and the performance of prestigious rites (often replicating the rituals of urban *curacas* – such as feasting or theatrical presentations in open plazas) empowered smaller lineages in the hinterland to defend group identity and economic resources. Such acts were undoubtedly implicated in the competitive machinations of lower-level chiefs who attempted to improve their standing vis-à-vis Chimú officials and influential local lords.

Evidently, the Chimú conquest of the region did not seriously disrupt the decentralized underpinnings of local sociopolitical structures, which first coalesced in the Late Moche Period (A.D. 600–900) and continued into the Lambayeque era (A.D. 1000–1200). In fact, scholars have commented on the remarkable flexibility of the dual corporate organization of coastal polities, in which homologous social units could be readily lumped into larger socioeconomic systems or split into smaller, autonomous entities (Netherly 1984). The Chimú evidently grafted their authority onto the highest rung of this telescoped lineage system, insinuating imperial political controls into the complex concatenation of labour obligations, resource flows and social dependencies that linked local *curacas* with numerous *caciques* and smaller lineage associations. In other words, the Chimú appear to have ruled indirectly

through pre-established sociopolitical systems and did not endeavour to impose an independent imperial bureaucracy (an act which would have been costly, both politically and economically). Scholars often distinguish this form of imperial control as ‘hegemonic’, contrasting it with ‘territorial’ empires which rely on large standing armies and provincial bureaucratic institutions (D’Altroy 1992, 18–24; Hassig 1985; Schreiber 1992, 17–27).

The Chimú officials residing at the provincial capital of Farfán likely directed reclamation projects including the construction of new irrigation systems and agricultural fields (Dillehay and Kolata 2004a; Keatinge and Conrad 1983). However, such programmes must have been executed through the mobilization of local and cooperating Jequetepeque lords. Indeed, similar arguments have been proposed to explain indirect administration of the Lambayeque Valley to the north (Tschuaner 2001, 111–13, 332–34). Moreover, the economic levies owed to the Chimú state do not appear to have been unduly onerous. That is, the labour obligations and resource extractions demanded by Chimú authorities (and likely filtered through the indigenous hierarchy) did not impoverish or disenfranchise the multiple lineage groups and their respective chiefs. Sufficient social and material resources were marshalled at the local level to support numerous arenas of political and religious expression in the countryside.

### Conclusion

The analysis reveals that despite the presence of large Chimú centres, a ‘centrifugal’ settlement pattern is evident in Jequetepeque: administration, religious practice and ideological production remained diffuse, overlapping and often locally directed. The replication of ceremonial space cross-cutting both city and countryside supports the hypothesis that dual corporate social systems, comprising ranked homologous units, structured Jequetepeque society in the Late Intermediate Period (Netherly 1984).

The mimesis of Chimú religious architecture – from stone precincts with north entrances to baffled entries on hillside *huacas* – cannot be interpreted as signalling the forceful imposition of Chimú ideology in Jequetepeque. Nor is selective emulation of corporate ceremonial space emblematic of hegemony writ large (see Ashmore 1989). Hegemony in this sense refers both to the coercive imposition of Chimú architectural symbols (and the relations they signify) and, more subtly, to the Gramscian notion of the social misrecognition or unquestioned acceptance of structural inequalities by the subjugated (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Gramsci 1971). Indeed, one can confidently conclude that these buildings were not commissioned by Chimú officials. Nor was the mimesis of Chimú architecture necessarily an indication of local endorsement of Chimú superiority.

The fact that many communities in Jequetepeque actively constructed political subjectivity through the emulation of Chimú religious practices (as reflected primarily in the widespread mimesis of corporate ceremonial space) might point to the respected authority of imperial governance. However, the evidence reveals that local elites and rural communities jockeyed for respect and political entitlement through the manipulation of the symbolic capital of the conqueror. Therefore the propagation of Chimú ideology in Jequetepeque was not determined exclusively by Chimú overlords and provincial governors

residing in the region's cities. Instead, local populations (elites and non-elites alike) played an important role in the reception and diversification of imperial religious systems.

In Jequetepeque emulative and syncretic architectural practices further demonstrate that indigenous communities effectively reinvented and transformed prevailing ideological systems so as to exert maximum control over their political standing. Continuation of Late Moche spatial ideologies in Jequetepeque, differently tailored to accommodate or even challenge Chimú value systems, similarly reflect the political subjectivity of non-elite communities.

Finally, the analysis of ceremonial architecture in Jequetepeque improved understanding of the impact of Chimú rule on local populations. The cooption of imperial spatial forms and the reformulation of indigenous religious practices by rural communities indicate that ideological production remained the prerogative of multiple and diverse groups. Local populations actively contributed to the invention of religious and political traditions in the region (including those associated with Chimú authority) and were not simply passive consumers of state ideology (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1983). Therefore it appears that the success of Chimú administration relied in part on indirect rule, although direct intervention was probable in particular situations (and the degree of such intervention undoubtedly fluctuated over the 300 years of Chimú rule) (Dillehay and Kolata 2004a).

To conclude, the Jequetepeque study provides an important cautionary tale for archaeologists interested in inferring political relations from prehistoric architecture. The fact that the archaic recycling of prestigious architectural forms or the syncretic emulation of foreign symbols were complicit in the creation of fluid political subjectivities should serve as a caveat to those who ascribe reductive ethnic labels to diagnostic architectural types (Alcock 2001; Bradley 1987; 2003, 223). The discovery of horizontal compounds with niched walls and baffled entries does not automatically signal the presence of the Chimú state but might in fact represent the multilayered ideological strategies of local, incorporated peoples. Moreover, Moche and Lambayeque architectural styles cannot always be correlated with their eponymous time periods (or religious traditions), as they were recycled in later eras, undoubtedly communicating new meanings, spatializing novel political relations and promoting select social memories (Bradley 2003; Meskell 2003, 52). In fact, the considerable confusion that surrounds analysis of the Late Intermediate Period (mainly the chronological placement of settlements) is partly a failure to recognize that stylistic complexes do not neatly index specific ethnic or temporal types. Rather, multiple architectural forms often coexisted as the materialized expression of varied ideological world views.

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