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Conclusion

Conquest and Abandonment

Peripheral areas, such as frontiers and border zones, are especially well suited to the study of cultural change and transition. This research focused on the Chao Valley as an example of the dynamic nature of geopolitical boundaries. The transformation of this periphery from frontier to border zone to conquered territory during a period of transition marked the decline of the Casma polity and the rise of the Chimú state. The approach used here examined the relationship between architecture, ceramics, and sociopolitical change through a diachronic analysis of the expansion and modification of Cerro la Cruz, a fortified hillside town on the north coast of Peru. In an attempt to understand the multivariate aspects of “life on the frontier,” this study sought artifactual evidence of cultural intersections in daily life and placed the site’s occupation within the context of contemporary regional settlement patterns.

Change occurred on several levels. At the site itself, change was indicated by the phases of construction and remodeling of buildings in relation to sociopolitical events, and by the incorporation of foreign elements into the Casma ceramic style. At the valley level, change occurred through the transformation of the Chao Valley from Casma polity frontier to border zone to province of the Chimú Empire. On a larger regional scale, interpolity relations fluctuated between the Casma polity and the Chimú polity as the latter expanded from local state to conquering empire. Absolute dates, in conjunction with superimposition of architectural features, analysis of ceramic styles, fortifications, and patterns of artifact deposition, provide multiple lines of evidence for these changes and for the following reconstruction of the establishment, occupation, and abandonment of the site.

Reconstructing the Events Surrounding the Establishment, Occupation, and Abandonment of the Site

The survey data from every valley, at least from Culebras north to Chao and perhaps including Virú, show that the Casma polity occupied the north coast during this period. My data indicates that the site of Cerro la Cruz was occupied for three hundred to four hundred years. Arriving in approximately AD 900, members of the Casma polity began construction of the compounds (Phase 1). The reasons for the establishment of the site of Cerro la Cruz may never fully be known, but I submit the following proposition. First, in the wake of the Moche polity collapse around AD 700, the Casma polity could have expanded northward, reaching the Chao Valley (ca. AD 890) before the end of the Middle Horizon and establishing a fortified settlement on what would become its northern frontier.¹ Second, the Chao Valley, while limited in natural resources, offered a strategic advantage for controlling trade because of the easy west-east passage from coast to highlands and north-south access from the Santa Valley to the Virú Valley (map 1.2). Third, the Casma polity might have continued their expansion north had they not encountered the southern frontier of the Chimú polity, which was gathering force and consolidating power in their heartland (the Chicama, Moche, and Virú valleys) at the end of the Middle Horizon (ca. AD 900–1000). With the rise of the Chimú state, the site of Cerro la Cruz suddenly would have had a formidable polity located to the north at the site of Chan Chan, leaving the Chao Valley at the intersection of these two territories (map 1.1). This is one possible explanation for the defensive aspects of the terraced hillside site of Cerro la Cruz, which would have served the population well as a fortification and boundary marker for the northern extent of the Casma polity. The site's location also left valuable irrigable land open for farming.

The population of Cerro la Cruz appears to have grown steadily until the site's abandonment (ca. AD 1290). Construction expanded around the hillside and out from the base of the two primary architectural zones on the southern and eastern slopes. Phase 2 of construction in Compound B3 occurred between around AD 1000 and AD 1150, while the third and final phase (Phase 3) probably corresponds to around AD 1200. These phases appear to have been completed by the same cultural group since there are no distinct changes in architectural style or other cultural indicators to suggest the incursion of an outside group. Instead, these changes appear

to have been caused by an increase in population and the growing importance of the site for the Casma polity as the frontier became a border zone. The dramatic enlargements of Compound B3 during Phase 2 seem particularly indicative of an increase in the site's importance, perhaps concurrent with the ambitions of a particular local leader. In this way, the expansion and modification of the site's built environment represent one area of architectural change linked to sociopolitical events.

In terms of climatic changes, Moseley (2001) discussed the significant sociopolitical effects of an extensive drought, which affected the Andes from AD 1100 to AD 1500. The fact that the site of Cerro la Cruz not only survived the first half of the drought but actually increased in size testifies to the resourcefulness of its people. This resourcefulness may have included the ingenuity of the agriculturalists, the expertise of the fishermen, the magnitude to which the elites were able to benefit from trade through the valley, or some combination of these specializations.

During the centuries that Cerro la Cruz was inhabited, daily life was probably quite similar to that of other coastal Peruvian communities. Subsistence included a reliance on marine resources such as fish and shellfish but also incorporated staple crops such as maize, squash, cotton, and chili peppers. There is some evidence for the herding of camelids, probably llamas or alpacas, but not much for the raising of guinea pigs. The only other domesticated animals present were dogs, and wild birds may have been caught for food.

The final series of architectural changes (Phase 3) relates to the end of the site's occupation. The site seems to have been under construction up to the moment it was abandoned. Construction of compounds in Sector D was never finished, and it is possible that the final perimeter wall (Wall 1) was also never completed. Although the site of Cerro la Cruz seems to have been abandoned rather quickly around AD 1300, there is abundant evidence that the site was ritually closed during a termination event. This suggests that either the inhabitants decided to flee the advancing armies of the Chimú state rather than fight, or they indeed lost the battle implied by the stockpiles of slingstones. While I cannot determine with certainty which group conducted the ritual closing events, it seems unlikely that the Chimú forces would expend the time and effort for such rites at a site occupied by an opposing polity. Instead, it appears the leaders of the site of Cerro la Cruz either had time to close the site before they left or were granted permission to do so by the conquering general.

The Site of Cerro la Cruz as a Frontier: Evidence for Cross-Cutting Social Networks

The artifacts recovered at the site of Cerro la Cruz present several examples of the cross-cutting social networks discussed by Lightfoot and Martinez (1995). The site's residents appear to have been incorporating some elements of Chimú iconography into the local Casma ceramic style (figure 5.11). But the Casma ceramic style was not replaced by Early or Middle Chimú-style ceramics. Instead, inhabitants of the site of Cerro la Cruz produced their own version of subjects that had a long continuity in coastal styles, such as birds (especially pelicans), fish, serpents, and *Spondylus* shells (figure 5.12). I interpret this heterogeneous blend of styles as representative of multiple cultural influences, which correspond to the cross-cutting social networks typical of a periphery.

There are also some potential references to interactions with highland polities. These include one ceramic kero (figure 5.13), an unusual vessel form for the coast; llama bone; and a textile fragment made entirely of camelid wool. Coastal textiles were usually made of cotton or a mix of cotton and wool (O'Neale and Kroeber 1930; Rowe 1980). As these few examples show, the inhabitants of the site of Cerro la Cruz incorporated resources and stylistic elements from various coastal and highland traditions, possibly as a result of the trade facilitated by the Chao Valley's strategic location.

Moreover, there appears to be a connection between the Casma polity, the Chimú polity, and perhaps the Lambayeque polity in the far north. Textile style at the site of Cerro la Cruz is most similar to that of other north coast cultures such as the Lambayeque and Chimú. Similarly, the stone jaguar pendant found at the site of Cerro la Cruz bears a striking resemblance to felines portrayed in profile on Lambayeque ceramic vessels. Unfortunately, we cannot know whether the pendant was traded from the far north or whether it simply emulated the Lambayeque style. Only one *Spondylus* bead was found, but this remains a significant find because of the expense and importance of *Spondylus* in Andean cultures. *Spondylus* shells can be harvested only in the warm waters off the coast of Ecuador north to West Mexico, and therefore must have been traded south to Cerro la Cruz, probably as a finished product. These shells possess special significance for Andean peoples as symbols for blood and the food of the gods (e.g., Marcos 1977; Paulsen 1974). While the sample of

potentially imported goods is rather small, this could be due to the lack of mortuary data from Cerro la Cruz. Many times, the more exotic goods tend to be found in burials rather than casually left on the surface when a site is abandoned.

In contrast to these northern influences, the predominant ceramic style at the site of Cerro la Cruz, Casma Incised, comes from the Casma Valley to the south. While the overwhelming majority of Casma ceramics found at Cerro la Cruz were redware, blackware was also present in the sample, and it included Casma stylistic elements. For example, the fragment of a stirrup-spout mold (figure 5.17) found in the ceramic workshop was made of blackware. This suggests that blackware, which became the prevalent paste in both Lambayeque and Chimú fineware styles, may also have spread northward from the south (Castillo 2001), perhaps even via the conduit of the Casma polity. The architecture at Cerro la Cruz fits generally with north coast patterns but does not include any Chimú diagnostic features, such as *audiencias*. Likewise, the occupation of terraced hillside settlements is not typical of Chimú settlement patterns but is instead similar to Late Middle Horizon sites such as Galindo. Subsistence remains clearly indicate a coastal diet, with little evidence of highland influence. Other evidence for coastal interaction is found in the abundant refuse of marine resources such as fish and shellfish, as well as a wooden harpoon (figure 5.25). Nevertheless, there is abundant evidence to prove that the site was established and occupied by members of the Casma polity and no convincing evidence to indicate a Chimú or Wari occupation.

Life on the Casma Periphery

The artifacts recovered from the site of Cerro la Cruz paint a picture of life on the edge of the Casma polity, revealing the cultural intersections and influences that shaped the lives and identities of the site's inhabitants. Data from the site of Cerro la Cruz suggest that its residents included women, men, and children of various ages, occupations (such as farming, fishing, weaving, and pottery production), and at least two levels of status, commoners and elites. The commoners lived and worked on most of the habitational terraces, while the elites resided in the larger compounds and administered the site and its surrounding area. Elites were expected to serve multiple purposes as administrators, diplomats, and religious specialists, and they most likely identified with the Casma polity, perhaps