

1.The Chimú culture succeeded the Moche culture. It lasted from approximately 900 CE until 1470 CE. Its capital and centre was in the city of Chan Chan. Its influence stretched along the northern coast of Peru making it the second largest empire in ancient Andes history.

2.According to Chimú oral history, the history of Chimor (the political grouping of the Chimu culture) began with the arrival of Tacaynamo in the Moche Valley from the sea on a balsa raft. He was considered to have been born from a golden egg. Saying he was sent by a great lord across the sea to govern this land, he established a settlement in the lower valley. Apart from the chronicle nothing else is known about him. His descendants conquered surrounding areas. His son expanded Chimú reign over the lower valley and his grandson expanded the kingdom by conquering the upper valley.

3.The capital of Chan Chan was vast. It is recognised as the largest mud city in the world. It spanned 20km and was occupied by around 60,000 inhabitants. It comprised 9 or 10 (depending which research you read) walled citadels or royal compounds, each built by a succeeding ruler. Each citadel contained dozens of chambers, plazas, ceremonial rooms, storerooms, and burial mounds. The earthen walls of the buildings were often decorated with friezes representing different geometrical shapes, reliefs, animals, and fish. The walls which enclosed the citadels are made of adobe brick and are up to 30 feet high.

Around these royal compounds were thirty-two semi monumental compounds and four production sectors for activities such as weaving wood and metal working.

The bulk of the Chimú population (approximately 26,000 people) lived in *barrios* on the outer edge of the city. They consisted of many single-family domestic spaces with a kitchen, workspace, domestic animals, and storage area.

4.Society

Chimu society was organized into a strict social hierarchy based on wealth, social status, and occupation. The Chimú believed that all men were not created equal. According to Chimú myth, the sun populated the world by creating three eggs: gold for the ruling elite, silver for their wives and copper for everybody else.

The Chimu were divided into four social classes:

first was the nobility, made up of priests and rulers.

second were the merchants and artisans. They were responsible for production and distribution with the farmers.

third were the servants who worked in domestic chores and did some forced labour.

finally, there were the slaves, who were prisoners of war.

5.Agriculture

The Chimú resided on a strip of desert on the northern coast of Peru. The rivers in the region carved fertile valley plains, which were very flat and well-suited to irrigation.

The Chimú expanded and gained power over their 500-year growth through intensive farming techniques and hydraulic works, which joined valleys to form complexes. A few of these agricultural techniques included the following:

- *Huachaqes*: These sunken farms included the removal of the top layer of earth and allowed farmers to work the moist, sandy soil underneath.
- Walk-in wells were developed to draw water.
- Large reservoirs were developed to retain water from river systems in this arid climate where water was an essential resource.

These systematic changes increased the productivity of the land, which multiplied Chimú wealth.

They cultivated beans, sweet potatoes, papayas, and cotton with their reservoir and irrigation systems. Inland communities began keeping llamas as an added way of obtaining meat and later also used them for transporting goods.

The Chimus used fishing canoes made of totora reeds.

6.Chimu artisans were best known for their ceramics , fine metal working of copper, gold, silver, bronze and tumbaga (copper and gold) and colourful textiles.

Their ceramics were characterised by their shiny black appearance, and were usually in the shape of an animal, or had a human figure sitting atop its rounded surface. The shiny black finish was achieved by firing the pottery at high temperatures in a closed kiln, which prevented oxygen from reacting with the clay.

7.The metal workers produced a variety of objects such as cups, knives, containers, figurines, bracelets, pins, and crowns. They used arsenic to harden the metals after they had been cast.

In contrast to their black ceramics, the Chimu **textiles** were multicoloured.

Their costumes consisted of loincloths, ponchos, sleeveless shirts with or without fringes and tunics.

The fabric used by the Chimu was spun from cotton and the wool of 4 camelids, alpaca, guanaco, vicuña and llama.

This fabric was then often coloured, using dyes created from plants such as walnut; minerals, such as clay; and insects such as cochineal.

Once woven, the garments were decorated with embroidery, brocades, feathers and jewellery.

8.Deities

The Chimú worshipped the Moon and considered it the greatest and most powerful of the deities. It was believed to be more powerful than the Sun, as it appeared by night and day, and was deeply linked with patterns in weather, fertility, and the growth of crops. Sacrifices of spondylus shells and other precious items were made to the Moon. Animals and birds were also sacrificed. Devotees sacrificed their own children on piles of coloured cotton with offerings of fruit and chicha. They believed the sacrificed children, normally around the age of five, would become deified.

Spondylus shells were used as a currency, used to make beads for jewellery and also used as offerings to the deities.

The second most important deity was the Sun. The Chimu associated the Sun with cacique stones, which were believed to contain ancestors of the people in the areas where the stones were found.

The last deity of the Chimu was the Sea. Sacrifices of white maize flour, red ochre, and other precious metals were made to the Sea deity in exchange for an abundance of fish, and protection against drowning.

Throughout each district in Chimor, the Chimu built shrines known as Huacas for their deities. The Huacas would represent the unique deity, legend, cult or religion that each specific region believed in.

9. The fall of the Chimu

The Chimu civilization began to decline in the late 14th century due to a combination of factors, including climate change, drought, and internal conflict.

Their end was brought about in the 1470's when they were conquered by the Inca ruler Tupac Inca Yupanqui, who led a fierce and well organized army northward. The Chimu people and their culture were absorbed into the Inca Empire.

The Incas moved the last Chimu ruler to Cusco and kept him in prison. The talented artisans were also forcibly relocated to Cusco to make goods for the Inca nobles.

Despite their relatively short period of dominance, the Chimu people made significant contributions to the cultural and technological development of Peru.

Their innovative irrigation techniques and road systems were adopted by subsequent civilizations,

10. Chan Chan today

Excavation work began at Chan Chan in the mid-1960s. It became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986. The same year it was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger because of the precarious state of conservation of the earthen architecture and its vulnerability to extreme climatic events, erosion, flooding, and high winds, during the heavy rains in El Niño years that affects the northern coast of Peru. Furthermore, the ruins were threatened by plundering of the archaeological remains, and by the proposed construction of a road crossing the site.

A 2007 report published by Unesco describes the erosion of Chan Chan as "rapid and seemingly unstoppable" and concludes "global warming is likely to lead to greater extremes of drying and heavy rainfall." Peru's National Institute of Culture is supporting efforts to preserve the site.

11. Tentlike protective structures are being erected in various parts of the city. Some friezes are being hardened with a solution of distilled water and cactus juice, while others have been photographed, then covered to protect them.