

Chimú

Practices

Located in Peru, this civilization was known to worship the moon, in contrast to the Inca who conquered them. The Chimú civilization grew out of the remnants of the Moche culture.

Early Chimú cemeteries are found without pyramid associations. Burials are usually in extended positions, in prepared tombs. The rectangular, adobe-lined and covered tombs have niches in their walls in which bowls were placed. The Chimú buried their dead with large quantities of textiles and vessels that held food and drink to provide sustenance for the deceased in the afterlife. Funeral mask were also found.

Cacique stones monuments were believed to be ancestors of the people in whose area they stood, and it is clear that the Chimú worshiped their ancestors.

Among the royalty a raised truncated mound served as a burial platform. These were found within the palace complex. Additionally, royalty was often buried along with human sacrifices.

While we do not know much about the actual funerary rituals of the Chimú, silver miniatures and detailed maquettes (models) have been found that give some clues to some of the rites performed. The silver miniatures depict men carrying a sedan chair and an oval casket. From many such works it is clear that high-status individuals were carried in sedan chairs as part of the funeral procession.¹ Similarly, the maquettes give us clues to funerary rites. The figures depict multiple characters carrying mummy bundles or offerings, serving or drinking corn beer, and playing music. Musicians play drums, rattles, flutes, or panpipes. Chimú sculpted vessels made of sheet silver also occasionally represent musicians. Musicians play drums, rattles, flutes, or panpipes.²

Deities and Important Concepts

- Goddess of the moon, weavers and the sea
The main deity of the Chimú. Considered more powerful than the sun because the moon can be seen both in the day and the night.
- The sun, destroyer god
Viewed as a harsh god, most likely because of the harshness of the sun in their desert environment.
- The staff god
Similar to the Moche staff god, but depicted as more human. Like the Moche staff god he controlled life and death;
- Spondylus shellfish
A common offering associated with the sea, rainfall, and fertility.

Modern Adaptations

- Have participants carry offerings to the funeral site to be interred.
- Play panpipes, flutes, rattles and drums as part of the procession to the funeral site. Alternately play recorded music with these instruments as part of the funeral service.
- Bury a Spondylus shell (or other sea shell) so that the deceased will have the comfort of the gentle rains.
- Wrap the deceased with some cloth being sure to include the head. The cloth can be a recreation of patterns used by the Chimú, depict something meaningful to the deceased or simply a colored piece of

¹ "Krannert Art Museum." Peruvian Model Funeral Cortege. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.
<http://www.kam.illinois.edu/collection/americas/FuneraryCortege.html>

² "Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History." Music in the Ancient Andes. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2014.
http://http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/muan/hd_muan.htm

cloth. For the later choose a color that represents some aspect of the deceased personality. Speak how the cloth will protect the deceased as they transition into the next world.

- Offerings of food in jars can be buried so that the soul of the departed will always be nourished.
- Sew a mask onto the cloth wrapped around the deceased with the idea that the memory of the deceased face shall not be forgotten. Alternately bury a mask with the deceased.

Note: There is no evidence as to why mask were historically sown onto the wrapped mummies. However mask and other decorations played an important role in the intricate conveyance of the dead from this world into the next, as symbols of wealth and status and because they were believed to protect and beautify the dead.

Sample Readings

No writings exist.

Resources

Ancient Tomb of Chimú Nobles Found in Peru

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/12/131203-chimu-tomb-ancient-peru-nobles-sacrifices-archaeology-science/#/1-chimu-tomb-peru-archaeology_74026_600x450.jpg