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Ancient Sites of the Andean Desert

A Photographic Essay by Edward Ranney





Huaca Prieta, Chicama Valley, 1988

Junius Bird's excavation at Huaca Prieta in 1946 registered it as an important site of the cotton pre-ceramic Period, ca 3000–1800 BC.



Caral, Supe Valley, Major Pyramid and Sunken Court, 1994

Ongoing excavation and reconstruction undertaken by Ruth Shady Solís since 1996 have established Caral, once known as Chupe Cigarro, as the earliest known Andean pre-ceramic settlement to build large scale monumental architecture, beginning around 3,600 BC.



Caral, Supe Valley, Major Pyramid and
Sunken Court, 2006



Huaca Partida, Chicama Valley, 1988

The monumental Moche platform mound Huaca Partida (also known as Huaca Cortada, for the cut made by looters) stands near the now excavated Huaca Cao Viejo, in the el Brujo Complex, both constructed between 3rd and the 7th century AD.



Huaca Colorado, Chicama Valley, 1988

This small ceremonial pyramid is not far from the el Brujo Complex, but post-dates the Moche period.



Huaca de la Luna, Moche Valley, 1988

The main ritual center of the Moche capital, seen here with the sacred peak Cerro Blanco behind it, was continually remodeled from the third century AD until around 600. An extensive roof has been built over the temple in recent years to protect the extensive mural paintings and reliefs uncovered at the site.



Chan Chan, near Trujillo, 1988

Beginning around 1000 AD successive Chimú rulers at Chan Chan each built his own "ciudadela", or walled palace compound, which also served as administrative centers and storage areas as well as mausoleums for the rulers.



Chan Chan (street), near Trujillo, 1998

The exterior walls of two separate ciudadelas form a narrow passageway at Chan Chan.



Paramonga, Fortaleza Valley, 1988

The restored Inca temple of Paramonga marks the southern limit of Chimor, the empire of the Chimú, which the Incas conquered in the late 15th century.



Inca road, San José, Jequetepeque Valley, 1988



Chucho, Independence Bay, Paracas Peninsula, 1994

Windblown sand covers the remains of low structures at this site of the Paracas culture, 700 BC to 200 AD, famous for its fine textiles and ceramics.



Huaca Soto complex, Chíncha Valley, 1996

Adobe pyramid construction dating from the Paracas period



Huaca Pucllana, Rimac Valley, 1996

Huaca Pucllana is now surrounded by houses of Lima's Miraflores residential district. The pyramid dates from the later phase of the Lima culture, ca 200–700 AD.



Nazca Pampa, Rio Grande River drainage, 1985

Hundreds of ceremonial lines created by the Nazca culture between 100 BC and 700 AD stretch across the vast, arid plain bordered on the north and south by the Ingenio and Nazca Valleys.



Palpa Valley, 2004

A number of Nazca lines and ray centers such as this one are located in the foothills and mesetas between the Ingenio and Ica Valleys.



Cerro Uñitas, near Tarapacá, Chile, 2006

Lines and geoglyphs created by cultures other than the Nazca are found between Arica and Calama, in northern Chile.



Chancay, Chancay Valley, 1994

Salvage excavation recovered valuable artifacts and information relating to the Chancay culture, 1000–1400 AD, during extension of the city's sewer system.



Quebrada de la Vaca, near Chala, 1994

The Inca fishing village and ceremonial center of Quebrada de la Vaca lies near both the imperial coastal road, and the road rising into the Andes en route to Cusco.

Edward Ranney is a photographer of the monuments of ancient America. His work has been featured in numerous publications and museum exhibitions, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Art Museum, Princeton University. His work has been supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, and the Fulbright International Exchange Program. Since 1970 he has lived with his family in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he currently teaches at the Marion Center, College of Santa Fe.