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Sechin archaeological site

Sechin is an important archaeological monument, given its age, architectural complexity and cultural content. It has a unique facade built with stone slab engraved with suggestive subjects of warriors in procession, whose meaning has not yet been fully defined.

Discovered in 1937 by renowned Peruvian archaeologist Julio C. Tello, the site is best known for its megalithic architecture and engraved stone slabs, which depict graphic scenes of human sacrifice and death.

Location:

Sechin archaeological site is located in Ancash province of Casma and 5 kilometers from the city of the same name, on the north slope about 90 meters above sea level. The

weather is hot, dry and with little rainfall annually. The sea is a little more than 10 kilometers away.

Characteristics:

The site covers an area of 5 hectares. Sechin is a complex formed by seven architectural structures, six of them built with mud (adobe) and stone, typical of the Archaic Period (1600 BC). There are two main structures occupy the central part of the complex, one of them being the “Main Building” (rectangular, curved corners and 51 meters long each side), that were carved with reliefs of various kinds. The other four structures are placed in pairs on both sides of the Main Building.

Discovered in 1937 by renowned Peruvian archaeologist Julio C. Tello, the site is best known for its megalithic architecture and engraved stone slabs, which depict graphic scenes of human sacrifice and death. Cerro Sechin is part of a larger group of sites known as the Sechin Complex, a group of contemporaneous settlements in the Casma Valley that exhibit similar monumental public and ceremonial architecture, and which practiced small-scale irrigation agriculture. All of the sites in the Sechin Complex were ideally situated on or nearby fertile agricultural land and their close proximity to communities on the coast provided easy access to marine resources.

Inhabited for much of the second millennium B.C., Cerro Sechin has been the most intensively studied site in the Sechin Complex. It covers roughly 50,000 meters squared and consists of a quadrangular three-tiered stepped platform flanked on each side by two smaller buildings. The platform was constructed in several stages using conical adobes, or large sun-dried bricks with broad circular bases and tapered points, which were then set into clay mortar and plastered over to form wall surfaces. A retaining wall, roughly 4.15 meters (13.5 feet) tall and containing nearly 400 granite sculptures, was added relatively late in the site’s history and encircled the perimeter of the building. The stone sculptures, undoubtedly the most famous feature at Cerro Sechin, depict a possible mythological or historical scene in which a procession of armed men, probably important personages or warriors, make their way among the mutilated remains of human victims. Given the gruesome nature of the stone frieze, it seems likely





that some degree of warfare, violence, and/or raiding existed among these early valley peoples.

Though little is known about Cerro Sechin's demise, the site appears to have been abandoned by 800 B.C., paralleling the decline of other important ceremonial and public centers on the Peruvian coast at this time.

Cerro Sechín Mount:

Temple of Sechin

In close proximity to the Sechin Temple, and raising above it is the Cerro Sechin site. The Initial period reconstruction of the pyramid measures about 53 m on each side.



The main Sechin Complex below may have actually been the entry point to this hill top complex. It is not known if the hill top complex was a fortress or simply a walled ceremonial center. The two separate sites are frequently referred to as simply Cerro Sechin. It is therefore important to differentiate between the lower main Sechin Temple Site with its carved monolithic walls, and the hill top complex shown here.

Sechín Alto Site:

The archaeological site called Sechin Alto is the capital of a pre-Incan culture located on the northwest coast of Peru, occupied between approximately 1800-900 BC. The site is remarkable for its enormous mound, the largest of its time period, measuring some 990 feet long, by 825 feet wide by 145 feet tall.



Sechin Alto is located on the left margin of the Sechin River, along the road to Huaraz. This temple site is the largest of the Prehispanic/Pre-Columbian monuments of Peru, and is the largest of the Casma Valley structures. It was constructed from dressed stone and "conical" style adobe, with a U-shaped monument plan covering about 200 hectares. Five plazas extend about a mile (1.4 km) from the central mound, three with central sunken courts, one of which is about 250 ft (80 meters) in diameter. The main mound is 44 meters high by 300 meters by 250 meters., making it the largest single construction in the New World during the second millennium B.C. The mound was faced with granite blocks, some weighing over 2 tons. Sechin Alto's great size may represent a 1000 year building span.



Fortress Of Sechín Bajo:

All the Sechin Alto sites are large complexes with large structures, squares and connecting roads. The basic structure of the main building platform installations are made of stone and clay (adobe) mortar, where smaller internal structures with different functions were built.

One of these complexes is Sechin Bajo. During 1992 the first detailed surveys were conducted (Patzschke 1993), it was also at this time that the first geodesic plans were created. Since then there have been several excavations covering a total of three major areas with more than 1000 m² excavated.

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