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## Reenvisioning Wari

JUSTIN JENNINGS

In 1946 three young American archaeologists—Donald Collier, John Rowe, and Gordon Willey—drove into the central Peruvian sierra to see what all the fuss was about. Julio C. Tello (1942:682–684) had published a few paragraphs about a massive archaeological site outside of the city of Ayacucho that he claimed was the progenitor of one of the most recognizable art styles of the Andes and the capital of a vast civilization. Although the Americans visited for only a short while, they came away convinced that their Peruvian colleague was correct: the art style, soon known as Wari, had indeed developed in Huari, the Pre-Columbian city, hundreds of years before the expansion of the Inca Empire. They then took Tello's argument a step further by suggesting a possible link between Huari's architecture and the architecture of Viracochapampa and Pikillacta, imposing sites found on either end of the Peruvian sierra (Rowe et al. 1950:136). With their restricted access, audience halls, and rows of likely storage deposits, the two sites had often been taken as Inca state installations (McCown 1945; Harth-Terre 1959). If these and other far-flung settlements with broadly similar architecture proved to be founded by the Wari state, then a possible explanation for the art style's spread was that an empire conquered and controlled much of the central Andes.

To date, more than two dozen possible Wari-affiliated sites have been identified outside of Ayacucho (Figure 1.1) (Jennings and Craig 2001; McEwan and Williams 2012). When further investigated, some of these suggested sites have been found to predate or postdate the Middle Horizon period (AD 600–1000) associated with Wari influence; others are from the right period but appear to be local constructions; still others may have been abandoned before occupation occurred (Jennings 2006:269–270). Yet the affiliations of Pikillacta, Pataraya, Cerro Baúl, and other settlements have withstood scholarly scrutiny: people with deep ties to the Wari heartland founded and

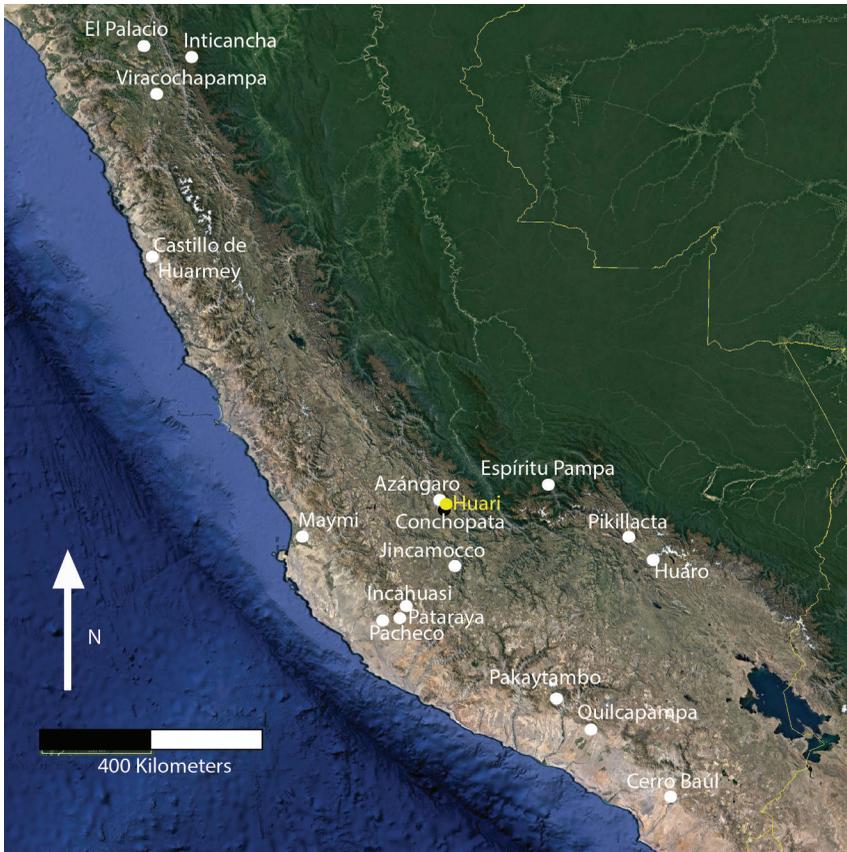


Figure 1.1. Landsat image of Peru showing the location of sites with Wari-associated ceramics and architecture (USGS/NASA Landsat).

lived at the sites. As briefly discussed in the introduction, the establishment of these places is the lynchpin of the imperial model for Wari, with each settlement often glossed as an administrative center that provides a “reliable indication of direct control of a region” (Schreiber 1992:264) and a “true measure” of Wari power (McEwan and Williams 2012:74). The Wari sites in this Inca-inspired model are thought to have organized surplus extraction, funneling the wealth of conquered provinces back to the imperial heartland (Isbell and McEwan 1991; Lumbreras 1974b; McEwan 2005; Menzel 1977; Rowe 1967; Williams and Isla 2002).

Those seeking alternatives to the imperial model of administration tend to suggest that a possible Wari site is not a bona fide one or question a center’s reach into surrounding communities (for example, Bélisle and Covey

2010; Jennings 2014; Shady Solís 1988). For fifty years, however, few have questioned the underlying assumption that at least some of the residents of Wari-affiliated centers were state-selected administrators who followed the dictates of a centralized bureaucracy. This chapter challenges this critical assumption by suggesting that politics in Huari were far more heterarchical, dynamic, and adversarial than commonly envisioned. If power dynamics in and around the city were in flux—as was the case in many early cities worldwide (Jennings 2016; also see the Introduction)—then Huari’s impact across the Andes should be similarly variable across space and time. Some people may have left the city to take up administrative posts in the later part of the Middle Horizon, but most likely left for the wide variety of other reasons why people have left home for millennia (see Stein 2005 for a general sense of this variability).

Initiated in the frenetic first decades of Huari urbanization, Viracochapampa and Pikillacta were never completed (Figure 1.2) (McEwan 2005:147; Topic and Topic 2010:197). The sites that best embody centralized planning for many scholars were therefore unrealized aspirations of what a Wari polity could become. Subsequent Wari-affiliated sites outside of Ayacucho are much more variable in their architectural organization and material culture (Jennings 2010b:7–9). Many inhabitants of these later sites shared a Wari ethnicity. They built their homes in certain ways, ate similar foods, and enjoyed related ritual traditions (Nash 2017; Rosenfeld 2012; Sayre et al. 2012). This does not necessarily mean that they came directly from Ayacucho, however, or were agents of the Wari state in any meaningful way. As I argue below, some may have been forced from their homeland. Others may have chosen to leave to seek a better future for their families.

An *a priori* coupling of Wari-affiliated sites and their residents to the service of an overarching state administrative structure masks the complexity of Middle Horizon life. A few sites appear to have functioned as administrative nodes, at least on the local level (Goldstein et al. 2009; McEwan 2005; Schreiber 1992). These settlements come closest to the vision of a “mosaic of control” that organized the political economy of Middle Horizon Peru (Schreiber 1992:263–265). Even in these cases, however, it is unclear whether and how resources were funneled back to the Wari heartland (Earle and Jennings 2014). In most places, there is little evidence that sites served an administrative role—residents may have thought of themselves largely as farmers, traders, refugees, or other identifiers. We can and should continue to debate what constellation of imported ceramics, architecture, cuisine, birth regions, or other measures should be used to assign a Wari affiliation to a site. Yet our next questions must be about the residents’ particular relationships to

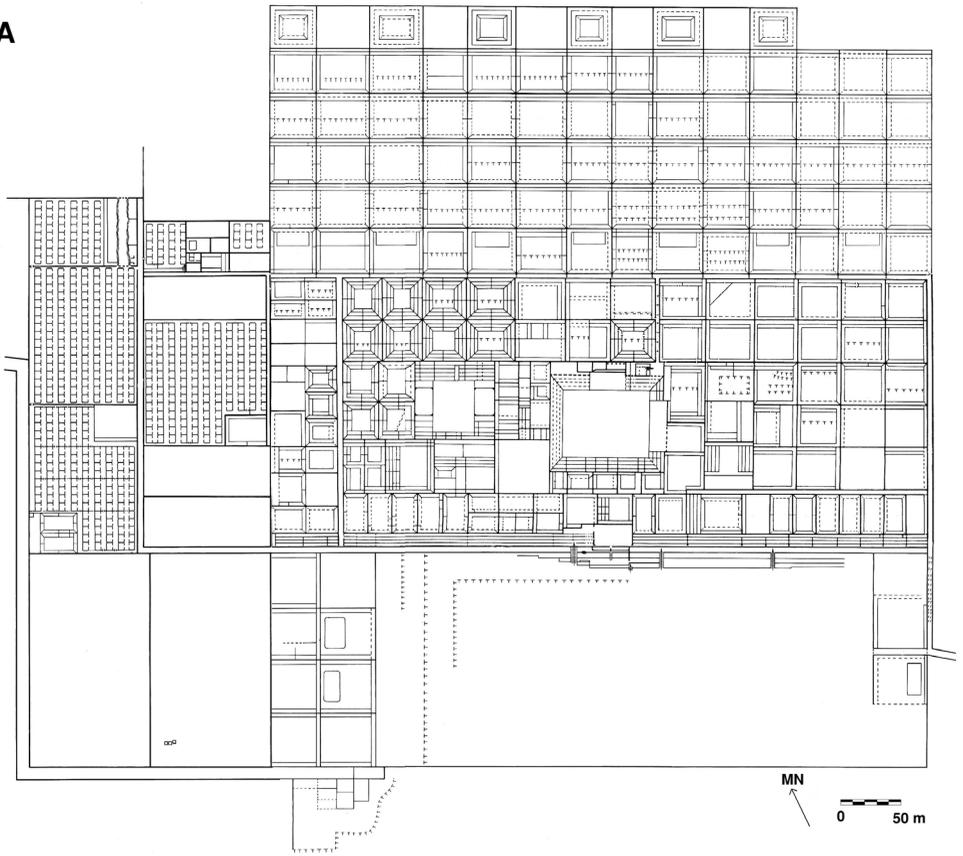
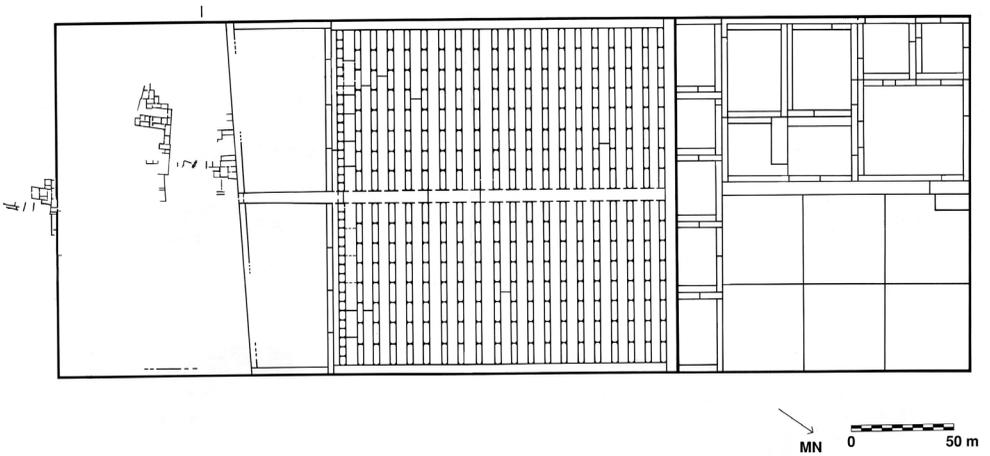
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Figure 1.2. The Wari-associated sites of Pikillacta (a) and Azangaro (b). The centralized planning seen in the site plans was integral to the development of the imperial model (Pikillacta plan courtesy of Gordon McEwan and Azangaro plan courtesy of the scholarly archive of Martha Biggar Anders).

Huari, Ayacucho, and other distant regions as well as to the local groups living around them.

In the following pages I use the extant data to offer a far messier vision of Huari and its role in the Middle Horizon than is commonly envisioned. Imperialism as a process associated with the extension of political sovereignty certainly plays a role, as do factionalism, colonialism, and globalism. Many readers may disagree strongly with at least aspects of this vision, and much of what is written will likely require revision. Yet I hope that readers will also recognize that the variation across Wari-affiliated settlements can no longer be shoehorned into imperial models that posit that each of these sites functioned to benefit a well-entrenched state (also see BÉlisle 2015; Conlee 2010; Skidmore 2014).

This chapter seeks to open up the interpretive possibilities for the excavation and survey data presented later in this volume by reenvisioning the urban experience in Huari, the rise of the Wari state, and the reasons why people may have left the city at different times. Quilcapampa, we argue, was founded by settlers of Ayacucho origin. They were, in a word, Wari. What this word might mean in the context of this particular site in Middle Horizon Arequipa is the focus of our book.

## HUARI AND ITS ENVIRONS

At its height in the eighth century AD, Huari was the largest city in the Pre-Columbian Andes. The site sprawled across 10 square kilometers and housed as many as 40,000 residents (Isbell 2009:215). The city had grown rapidly at the very end of the Early Intermediate Period (200 BC–AD 600), attracting people into the settlement from the surrounding region (Schreiber 1992:87–91; Valdez and Valdez 2016:106). The impetus for Huari's initial growth may have been religious since ceremonial centers were centripetal forces in Ayacucho for more than two thousand years (Leoni 2006; Pérez Calderón and Paredes 2015; Vivanco and Mendoza 2015).

Excavations suggest that Huari was home to several ritually important centers vying for followers during the mid–first millennium AD (Isbell 1997:194, 2001:111–117; Ochatoma Paravicino et al. 2015:115). The differences in ceremonial architecture across space and time at Huari is striking: people were experimented with different kinds of sacred spaces, although there appears to have been an ongoing emphasis at the site on more intimate, smaller-scale events that took place inside structures.

Rapid urbanization at the end of the sixth century brought with it a dense warren of architectural compounds and D-shaped structures at both Huari

and the nearby site of Conchopata, where this period is better identified (Figure 1.3) (Isbell 2009:201–208). D-shaped structures, in use in the region for centuries (for example, Pérez Calderón and Paredes 2015), were employed in part to navigate conflict between compounds composed of “extended families made up of biologically related kin and affines” (Tung 2012:83). Some of this conflict was undoubtedly associated with rising inequalities that were by now clearly visible both in the ways that people were buried and in the consumption of sumptuary goods (Bergh 2012; Isbell 2004).

The ceremonies that took place within the D-shaped structures appear to have emphasized ancestry and sacrifice (Cook 2001:160), forming the core of a new religion that legitimated the city’s growing status differences by emphasizing elite ties to the sacred (Menzel 1964:67). D-shaped structures could only house a few dozen people at a time, but at places in the city like Vegachayuq Moqo attempts were made to create larger plazas and platform complexes to include more people in ritual activities (Bragayrac D. 1991). Mausoleums may have also housed select elites from across the site (Pérez Calderón 1999:50–56). The largest of these spaces, however, could house only a tiny fraction of the city’s population.

If these latter efforts were attempts to create a shared civic identity, then they appear to have failed by the mid-seventh century. The city by this time was divided into “repetitive, apartment-like cells,” each with its own patios and courtyards (Isbell 2009:209). No temple complex, great plaza, or other core feature had developed to unite the residents of Huari. The settlement was instead experienced as a place of “spatial confusion” marked by “enclosure and redundancy” (Isbell and Vranich 2004:176). Yawning socioeconomic differences are evident at Huari by this time (González Carré 1981:94; Spickard 1983:153–154; Von Hagen and Morris 1998:130), and much effort appears to have been made to sort and rank people.

The existence of hierarchies at Huari, however, should not necessarily be seen as evidence of a centralized monarchy. The lack of a ceremonial core to Huari, when combined with the absence of both a royal residence and depictions of a ruler (Isbell 2006), raises the possibility that the city was instead composed of rival factions that were internally hierarchical while being quite fluid in their relationships with each other (Crumley 1995; see Makowski 2016 for a related view). Although thinking about cities without kings, bureaucrats, and taxes may seem odd to readers steeped in the framework of cultural evolution, urbanization, and state formation are not necessarily coupled (Jennings and Earle 2016).

A more heterarchical political organization may actually have been the norm, instead of the exception, in the earliest cities worldwide (Jennings



Figure 1.3. Site plan of a portion of Conchopata (courtesy of William H. Isbell and the Conchopata Archaeological Project).

2016, 2021), with groups seeking to maintain a semblance of the power and autonomy that they were accustomed to within a now much larger collective. States—classically defined as regionally organized societies composed of a ruling class, a commoner class, and a highly centralized and internally specialized government (Johnson and Earle 1987:246; Marcus and Feinman 1998:4)—appear to be one of the possible products of urbanization. Hierarchy thus emerges from heterarchy over dozens of years, as one group establishes control over others by solidifying a governing apparatus. Other kinds of regional polities are possible (for example, Kenoyer 2008; McIntosh 2005), but state formation is common in the wake of urbanization.

A more heterarchical organization of Huari politics is supported by analysis of Wari iconography. For more than a decade, Patricia Knobloch (2010, 2012, 2016) has been studying a group of more than fifty agents, identifiable by dress, facial markings, and other features, who regularly appear on Wari-style ceramics, textiles, metal work, and other media (Figure 1.4). Who exactly these agents represent remains unclear, but many seem to depict distinct individuals—whether people, ancestors, or some kind of composite fig-

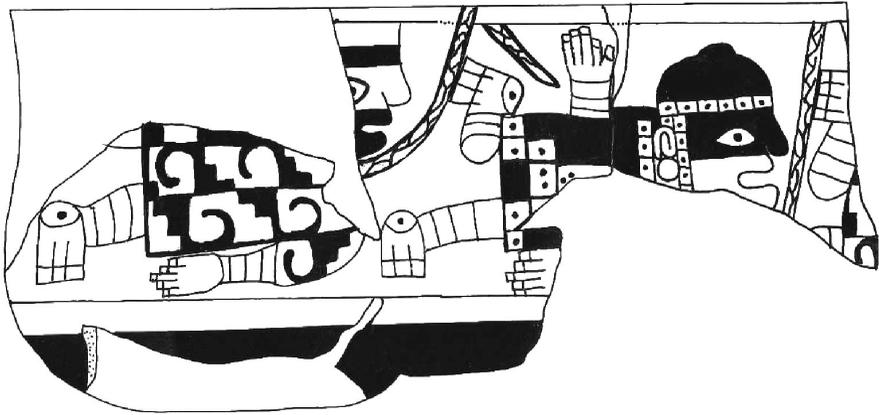


Figure 1.4. A Viñaque-style bowl from Huari showing captured individuals. The figure on the right, Agent 103, is found at Quilcapampa, while the unidentified agent on the right wears a tunic similar to the one worn by Agent 141, who is also found at Quilcapampa (drawing by Patricia J. Knobloch based on photographs by Knobloch and drawings by Ismael Pérez Calderón [1999: 75]).

ures that stand for a group—associated with Huari and its environs. Groups of these Wari-affiliated individuals are often found together in the same context and sometimes on the same object. They can be shown working together but also in conflict. A social network analysis of depictions of more than one agent on the same object shows highly significant clustering (Gibbon et al. 2021). Certain agents appear together much more often than they do with other agents, and the relationship between agents appears to change over time. Knobloch (2016) is beginning to trace the biographies of certain agents whose histories sometimes read as sagas of friendship and betrayal.

Heterarchy in Wari political structure during the early Middle Horizon is also supported by Anita Cook’s (1992) analysis of two sets of forty sodalite figurines likely interred at Pikillacta soon after the settlement’s founding. The figurines are individualized by their headgear and garments. Although some of the individuals likely represent foreigners (also see Valcárcel 1933), Cook argued that many of the figurines were meant to depict Wari actors whose relative statuses were displayed by their size and costume. Cook (1992:358–359) suggested that the twenty figurines with matches in each set represented “Huari ayllus or the mythical ancestors of the 20 highest-ranked descent groups” and that the bronze bars found in their midst were “a metonym” for their collective authority in Wari society. The stone, *Spondylus*, and metal figurines recently excavated from an offering pit at Pikillacta also appear to represent groups of “specific individuals” battling foreigners (Arriola Tuni