

EARTHWATCH INSTITUTE FIELD REPORT 2006 - Archaeology of Peru's Wari Empire

Project Title: Archaeology of Peru's Wari Empire

Principal Investigator: Mary Glowacki

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Research Site: Site of Cotocotuyoc, Cuzco, Peru. S13.68405°, W71.63627° (lat./long,
datum WGS 84)

Local Management Status of the Research Site: Archaeological park managed by
Peru's Institute of Culture

Scientific names of primary species being studied: N/A

Key Research Objectives:

- (1) Determine nature of Wari occupation of Huaro;
- (2) understand role of Cotocotuyoc in valley occupation;
- (3) elucidate Wari and later Lucre mortuary practices through excavation and analysis of Cotocotuyoc cemetery and mortuary edifice;
- (4) document transition from Wari to Lucre culture;
- (5) glean insights into decline of the Wari occupation in Cuzco.

Data Collection and Results

We have collected a variety of data from this season's excavations. In particular, we excavated two principal areas of Cotocotuyoc, both of which are funerary in nature. The first is a Wari cemetery, which we identified last year. There, we excavated various burials in an effort to delimit the cemetery and understand more about the individuals that were interred and their role in Wari society.

The second excavation area dates to the Lucre period. It represents the interment of individuals marking the decline of the Wari empire and the society that continued after this event. These data are extremely important because they will help explain the transformation from Wari to Lucre society and what factors may have caused this change.

Excavation material includes pottery, both fragments (i.e., potsherds) and whole vessels, adornments, such as *Spondylus* (shell) carved beads and bronze clothing fasteners/pins, camelid (llama) bone offerings, textile fragments, and fragments and complete stone tools, such as projectile points and grinding stones.

Our progress has been gradual but substantial. We were unaware of the mortuary component of Cotocotuyoc until excavations last year revealed the Wari cemetery. While an important discovery, these new site components must be studied slowly and deliberately, and this work has taken more time than we anticipated. Consequently, we have not yet delineated the cemetery, and there are still areas of the site that we wish to test. In particular, we have evidence that the site functioned as a redoubt for the Wari at the end of their control of Cuzco; however, we do not have many occupational contexts to help us understand this component of the site.

At present, our interpretation of the site is as follows:

The Wari occupied Huaro early, which we discovered substantial evidence for at Cotocotuyoc. Excavations of the Cotocotuyoc cemetery show that the interments date to the initial occupation of the valley. These excavations also indicate that this cemetery was the final resting-place of Wari elite.

Our tentative analysis of the human remains recorded in the Cotocotuyoc Wari cemetery indicate that the majority of the individuals interred were women, some of whom may have been shamans, evidence for which includes mortars for grinding possible medicines, curing stones, and art imagery symbolic of shamanic activity. The cemetery also contained two principal burials with lined tombs that were looted prior to our excavations. We do not know whether these burials were for men or women.

Another formal Wari cemetery, Batan Urqu, is located on a hillside across from Cotocotuyoc. It was excavated in the 1980s and post-dates the Cotocotuyoc cemetery. It would appear that these two Wari cemeteries of high-ranking individuals, now recorded for the valley, represent an early and late phase of the area's occupation, Cotocotuyoc representing the former, and Batan Urqu, the latter.

Cotocotuyoc was also used for interring the dead following the Wari occupation. The Lucre who succeeded the Wari buried societal members in walled structures built on portions of the same edifices as the mortuary architecture of the Wari cemetery. They also buried them in a building in close proximity to the Wari cemetery. These interments stylistically demonstrate the transition from Wari to Lucre with emphasis on the later phase of the site's occupation.

Comparative data from Cotocotuyoc and the site of Chokepukio, a site approximately 19 km northeast of Huaro in the Lucre Basin, suggest that the early Lucre occupation of Cuzco was concentrated in the southern reaches, in the area of Huaro. The later Lucre occupation was focused farther north, in the Lucre Basin.

Significance/Benefits of Research

- This project contributes to the local economy and to the understanding of local peoples of their cultural heritage. Moreover, tourism is very important to Cuzco, and new excavations/interpreted sites can frequently translate into an increase in visitors. This further translates into an increase in jobs for the Institute of Culture, the university, private tour agencies, and shops and stores. Our work also benefits the local community of Huaro, whose members, through our presence, are becoming increasingly aware of their Wari ancestors.

- On a broader scale, our work will make a contribution to the culture history of Peru, since Wari was imperial in nature and occupied many parts of ancient Peru. Little is known about the Wari, and since Cuzco served as its principal provincial centre, clearly documented by the monumental site of Pikillacta and the long and intensive occupation of the Huaro Valley, there is much that can be learned from investigations there.
- On a global scale, the rise and fall of state level societies continues throughout the world today. Information from the past can inform upon the present, meaning that prehistoric investigations have practical merit. Additionally, these studies help us understand the richness of past societies, and the commonalities we find universally can bring people together as they see that all people share many basic cultural attributes.

The cycle of the rise and fall of complex societies since prehistoric times is tied to environmental fluctuation. Again, lessons from the past can inform upon the present. In the case of the Cuzco Wari, evidence indicates that drought was partially the cause for this society's decline. One of the project's ultimate goals is to look at the complexity of this problem as it relates specifically to Huaro.

Dissemination of Results

Previously, updates of the Huaro Archaeological Project have been reported in professional publications, for example:

Glowacki, Mary 2002 The Huaro Archaeological Site Complex: Rethinking the Huari Occupation of Cuzco, pp. 267-286, in *Andean Archaeology I: Variations in Sociopolitical Organization*, edited by William H. Isbell and Helaine Silverman. Kluwer Academic /Plenum Publishers, New York.

Glowacki, Mary, and Gordon F. McEwan, 2001 Pikillacta, Huaro y la gran region del Cuzco: nuevas interpretaciones de la ocupacion Wari de la sierra sur, pp. 31-50, in *Boletín de Arqueología PUCP No. 5, Huari y Tiwanaku: Modelos vs. Evidencias*, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima.

Preliminary results were presented last year at the annual Northeast Andean conference held in Washington, DC (over 100 attendees). Additionally, a public presentation of the project was delivered by the PI in November 2005 to the Panhandle Archaeological Society at Tallahassee, a local organization to which Glowacki belongs (over 35 attendees). This year, the project gave a formal talk to the community of Virgen de Purificacion, located adjacent to Cotocotuyoc in Huaro. Afterwards, members joined us in the field to help clear loose stone and learn more about our field project. Additionally, various members of the project, in collaboration with other archaeologists working in Cuzco, will participate in a symposium that will serve as the basis for an edited volume, plans for which are currently being made. The symposium will be held at the annual meetings of the Society for American Archaeology in April. Finally, the popular guide to Cuzco archaeological sites, written by Peter Frost, will be updated this year with contributions from the Huaro Archaeological Project members.

Glowacki, Mary 2007 The Wari and Their Ancestors: Imperial Transformation in Cuzco, Peru. Symposium with eleven participants to be held at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Austin, TX, April, 2007. Mary Glowacki, organizer.

Glowacki, Mary 2005 Excavations at Cotocotuyoc: New Data on the Wari and Lucre Occupations of the Huaro Valley, Cuzco, Peru. Presented at the annual meeting for Northeast Andean Archaeology, Washington, DC, November.

Glowacki, Mary 2005 Excavations at Cotocotuyoc: Investigating the Collapse of a Wari Imperial Center. Public lecture delivered to the Panhandle Archaeological Society at Tallahassee, November.