

The Middle Horizon in the North: Wari, an empire or something like it

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- Ayacucho basin setting
 - north (and west) of the Titicaca altiplano area
 - moderately high intermontaine valleys
 - steep, scrubby land that needs terracing, plus canal irrigation in some places for consistent yields

- Origins in Huarpa culture
 - an Early Intermediate Period culture, about 300 - 650 cal AD
 - pottery style shows strong similarities to Nasca
 - presumably some interaction, exchange, or other connection
 - the highland culture (Huarpa and the Wari that followed) seems to have adopted some of the impressive Nasca pottery motifs and technology
 - maybe these were useful to an emerging elite that needed to differentiate itself from common folks and legitimate its special status
 - significant corporate (?) effort used to build terrace systems
 - up to 100 terraces high
 - with spring-fed and river-fed canals, small reservoirs, etc.
 - canals up to several km long
 - some relatively well built, with clay linings and up to 1.6 m wide
 - mostly relatively small villages
 - plus Nawimpukyo, a larger town
 - on a hilltop
 - fancier "H" style fieldstone (not cut) masonry
 - focussed on several platforms with some presumably administrative buildings, open courts, and high-status residences
 - has its own small spring-fed canal system
 - presumably the seat of a complex chiefdom that incorporated the immediate valley region

- Beginning of the Middle Horizon, traditionally dated 600 (or 500, or 550) to 1000 cal AD
 - Moseley emphasizes a long, severe drought shown in ice cores from 562-594 AD
 - estimates precipitation down about 30%
 - dust in ice cores suggests significant erosion
 - presumed decline in agricultural productivity, maybe by a third
 - Moseley describes the decline of Moche as a result
 - we won't pursue that further here, for lack of time, but the reading is good
 - Moseley's story for the origins of Wari
 - Huarpa began to use high springs and river water sources, canals, and terraced mountain slope fields
 - these were mostly unused prior to this time

- picking water out of sources high up gives you first claim over those using them downstream
- also increases total usable amount of water, due to less travel and loss by seepage and evaporation
- so Huarpa weathered the drought better than valley-bottom or coastal irrigating groups
- perhaps a related argument could be made for Tiwanaku's rise to prominence at the same time
- Huarpa developed into Wari, and the Wari “package” of ideology, technology, social organization for labor mobilization, iconography, etc. spread

- Dates are still being debated (is this sounding familiar?)
- Chronology based on ceramics
 - many were exceptionally fine, borrowing from Nasca traditions
 - Middle Horizon Epoch 1: thought to be a first large wave of expansion
 - best estimate: 650-750 cal AD
 - elaborate Wari pottery was used in many parts of the Andes of what is now Peru, alongside the local ceramics of each place
 - Middle Horizon Epoch 2: a second wave of expansion
 - best estimate: 750-950 cal AD
 - somewhat different Wari pottery was widespread in mostly the same area
 - maybe associated with rebuilding of some provincial sites
 - Epoch 3: collapse
 - best estimate: 950-1100 cal AD
 - fancy Wari pottery changed somewhat, and less of it is found
 - In the chronology charts, I show the Wari empire (?) as lasting until a round 1000 cal AD, which is the conventional end of the Middle Horizon
 - this is a bit into the period of collapse
 - but some outposts probably functioned during the early states of collapse
 - the process of Wari's collapse still needs a lot of study
 - Epoch 4: decline, mostly in heartland
 - the real patterns may not have been this clear-cut...
- Wari's chronological relationship to Tiwanaku
 - contemporary, maybe starting a bit later
 - but that depends on what you consider "starting" to be
 - early sunken rectangular court at Wari, with cut stone walls
 - reminiscent of Tiwanaku courts
 - dates 560 ±60 to 720 ±60 AD
 - refloored numerous times
 - then ritually buried and built over
 - Moseley takes this and the iconographic similarities as suggesting Wari “borrowed” ideology and iconography from Tiwanaku
 - both declined at around the same time, roughly 1000 cal AD

- The capital at Huari

- Yet another odd spelling convention
 - "Huari" is used for the capital site and things relating specifically to it
 - "Wari" is used for the culture, state, pottery style, etc.
 - not everyone sticks to this convention, though
- Huari was a big, urban center
 - 3-4 square km
 - estimated 20,000 - 30,000 population
 - on a big flattish area well above the valley floor
 - this area was originally farmed, later covered by urban sprawl
 - with very high, long walls dividing the city into sectors
 - and large, multistory rectangular buildings
 - some clean, suggesting administrative or other special uses
 - some contain domestic debris, suggesting occupation
 - construction was mostly uncut fieldstone
 - rows of projecting stones to hold up floors
 - bottom floor often elevated several feet above, making a low cellar or crawl space under the first floor... why?
 - some special buildings had cut stone walls and/or floors, but not as massive nor as widespread as at Tiwanaku
 - plans tend to involve long, narrow buildings along one or more sides of a roughly square, walled courtyard
 - roofs probably peaked and made of thatch
 - as suggested by a ceramic model of a multistory building with its square, walled courtyard
 - some building compounds were apparently used for specialized craft production
 - ceramics
 - beads
 - lithic points
 - another had lots of decorated service and drinking vessels
 - suggesting ritual feasting and drinking
 - as known from the Inka
 - Moseley suggests an overall pattern of segregation
 - implying lots of class, rank, kin, and occupational differentiation
- some ritual sectors
 - unlike Tiwanaku
 - no elevated mound
 - little use of sunken rectangular courts
 - except for the early one mentioned above, that might indicate that Tiwanaku had a role in the early development of Huari
 - no carved monoliths
 - little or no emphasis on huge cut stonework
 - instead, D-shaped rooms or temples
 - door in the flat side

- flat prepared floor
- surrounded by rooms and walls, usually some running right up to the outer walls of the D-shaped temple
 - so the D-shaped rooms were apparently not meant to be particularly impressive from the outside
 - but rather, the inside was the point
- the biggest one at Huari: Vegachayoc Moqo
 - in a complex with walls that had big niches
 - which contained upright seated human burials: originally mummy bundles, like the Inka venerated?
- looks like a pretty different set of ritual facilities from Tiwanaku, presumably quite different religious ideas
- yet both depicted very similar Staff God figures
 - Tiwanaku on the Gateway of the Sun, on the surface of many of the monoliths, on portable objects
 - Wari mostly painted on pottery
- Multi-story underground burial structures with massive cut stone construction
 - apparently intended to be revisited, albeit not easily
 - to add more burials?
 - to leave offerings?
 - to consult the dead?
 - apparently contained very high-status burials
 - but mostly badly looted
 - example: Cheqo Wasi sector at Huari
- exotic imports
 - *Spondylus* from Ecuador
 - other shells from the (distant) coast
 - green stones from unknown sources
 - lapis from Chile
 - copper, silver, gold from unknown sources
- Conchopata, a major Wari site near Huari
 - recent large-scale excavations have uncovered a dense complex of walls, rooms, plazas, and corridors
 - also several D-shaped "temples"
 - possibly enclosed by straight perimeter walls
 - clearly very high-status residences
 - William Isbell identifies this as one or more "palaces"
 - D-shaped "temple"
 - flat, prepared clay floor
 - with an upright stone that might have served to cast a shadow (assuming the room was unroofed) like a sundial
 - several heaps of sherds from broken, large, fine ceramic vessels laying directly on the floor

- part of the regular use of the structure?
 - "closing" offerings?
 - destruction?
- elsewhere at Conchopata, lots of evidence of fine ceramic manufacturing
 - molds
 - plates on which the ceramic stood and was turned during manufacture
 - scrapers made from sherds
 - a probable firing area (not really a full-fledged kiln)
- The valleys around Huari and Conchopata contain many more Wari sites
 - some with planned architecture and cut stone
 - many just rural villages
 - presumably the people who supported the urban sites
 - using both plainer pottery and a subset of the fancy Wari ceramics, but even rural farmers did have some of the nice stuff
- Wari pottery destruction
 - tradition of smashing large, very fine pots
 - and burying the pieces in specially-prepared stone-lined pits, or spreading the pieces around on the floor of a room that was then abandoned or had a new floor laid over the offering, etc.
 - the smashed vessels are usually similar in form, size, finish, etc., as though they were made to be used (and destroyed?) together
 - specific types of pots seem to have been smashed and disposed of in specific ways, suggesting that this was a ritual process, not just wanton destruction
 - in some cases, the pattern of breakage suggests that a blow was struck right on the face of the Staff God painted on the vessel
 - what sort of ritual *was* this??
- Pottery decorations may tell us about Wari society
 - Urn with pictures of multi-story buildings in walled compounds
 - ceramic house model mentioned earlier
 - Conchopata vessels that show warriors in elaborate clothes and face paint (?) with shields, axes, bows and arrows kneeling on what are probably reed boats
 - a campaign on Lake Titicaca?
- Elaborate textiles
 - mostly known from coastal sites where preservation is better
 - tapestry shirts with complex geometric and figural designs
 - some look like the secondary figures around the Staff God on Tiwanaku's Gateway of the Sun, often with some parts compressed and other parts stretched out... what does this mean?
 - 4-pointed hats similar to the Tiwanaku ones
 - but both the tunics and hats differ consistently in technical and stylistic details
 - they can be told apart in almost every case
 - Wari people used quipus

- were they the first to do so?
- did Tiwanaku people also use them? (no indication of that yet)
- Wari peripheral centers and settlement pattern
 - compared to Tiwanaku, Wari had outposts in many more places, scattered over a much larger region
 - these tend to be very far apart and isolated from each other
 - plunked down in the middle of whatever local society was already there
 - usually located on big, flattish, open areas
 - not particularly defensible spots
 - big, planned complexes
 - up to 800 m on a side!
 - areas with vast numbers of repetitive small rooms in orderly arrays
 - some may have been for storage
 - some were lived in
 - barracks or worker housing?
 - if so, mit'a labor?
 - open plazas
 - long, narrow rooms, some multistory, probably thatched peaked roofs
 - high, blank enclosing walls with few entrances
 - was this for defense?
 - to control traffic, access to the interior, goods?
 - irregular architecture in higher-status areas
 - most have no D-shaped rooms (Cerro Baúl is an exception)
 - often have stone-lined underground canals, probably to handle drainage
 - unfinished; some areas were laid out with rows of stone but the walls were never built
 - in many areas, few artifacts
 - Examples of planned Wari centers
 - Pikillaqta
 - near Cuzco
 - the largest, southernmost, most famous Wari highland center
 - Azángaro
 - near Huari itself
 - many features similar to Pikillaqta
 - Viracochapampa
 - way up in northern highlands
 - has the rectangular courts and long rooms, but lacks the repetitive tiny rooms
 - has big niched halls... maybe for storing and venerating mummy bundles?
 - right near Marcahuamachuco, a very impressive site of a local northern highlands culture
 - which used similar architecture
 - maybe even was the inspiration for Wari architecture
 - what was the relationship between these two cultures?

- and numerous others, smaller but similar in concept and plan
 - such as Wariwillka
- what were these peripheral centers for?
 - usually had little impact on surrounding areas
 - little exchange (few Wari goods found in nearby local sites)
 - generally not in defensible locations
 - although the high walls might have allowed for defense
 - but they lack baffled entryways, concentric perimeter walls, bastions, and other features usually associated with fortresses
 - if they were for ritual purposes, why do they generally lack D-shaped rooms and megalithic burial structures?
 - Schreiber sees them as administrative centers of an empire established by military force
 - many people agree
 - but this is by no means proven yet
- Carahuarazo valley study (now called Sondondo valley)
 - in this case, a big impact
 - looks like “normal” state or imperial expansion into a region that was already populated by farmers who were organized as small-scale chiefdoms
 - the Wari came in and built roads, administrative centers, terraced fields
 - presumably they had to coerce the local people to do this
 - as the ceramic illustrations of warriors suggest they could do by force
 - apparently oriented towards getting the locals to produce maize and maybe other crops that were presumably partially collected as taxes or tribute for use by the Wari state
 - later, when the Inka conquered the same region, they simply reused the infrastructure that the Wari had set up
 - both the physical infrastructure of terraces, canals, etc.
 - and the social infrastructure that remained after Wari withdrew
 - that is, a tradition of corporate work, administration, authoritative leaders, etc.
- But the pattern of interaction between Wari and local people is different in different places
 - Carahuarazo (Sondondo) valley: Inka-like empire?
 - Viracochapampa: some sort of relationship among equals?
 - central and north coast: pilgrimage, trade, or diplomacy?
 - no big, planned centers as in the highlands
 - high-status Wari burials at some sites that had become ritually important before the Middle Horizon
 - like Pachacamac, which was presumably still in active use
 - and the Early Horizon center of Chimu Capac, which was probably abandoned by the Middle Horizon
 - and fancy Wari goods in local high-status burials, such as some late Moche "royal" burials
 - south coast, Nazca drainage: smaller, partially ritual centers?

- the site of Pacheco had numerous stone-lined pits full of smashed elaborate, sometimes giant-sized Wari ceramics, like the rituals practiced in the highlands
- probably also had a complex of many rooms
- unfortunately, it has recently been destroyed, so we will probably never really know what was there
- one rural Wari settlement in the upper neck of the Nazca valley
 - maybe a modest agricultural colony?
 - maybe some sort of administrative center??
- Cerro Baúl: A special case?
 - located well south of the area where Wari pottery is generally found
 - within the area where Tiwanaku-influenced pottery is found
 - A vertical-sided, flat-topped mountain upriver from the main Tiwanaku sites in the Osmore drainage near Moquegua
 - visible from the Tiwanaku temple at Omo
 - the Wari also settled on two other adjacent hilltops and several smaller sites, all within a small area just a few kilometers across
 - Cerro Baúl is extremely defensible naturally, but not clear that the Wari added defensive walls
 - but they did build sizable defensive walls at the neighboring site of Cerro Mejía
 - suggests that keeping people out may have been important at both places
 - Cerro Mejía seems to have been occupied by fewer people and/or for a shorter time
 - Baúl and Mejía are horrendous places to live
 - water, food, fuel, everything has to be hauled up by hand
 - in the case of Baúl, by a narrow, dangerous path
 - they are exposed to blasting winds
 - people must have had some strong incentive to pick these particular places to settle
 - The top of Cerro Baúl has some typical Wari rectangular courts, long buildings with raised first floors, at least one probably two stories high, flagstone floors, etc.
 - but not a large, rectangular overall plan like the other major sites
 - none of the repetitive small room complexes as at some other sites
 - no niched halls recognized yet (as at Viracochapampa)
 - it has one (or several?) D-shaped "temples", unlike the other major sites
 - as in other regions, there was almost no detectable exchange of goods between Wari people and the others in the valley
 - particularly the Tiwanaku farming colonists we saw earlier
 - maybe a little with the local population of indigenous farmers, who I believe were still living in the valley at this time
 - not everyone buys that, though
 - a few Wari sherds have been found on the surface of some of these local sites
 - what was going on here?
 - a military outpost to block further Tiwanaku expansion towards Wari's territory?
 - given our current understanding of Tiwanaku's limited ability to expand, it does not seem like Wari should have had to worry about Tiwanaku much

- trade?
 - if so, how come virtually no Wari pottery, obsidian, or other goods turns up in non-Wari sites, and vice-versa?
- My theory: competition over a huaca
 - remember that there was a second Tiwanaku temple located right at the foot of Cerro Baúl, well away from the main area of Tiwanaku settlement
 - again, this is from my own work
 - the larger temple at Omo was located in one of the few places in the lower valley where you can see Cerro Baúl
 - I think these facts suggest that Cerro Baúl was important to the Tiwanaku colonists: a huaca, maybe the seat of an apu
 - even today, people come from as far as Puno, on the shore of Lake Titicaca, to make offerings on top of Cerro Baúl
 - it looks like the Tiwanaku colonists were probably in the Moquegua area before the Wari settlers, although that is not absolutely certain
 - so we can imagine the Tiwanaku people setting up one or both temples at least in part to respect an apu at Cerro Baúl
 - then the Wari came in and, maybe by force, took control of the region right around Cerro Baúl
 - they built a Wari outpost right on top of the huaca
 - with ritual features like the D-shaped rooms that are not part of the usual Wari outpost plan
 - we can also imagine an alternative scenario in which Wari arrived first, built on Cerro Baúl, and then the Tiwanaku came in and placed their temple at the foot of the mountain
 - why would Wari build a major site on this miserable rock outcrop?
 - to express domination over the Tiwanaku and/or local people?
 - to actually control them by controlling access to or threatening their huaca?
 - or for ritual reasons, wanting to revere or propitiate the huaca in its own right?
 - is it likely that both Wari and Tiwanaku would have cared about the same mountaintop?
 - yes - first, it is particularly impressive, and still has spiritual meaning for people today
 - and consider how similar other aspects of their ideology were, like their very similar depictions of the Staff God
 - Wari's domination of the huaca could certainly have been combined with or served some other economic, political, or military purpose
- yet another different pattern emerging from recent work in the Majes valley (coast south of Nazca)
 - I have been involved in some of this, and we will expand on it this summer
 - a south coast valley with plenty of water and reasonably large valley bottom that can be farmed
 - in both the upper, inland part of the valley, many small, unplanned, apparently rural villages
 - with typical provincial Wari ceramics
 - but little or no typical Wari planned architecture
 - dated early in the Middle Horizon

- excavated example: Beringa
 - occupied within 650-850 cal AD
 - this looks to me very much like the rural area surrounding Huari itself
- one upper valley site differs from the others
 - it looks like a temporary camp used by many different groups of people with Wari pottery, and is located where a major travel route comes into the valley
 - a llama caravan resting point?
- in the narrow, coastal stretch of the valley, several planned sites that look Wari by their architecture and ceramics from nearby looted cemeteries
- test excavations at the smallest one, Sonay, date it around 970 cal AD
 - odd that an apparently planned, intrusive Wari center would have been built centuries *after* rural farmers were using Wari ceramics there
 - rather than a planned, state colonization, could we be seeing a late effort to formalize control of a region that had had culturally Wari farmers living there for generations?
 - maybe even associated with the decline or collapse of Wari?
- there are at least three other planned apparently Wari-style sites in the coastal portion of the valley (called the Camaná valley)
 - relatively small compared to the gigantic major Wari centers -- but by any other standard, they are very impressive sites
 - they have the typical rectangular patios, long rooms, raised floors, etc.
 - they do not seem to have high perimeter walls, so they are even less defensible than other Wari centers
 - odd that there should be several, rather than the typical Wari pattern of one big center
 - and apparently none in the upper part of the valley
 - excavations this summer will determine if they really are Wari, date them, and begin to figure out what was going on
- if the Majes valley was a Wari agricultural colony, it was nothing like the Carahuarazo (Sondondo) valley, where the Wari exploited a local population
 - in the upper valley, at least, the state did not invest in infrastructure (that we can see) nor in much administration, nor in crop storage
 - either the state must have moved in nearly the entire valley's population from some area full of ethnically Wari farmers
 - or they must have been essentially Wari already for some other reason...?
- next time, we will compare the two Middle Horizon states, and look at their collapse