

The Archaeology of Rituals: Middle Horizon Shattered Ceramics and the Acari Valley, Peru

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Abstract

Ever since the discovery made back in 1926 at the site of Pacheco of the Nazca Valley, on the south coast of Peru, it is known that an important aspect of the ritual celebrations staged by the Wari state consisted on the deliberate smashing of large-sized and finely painted ceramic vessels that afterwards were buried in the ground. Subsequent research has shown that this tradition was initiated by the Wari and the earliest known purposely shattered vessels are found in the Ayacucho Valley, heartland of the Wari state. As Wari expanded, similar celebrations were performed elsewhere in the recently annexed regions, as the finding of analogous ceramic deposits indicate. One such deposit has been found in the Acari Valley of the south coast of Peru. The finding from Acari is described here, and it is argued that the act of shattering the vessels marked the culmination of a complex ritual celebration probably performed to spread Wari religion and Wari deities, as well as to befriend the locals, which ultimately helped to legitimize Wari's intrusive presence in the region.

Key words: Wari state; Rituals; Ceramic Deposit; Offering; Acari Valley.

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La Arqueología de los Rituales: Cerámica Destrozada del Horizonte Medio y el Valle de Acari, Perú

Resumen

Desde el descubrimiento hecho en 1926 en el sitio de Pacheco del valle de Nazca, de la costa sur del Perú, se conoce que un aspecto importante de las celebraciones rituales organizadas por el estado Wari consistió en la intencional destrucción de vasijas de cerámica de tamaños grandes y finamente pintados que posteriormente fueron enterrados. Investigaciones posteriores han demostrado que esta tradición fue iniciada por el estado Wari y que los más tempranos ejemplos de vasijas intencionalmente sacrificadas provienen precisamente del valle de Ayacucho, el centro de origen del estado Wari. Con la expansión Wari, celebraciones similares se organizaron en los territorios anexados, tal como indica la presencia de depósitos de cerámica fragmentada. Uno de tales depósitos fue encontrado en el valle de Acari de la costa sur del Perú. Aquí se describe el hallazgo, y se sostiene que el acto de sacrificar las vasijas posiblemente marcó la culminación de una celebración ceremonial compleja al parecer organizada para dispersar la religión Wari y las deidades Wari, así como para hacer de la población local aliados de los Wari, y que en última instancia permitió legitimar la presencia Wari en la región.

Palabras clave: *Estado Wari; Rituales; Depósito de Cerámica; Ofrenda; Valle de Acari.*

Arqueologia dos Rituais: Cerâmica Quebrada do Horizonte Médio e Vale do Acari, Peru

Resumo

Desde a descoberta feita em 1926 no sitio de Pacheco do Vale de Nazca, na costa sul do Peru, sabese que um aspecto importante das celebrações rituais encenadas pelo estado Wari consistia no esmagamento deliberado de grandes e vasos de cerâmica finamente pintados que depois foram enterrados so solo. Pesquisas subsequentes mostraram que essa tradição foi iniciada pelos Wari e os primeiros navios que foram destruídos propositalmente foram encontrados no Vale Ayacucho, coração do estado Wari. À medida que Wari se expandia, celebrações semelhantes eran realizadas em outras partes das regiões recentemente anexadas, como indicam os achados de depósitos de cerâmica análogos. Um desses depósitos foi encontrado no Vale Acari, na costa sul do Peru. A descoberta de Acari é descrita aqui, e argumenta-se que o ato de quebrar os vasos marcou o culminar de uma complexa celebração ritual realizada provavelmente para espalhar a religião Wari e divindades Wari, bem como para fazer amizade com os locais, o que acabou ajudando a legitimar a presença intrusiva de Wari na região.

Palavras-chave: *Wari state; Rituais; Depósito de cerâmica; Oferta; Vale de Acari.*

L'archéologie des rituels : la céramique brisée de l'horizon moyen et la vallée d'Acari, Pérou

Résumé

Depuis la découverte faite en 1926 sur le site de Pacheco de la vallée de Nazca, sur la côte sud du Pérou, on sait qu'un aspect important des célébrations rituelles organisées par l'État Wari consistait en l'écrasement délibéré de et des récipients en céramique finement peints qui ont ensuite été enterrés dans le sol. Des recherches ultérieures ont montré que cette tradition a été initiée par les Wari et que les premiers navires volontairement brisés connus se trouvent dans la vallée d'Ayacucho, au cœur de l'État Wari. Au fur et à mesure de l'expansion de Wari, des célébrations similaires ont été organisées ailleurs dans les régions récemment annexées, comme l'indique la découverte de gisements de céramique analogues. Un de ces gisements a été trouvé dans la vallée d'Acari sur la côte sud du Pérou. La découverte d'Acari est décrite ici, et il est soutenu que l'acte de briser les vaisseaux a marqué le point culminant d'une célébration rituelle complexe probablement réalisée pour répandre la religion Wari et les divinités Wari, ainsi que pour se lier d'amitié avec les habitants, ce qui a finalement contribué à légitimer la présence intrusive de Wari dans la région.

Mots-clés: *État Wari; Rituels; Dépôt de céramique; Offre; Vallée d'Acari.*

Introduction

Ancient political powers employed different strategies to expand their frontiers. For the Inka state, for example, diplomacy was a common formula for establishing *Tawantinsuyu*, but the use of coercive force was also a viable alternative (D'Altroy, 2003, p. 205; Covey, 2015, p. 86). Regardless of which strategy may have been used, the intrusive presence of a foreign power in a recently annexed territory probably disturbed existing — perhaps centuries old — socio-cultural conditions. Expansive foreign powers, such as the Inka state, understood that to exercise control over the recently conquered peoples, it was essential to normalize the newly created abnormal condition and maintain a reciprocal, friendly relationship with the newly seized subjects. A strategy regularly employed by the Inka to befriend conquered peoples encompassed ceremonies involving reciprocal interactions and acts of generosity, such as gift giving and feasting (Morris, 1982, pp. 165-166; Goldstein, 2003, p. 147). Befriending the locals also entailed complex negotiations with local and regional huacas as well as tolerance of local religion (Chase, 2018, pp. 519-520). In this sense, conquest was not merely about annexing peoples and their lands; it also often involved complex dealings with the supernatural entities to ensure smooth relations.

Acknowledgement of the supernatural entities was derived from the strong belief of the peoples of the Andes that the cosmos was filled with the “animate dead, the gods, and the spirits of the landscape” (D’Altroy, 2003, p. 142; see also Hastorf, 2007) and that the deities controlled the weather as well as the success of crops and herds, and they augured the future (Reinhard and Ceruti, 2010, p. 5). These were ample reasons to establish and maintain a good relationship with the supernatural entities (Cobo, 1979, pp. 215-216). The Inka asserted that their imperial expansion was driven by a divine order, which was to spread the religion of their deities (D’Altroy, 2003, p. 221; Eeckhout and López-Hurtado, 2018, pp. 191). At the same time, the Inka were aware that the deities of the conquered peoples were as powerful as their own deities (Chase, 2018, p. 526; Rosenfeld and Bautista, 2017, p. 8). The Inka, nonetheless, were convinced that it was possible to establish meaningful relationships with the sacred deities to negotiate, for instance, forgiveness for their intrusive presence.

Rituals (Rappaport, 1991; Marcus, 2007) were the mechanisms that enabled the establishment of significant links between the deities and the peoples (Hastorf, 2007, p. 78), where the Inka staged ceremonies and made offerings to the supernatural entities as special gifts and expected the deities to reciprocate. To the Inka, interactions had to be reciprocal, an idea that also applied to the supernatural entities. These special Inka offerings were of various kinds and included objects, also believed to be animate (Benson, 2001, p. 1). In this manner, rituals, accompanied by offerings of various kinds, enabled the Inka to normalize the abnormal condition they created and ultimately allowed them to legitimize their intrusive presence.

Several centuries prior to the rise of the Inka state, most of present-day Peru was dominated by the Wari state (ca. AD 600-1000). Wari was an expansive political power centered in the Peruvian central highland valley of Ayacucho (Cook and Glowacki, 2003; Isbell and Cook, 1987, 2002; Isbell, 1997, 2010; McEwan, 1996; Menzel, 1964, 1977; Schreiber, 1992; Valdez and Valdez, 2020). The Wari expansion was accompanied by the introduction of Wari-style artifacts and standardized architectural complexes, identified as provincial administrative centers. In the provinces, the Wari state invested valuable resources establishing labor-demanding agricultural terraces and irrigation canals (McEwan and Williams, 2012). As with the Inka state, the presence of the Wari state and the changes it generated in the annexed territories likely alienated the existing socio-cultural conditions. One may ask, how did the Wari overcome the uneasiness their intrusive presence provoked? What were the strategies employed by the Wari to befriend the recently conquered peoples and to normalize the altered condition?

My goal here is to discuss the approaches employed by the Wari state to annex the Acari Valley of the south coast of Peru. Specifically, how was the

Acari Valley annexed into Wari control? And, what did Wari do in the Acari Valley to legitimize its presence? At the core of this discussion is the deposit of shattered ceramics found at the La Oroya site in the Acari Valley. The ceramic deposit offering strongly suggests that Wari envoys were engaged in what appears to have been elaborate ritual celebrations. I argue that the shattered vessels marked the culmination of a long and complex ritual gathering that was seemingly deliberately staged by Wari officials to engage local leaders in commensal hospitality, intended to create and maintain friendly social relations.

The archaeological evidence indicates that late in the Early Intermediate Period (AD 1–600), there were several small settlements scattered along the course of the Acari River. Chaviña was the single largest settlement found near the mouth of the river (Valdez, 1994). At the time Wari officials marched into the Acari Valley, they found small communities, whose numbers must have made resistance seem futile. The most likely scenario is that the local population was annexed peacefully. Upon establishing themselves in Acari, it appears that the Wari officials proceeded establishing amicable relationships with the locals. As further discussed below, Wari initiatives likely included acts of generosity such as sharing of food and drinks that enabled cementing and maintaining political loyalty. To familiarize the reader, first, some background information is briefly put forward.

The Wari State

The Wari state emerged in the Peruvian central highland valley of Ayacucho and sometime after AD 600 expanded over most of present-day Peru. The Peruvian south coast was one of the regions that was incorporated into Wari control (Menzel, 1964; Conlee, 2010; Schreiber, 2000; Edward and Schreiber, 2014). Several generations before the Wari expansion into the south coast, the inhabitants of these two regions maintained close ties; just prior to the emergence of the Wari state, the interaction appears to have intensified as suggested by the appearance of late Nasca designs and late Nasca vessel forms in the Ayacucho Valley ceramics (Lumbreras, 1959, p. 78, 1960, p. 200, 1975, p. 116; Menzel, 1964, pp. 3-4, 8-9, 1977, p. 52; Isbell, 2010, p. 236; Knobloch, 1991, p. 248, 2000a, p. 71, 2012, p. 125; Schreiber, 2012, p. 38; Valdez and Valdez, 2016, p. 99). The close ties between the two regions is further manifested in the incorporation of Nasca religious art into the newly established Wari religious art (Menzel, 1977, p. 52). Thus, it is plausible that the early Wari expansion into the south coast was the outcome of the long-standing contact between the two regions that not only granted Nasca a “special privileged position” within the Wari state (Menzel, 1964, p. 68), but also made of the Nazca Drainage a “natural stronghold” of the Wari state and Wari religion (Menzel, 1977, p. 52).

Acari is the valley found immediately south of the Nazca Drainage and is often recognized as the southern boundary of the Peruvian south coast. From the Chincha Valley to the north to the Acari Valley to the south, the south coast is a cultural unit where its ancient inhabitants coexisted and shared many cultural features over long period of time (Menzel, 1977, p. 51). It is unknown whether the ancient inhabitants of the valleys of Acari and Ayacucho maintained direct contact. However, it is recognized that the inhabitants of the Initial Period site of Hacha in the Acari Valley (Riddell and Valdez, 1987) accessed obsidian from sources found just south of the Ayacucho Valley (Burger and Asaro, 1977, pp. 310-311; Burger and Glascock, 2000). Furthermore, ceramics manufactured by the inhabitants of Hacha and the highland settlement of Waywaka (Grossman, 1972a, 1972b) exhibit strong similarities indicating that the ancient residents of the Acari Valley already maintained a wide sphere of interaction. Thus, the possibility that the people of Acari also were in contact with the Ayacucho Valley cannot easily be ruled out.

While significant progress has been made explaining the Wari presence on the south coast (Conlee, 2010; Conlee and Schreiber, 2006; Edwards and Schreiber, 2014; Edwards, 2017; Schreiber, 1989, 2000), questions remain with regards to the strategies employed by the Wari state to annex the various valleys of the region and about the nature of Wari occupation in each of those valleys (Conlee, 2010, p. 98). Likewise, it is still little explored the specific socio-economic situations encountered by Wari envoys in each of the valleys of the south coast, as well as the local responses to the Wari intrusion, and what the Wari did in each of the valleys of the region. It is known that the Wari expansion from the Ayacucho Valley manifests itself differently in different regions (Glowacki and Malpass, 2003, p. 434), perhaps an indication of the different strategies employed by the Wari state due to specific local situations encountered in the recently conquered territories. On occasion, perhaps, the Wari state adjusted itself to existing local conditions. Thus, it is possible that peoples with whom the Ayacucho Valley inhabitants already had a history of close interaction may have been annexed differently from peoples with whom there was no previous interaction or from peoples who resisted the Wari.

While there are no written accounts for the Wari state, researchers have long argued that "religion formed the nucleus of the expansion movement" of the Wari state (Menzel, 1977, p. 56; see also Glowacki and Malpass, 2003, p. 434). Indeed, archaeological research shows that the Wari state staged intricate rituals that consisted of elaborate offerings; in some instances, the rituals were performed inside centrally located D-shaped buildings (Cook, 2001) and involved the purposeful shattering –or sacrifice– of beautifully painted large-sized urns and jars (Menzel, 1964, p. 24; Glowacki, 2012; Isbell 2000, pp. 36-43; Isbell and Cook, 1987; Isbell and Groleau, 2010, pp. 198-199; Ochatoma and Cabrera, 2000, p. 458). The act of deliberately smashing the

vessels, according to Cook (2001, p. 132), constitutes an unprecedented ritual practice for the entire central Andes. The earliest evidence for such ritual behavior is found in the Ayacucho Valley and dates to the Middle Horizon 1A (Menzel 1977, p. 53). The most important image depicted on the shattered vessels is of the solitary male deity, believed to represent the Thunder deity (Menzel, 1964, p. 19, 1977, p. 55).

Following the Wari expansion, similar celebrations were performed elsewhere in the provinces and attest that “sacred religious offerings played a powerful part in the operations” of the Wari state (Menzel, 1977, p. 53). One such example comes from the site of Pacheco in the Nazca Valley (Menzel, 1964, pp. 26-30; Glowacki, 2012, pp. 146-147), which dates to the Middle Horizon 1B (Menzel, 1968, p. 49) and marks the “first appearance of a goddess” represented alongside a male deity (Menzel, 1964, p. 19, 1977, p. 54). The divine couple (see Glowacki, 2012, Figure 132) is interpreted to represent the Sun and the Moon. It appears that as the Wari expanded to the south coast and began preaching about the Thunder deity and their religion, they came to realize that the single Thunder god was unimpressive to the coastal peoples since thunder rarely, if ever, occurs in the dry coastal region. This realization may have been the reason for naming the Sun and the Moon as new primary Wari deities. Because of the strong association of the goddess with cultivated plants, Menzel (1977, p. 55) asserted that the goddess embodied fertility in Wari religion.

It has long been established that the intentionally shattered ceramics are offerings of religious significance (Menzel, 1964, p. 19, 21, 1968, p. 49) and that the ceramic deposits represented special gifts (offerings) to supernatural entities (Cook, 2001), perhaps with the “expectation of a favor to be received from the deities in return” (Schwartz, 2017, p. 225). It has also been argued that the oversized vessels were not just offerings, but “involved in hosting, brewing, and feasting” (Isbell and Groleau, 2010, p. 199) before being smashed. For the specific case of Conchopata, it is stated that eating and drinking played a key role in the establishment and maintenance of power. Beyond the Ayacucho Valley Wari heartland, deposits of purposely shattered vessels have also been found and they more likely constitute the material manifestations of Wari rituals commemorated in the provinces. However, what were the aims of such celebrations remains to be discussed. Taking into consideration that ritual celebrations constitute a complex sequence of actions (Marcus, 2007, p. 48; Rappaport, 1999, p. 94; Richards and Thomas, 1984, p. 191) and include humming, chanting, singing, playing music, dancing, eating, and drinking, it becomes apparent that the physical destruction of the vessels marked only a small segment of a long chain of important actions. For expansive political powers, such as the Wari state, it is possible that rituals were purposely performed not only for spreading religious ideologies, but also to establish a new social order. For the Inka state, for example, Morris (1982, p. 166) pointed

out that the drinking ceremonies celebrated in the provinces “were at least nominally religious” but enabled cementing lasting social obligations. In this way, besides their notable religious associations, rituals played a key role in the “negotiation and the creation of political subjects” (Swenson, 2008, p. 238). I return to discuss these ideas after describing and discussing the ceramic offering deposit from Acari.

Archaeological Research in the Acari Valley

As part of the Inca Royal Highway Project directed by Victor W. von Hagen and the University of California Explorations directed by John H. Rowe, in 1954 Dorothy Menzel and Francis A. Riddell carried out the first archaeological research at the Inca provincial center of Tambo Viejo on the Peruvian south coastal valley of Acari (Rowe, 1956, p. 137; Valdez, 2018, p. 114). While working at Tambo Viejo, Menzel and Riddell also surveyed the middle and lower sections of the valley, recording a total of 25 archaeological sites. The assessment of diagnostic ceramic sherds collected from the surface of the recorded sites demonstrated a continuous human occupation of the valley that began as early as the Initial Period. In their report, which became available many years later, Menzel and Riddell (1986, p. 2) stated,

The Acari Valley is rich in archaeological remains. Sites noted in a surface survey of the valley between Huarato and Chaviña cover a very large segment of Peruvian history, from early Nasca times on, and perhaps even earlier, down to the Spanish conquest and present times (some 2000 years). Surface sherds indicated that in this time span successive peoples were in close touch with the coastal area to the north, notably the Nazca region, its next-door neighbor. There are indications that the Acari Valley was the southernmost one to participate so fully in the history of the south coast.

Several of the recorded sites of Acari were assessed as representing a Wari occupation (Menzel and Riddell, 1986, pp. 117-118). The sites of La Banda and La Oroya, both found immediately north of the contemporary town of Acari, on the right bank of the Acari River (Menzel and Riddell, 1986), were two of them. It is worth mentioning that when discussing Wari ceramics and Wari expansion, Menzel (1964, pp. 25-26) noted having recorded in Acari “imitation Chakipampa B pottery similar to that of Pacheco at several sites.” The archaeological survey of the Acari Valley inaugurated in 1954 was resumed after a long hiatus in the 1980s, during which, sites initially recorded by Menzel and Riddell were revisited. For the specific cases of La Banda and La Oroya sites, the new evidence confirmed the assessment made in 1954, that both were associated with Middle Horizon Period Wari ceramics. New surface findings also suggest that the La Banda and La Oroya sites were initially

established sometime during the late Early Intermediate Period and they may have been part of a single site.

The general picture that emerges for the Acari valley is that at the end of the Early Intermediate Period, there were several settlements established along the course of the Acari River (Figure 1). The largest of all was Chaviña (Lothrop and Mahler, 1957), a site originally built at the beginning of the Early Intermediate Period and found near the mouth of the Acari River. An important distinguishing feature of these settlements is the presence of wattle-and-daub structures. Gentilar is the single late Early Intermediate Period site in the valley that has been partially investigated (Valdez, 1994). Although the site is found about 20 km from the sea, the entire surface of Gentilar is covered with shellfish remains and suggests that marine resources, especially mollusks (*Mesodesma donacium*), had become important for the

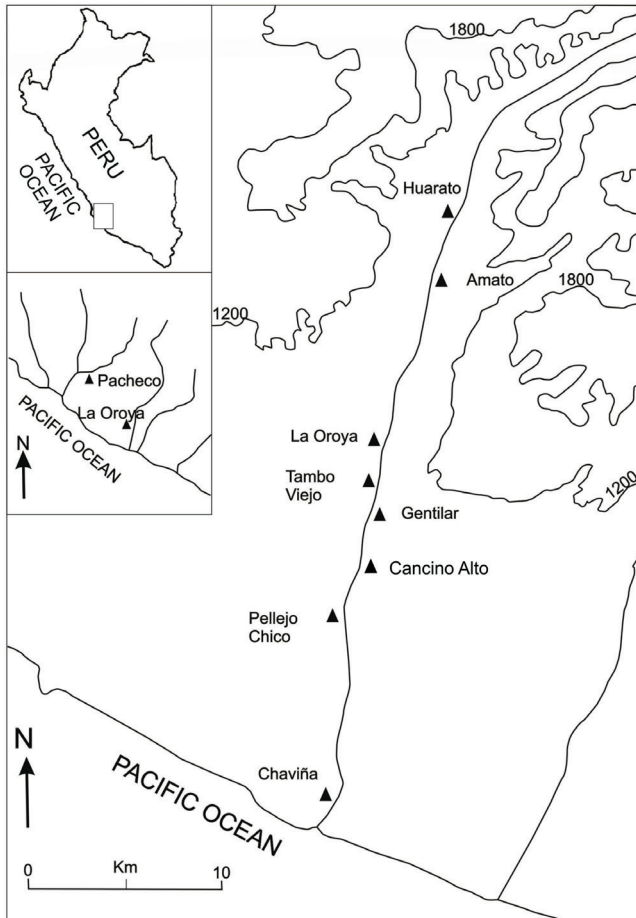


Figure 1. Location of the late Early Intermediate Period sites of the Acari Valley, Peru.

local subsistence (Valdez, 1994, p. 357). At the same time, some plants present at other earlier sites are absent at Gentilar and suggest that a severe drought may have affected the region; Schreiber (2000, p. 439) has made a similar observation for the Nazca Drainage. A single radiocarbon date secured for Gentilar (UCIAMS-125631 ULA-4157) produced a ^{14}C age of 1550 ± 15 BP (95.4% probability 427 (65.5%) 499 Cal AD and 504 (29.9%) 559 Cal AD). The case of Gentilar is a good instance of the situation encountered by the Wari envoys upon their arrival in the Acari Valley; several small communities scattered along the course of the river relying on marine resources.

At the time Gentilar was occupied, the inhabitants of Acari had intensified their ties with their neighbours of the valleys further to the north. Ceramics manufactured in the Acari Valley resembled Nasca 7 ceramics (Valdez, 1994, p. 355). Considering that the inhabitants of the Nazca Drainage were also in contact with the residents of the Ayacucho Valley, it is possible that the people of Acari had at least an indirect link with the Ayacucho Valley. At some of the settlements of Acari that were occupied about this time, there is a new ceramic style that consists of unique tall face vases, with a modelled nose and painted face (Figure 2). Rye (1981, Fig. 3b) was the first to publish a picture of such a vase with its provenience as the “coast of Peru.” Since the vases are unknown elsewhere outside the Acari Valley, the one published by Rye must be from Acari. In the collection of Loro ceramics studied by Spivak (2015, Figure 5.33), the only face vase included also comes from the Acari Valley.

While the Acari face vases share some features with the Loro style from the valleys immediately to the north (Spivak, 2015, 2016), there are important distinguishing elements, the most obvious being the shape of the vessels from Acari, which are predominantly vases. Due to their uniqueness, the Acari vases have been identified as the Chaviña style (Valdez, 2009, p. 202). The Acari vases have been found as burial offerings as well as in middens. Chronologically, the vases have been assessed as belonging to Middle Horizon 1 (Kent and Kowta, 1994), which indicates that some of the settlements established late in the Early Intermediate Period continued being occupied during the following Middle Horizon Period.

At the time Menzel and Riddell carried out the first field research in Acari in 1954, the town of Acari was very small and found about 3 km north of Tambo Viejo (Menzel and Riddell, 1986, p. 2). La Banda and La Oroya were likely found at least one km north of the town. However, during the last four decades the small town of Acari has expanded substantially reaching as far south as to Tambo Viejo (Valdez, 2014, p. 206; Valdez *et al.* 2020, p. 204) and as far north as to the northern limits of the La Oroya site. As a result, the site of La Banda has disappeared in its totality, while a small but severely looted mound found next to the football stadium of Acari is all that is left of the La Oroya site. About 200 m south of this mound, there was a small undeveloped

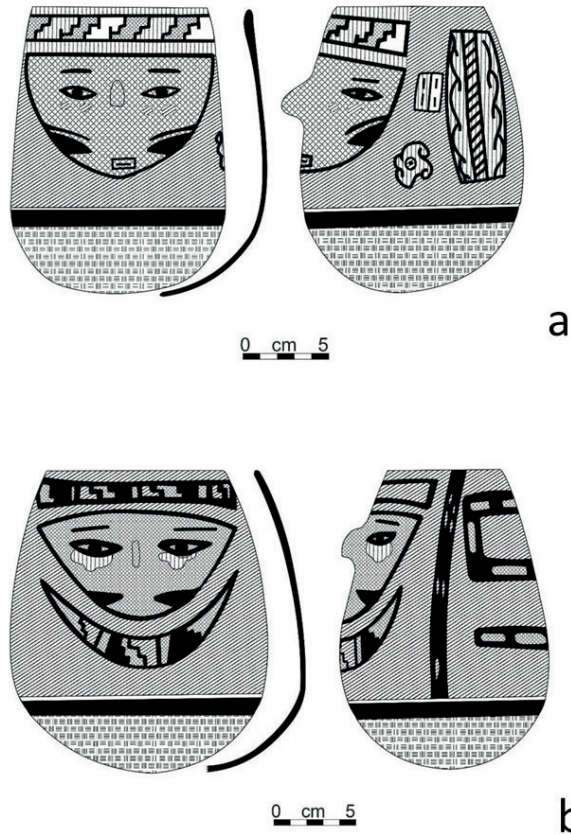


Figure 2. Face-neck vases from Tambo Viejo.

area found at the edge of the river. In the mid 1990s the Municipality of Acari took the initiative to develop the vacant area to build a small park (Óvalo de Acari). While digging the trenches to establish the foundation of the park, workers unearthed quantities of archaeological artifacts, including complete face-neck vases (Figure 3), identical to the vases uncovered from a cemetery found on the southern edge of Tambo Viejo (Kent and Kowta, 1994). Furthermore, neighbours from the northern section of Acari reported finding similar artifacts on their properties. This strongly suggests that the entire northern section of the contemporary town of Acari was established over an archaeological site.

As originally recorded in 1954, the sites of La Banda and La Oroya are close to each other. Ceramic sherds found on the surface of both sites are identical, suggesting that these sites may have constituted a single large settlement. The location must have been of some importance because this was where the Wari envoys established themselves. Before the establishment

of La Banda and La Oroya, this location appears to have already been of importance as indicated by an earlier large fortified settlement found a short distance to the south (Valdez, 2014). Several centuries after the Wari, the Inka state also established its main center in the valley only a short distance to the south, at Tambo Viejo (Menzel 1959; Valdez, *et al.* 2020). Therefore, besides its proximity to one of the agriculturally most fertile sections of valley and where the foothills of the Andes dip into the desert plain, this location probably had some additional advantages.



Figure 3. Face-neck vase from La Oroya.

The Ceramic Deposit of La Oroya

In 2005 the Municipality of Acari and the Red Cross carried out a joined project to establish the sewer system for the rapidly expanding town of Acari. The work started on the northern section of the town and consisted of the excavation of long trenches in the middle of the streets to place the sewage pipes. Two blocks west from the newly built óvalo, one of the trenches cut through one side of a cache of ceramic sherds that had been buried in a round pit (Figure 4). The cut exposed a single deposit, mainly of large-sized ceramic vessels that had been deliberately shattered. Subsequent assessment of the motives depicted on the sherds indicated that the smashed vessels dated to the Middle Horizon (Valdez, 2009, pp. 196-197).

Deposits of purposely smashed vessels are exceptional finds associated with the Wari state and have been recorded at several Wari sites

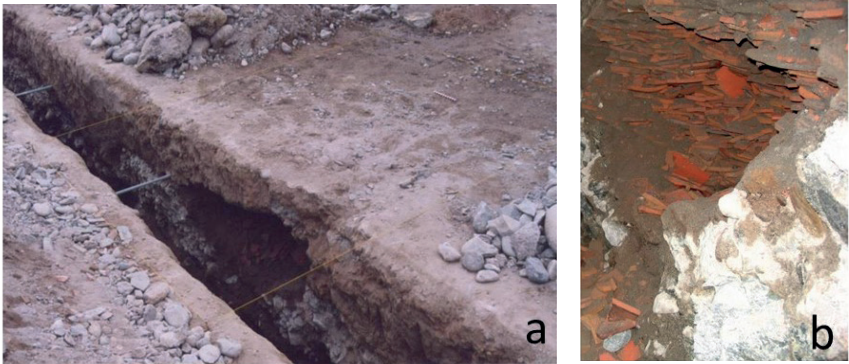


Figure 4. View of the excavated trench and the ceramic deposit.



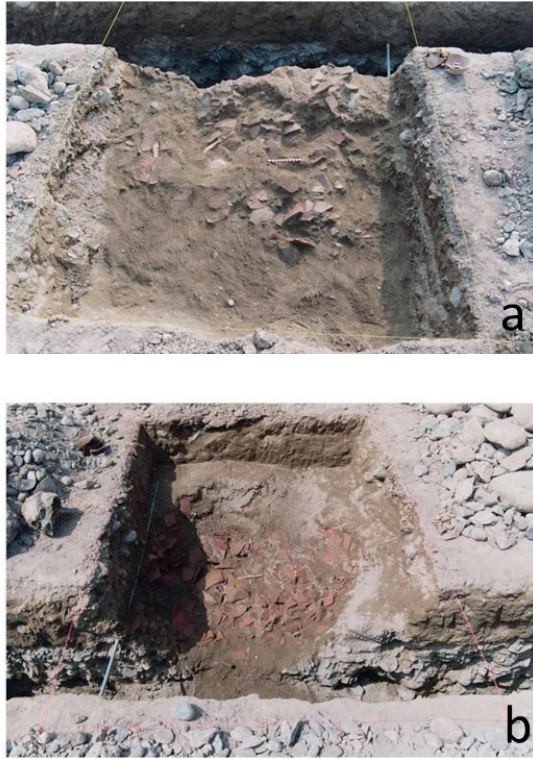
Figure 5. Wari face-neck depiction from the La Oroya ceramic deposit.

(Menzel, 1968; Glowacki, 2012). Considering the uniqueness of the deposit, a decision was made to carry out an emergency excavation to record the finding and rescue all the sherds that were in danger of being lost (Valdez, 2009). The first task of the rescue operation was to collect all the sherds already

removed from the pit. Subsequently, a 2x2 m excavation unit was established to uncover the deposit and collect its contents.

This rescue excavation provided important information about the ceramic deposit. A compact soil layer sealing the deposit was found on the uppermost level. On the northern section of the excavation unit the compacted layer was already cut by a previous trench excavated to install a water pipe. Fortunately, the earlier excavation did not disturb the deposit. Underneath the compacted layer there was an accumulation of fine and clean sand that did not expand beyond the opening of the deposit, thus indicating that the sand was purposely poured to cover the ceramic deposit. Once the sand layer was removed, the ceramic deposit was fully exposed (Figure 6). This revealed that the sherds had been placed mostly in a horizontal position, suggesting that this was a carefully performed act. Overall, the shape of the pit was almost circular in plan, about a meter in diameter and 1.10 m. deep. At the surface level the opening is wider, but narrower at the bottom. Halfway through the deposit, it was noted that the walls of the pit and the sherds had been exposed to fire, while at the bottom of the pit, there was the obvious presence of burned soil and ash, confirming that there was fire inside the pit before the sherds were deposited and that some sherds were deposited while fire was still burning. In a ritual context, fire has a purifying effect (Kaliff, 2011) and this appears to have been the case here; perhaps to emphasize the sacred aspect of the offering, the excavated pit needed to be purified. Sherds recovered from the bottom of the pit were found totally glued one to another and it was impossible to separate them even after soaking the sherds in water for several days. It appears that some material was burned there at a high temperature. Samples of the compacted material were collected and sent for radiocarbon dating but unfortunately did not produce any date. There can be little doubt that the pit was dug up exclusively for the burial of the shattered ceramics and that the deposit represents a single event. As pointed out, in the Ayacucho Valley ritually smashed vessels have been found inside special D-shaped buildings (Cook, 2001); whether the La Oroya deposit was also placed inside a structure or not could not be verified.

This shattered ceramic deposit is part of what Menzel (1968, p. 48) recognizes as the Middle Horizon offering tradition. The first such finding was made back in 1927 at the site of Pacheco (Figure 7) in the Nazca Valley (Menzel, 1964, pp. 21, 24-28; Glowacki, 2012, p. 146). Since then, similar deposits have been found at several Wari sites, such as Conchopata (Menzel, 1964; Cook, 1987; Isbell and Cook, 1987), Ayapata (Ravines, 1977), Maymi (Anders, 1990), Pataraya (Edwards, 2017), and Pikillaqta, among others (see Glowacki, 2012, p. 153). The La Oroya deposit belongs to this important tradition.



Figures 6. View of the excavation to rescue the ceramic deposit.

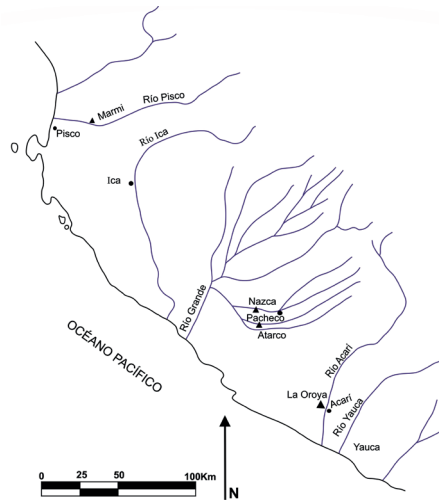


Figure 7. Location of La Oroya in relationship with the other Wari sites of Pacheco and Maymi.

The Vessels from the La Oroya Deposit

Recently an attempt was made to restore the broken vessels from the La Oroya deposit to determine their original size and shape. An additional aim was to reconstruct the motifs depicted on the vessels to further assess the stylistic association of the cache. Considering that the vessels had been intentionally smashed and that during the rescue excavation an effort was made to collect all the sherds, there was the possibility of restoring the broken vessels. To this end, the several thousand sherds were laid down on a large surface for the purposes of classification (Figure 8). The criteria used for classification included: i) surface finishing, ii) paste, iii) thickness, iv) color base, and v) decorative designs. In addition, rims and bases were separately classified. Once the sherds were grouped following the above criteria, restoration was initiated.



Figure 8. Classification of the ceramic sherds from La Oroya.

As work progressed, it became evident that a significant number of sherds were missing. A total of 15 bases mainly of large sized vessels were partially restored; likewise, a total of 13 rims of large sized jars were partially restored, while there were many other rim sherds that belong to medium size jars. This accounts for a minimum of 15 large sized vessels that had been intentionally broken and the sherds buried in the pit. There also are sherds that belong to dishes (plates, cups, bowls), making the actual number of smashed ceramics even greater.

The absence of a significant number of sherds does not seem to be accounted for by the possibility that they had been removed by the workers

soon after the deposit was found. As already noted, the trench cut only an edge of the deposit and the pit was still almost full of its original content when the rescue excavation began. Prior to and during the salvage excavation, an effort was made to collect all the sherds, including those removed soon after the pit was found. Therefore, there is the possibility that the excavated cache was one of several, perhaps similar, pits. Indeed, it appears that the excavated pit may not have been large enough for the shattered pieces of so many vessels. Thus, it seems that as vessels were smashed, the sherds were deposited into several pits, and this may be the reason for the absence of some vessel parts from the studied collection. If this observation is correct, the other possible pits perhaps are still buried nearby, if not already destroyed. As already pointed out, local people mentioned finding ceramics at the time of construction of their houses. In addition, neighbours have collected fragments of face-neck jars, a type of vessel not found in the excavated pit. Unfortunately, once the sewage system was established, the street where the ceramic deposit was found was paved, making it difficult to verify the above possibility. Isbell (2000, p. 43) has observed that a broken vessel can rarely be fully restored because not all the sherds are present. Thus, he suggests that the vessels perhaps were shattered elsewhere within the site and then transported to a different location for burial. This is an additional possibility to keep in mind.

Most of the sherds found in the deposit belong to thick-walled, large and medium sized vessels (Valdez, 2009, p. 196), while only a few fragments belong to dishes. Although not a single vessel was fully restored, it was possible to determine that all the large and medium sized vessels were narrow-necked jars, a good number of them lobed immediately below the neck (Figure 9). There was some variation in the neck of the jars, some being short necked and others large necked. For the unlobed jars, the shoulder section of the jars is broad but narrower closer to the base. For the lobed jars, the middle section of the body is broad and the lower section also narrower. Without exception, the bases were flat and thick (Figure 10), some with scratches, suggesting that some of jars were not newly made. Functionally, the jars may have been useful for storing and transporting beverages, including fermented types.

Most of the exterior surface of the large and medium sized jars was smoothed (never polished) and painted, often with dark red slip. The interior surface of the neck was also smoothed and painted with the same color as the exterior surface (Figure 11). A broad horizontal black line separates the neck from the rest of the vessel's body. (1) Without exception, the decorated section of the jars is precisely the area immediately below the broad black line, which was often lobed. The color base of the decorated section was either white or cream. In the lower section of the lobed part there is a second broad horizontal black line. In some cases, just below the lower black horizontal line there is a second broad white line with black outline. Only in one instance was it

possible to determine the occurrence of designs on the exterior surface of unlobed jars. In this case, the designs were depicted in the upper and middle section of vessel's body.

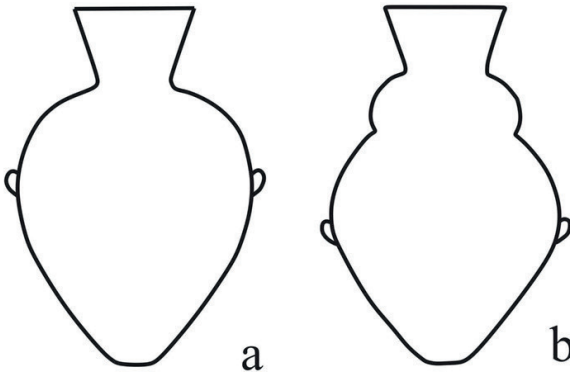


Figure 9. Forms of the medium and large sized narrow necked jars from La Oroya.

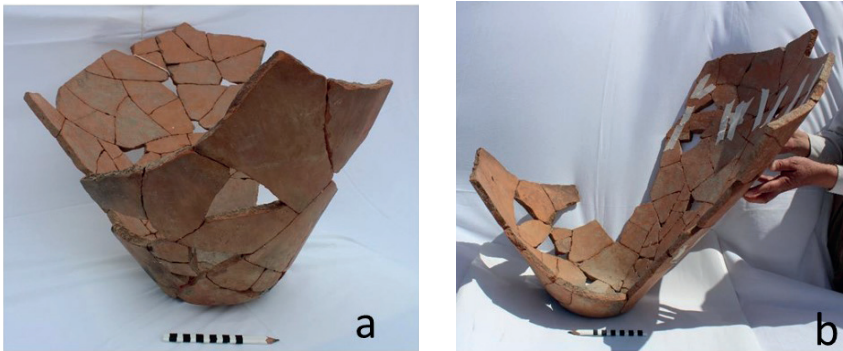


Figure 10. Base of the shattered jars from La Oroya.

The single most recurrent design depicted on both medium and large-sized lobed jars is the “Ayacucho Serpent” (Figure 12) that following Menzel (1964, p. 15) is representative of the Chakipampa 1B style (Knobloch 2012, Figure 98) and dates to Middle Horizon 1B (Knobloch, 1991, p. 249). In all the cases, the motif is depicted in black outline, on a white or cream surface, but on occasion also on a light red surface. Furthermore, in all the observed cases, the motif was depicted on the lobed section of the jars and between two broad black lines. As pointed out by Menzel (1964, p. 15), the Ayacucho Serpent “consists of two serpent-like animals with a toothed, whiskered head” shown on both ends of the body. The body consists “of a chain of circular segments

with ray appendages.” Knobloch (2012, p. 126) describes the motif as “a legless centipede-like creature with a multilobed body, two eyes, open mouth, and whiskers.” The number of the circular segments that form the body varies from just three to as many as seven. In each vessel, two such motifs were depicted, “separated by a pair of vertical bands divided into squares which contain small, radially symmetrical ray designs” (Menzel, 1964, p. 15) (Figure 13).



Figure 11. The narrow necks of the jars of La Oroya.



Figure 12. Depictions of the “Ayacucho Serpent”.

The second most recurrent motifs occur mainly on the medium-sized lobed jars and consist of a variety of symmetrical and asymmetrical ray designs painted with black outline (Figure 14). Just like the Ayacucho Serpent, the ray designs were also depicted on the lobed section of the jars and between two broad black lines. A set of about eight of such motifs were depicted in a vessel. A few of the designs are single-bodied and painted red and purple in an alternating manner. However, most of them are double-bodied and depicted in a manner that they are overlapping. In the latter case, each body was painted with different colors, to emphasize the presence of two separate bodies. In most cases, each ray design has three asymmetrical long and wavy stems, but



Figure 13. Designs that separate de “Ayacucho Serpent” motifs.

there are examples with four wavy stems as well. Menzel (1964, p. 13) asserts that the rays and their stems derived from Huarpa antecedents. Around the ray designs, there are also rings of black outline that enclose a black dot. Some of the rings enclose an additional ring; the number of such rings varies. Finally, between the ray designs there are also additional rings of black outline that enclose a black dot. While such rings are not always present, when they occur, they vary in number, from two, three or four. For the large size jars, additional motifs were represented below the white band with black outline (Figure 13 A); the specific details of the motifs are difficult to determine. For the medium size jars, it appears that no additional designs were depicted below the lower black line of the lobed section.

Less recurrent but present in the La Oroya ceramic collection is an S-shaped design of the so-called “Serpentine Figure” (Menzel, 1964, Plate III, Figure 8) (Figure 15). Unfortunately, only a section of the design was found, and it consists of one end of the figure that includes the head in profile of the Serpentine, while the body is painted in black with ray appendages. The Serpentine shows a black outline and is depicted over a red glossy surface. It appears that a pair of the Serpentine figures decorated the jar and each figure was enclosed inside a rectangle of broad white band outlined with black. This is the single example of an unlobed jar that was decorated.

In addition to the narrow-necked jars, a few sherds of bowls, plates and cups were found in the deposit. A salient image depicted on the exterior surface of one of the bowl fragments is the “Humped Animal” (Menzel, 1964, p. 15; Knobloch, 2012, Figure 97) with profile head and ray appendages (Figure 16). As in the previous cases, it appears that a couple of the Humped Animal designs were depicted on the bowl. The sherd where the Humped Animal is represented is thin, with red slip paint on both surfaces. As discussed by Knobloch (2005, p. 112), the earliest version of the Humped Animal is the Nasca 7 monkey, which was transferred to the highland Wari.

Finally, the ceramic collection from the La Oroya deposit includes sherds in the distinguishable Cajamarca style (Figure 17). While some these sherds had been already removed before the salvage excavation, more sherds were found with the excavation. A minimum of two similar plates appears to have been included in the deposit. While no samples of other local ceramic styles have been found in the ceramic collection discussed here, the occurrence of the unique Cajamarca plates suggests that they were highly regarded.

In addition to the purposely smashed vessels, the rescue excavation at La Oroya resulted in the finding of some tools used in the production of ceramics (Figure 18). The tools include a potter’s plate, and scrapers used to smooth the surface of the vessels. The finding of such artifacts indicates that ceramics were produced at the site, and this probably included the smashed vessels. At the Wari site of Maymi in the Pisco Valley, there is evidence for

both, ritually smashed vessels and the production of ceramics. Likewise, for Pacheco, Menzel (1964) mentions that the smashed vessels were locally made. This appears to have also been the case at La Oroya. The fact that the site is now under new buildings and paved streets it makes it difficult to carry out further excavation to verify this possibility.

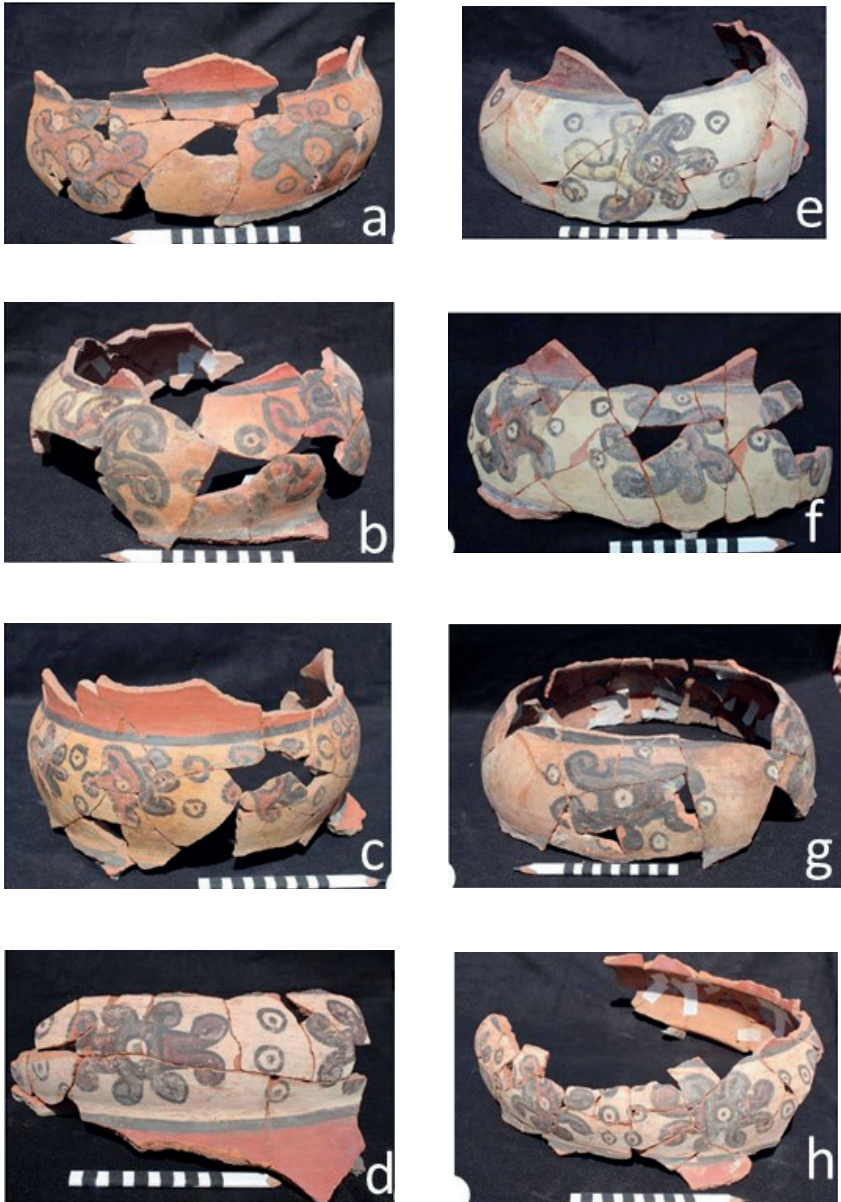


Figure 14. Depictions of the Ray designs.



Figure 15. Representation of the Serpentine Figure.



Figure 16. Representation of the Humped Animal.



Figure 17. Cajamarca style ceramic from La Oroya.



Figure 18. Tools used in the production of ceramic vessels from La Oroya.

The La Oroya and the Middle Horizon Offering Tradition

A salient feature of the Wari state was the purposeful placement of dedicatory offerings (Arriola Tuni and Tesar, 2011; Cook, 1992; Cuba Muñiz and Amachi Flores, 2019), including ritually sacrificing beautifully decorated large-sized ceramic vessels that afterwards were buried in the ground (Cook, 1987, 2001, p. 137; Isbell, 2000; Isbell and Cook, 1987; Glowacki, 2012, p. 145; Menzel, 1964, 1968; Ochatoma and Cabrera, 2000). Menzel (1977, p. 52) asserts that these ritual celebrations are associated with the emergence of the Wari state and a new religion in the Ayacucho Valley, while its presence elsewhere in the central Andes signals the presence of the Wari state. The shattered ceramic vessels from the La Oroya site in the Acari Valley belongs to this religion

tradition (Valdez, 2009). Although the smashed vessels described above are not as impressive as those found at Pacheco, for example, the basic concept is the same. With a very few exceptions, most of the partially restored vessels from the La Oroya site are large and medium sized narrow necked jars that, functionally, may have been ideal for fermenting and transporting beverages. Researchers assert that the rituals that involved the purposeful shattering of ceramic vessels were associated with the conspicuous consumption of food and chicha beer (Cook, 2004, p. 156; Cook and Glowacki, 2003; Glowacki, 2002, p. 276, 279, 2012, p. 146; Isbell and Cook, 1987, p. 28; Isbell and Groleau, 2010, p. 191; Knobloch 2000b, p. 398; Ochatoma and Cabrera, 2002, p. 236), fermented beverage often made from maize (Valdez 2006). If so, the smashed vessels from La Oroya perhaps were full of beverages at the start of the rituals and finally shattered at the conclusion of the celebration. Thus, it is possible that in the provinces this type of Wari rituals were purposely staged for eating and drinking together as tactics that enabled establishing and maintaining lasting social bonds.

The association of the La Oroya ceramic deposit with the Wari state is manifested in the occurrence of important Wari motifs, such as the Ayacucho Serpent (Knobloch, 2012, p. 126), the Serpentine Figure, and the Humped-Animal, all of them representative of the Middle Horizon epoch 1B (Menzel, 1964, p. 15). The Humped-Animal, according to Menzel (1968, p. 62), also occurs during the Middle Horizon 2A, but the significant difference is that “the tail is drawn as a separate arc from the body,” while the “corresponding epoch 1B bodies and tails are usually, though not invariably, drawn together in a single curve.” The single Humped-Animal motif from La Oroya (Figure 16) corresponds to the design type of Middle Horizon 1B. Thus, in the absence of any radiocarbon dates for the pit, it can be concluded that the ceramic deposit from the La Oroya site likely belongs to the Middle Horizon 1B.

However, the La Oroya deposit also includes plates in the Cajamarca style (Valdez, 2009, p. 197). Menzel (1964, p. 72) notes that the Cajamarca style is more recurrent in contexts that date to the Middle Horizon Epoch 2B. Following the finding of the La Oroya ceramic deposit, pictures and drawings of the most representative motifs of La Oroya were sent to Menzel, who kindly replied noting that the deposit likely dates to the Middle Horizon 2A and that the motifs of Ayacucho Serpent and the Humped-Animal, for example, appear to be derived from Chakipampa 1B.

According to Menzel (1977, p. 53), the most impressive and sacred Wari deities were depicted during the Middle Horizon 1A, before the Wari expansion, and during the Middle Horizon 1B, at the beginning of the expansion movement. In contrast, during the Middle Horizon 2A, “non-religious objects began to play a significant part in sacred offerings,” and during the Middle Horizon 2B the “offerings appear to have become even less

impressive.” These changes suggest that at the beginning Wari expansion was more religious in character, then became more secular, as indicated by the widespread occurrence of Chakipampa ceramics (Menzel, 1964, p. 68). Therefore, the absence of depictions of the most sacred Wari deities in the La Oroya deposit appears to confirm that the ceramic deposit discussed here occurred some time at the end of Middle Horizon 1B or early during the Middle Horizon 2A.

This possible date for the La Oroya ceramic offering does not indicate that the Acari Valley was annexed late compared to the Nazca Valley. It only means that the ritual that resulted in the deposit discussed here was conducted relatively late compared to Pacheco. Having said that, it is possible that other similar rituals were carried out much earlier, but the material evidence is still to be found. The presence of sherds belonging to face-necked jars at the site strongly suggests that the offering deposit discussed here was not the only one. Considering that rituals are staged repetitively (Marcus, 2007, p. 46) and that similar actions are performed over a considerable time, the possibility that there were other ceramic deposits at the site is even greater. It must be stressed, nonetheless, that Menzel (1964, p. 25) had already found “imitation Chakipampa B pottery” in Acari and those finds enabled her (1964, p. 67) to assert that during the Middle Horizon 1B the Wari state had expanded from Acari to Chancay along the coast and as far north as Huaraz along the highlands. More recent research has demonstrated that Wari expansion during Middle Horizon 1B extended farther south to the Moquegua Valley (McEwan and Williams, 2012).

Discussion and Conclusion

And so, making the people joyful and giving their solemn banquets and drinking feasts, great taquis, and other celebrations such as they use, completely different from ours, in which the Incas show their splendor, and all the feasting is at their expense... (Cieza de León, 1959, p. 191).

Then the lords of Cuzco came out very well dressed in their finest garments, and the Inca came along with them. The caciques also came wearing the garments that the Inca had given them. Then many large jugs of chicha were brought out on the square. Next came the ladies, both the wives of the Inca and those of the other important men. The ladies spread out a variety of delicacies, and then everyone sat down to eat. After eating, they started to drink (Betanzos, 1996, p. 56).

The two above quotations with reference to the rituals celebrated by the Inka describe lively gatherings, full of actors dressed for the occasion and actively participating in singing, dancing, eating, and drinking. Betanzos (1996,

p. 56) adds that Inka rituals lasted for about six days, which perhaps indicates that the celebrations were of a grand scale. Unfortunately, most of these actions do not result in tangible evidence and thus are difficult to observe archaeologically. However, Inka rituals made use of material objects (Moore 2017, p. 296). For example, historical documents mention that the Inka used various treasured goods, such as cloth, llamas, guinea pigs, ceramics, feathers, coca leaves, maize, in addition to food and beverages as valuable offerings to the sacred entities (Calancha, 1975, pp. 850-851; de Arriaga, 1968, p. 42, 210; de Acosta, 1962, pp. 206-207; Cobo, 1990, p. 113). Archaeological research has confirmed the actual physical presence of such offerings (Reinhard and Ceruti, 2010; Valdez, 2019; Valdez *et al.*, 2020).

Of course, the Inka were late comers to the Andean stage, and it is likely that much of the ritual performances and paraphernalia they used followed long established Andean customs. Indeed, as summarized by Benson (2001, pp. 1-2), there is a long tradition of placing offerings across the central Andes, strongly suggesting that centuries prior to the Inka, most of the above listed products already constituted valuable goods that could be offered to the gods. This was the case with coca leaves, for instance, a highly esteemed good by the Inka and frequently given as an offering to important shrines (Cobo, 1990, pp. 63-64); several centuries before the Inka, the Wari already used coca leaves for similar purposes (Valdez *et al.*, 2015).

In contrast to the Inka state, there are no written accounts for the rituals staged by the Wari state. Thus, any discussion about Wari ritual performances must rely in the scant material evidence. As pointed out in the previous sections, the Wari state invested valuable time manufacturing oversized vessels “for ritual use” (Menzel, 1964, p. 22) that, subsequently, were “broken by deliberately placed blows” (Menzel, 1964, p. 24; see also Isbell, 2000, p. 50; Isbell and Groleau, 2020, p. 191; Ochatoma and Cabrera, 2000, p. 456). As in the case of the La Oroya site discussed above, the shattered ceramics were buried in the ground, likely as a sacrificial offering to supernatural deities (Insoll, 2011, p. 153; Schwartz, 2017, p. 225). Such deposits have been interpreted as “an expression of great religious devotion and elaborate ceremonial” (Menzel, 1968, p. 49). However, beyond this, the Wari ceramic deposits found in the provinces have been largely discussed as if the intent of the ritual was just to sacrifice the vessels, leaving unaddressed the circumstances under which and the purpose for which the rituals were organized and performed. In the existing narratives, the central actors and the audience that probably came to witness the celebrations are also absent.

Isbell (2000, p. 51) has made a cautious suggestion for the smashed vessels from Conchopata, that may have occurred during celebrations staged for power transfer from one deceased ruler to another. The suggestion is appealing, especially for the case of Conchopata. Then, what about the

shattered vessels from the provinces? Were these also linked with the power transfer celebrations that took place in the Wari heartland? While that is a possibility, there is also the prospect that the smashed vessels such as those from La Oroya may be the materialized evidence for rituals staged to befriend the local lords that ultimately helped the Wari state to assert its dominium over the provinces. It is conceivable that Wari envoys did not just walk into a foreign territory and proceed to smash their elegantly painted ceramic vessels that afterwards were buried. Instead, the ritual must have been more complex and likely also more costly. The shattered ceramic deposits probably represent only a small segment of a longer and more intricate ritual process –the aftermath of the ritual (Rowley-Conwy, 2018). At the heart of the rituals probably were theatrical performers, who following a carefully drafted official script, addressed the local audience. Performances such as this probably had “critical implications and consequences for the development of centralized polities” (Inomata and Coben, 2006, p. 11) as well as for the establishment of reciprocal obligations.

Ritual performances are formal and solemn acts conducted outside quotidian activities, carried out by specialists, usually a person of religious and political power (Inomata and Coben, 2006, p. 12; Marcus 2007, p. 45; Rappaport, 1999, p. 24). Rituals also have a purpose, and it is the purpose that ultimately serves to guide the ceremony (Coben, 2006, p. 223). Rituals can be, for instance, for the shaping of beliefs and ideologies (Kyriakidis, 2007, 2), to assist creating culturally specific domains of the sacred (Swenson, 2015, p. 331), to invoke of a greater power (Rosenfeld and Bautista, 2017, p. 8). Rituals often require the physical presence of an audience (Inomata and Coben 2006, p. 14-15) and thus are the ideal settings to establish communication (Swenson 2008, p. 240). The collective participation of a large audience probably also resulted in new experiences and shared memories (Whitehouse and Lanman, 2014, p. 678). In the case of Wari, the rituals perhaps were enacted for spreading Wari religion and Wari deities, expanding Wari hierarchy, and legitimizing Wari’s presence in the provinces. Hence, the rituals performed at La Oroya must have been deliberately staged for the local audience to convey to them the “good” intentions of the Wari. In the sequence of several events that rituals encompass, the act of sacrificing the vessels probably marked the culmination of a long process of socialization that enabled participants to affirm their loyalty as a sign of friendship. Perhaps, the individuals who were granted with the privilege to smash the vessels were important local leaders, who by smashing the vessels expressed their loyalty to the Wari deities and the Wari state.

Anthropological research demonstrates that feasting is an important component of ritual celebrations (Dietler, 1996, 2001, 2011, p. 179; Wiessner, 2001, p. 116). When the staged rituals require the presence of large audience,

which may have been the case at La Oroya, the best strategy to bring peoples together is precisely providing food and drink (Krögel, 2011, p. 2). More importantly, perhaps, collective rituals that enable eating and drinking together have the capacity to bind groups together creating the sense of belonging (Meigs, 1997, p. 95; Whitehouse and Lanman, 2014, p. 674) and cementing trust and loyalty. It is known, for example, that eating and drinking together in ceremonial settings played a key role in the consolidation of power of the Inka state (Costin and Earle, 1989; Morris, 1982; Murra, 1960), and it appears that the Inka understood well the political advantages of commensal hospitality that allowed them to establish and maintain social relations.

Whether the Inka learned independently the political advantages of commensal hospitality is open to debate. However, it is important to point out that other political forces in the region long before the Inka appear to have also known that eating and drinking together were an effective means to create friendship (Cook and Glowacki, 2003; Isbell and Groleau, 2010). Nash (2020, p. 84; Nash and deFrance 2019) reports that elaborate Wari feasting ritual was celebrated at Cerro Baúl; this instance demonstrates that the Wari were familiar with feasting and probably also with the advantages of hosting a feast (Cook and Glowacki, 2003, p. 180-182). Indeed, Isbell and Groleau (2010, p. 198) argue that “feasting of subordinates was a Wari administrative strategy” and practiced long before the rise of the Inka state. For an expanding state, such as the Wari, feasting may have been an effective approach not only to establish communication (Whitehouse and Lanman, 2014, p. 678), but also to establish, maintain and renegotiate power relations. Eating and drinking together in a ritualized context likely enabled building trust and friendship, especially in a situation where locals and foreigners found themselves side-by-side. At the end, this perhaps was the scheme employed by the Wari to normalize the abnormal situation they generated in the newly annexed regions and thus to legitimize their presence.

Feasting is a costly activity in terms of time and invested effort (Whitehouse and Lanman, 2014, p. 675). However, hosting a feast shows one's resourcefulness and generosity, and thus it has an empowering effect (Dietler, 2001). At the same time, the political advantages of hosting a feast are enormous, especially in a situation where an expansive political force, such as the Wari state, was aiming to gain access to local resources and local labor. In this situation, throwing a grandiose banquet to gain the loyalty of the local people must have been an investment that brought massive return.

Available archaeological evidence strongly suggests that the ritual ceremonies staged by Wari religious leaders were planned well in advance. In the case of coastal valleys such as Acari, the celebrations perhaps marked the start of the rainy season in the highlands, which annually results in coastal rivers carrying water again and thus marks the beginning of the planting season.

Therefore, timing would have been significant, if indeed Wari deities were associated with crop fertility (Menzel, 1977). Moreover, all the paraphernalia needed for the rituals, such as the ceramic vessels, had to be made ready, and food and fermented beverages for the feasting also had to be prepared.

To conclude, Wari ceramic offerings are the materialized remains of the ritual performances staged by the Wari state. The rituals encompass a chain of actions that often include singing, dancing, eating, and drinking. In the context of expansive political organizations aiming to annex new peoples and lands, rituals probably played a key role in the process of negotiation of political alliances. Unfortunately, most of the aspects of a ritual performances do not leave behind tangible evidence, and the one available for the rituals staged by the Wari state, the shattered vessels, appear to represent only a small segment of the ceremony. The shattering of the vessels does not look to have been the foremost purpose of the ritual; the aim seems to have been to create an ideal setting for eating and drinking together that ultimately enabled building reciprocal obligations. In this manner, by means of commensal hospitality, the Wari managed to legitimize its intrusive presence and consolidate its power.

Note: The finding of sherds belonging to face-neck jars (see Figure 5) leaves open the possibility that such vessels were also smashed and buried at the site.

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