



A Majestic Frontier Outpost Chose Cooperation Over War

Empires of the Andes

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The people huddled in their impregnable fortress atop the high mesa called Cerro Baúl, their last refuge as the mighty Inca legions swept through the valley far below. With its sheer walls and single, tortuous route to the top, the citadel defied attack by storm, so the Inca army laid siege to Cerro Baúl. For 54 days, the people held out. But with little food and no water, they found their redoubt was not only a grand bastion but also a grand prison.

The summit of Cerro Baúl, protected by steep, rugged slopes, provided a virtually impregnable fortress for ancient civilizations of the Andes.

Then, in hopes of saving their starving children, the defenders sent the youngsters down from the beleaguered mountaintop. The Inca received the children with kindness, fed them, and even let them take a few supplies to their parents — along with a promise of peace and friendship.

That was enough for the hungry and hopeless people of Cerro Baúl. They surrendered unconditionally to the new imperial order about A.D. 1475.

The siege of Cerro Baúl was but the final chapter in the legendary history of what 500 years earlier had been the southernmost outpost of the Wari, the first of the great empires of the Andes. The Inca siege was described by Spanish chronicler Garcilaso de la Vega, and our two seasons of excavations at Cerro Baúl lend credence to this historical lore.

The mesa today is a sacred mountain, sanctuary of *El Señor de Cerro Baúl*, a spirit that's widely venerated throughout the region. But our investigations confirm that it was, for nearly five centuries, a majestic city that dominated the frontier between the Wari and the neighboring Tiwanaku empire.

The story of Cerro Baúl begins in the time archaeologists call the Middle Horizon, when the two empires ruled the central Andes. The Wari, secular and militant, governed most of highland and coastal Peru from their upland capitol at Ayacucho. The Tiwanaku, a trade-based state with a religious core, controlled parts of what is now Bolivia, southern Peru, and northern Chile from a capitol near Lake Titicaca. The Moquegua Valley, dominated by Cerro Baúl, is the only place where the two civilizations are known to have come face-to-face.

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The Moquegua Valley had been in the Tiwanaku orbit until the Wari made their bold thrust into the region. To secure their political outpost, the Wari intruders strategically settled the towering Cerro Baúl and the adjacent pinnacle of Cerro Mejía. Unraveling the nature of this intruding colony and its relationship with the surrounding Tiwanaku is a long-standing concern of the Asociación Con-tisuyo, a consortium of Peruvian and American scholars investigating the region. Recent mapping and excavation at Cerro Baúl and adjacent sites are beginning to reveal pieces of this puzzle.

Where the two competing nations met, their citizens apparently chose cooperation over conflict. Our excavations find no evidence of warfare during the centuries (from about A.D. 600 to 1020) in

which the Wari and the Tiwanaku shared the valley and its scant water. Goods and ideas almost certainly were being exchanged; interaction was inevitable, if for no other reason than to discuss rights to the most critical resource of the arid

desert. Water streaming from mountain rainstorms had to pass by a Wari canal before it reached Tiwanaku fields.

Furthermore, we recovered a Tiwanaku-style *kero* (a drinking vessel used in ceremonies) among the Wari's most sacred ceremonial offerings yet found at the site — a strong argument for ritual interaction between the two groups who shared the valley.

Cerro Baúl was a bustling city of one- and two-story houses organized around plazas where people raised guinea pigs (for food and fuel), prepared feasts, created obsidian projectile points, and made necklace beads of turquoise, lapis lazuli, onyx, and polished shell imported from the Pacific coast.



Archaeologists excavating the summit of Cerro Baúl (the layout of the once-majestic city is shown at right) discovered strong indications of cooperation rather than warfare in the frontier region shared by citizens of the two empires. Among the evidence is this unusual *kero* (a drinking vessel used in important rituals) that was found at the Wari-empire city of Cerro Baúl. A hybrid design, it is decorated with elements of both Wari and Tiwanaku cultures, and depicts the Staff God, an important deity for both societies. Clearly, the Tiwanaku had some impact on the most important aspect of Wari life — religion.



The 25-hectare (62-acre) summit of Cerro Baúl — some 600 meters (nearly 2,000 feet) above the valley floor — was clearly the political and social crown of the Wari outpost. Yet most of the empire's citizens lived not on the top, but on terraces cut into less lofty heights.

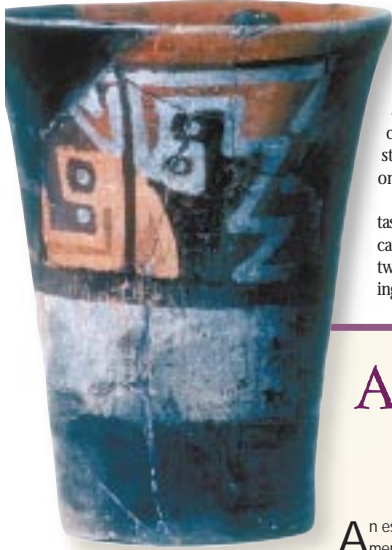
When the Wari arrived in the valley, they introduced an agricultural technology of terracing steep slopes and digging long, serpentine canals across the broken land. A 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) canal wound from the Torata River through

the El Paso Divide between Cerro Baúl and Cerro Mejía, where the water course split to irrigate expansive terraces that stairstepped the flanks of both hills.

This high-country irrigation system may be the key to the Wari's successful expansion into the extremely arid Moquegua Sierra, especially during severe droughts from A.D. 562 to 594 and from A.D. 650 to 750.

The summit of Cerro Baúl is divided into two areas of very different architecture. A monumental core comprises





one- and two-story masonry buildings, while the eastern occupation, extending to the edge of the mesa and overlooking the route of ascent, is crowded with more modest, one-story stone dwellings similar to those found on the terraces of the slopes.

Building atop the mesa was a daunting task. Earth for mortar and silt for plaster came from the banks of the Rio Torata, two hours away by foot. Water for mixing those materials was hauled uphill

from the El Paso canal. For construction stone, Wari builders turned to the mesa itself, quarrying the western half of the summit so heavily that it resembles a cratered lunar landscape.

Fine masonry construction was restricted to important buildings that adhered to the strict architectural canons of the imperial capital at Ayacucho. D-shaped structures are among the rarest and most distinctive buildings at the political nexus, where they likely were at

An Intoxicating Ritual

*A Sacrament of Drunkenness Built
Loyalty in the Andes*

An essential sacrament of both the Wari and Tiwanaku empires — and of the fabled Inca who succeeded them — centered around *chicha*, an alcoholic beverage that was imbibed until participants were hopelessly drunk.

The drinking rituals were designed to cement relationships between inferiors and superiors within the empire by reducing all parties to a shared state of staggering intoxication. The main pottery forms found at a ceremoniously destroyed sacred structure at Cerro Baúl are large urns and drinking vessels — *keros*, which were almost certainly used to store and serve *chicha*, the intoxicating beverage made from maize.

More importantly, a number of the *keros* bear a depiction of the Staff God, or Wiracocha, the principal deity shared by both Wari and Tiwanaku. This deity is portrayed as the centerpiece on the most famous of the Tiwanaku empire's monuments, the Gateway of the Sun. Wiracocha is a defining figure in the link between Tiwanaku and Wari religions. It is the principal deity who controls life and death, and its appearance as the central figure in the religious pantheons of both empires clearly reflects a strong system of shared beliefs. Its presence in this offering is a unique blend of Wari and Tiwanaku religious beliefs.

The god is usually depicted holding a staff in either hand, with rayed appendages protruding from its head. The rays often terminate as the heads of stylized pumas

or condors, as do the Cerro Baúl examples.

Wari typically portrayed the Staff God on ceramics, while Tiwanaku preferred stone. And some differences between Wari and Tiwanaku portrayals are notable. Later Wari manifestations, for example, included maize, the basic ingredient of *chicha*, as part of the rayed appendage. Most Wari representations of the deity depict bird motifs dropping from the eyes — a form referred to as tear bands. The Cerro Baúl examples, however, have llama necks and faces for the tear bands instead of the common bird design. Perhaps this element represents Tiwanaku influence, since llamas are a primary product of their *altiplano* homeland and are represented on numerous Tiwanaku vessels.

An even more convincing argument, though, for ritual interaction between Wari and Tiwanaku is the recovery of a Tiwanaku-style *kero* (pictured above) from the ceremonial deposit in the burned-out ceremonial structure. Wari *keros* do not have the sharp, angular base and strongly concave profiles typical of Tiwanaku *keros*. Wari *keros* use different color schemes than those found on the *kero* from Cerro Baúl.

Does this *kero* represent a Tiwanaku elite who participated in the most important ritual yet discovered from Cerro Baúl, or does it represent a gift or an emulation of a Tiwanaku ruler? In either case, the inclusion of a significant Tiwanaku artifact in such an essential Wari ceremony certainly reflects the mutual influence between the two great Andean states. □ PRW

the sacred center of Wari culture, an area of sacrifice and propitiation of the gods. At Cerro Baúl, we find at least one and possibly two of these temples. In our investigations of one of them, several fine artifacts were found in a ritual offering. These include entire polychrome ceramic vessels, an engraved gourd bowl, and a silver-alloy foil camelid 2.5 centimeters (about an inch) across.

Another potentially important religious complex at Cerro Baúl is the plaza of the sacred stone, an architectural compound built around a large boulder at the center of the summit. Sacred stones were prominent features in Inca cosmology, and a similar structure has been uncovered near the Wari site of Pikillacta in the Cuzco region. These stones were the centers of ritual and received offerings of special libations (such as maize beer or sacrificial blood) or of sacred items. Common Inca sacrificial offerings included llamas, coca leaves, gold or silver work, and in extreme cases, human children. The massive boulder of Cerro Baúl likely played a similar role.

The most common architectural form at the capital and other Wari cities is an enclosed plaza flanked by impressive stone halls. These halls included residences of governors and wealthy citi-

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zens, government offices, and beer houses for state-held parties that rewarded the loyalty of important subjects.

The most interesting of the long halls that have been excavated so far contained a burnt deposit of classic vessels and *keros*, some of which were decorated in a hybrid Wari-Tiwanaku style. Six fine necklaces were also recovered from this burnt offering. Each had an average of 970 shell beads, some with a few lapis lazuli or chrysocolla tube beads as well. The evidence suggests the fire that destroyed the

hall was intentionally set, and the beautiful ceramic vessels, many of them probably brought more than 500 miles from the Wari capital, were deliberately smashed and thrown into the smoldering flames.

The fire and destruction clearly were ceremonial and not a general sacking of the site. As part of the final sacramental drinking episode in this hall — perhaps as part of the abandonment of Cerro Baúl itself — Wari priests ceremonially interred the building. The offering of bead necklaces was made after the fire had been extinguished.

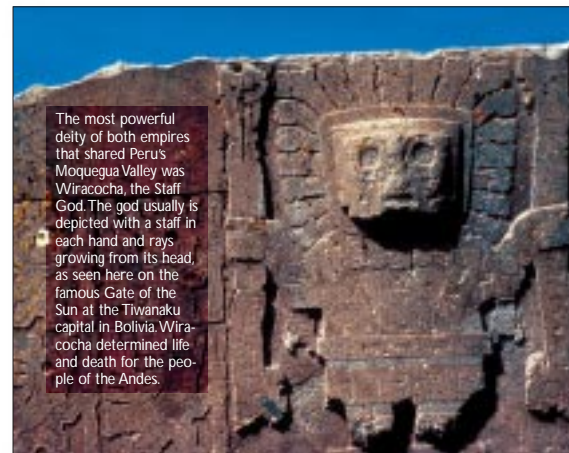
Similarities in their religious iconography are impressive and suggest intimate contact between the Wari and Tiwanaku. The Tiwanaku influence on hybrid Wari *keros* reflects the incorporation of Tiwanaku ideas in the highest realms of Wari religion, and the existence of a Tiwanaku-style *kero* in the most sacred of Wari ritual offerings on the summit documents the inclusion of Tiwanaku artifacts in Wari religious ceremonies.

By studying relationships between the Wari and the Tiwanaku, we can observe how ancient empires communicated with each other. In our own age of internationalization and globalization, the Andean past may tell us a great deal about the nature of confrontation between nations and the successes and failures of strategies of imperial interaction and control. □

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The most powerful deity of both empires that shared Peru's Moquegua Valley was Wiracocha, the Staff God. The god usually is depicted with a staff in each hand and rays growing from its head, as seen here on the famous Gate of the Sun at the Tiwanaku capital in Bolivia. Wiracocha determined life and death for the people of the Andes.