

**Intermediate Elites
in Pre-Columbian States
and Empires**

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Intermediate-Elite Agency in the Wari Empire

The Bioarchaeological and Mortuary Evidence

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Although human agency is circumscribed within a greater social framework that it generally reproduces, interactions between individuals operating within this structure have the potential to reshape established arrangements (Dobres and Robb 2000; Robb 1999:7). To identify how recursive interactions between various groups of individuals and society can affect past social organization, we turn to bioarchaeological and mortuary data from the pre-Hispanic Andes to describe how individual agents may have contributed to both the maintenance and the (re)structuring of Wari society (A.D. 550–1000).¹ These data provide crucial details about age, sex, kinship affiliation, and health status, as well as specifics about burial and ritual practices, demonstrating that actors or groups of actors negotiated their place in the structure of society and likely competed with other individuals, factions, or institutions in the process.

Elites and commoners can be viewed as social categories made up of agents whose actions affect social praxis. Elites may dominate the trajectory of social praxis, yet documented cases show that non-elites also create ways to challenge social structures (Brumfiel 1996). Nevertheless, while elites, commoners, and other categories of persons embody agency, some individuals and collectivities are better equipped to actualize social transformations. In imperial societies, social inequality circumscribes people from successfully challenging “institutional and cultural structures that oppress and limit them” (Morrison 2001:256; see also Wolf 1990). While elites are commonly identified as agents able to actualize social transformation, they often are generalized as pragmatic actors whose behavior

is driven by individual self-interest. Such normative representations as “self-aggrandizing models” (that rely on a somewhat universal, ahistorical explanation for why actors do what they do) deny “the role of structure in the signification of motivations, actions, and outcomes” (Gillespie 1999:225) and create “passive, neutral and neutered” beings (Sorensen 2000:65). In the end, this only thwarts attempts to identify the construction of the actor and his or her actions (Sorensen 2000).

The dichotomy between elites and commoners may be too simplistic for illuminating what were surely complex prehistoric social arrangements. We need to consider, whenever possible, variation within elite (and commoner) groups. Focusing on intermediate elites allows us to avoid viewing elites as a homogeneous, one-dimensional group by recognizing the dialectical relationship they share with primary elites (“above” them) and commoners (“below” them). Intermediate elites are well positioned to interact with both. In this chapter we argue that elites situated at the secondary site of Conchopata occupied a pivotal position in maintaining and creating social structures. We do not mean to imply that a dichotomy (elites versus commoners) should be replaced with a trichotomy (elite, intermediate elites, and commoners). Instead, our intention is to use bioarchaeological data to reconstruct social subsets with “differing status, interests, and abilities who may or may not share common goals” and describe how effective these groups were in realizing particular agency (Deagan 2001; Morrison 2001:255; see also Brumfiel 1992:551).

Bioarchaeological and mortuary evidence from the Middle Horizon site of Conchopata (A.D. 550–1000), located in the central Peruvian Andes (fig. 4.1), allows us to identify a class of intermediate elites and discuss their potential relationships to ruling elites at Huari. Elites at Conchopata are documented by an increase in tomb types through time, indicating an increasing diversity of social strata; an increase in the quantity of high-status tombs and exotic grave goods; and the development of new complex rituals never before documented within the Wari empire. Differences in ritual practices conducted by elites at Conchopata can be interpreted to suggest that while significant aspects of mortuary treatment and architecture are similar at Conchopata and Huari—thereby suggesting imperial standardization in these social arenas—the unique ritual practices at Conchopata demonstrate a specific kind of intermediate-elite agency that was particularly realized in the ritual sphere.

The Wari Empire and Its Capital

Most Andean archaeologists interpret the Wari empire as a politically centralized administrative structure with its capital at the site of Huari (Ist 1989, 1991; Isbell and Schreiber 1978; Lumbreras 1974, 1981; McEw 1991, 1996; Schreiber 1991, 1992). The architectural core of Huari covers approximately 250 hectares (Schreiber 2001) and is composed of funerary areas, plazas, administrative spaces, and ritual structures (Benavides 1991; Bragayrac D. 1991; Isbell et al. 1991). Occupation in this core likely began in the latter part of the Early Intermediate period, around A.D. 450–500, when three Huarpa sites coalesced into one urban center (Schreiber 2001). The length of occupation at Huari remains unclear. Distinctive Wari-style architecture includes patio groups in cellular patterns (Schreiber 1992, 2001), also referred to as orthogonal architecture (Ist et al. 1991), with elongated galleries along the length of the rooms and ritual spaces in the form of D-shaped and circular structures (Cook 2000; Isbell et al. 1991).

Alternative interpretations regarding Wari political structure view the empire as a confederation composed of lineages (J. R. Topic 1985, 1992; T. L. Topic 1991) or a patchwork of independent city-states interconnected by trade and commerce (Shady Solís 1982, 1988; Shady Solís and Ruiz 1979). A related view posits that Wari was organized around somewhat autonomous oracles (Shea 1969), and another suggests that the Wari state was centrally administered with regional centers focused on an agricultural economy and a ritualized landscape (Anders 1989, 1991).

Our research at Conchopata—the second most important regional center in the Ayacucho Valley during the Middle Horizon—contributes new data on the nature of Wari politics and society. Located just 12 kilometers south of the capital (fig. 4.2), Conchopata likely was controlled by elite Huari; however, the extent and nature of that control are not fully understood. A synchronic comparison of mortuary and ritual practices at Huari and Conchopata allows us to discuss how specific agents reflected or projected state standards. While some points of comparison are limited, owing to a relative lack of data from the Wari capital, the data sets from Conchopata allow for a richly detailed examination of mortuary and ritual behaviors and health status.

We posit that if Wari firmly established state standards and exercised

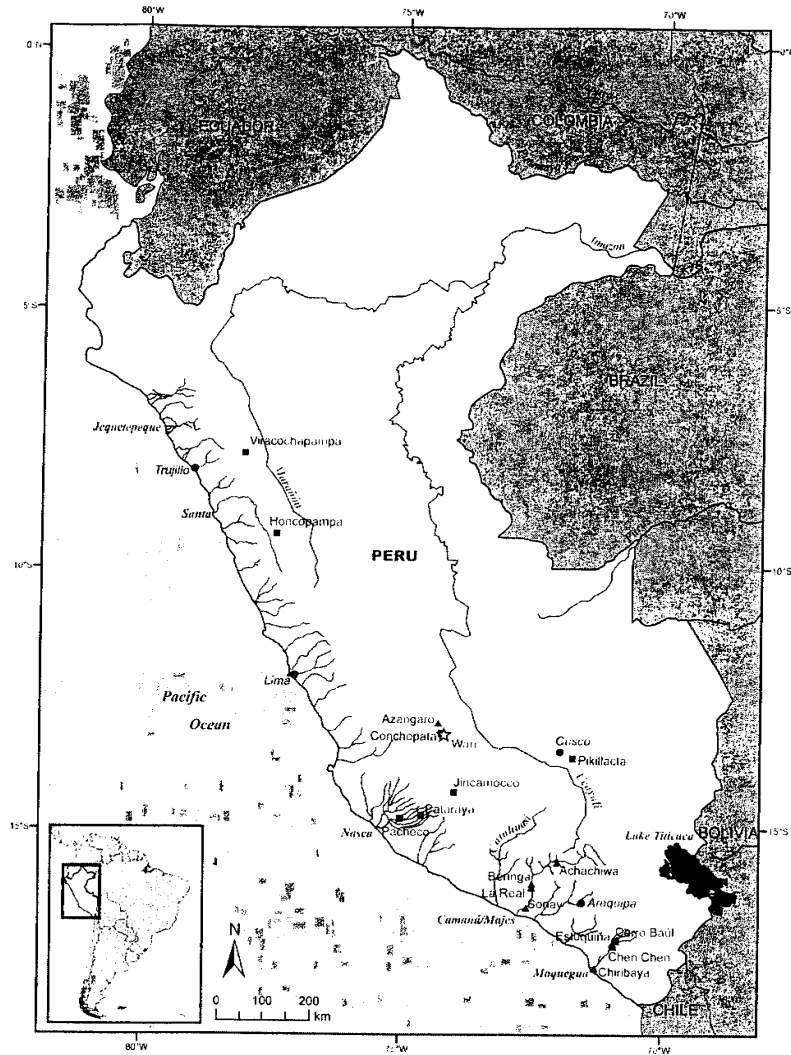


Figure 4.1

Map of Peru showing Wari sites discussed in the text.

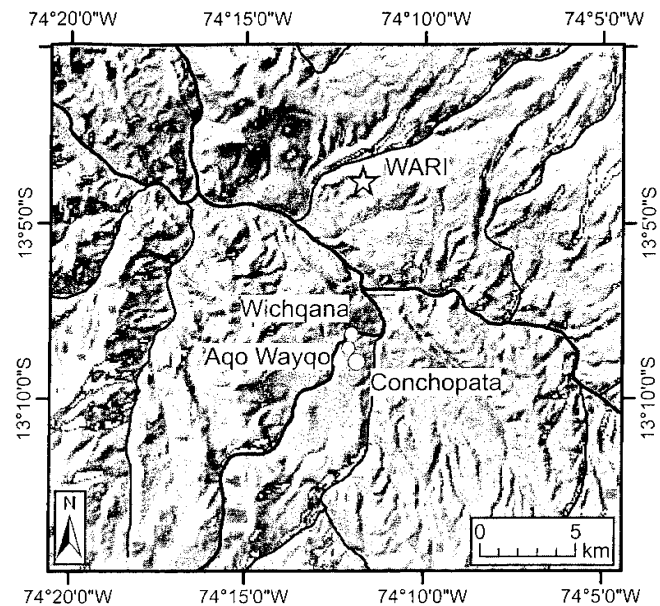


Figure 4.2
Map of the Ayacucho Basin.

strong control at Conchopata, then the Wari “signature” should be evident in many media, from civil engineering (such as administrative and ritual architecture) to tomb types, grave goods, and ritual paraphernalia. For example, if mortuary practices at Conchopata were essentially indistinct from those at Huari, then this may suggest that Wari rulers were interested in ensuring that other groups did not deviate from acceptable funerary expressions of status. As a case in point, English funerals during the sixteenth century were a moment for power negotiations as the queen attempted to control elaborate mortuary displays by aristocrats (Gittings 1984). The queen wished to maintain strict social rankings, particularly as they crumbled under the formation of new classes based on wealth, not just heredity. One way for the royalty to control aristocrats was to limit their ostentatious funerary displays. Wari ruling elites may have employed similar strategies, perhaps controlling mortuary practices at Conchopata to limit the ability to express or to develop new expressions of elite status. In this scenario, lack of variability in elite mortuary practices at Conchopata could signal top-down control over local funerary displays.

Alternatively, variability between elite burials at Huari and Conchopata could suggest that ruling elites designed the state apparatus to tolerate diversity. Rulers generally need collaboration from intermediate elites to effectively consolidate power and maintain control (Robinson 1972; Schreiber 1992); thus, by preserving or blending local practices with imperial ones, an empire may incorporate new politics into its domain more efficiently than if alien practices are forced upon the populace. Additionally, by tolerating local practices the state may better identify diverse ethnic groups, which aids in state monitoring. For example, the Inka empire required that groups maintain local dress and language to distinguish the myriad ethnic groups within its domain, and they threatened punishment if the policy was not obeyed (Cobo 1979[1653]; D’Altroy 2002).

Thus, on the one hand, variability between the local groups and the state may reflect not resistance by the indigenous community but a smart imperial strategy to govern more effectively. Some evidence suggests that Wari rulers used this kind of strategy comes from an analysis of tunics and architecture from the Wari site of Pikillacta. This study concluded that while art and architecture were controlled by the Wari state, some individual weavers and builders deviated from state standards; however, they did so within parameters ultimately defined by the Wari state (Stone-Miller and McEwan 1990). Anomalies in tunics and architecture were permitted by the state but still fell into an overarching standard in which “breaking the rule was one of the rules” (Stone-Miller and McEwan 1990: 68). Differences in mortuary and ritual practices between Conchopata and Huari could be interpreted to suggest that the Wari state had developed this kind of savvy political rule some six centuries before the Inka.

On the other hand, variability in material remains between the two sites may suggest resistance, signaling successful opposition to state ideologies by Conchopata’s inhabitants and Wari’s inability to deflect those challenges. This interpretation posits that intermediate elites at Conchopata were engaging in social practices that undermined the empire’s goals and standards.

It may be difficult to use current data to definitively sort out the nuanced meanings of variability between Huari and Conchopata; however, if we are to approach this task at all, we must first establish a better understanding of variability in Wari society. Previous studies have focused on similarities in administrative, mortuary, and ritual architecture (Cob

2001; Isbell 1989, 1991; Isbell and Cook 2002; McEwan 1996; Schreiber 1992; J. Topic 1991; Williams 2001), but a close examination of grave goods, ritual paraphernalia, and health status provides new insights on how such practices differed between the capital and a secondary center. This is the first step in illuminating Wari power structures and the actions of agents who maneuvered through them.

Conchopata

Recent large-scale excavations by the Conchopata Archaeological Project, directed by William Isbell and Anita Cook, document that the site was first occupied circa A.D. 425 (during the Early Intermediate period) and was abandoned at the end of the Middle Horizon period, circa A.D. 1000 (Isbell and Cook 2002; Ketteman 2002). Situated atop a large plateau, Conchopata covers approximately 30 hectares. Conchopata's civic-ceremonial buildings form a sacred landscape representing the material manifestation of Wari imperial ideology, a common feature of Wari sites (Anders 1989; Cook 2001; Glowacki and Malpass 2003; Schreiber and Gibson 2002). Recent excavations have revealed patio groups that likely served as public spaces for feasting ceremonies (Cook and Glowacki 2003), as well as D-shaped and circular ritual structures that are similar to those known from the capital (fig. 4.3). The central residential area of the site also functioned as a mortuary sector—at least ninety-nine human burials were located under house floors in that section (Tung 2003b).

Conchopata's settlement function has been interpreted in a variety of ways. Pozzi-Escot has suggested that it was a "community of potters" (Lumbreras 1974; Pozzi-Escot B. 1991), while William Isbell (2001; Isbell and Cook 2002: 299) believes it contained a palace compound that housed a high-level male elite or even a royal male.² Recent studies support the idea that Conchopata housed potters, while also showing that pottery production may have had a dual organization, including production at the household level and fineware production administered by local elites (Cook and Benco 2002). We contribute to the dialogue regarding Conchopata's function and suggest that the data point to the presence of large, local elite households and extended families in which senior females were afforded greater prestige in mortuary contexts.

Elite agency at Conchopata can be discerned through increased variation in mortuary types, wealth accumulation as evidenced by the presence

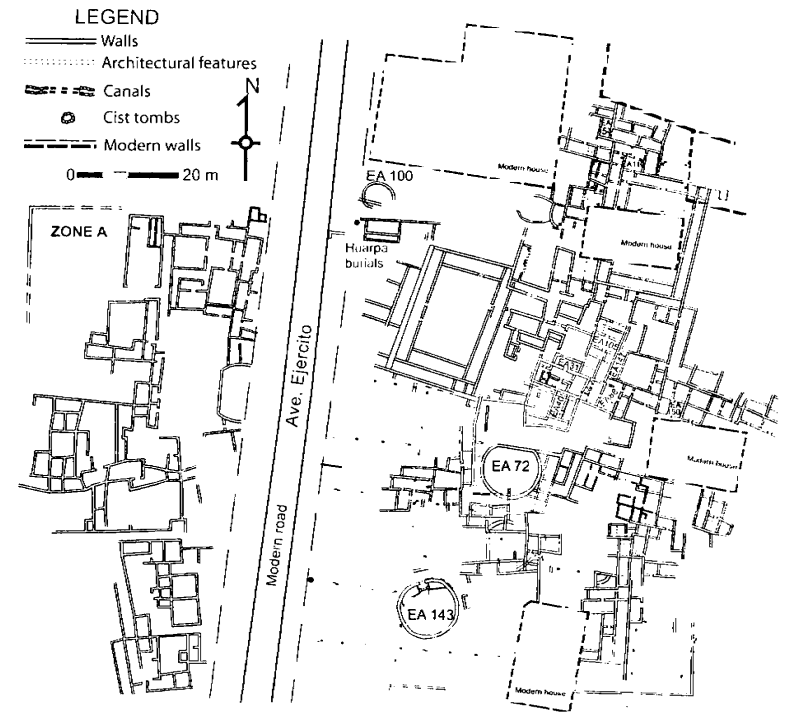


Figure 4.3
Map of Conchopata, showing architectural spaces discussed in the text (redrawn from a map by Juan Carlos Blacker).

of elaborate tombs and fancy goods, and new complex rituals in ceremonial circular and D-shaped rooms. In continuation, data for each of these are discussed, and when possible, comparisons are made with data from Huarpa.³

Increased Variation in Tomb Types from the Pre-Wari to the Wari Period

We argue that our identification of an increase in tomb types through time is suggestive of developing social stratification from the pre-Wari to the Wari period. There were only three types of interments during the pre-Wari period, locally known as Late Huarpa (A.D. 300–550). During the subsequent Wari period, the number of tomb types increased to eight. W

argue that pre-Wari society was a more socially homogenous population, while Wari society shows greater social diversity.

Pre-Wari Burials. A radiocarbon date from one of the Huarpa (pre-Wari) burials yielded a date of A.D. 425–601 (calibrated 2-sigma) (Ketteman 2002). During this phase, the simplest burial type (Conchopata Burial Type 1 [CB Type 1]) was a shallow pit with a single flexed individual sometimes associated with grave goods (Isbell and Cook 2002). This burial type always features an adult, often with a large capstone above the body. The second burial type (CB Type 2) is a simple shallow pit with two or more individuals (Isbell and Cook 2002). Bioarchaeological analysis shows that the individuals in these pits represent all age groups and both sexes.

The third pre-Wari burial type, CB Type 7 (Isbell and Cook 2002), appears to be transitional, based on stratigraphy, burial accoutrements, and radiocarbon dates from surrounding rooms (Ketteman 2002). Although only one example of this type has been identified at Conchopata, the original excavators suggest that its uniqueness warrants its own designation (Isbell and Cook 1987). It is a multioccupant tomb containing five females: three juveniles (aged 11–17) and two young adults (aged 17–22).⁴ The five females were in a flexed position, lying next to each other, and some were separated by large stones. One female was not interred with any grave goods, but the other four were associated with a spindle whorl, three bone implements, and eleven large and small copper pins used to hold clothing together (*tupus* and *t'ipkis*, respectively).

The grave goods suggest that the women buried in this tomb were well dressed and could afford a variety of beautiful copper pins. Three women had *tupus* positioned near their clavicles, which would have pinned clothing together near the neckline so that the large copper discs were clearly visible, and two of the three females had *t'ipkis* near their right humeri, probably to pin shawls together. The other young female had one *t'ipki*, two *tupus*, and three polished bone implements beneath her head—these may have been in her hair or used to pin a head cloth together (see A. Rowe 1995:22). Ethnohistoric descriptions of elite Inka women show that they wore large and small copper pins but that only noble women wore a head cloth, known as *ñañaca* (Cobo 1956:237–240, 1990[1653]:185–189; A. Rowe 1995:24), so this young woman with bone pins may have held a relatively high social status. The numerous copper *tupus*, *t'ipkis*, and bone implements indicate noncommoner females, demonstrating an early example of developing social differentiation via wealth display.

Pathological lesions on the female skeletons indicate that they suffered physiological stresses in their early childhood years but suffered no diseases or trauma later in their young lives. Two of the four females displayed healed cribra orbitalia, a lesion on the orbital roof suggestive of iron-deficiency anemia incurred during childhood.⁵ Notably, they recovered from these biological insults and appear to have been free of physiological stress, disease, and trauma during the last years of their lives.

Wari Burials. During the pre-Wari period, there were only three tomb types; in the subsequent Wari period, tomb types increased to eight.⁶ Conchopata burial types 1 and 2 continued to be used, but they rarely contain grave goods; they appear to have been the resting place for commoners. The six other tomb types vary in location and architecture and include rock-lined cists capped with stone slabs, large tombs carved into the bedrock under house floors, and mortuary rooms containing several cist tombs enclosed by walls or mausoleum-like structures (see Isbell and Cook 2002 for a complete description of these tomb types). Adding to the Wari tomb types previously identified (Isbell and Cook, 2002), we describe another type called a “bench burial” (CB Type 8), characterized by a rectangular stone platform above interments. To date, all of the seventeen bench burials encountered contain infants or children. A final tomb type described elsewhere is an upside-down-T-shaped chamber called Tomb X by Luis Lumbreras (1981).⁷

Elaborate Wari Period Tombs, Exotic Items, and the Health of Intermediate Elites

At the capital site of Huari, large stone-slab burial chambers were constructed in the Cheqo Wasi sector, probably to house the ruling elite. The Cheqo Wasi mortuary area contained “about a hundred” disturbed interments buried with turquoise, *Spondylus* shell, copper *tupus*, gold, and a wide array of ceramics (Benavides C. 1991:65). In addition, two crania were covered in cinnabar (Gonzalez Carré et al. 1996:118). Burials also were recovered from the Vegachayoq Moqo sector at the capital, but only two of the ninety-five individuals interred in these burials have been dated to the Middle Horizon; all others date to the Late Intermediate period (Gonzalez Carré et al. 1996).

Cist tombs with capstones were common at both Huari (Cook 2001) and Conchopata, yet the Conchopata cist tombs (CB Type 5b) appear miniaturized relative to those at Huari, even though the former are elabo-

rate within their local site context. Potentially, Conchopata elites adopted Huari burial styles as a way to legitimize their own status and the status of their kin and associates. At the same time, their actions would have reified imperial concepts of elite status.

The Conchopata data sets allow us to look beyond tomb type and describe the demographic profile of tomb groups as well as their mortuary treatment. In particular, we can provide a detailed description of elite female funerary treatment because more women than men were buried at the site: 62 percent are female and 38 percent are male ($N = 81$), a profile that significantly differs from a symmetrical distribution (Fisher's exact test, $p = 0.0176$; $N = 81$) (Tung 2003b).⁸ (This count excludes the trophy heads discussed below, which, because of their unique context, should not be considered with the general mortuary population.)

High-status tombs are located between two large orthogonal patios and an important D-shaped structure (see fig. 4.3). The tombs share a somewhat standardized funerary style, suggesting a newly formed intermediate-elite class. Within this main mortuary area, there are twenty-seven rooms, fifteen of which have tombs. The fifteen tombs contained at least ninety-nine individuals. Two of the fifteen tombs are simple burial pits (CB Types 1 and 2), two are bench burials (CB Type 8), and the other eleven are either CB Type 4 or 5. Focusing on the more elaborate tomb types, we describe six well-preserved tombs, categorized as CB Type 4, 5b, and 8.

Tomb EA (Espacio Arquitectónico) 105 (CB Type 4). Located within the central mortuary sector, EA 105 included a large tomb with multiple occupants and numerous grave goods (see fig. 4.3 for EA 105 location). The tomb is in the northwest corner of the rectangular enclosure, carved deep into the descending bedrock. The entrance to EA 105 was capped by several large stones; attached to its southern edge was a stone platform with surface dimensions of 70 centimeters by 58 centimeters and a shallow hole in the center. Inside the shallow hole, which probably functioned as a receptacle for offerings, we recovered goods such as *Spondylus* shell, obsidian, and ceramic figurine fragments. In this detail, EA 105 contrasts with the cist tombs at Huari, which have complete perforations in the capstone for offerings and libations (Cook 2001: 149). A radiocarbon assay from the base of the tomb provided a date of A.D. 688–879 (calibrated at 2-sigma; Sample AA45796 [Tung 2003b]), clearly placing its use during the Wari period.

EA 105 likely was the resting place for an elite family group. It contained fourteen individuals: two fetuses, three infants, one child, one juvenile, four adult females, one senior female (47–53 years old), one adult male (23–27 years old), and one adult of unknown sex (Tung 2003b). One of the adult females (Individual 1), the last adult to be buried, was pregnant at the time of her death. Another female (Individual 4), located below and to the east of the pregnant woman, held an infant in her right arm. The presence of multiple age categories and similar skeletal genetic traits, such as the vastus notch on the patella (see Finnegan 1978 for discussion of this genetic trait), indicate that this likely was the tomb for a kin group. Because some skeletons were disturbed, the bodies appear to have been added to the tomb over a period of time, not in a single burial event.

The quality of the tomb's construction and its contents indicate that it contained an elite family. Thirty-five ceramic items and forty-seven other funerary objects, including carved turquoise pieces, *Spondylus* shell, and sixteen complete copper pins (fig. 4.4) were included as grave goods. The young adult male (Individual 6) was not associated with any grave goods, but he was seated on wood boards that likely formed a solid base for a textile bundle. The remnants of feather quills suggest that his now-disintegrated textile probably was decorated with feathers. He was placed at the base of the tomb, surrounded by white ash, and covered with soil.

Most of the ceramics in EA 105 belonged to the Huamanga and Wari blackware styles, and all were associated with females (and the two fetuses), suggesting gender-specific mortuary treatment. The pregnant female (Individual 1), a young adult female (Individual 2), and the elder female (Individual 3) all had Wari blackware face-neck vessels (fig. 4.4A–C). Specifically, Individual 1 and Individual 3 each had a Wari blackware vessel in her lap and a Huamanga bowl inverted on her head. Three of the women had miniature ceramic vessels with bird and feline heads in profile (fig. 4.4H), among other miniature vessels.

Other similarities abound. Four females were wearing copper tupus (fig. 4.4D,E)—a common practice among women of the later Inka period, suggesting that this sex-specific adornment has deep historical roots. Additionally, the elder female and the young woman with the infant in her arm (Individual 4) were partially covered in cinnabar, a treatment observed on female skeletons from other tombs.

A few items associated with the women varied, perhaps reflecting differences in age status, social status, or the preference of the deceased or her mourners. The senior female (Individual 3) was interred with a neck-

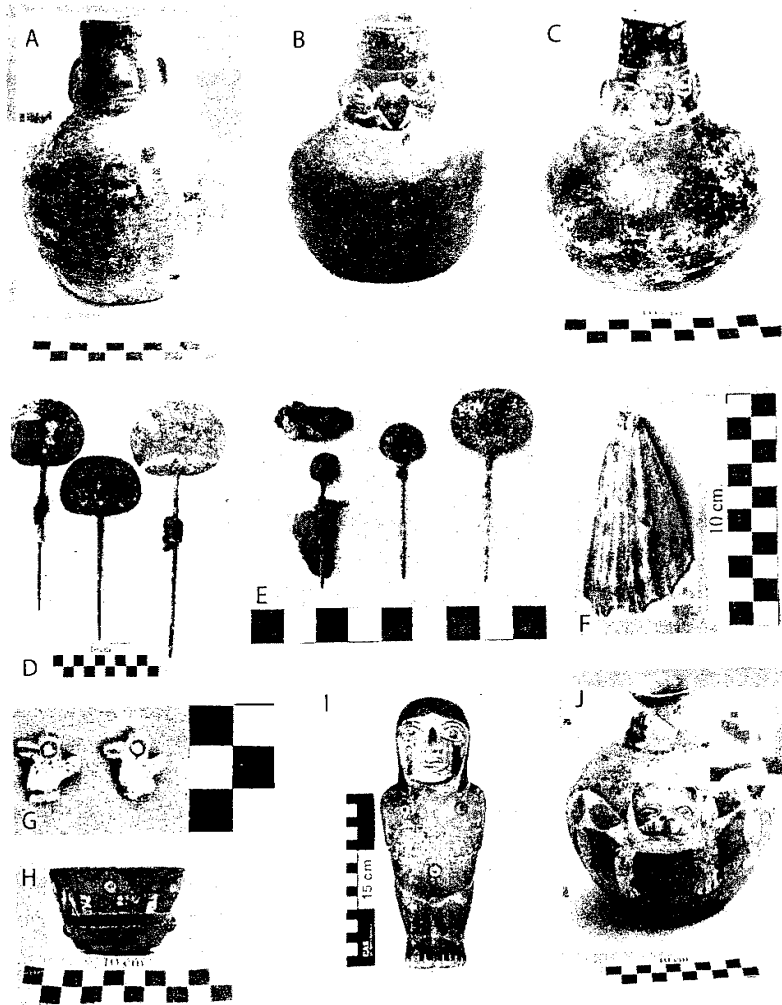


Figure 4.4

Sampling of artifacts recovered from Tomb EA 105, Conchopata:
 (A) face-neck jar located in the lap of Individual 1 (pregnant female);
 (B) face-neck jar located in the lap of Individual 3 (elderly female);
 (C) face-neck jar associated with Individual 2 (young adult female);
 (D) sample of tupus from Individual 1; (E) t'ipkis from Individual 2;
 (F) *Spondylus* shell from Individuals 2 and 3; (G) ducks/bird carvings
 from Individual 3; (H) miniature vessel from Individual 1; (I) figurine
 associated with Individuals 2 and 3; (J) feline jar associated with
 Individuals 2 and 3.

lace made of shell and turquoise beads, two shell pendants carved into ducks/birds (fig. 4.4G), and a carved turquoise piece resembling a frog.⁹ Four additional objects—including a triangular *Spondylus* shell piece (fig. 4.4F), a female figurine (fig. 4.4I), and a jar with a molded feline head and painted body (fig. 4.4J)—were recovered from a space near the senior female and one of the young females (Individual 2), so it is not clear with whom the objects were associated. The pregnant female was associated with a Huamanga vessel containing a human hair braid.

Two fetuses found in the uppermost strata of the tomb were placed in large (separate) Huamanga vessels filled with white ash and capped by smaller Huamanga bowls. One of the fetuses was placed in a leather bag before being placed in the vessel. Both were associated with a variety of grave goods, such as a hollow mushroom-shaped ceramic object (a possible miniature drum), obsidian, copper tupus, a ceramic spoon, and one Huamanga face-neck jar. The placement of the fetuses in the tomb and their interment with elaborate grave goods suggests that they probably were the unborn offspring of intermediate-elite women and were perhaps related to the women buried in the lower levels of the tomb.

A common physical ailment for individuals in Tomb EA 105 was osteoarthritis, particularly in the back (Tung 2003b). Half of the adults (three out of six) with well-preserved vertebrae displayed spinal osteoarthritis. While it is not unusual that an elderly female would suffer from this degenerative joint disease, it is notable that the unsexed adult (Individual 5) and the young male (Individual 6) also exhibited osteoarthritis. These kinds of pathological changes at a young age suggest that these individuals engaged in strenuous or repetitive physical activity; conversely, an injury could have initiated the pathological bone formation. Osteoarthritis also was observed on the right shoulder of the senior female and the left shoulder of the young adult female who held the infant (Individual 4). In the case of Individual 4, osteoarthritis may indicate that she repeatedly or strenuously used her left arm. Moreover, because her left hand bones were larger than her right, we suspect that she was left-handed. If this was the case, then the infant's placement in her right arm could reflect how it was carried during her lifetime, leaving her left arm free to carry out tasks (this interpretation, of course, is speculative). We propose that these skeletal health data indicate that although these women held a relatively high social status and were part of the elite class, they were not necessarily members of a "leisure" class.

The occupants of EA 105 also exhibit numerous bone fractures. Half of the adolescent/adult tomb occupants (four out of eight) have healed postcranial fractures.¹⁰ Healed cranial trauma was observed in three out of seven individuals: the senior female (Individual 3), the young adult male (Individual 6), and the unsexed adult (Individual 5). The wounds were well healed and certainly not the cause of death. Traumas were located on the posterior of the cranium of each adult; given this patterning (in the tomb subgroup and the population at large), it is unlikely that the traumas resulted from accidental falls (see Tung 2003b). Such wounds can stem from interpersonal violent conflict (such as battle, domestic violence, or ritual violence) or corporal punishment (such as stoning) (see Moore 1973; Smith 2003; Tung 2003b). Notably, the frequency for cranial trauma at Conchopata during the Wari period shows that about one third of both sexes have healed head wounds (Tung 2003b), indicating that women and men were equally exposed to violence.

Dental disease also was common among the tomb's occupants: 71 percent of the individuals (five out of seven) showed at least one carious lesion (cavity).¹¹ Although skeletal and dental lesions are often interpreted as signs of lower social status (decreased access to resources, greater exposure to pathogens, and so forth), the high rate of dental caries may actually reflect greater access to a socially valuable crop—maize. While carious lesions are caused by several factors working in tandem, high-carbohydrate foods such as maize are extremely cariogenic (Larsen et al. 1991; Milner 1984), suggesting that these individuals may have been consuming large quantities of maize as food and/or fermented drink (*chicha*).

In summary, data from Tomb EA 105 suggest that it was the final resting place for a kin group of intermediate elites. The tomb was built with a distinctive stone covering, had a stone platform with offerings, and contained a great number of grave goods (especially rarer items, including *Spondylus* shell and turquoise). The individuals inside the tomb had a diet suggestive of elite status. At the same time, the prevalence of osteoarthritis and healed skeletal fractures suggests that these elites were physically active and that both men and women were exposed to injury, particularly trauma that can stem from violent conflict. We do not interpret EA 105 as a royal tomb because tomb design, while elaborate relative to the pit burials, pales in comparison to the grand stone-slab tombs at Huari and, while the tomb contains Huamanga and blackware pottery, it is nearly void of Wari finewares (only one out of thirty-five ceramic items was a fineware).

Tomb EA 31 (CB Type 4). Another Type 4 tomb yielded fourteen ceramic vessels and seventeen other funerary objects. We interpret this tomb as a final resting place of an elite kin group of ten individuals: three infants, one child (3–5 years old), one juvenile female (14–17 years old), one young adult male (22–26 years old), and four unsexed adults (Tung 2001). While evidence for malnutrition and infectious disease are not present in the tomb's population,¹² several individuals show healed bone fractures or osteoarthritis, similar to those found on remains from EA 105. The young adult male suffered from osteoarthritis of the spine and right elbow, suggesting that he engaged in strenuous or repetitive physical activity.¹³ One unsexed adult of unknown sex suffered from a vertebral compression fracture, and one other unsexed adult who was interred with two weaving implements (David Goldstein, pers. comm., 2002) exhibited spinal osteoarthritis and a healed fracture on the third left metacarpal (the middle of the back of the hand, in line with the middle finger). This kind of injury is often described as a “boxer's fracture” because this bone can be broken when a fist strikes a hard surface. Next to this individual, a fetus was found in a vessel capped by a smaller Huamanga bowl, providing another similarity between this tomb and Tomb EA 105. The juvenile female in this tomb was interred with items closely paralleling those found with women in EA 105: a Wari blackware face-neck vessel, Huamanga bowls, three copper tubes, and *Spondylus* shell. Her postcranial elements showed no evidence of infectious disease, trauma, or osteoarthritis. Two of the three infants were associated with turquoise, *Spondylus* shell, and a Huamanga bowl. Additional grave goods could not be associated with any specific person. These include a face-neck bottle (similar to those found in EA 105), a rectangular piece of *Spondylus* shell, a copper object interpreted to be a small spoon or snuffer, and chunks of cinnabar.

In sum, comparative data from EA 105 and EA 31 suggest that (1) the tombs are contemporaneous; (2) elite burial treatment was standardized, particularly among women; and (3) individuals experienced similar health patterns during life, notably an absence of malnutrition and infectious disease but exposure to physical activity and possible violence.

Tomb EA 150 (CB Type 5b). This tomb, located east of the primary mortuary sector (see fig. 4.3), is distinct from all others at the site. Tomb EA 150 is a quadrangular mausoleum-like structure with a subterranean, rectangular chamber. Thus far, it is undoubtedly the most elaborate burial at

covered and “must have been reserved for the most powerful and wealthy individuals” at Conchopata (Isbell and Cook 2002:287). In contrast to the tombs discussed above, EA 150, which had been partially looted, contained parts of only five individuals: two young adult females, one “old” or senior female (approximately 50 years of age), one juvenile, and one child.¹⁵

In a manner similar to those in the tombs described above, females in EA 150 were afforded great prestige in burial treatment. Despite the partial looting, the females were associated with five copper tupus and other copper objects, as well as numerous exotic items such as *Spondylus* shell, gold, and great quantities of turquoise. As looters likely removed most of the gold at Conchopata, it is significant that EA 150 was one of only two locations containing gold. Like females in other tombs, the senior female in EA 150 had been covered in cinnabar.

Women in this tomb exhibit few signs of skeletal disease and no signs of trauma. The senior woman suffered from osteoarthritis in the spinal column, left hip, and both elbows and showed premortem tooth loss of all posterior teeth, a condition that may have resulted from numerous large carious lesions and/or periodontal disease (common among individuals who survive into “old age”). No posterior teeth were recovered from the other individuals, so carious lesion frequency cannot be compared to that of other tomb populations.

Tombs EA 88, EA 147, and EA 154 (CB Type 8). All three of these tombs belong to the category known as a “bench burial.” To date, this grave type has always been found in the southern half of rectangular enclosures and appears to have been reserved solely for infants and children. We have analyzed seventeen interments—ten infants and seven children—from three bench burials in rooms EA 88, EA 147, and EA 154 (see fig. 4.3 for their locations). Among the twelve intact infant/children, eight had inverted ceramic bowls placed on their heads, similar to the treatment of pregnant and senior female burials from EA 105. Of the eight bowls, one had no decoration, five were Huamanga-style bowls with geometric designs, and two were quite elaborate, with molded anthropomorphic or feline heads on their exteriors, similar to the feline jar from EA 105. Other parallels between infants in the bench burials and the females in EA 105 and EA 31 include the presence of miniature ceramic vessels, copper tupus, and cinnabar-covered bones. Unique items placed in bench burials included a ceramic whistle with an anthropomorphic face, four copper bells, and two shell plaques with drilled holes. Overall, the inclusion of these fancy

and exotic goods suggests that the infants and children in bench burials probably were the offspring of local elite women.

Mortuary Treatment and Status. To summarize, data from EA 105, EA 31, and EA 150 indicate that in general elite women at Conchopata can be identified by their placement in elaborate stone mortuary structures (CB Types 4 and 5b), where they are accompanied by high-status and exotic goods such as Wari blackware face-neck jars, miniature vessels, copper tupus, *Spondylus* shell, and turquoise.¹⁶ Yet within the elite stratum, some variability existed, as evidenced by the women in EA 150; those individuals were placed in a unique kind of structure, had better skeletal health (less osteoarthritis and exposure to violence), and were accompanied by more turquoise, *Spondylus* shell, and gold. Some of the infants and children—likely the offspring of elite women—were placed in bench burials with burial accoutrements similar to those interred with women. While wealth accumulation and display may have been related to a woman’s place (or her mourner’s place) in the social hierarchy, it also may have expressed achieved female prestige and leadership within the community.

Comparative data suggest that the creation of the intermediate-elite class at Conchopata was built upon an existing system. Mortuary practices and the use and inclusion of certain objects with females likely were adopted from elite practices at the capital of Huari. For example, elite women at Huari were buried with tupus, gold, and *Spondylus* shell.¹⁷ High status women at Conchopata may have adopted these material forms as an elite expression to exaggerate inequality within their own community. At the same time, by reproducing these behaviors they may have reified Wari class differences. In this regard, it appears that local elite women at Conchopata did not deviate greatly from their counterparts at Huari.

Ritual Killing of Urns and Trophy Heads

Rituals of power at Conchopata demonstrate the emergence of an elite ideology unlike that known from any other Wari site. Excavations at Conchopata have uncovered classic examples of Wari feasting wares (Cook and Glowacki 2003). These large, beautifully made vessels probably served as centerpieces in state-sponsored feasts focusing on the conspicuous consumption of food and drink. Powerful visual imagery and elaborate iconography on the vessels suggest that Wari feasts also may have served as an arena for ritual battles, competitive games, and rituals of death and regeneration.

By the middle of the seventh to eighth centuries A.D., a novel activity had developed at Conchopata that included the ritual “killing” of oversized ceramic urns and the display, dismemberment, and destruction of human trophy heads and hands within circular or D-shaped structures. The evidence for these ceremonies indicates the presence of new elite activities that may have led to the expansion of existing socio-structural boundaries.

The ritual use of trophy heads and notions of sacrifice and regeneration have historical precedents. At the Late Formative site of Wichqana in Ayacucho, five decapitated heads were recovered from holes in the ground of “a strange building with cobbles arranged in a semi-circle” (Lumbreras 1981:172). Although they were not transformed into trophy heads like the Conchopata specimens, they were severed when soft tissue was still attached, as indicated by the presence of articulated cervical vertebrae and mandibles. According to Luis Lumbreras, they represent early examples of the “trophy head cult” that is well documented in the Nasca region (Lumbreras 1981:173; also see Proulx 2001; Silverman and Proulx 2002; Verano 1995). Thus, the preparation and use of Wari trophy heads probably were founded upon more widespread, ancient practices connected to household rituals (Cook 2001) but were uniquely recast in a new hegemonic mode by ritual elites from Conchopata.

The ritual architecture and architectural contexts at Conchopata and Huari are similar; both have D-shaped structures (fig. 4.5) that are associated with disembodied or decapitated heads, either in human or ceramic form. In particular, the Mongachayoq sector at Huari contains a large D-shaped plaza, subterranean galleries (Bragayrac D. 1991), and a monolithic anthropomorphic sculpture that was decapitated (Francisco Solano, pers. comm., as cited in Bragayrac D. 1991). In the Cheqo Wasi sector at Huari, a smaller D-shaped structure has five semisubterranean chambers, three of which contained human remains (Benavides C. 1991). One of those three contained seven skulls (Benavides C. 1991), but these were apparently not transformed into trophy heads. Finally, in the Vegachayoq Moqo area at Huari, small-scale excavations within the D-shaped space revealed no cultural material, yet smashed pottery was found in the area immediately surrounding the D-shaped room; one of the items was a ceramic figurine of a human head with a portion “deliberately” chipped off (Bragayrac D. 1991:79).¹⁸

Prior to excavation at Conchopata, Cook’s (2001) iconographic analysis of ritually smashed urns from Huari led her to hypothesize that human



Figure 4.5

D-shaped structure at the capital site of Huari.

sacrifice and activities featuring trophy heads occurred within D-shaped structures. Excavations in the three D-shaped and two circular structures at Conchopata (Isbell and Cook 2002; Ochatoma and Cabrera 2002; Pozzi-Escot B. 1991) support Cook’s hypothesis, and current analysis of those remains reveals a temporal pattern in ritual behaviors. Smashed ceramic offerings and/or trophy heads have been recovered from three ritual buildings. A circular structure within EA 100 (see fig. 4.3) contained large sherds from beautifully decorated, oversized ceramic urns that were ritually smashed and buried. A radiocarbon assay dates the uppermost stratum of EA 100 to A.D. 658–890 (calibrated at 2-sigma; Beta-133546) (Ketteman 2002). Thus, the smashed ceramics sealed below this top level likely predate the eighth century A.D. A generally contemporaneous circular structure, EA 143, contained twenty-one discrete piles of smashed and burned human trophy heads, all deposited in the southeast quadrant of the structure. No ceramics were recovered in association with the trophy heads. The third ritual structure, EA 72, is a D-shaped building with ritually smashed oversized ceramic urns and shattered, burned human trophy heads (Ochatoma and Cabrera 2002). Radiocarbon samples (see table 4.1) date this structure’s use to after the eighth to tenth century A.D. (Ketteman 2002). These data suggest that during the early Wari period (prior to A.D. 650–800), elites at Conchopata performed sacred practices in circular structures that involved either the destruction of oversized urns or human trophy heads, but not both. After A.D. 700–900, ritual special-

Table 4.1
Summary of circular and D-shaped architectural spaces with ritual offerings

Architectural space	Form	Date	Offering type
EA 100	circular	pre-A.D. 650–800 ^a	smashed oversized ceramic urns
EA 143	circular	pre-A.D. 650–800 ^b	smashed, burned human trophy heads
EA 72	D-shaped	post-A.D. 700–900 ^b	smashed oversized ceramic urns and smashed, burned human trophy heads

^aBased on radiocarbon dates from inside the building.

^bBased on stratigraphy and radiocarbon dates from surrounding rooms.

ists integrated these two components—destruction of ceramic urns and human trophy heads—within a distinctive D-shaped structure.

Analysis of human remains found in ritual structures provides additional data on the ritual use of body parts. At least thirty-one human trophy heads were recovered from the two ritual structures described above: EA 143 contained twenty-one trophy heads, and EA 72 contained ten. Burned trophy head fragments from seventeen adults and four children were piled into discrete clusters on the floor. Among the seventeen adults, there were seven males, four possible males, and two possible females (four were of unknown sex). The ten trophy heads in the D-shaped building (EA 72) represent seven adults and three children, all of which were burned and scattered on the floor. The seven adult trophy heads represent three males, one possible female, and three unsexed adults. Among the total seventeen individuals whose sex could be determined, adult males and possible males constitute 82 percent ($n = 14$), similar to what has been reported for trophy heads from the site of Cerro Carapo in the Nasca region (Browne et al. 1993; Verano 1995).¹⁹

Conchopata trophy heads are distinct from Nasca trophy heads. The latter exhibit a hole on the anterior portion of the frontal bone, while Conchopata trophy heads have a drilled hole on the top of the cranium at bregma (the point where the sagittal and coronal sutures intersect) and one or more holes on the nuchal crest of the occipital bone, the posterior part of the skull (Tung 2003a). A hole at bregma would facilitate hanging



Figure 4.6

Ceramic urn fragment showing a Conchopata warrior wearing a trophy head around the neck (drawn by José Ochatoma).

for display, probably in the manner depicted on a Conchopata urn fragment (fig. 4.6) recovered from the D-shaped structure, on which a high-status warriorlike individual is depicted wearing a trophy head around his neck (Ochatoma and Cabrera 2002).

The presence of a large percentage of child trophy heads is unique to Conchopata, and their presence may be evidence for child sacrifice. Twenty-three percent of the Conchopata trophy heads were children (seven out of thirty-one), and of these, six were from children 3–6 years old (the seventh child was of unknown age). Children from this age group typically comprise a very small percentage of archaeological burial populations, making it unlikely that these individuals died of natural causes.

The elaborate and standardized preparation of the trophy heads sug-

gests that an exclusive, skilled class of persons was responsible for this task. Perimortem cut marks on many of the adult and child trophy heads indicate that the body was dismembered while it was still fresh or while soft tissue was present. Cut marks on 75 percent of the mandibles (on the posterior edge of the ramus, or back of the jaw) suggest that mandibles were disarticulated from the cranium. This particular act was not the cause of death but part of the postmortem ritual process. Death may have been imposed by some other means, such as decapitation; however, heads could have been decapitated from the body sometime after death. (There is no way to distinguish between the two scenarios.) In either case, disembodied heads were taken and transformed into trophy heads in what was surely a complex ritual that required skill as well as knowledge of human anatomy. The ritual specialist would have had to cut muscles and other soft tissue of the neck and skull and drill a hole at bregma and on the occipital without damaging the surrounding bone. Moreover, given the standardization of the trophy heads, we argue that an exclusive class of ritual specialists was required to transform these bodies into sacred objects. We do not know if this process was devised by capital elites or local elites; however, local variation could be one way in which Conchopata's leaders challenged the authority of Huari. Eventually, all trophy heads were burned, smashed, and deposited on the floor of the ritual structures. This final act could have been part of the Wari ritual program or an act against that program reflecting local agency against this practice.

Intermediate-Elite Life- and Death-ways at Conchopata

Site similarities between Conchopata and Huari suggest the presence of an intermediate-elite class at the Wari site of Conchopata during the Middle Horizon. Elaborate burial vaults and cist tombs at the capital appear to have served as templates for tombs at Conchopata. Although local elite tombs at Conchopata did not attain the size and grandeur of those at Huari, they do recall styles employed at the capital. Similarities in grave goods—especially objects associated with females—indicate that social status was actively demonstrated through displays of material wealth. Such similarities may reflect set mortuary standards within the Wari empire and state control over important aspects of mortuary practice.

The high quality of the Conchopata data allows us to examine intimate details of local elite lifeways. Far from being members of a “leisure class,”

both male and female elites led physically active lives. Biological sex did not play a significant role in terms of physical activity load or exposure to violent interactions, though the social context in which violence occurred may have differed between men and women (see Tung 2003b). Analysis of the data also provides some insight into possible internal rankings of intermediate-elite women at Conchopata. The women interred in the mausoleum-like tomb (EA 150) not only were accompanied by gold and great quantities of turquoise, but also appear to have been unaffected by trauma and physical afflictions such as osteoarthritis. These women may be from the highest-ranking elite families at Conchopata.

Finally, ritual architecture and bioarchaeological evidence on the ritual processing of human trophy heads indicate differences between practices at the capital and at Conchopata. The complex act of modifying human heads into what were probably sacred objects argues for the presence of ritual specialists, who could have been cooperating or competing with leaders at the capital. On the one hand, architectural evidence, including the presence of D-shaped buildings at both sites, is indicative of shared ritual practices. On the other hand, elite practitioners at Conchopata conducted unique rituals within these sacred spaces, perhaps as a way to ostensibly display their ritual prowess and potential for power. To date, Conchopata is the only Wari site showing such clear evidence for the display and destruction of oversized urns and trophy heads, yet this practice was not a Wari invention. While the cult of trophy heads is deeply rooted in Andean prehistory, elite ritual specialists at Conchopata—either as a well-integrated or a somewhat rebellious branch of the Wari state apparatus—harnessed this practice and transformed it.

Data from Conchopata illuminate the complex nature of one of the first expansive empires in South America and allow us to suggest the kinds of strategies Wari rulers may have used to incorporate intermediate elites at secondary sites. In mortuary activities, local elites may have been encouraged to or may have actively sought to copy the burial practices of elites at Huari. In the ritual sphere, elite specialists may have sought to push the limits of social boundaries by introducing novel behaviors. Potentially, Wari rulers may have tolerated diversity in ritual practices if they considered that they still exercised ultimate control over local decision making. Alternatively, these ritual acts could reflect tensions between local and capital elites. Innovative rituals initiated by elites at Conchopata would have contributed to changing social praxis and could have helped define

a local ritual space over which imperial leaders had limited influence. In the future, we hope additional data from Huari and Conchopata will allow researchers to continue to evaluate the precise nature of interactions between capital and local elites.

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Notes

1. We use the term "Wari" to refer to the cultural group and the term "Huari" to refer to the capital city.
2. The proposition that Conchopata was a palace with a royal male is difficult to test because the area identified as the royal tomb (EA 110) was badly looted and few diagnostic human bones or high-status goods have been recovered from this area (see Isbell 2001).
3. The burial typology created by Isbell and Cook (2002) forms the foundation for our analysis, but we also document two more tomb types and clarify the chronology of the tombs.
4. These burials were rescued by Isbell and colleagues in a 1977 salvage excavation, and Cook relocated them after they had been hidden away by conscientious INC-Ayacucho museum staff during the years of bombing by the Shining Path. Tung analyzed the human remains twenty-four years after their excavation, and in that time some bone degradation had occurred, but basic osteological observations were still made.
5. The inferred iron-deficiency anemia may have been the result of poor nutrition, some infectious disease that robbed their bodies of iron, or both. The two affected were the young adult females, one of whom also displayed linear enamel hypoplasia, a pathological lesion on the dentition indicative of physiological stress during formative years (see Goodman and Rose 1990; Kelley and Larsen 1991).
6. CB Types 1, 2, 3, 4, 5a, and 5b (Isbell and Cook 2002); we add CB Type 8 (bench burials); and Type X as described by Lumbreras (1981).
7. Tomb X is unique in that the individual was placed in an extended, rather than a flexed, burial (Lumbreras 1981).
8. Although the sex distribution is not symmetrical, the age-at-death profile shows a nearly equal distribution of juveniles and adults: 49 percent are infants and children under 15 years of age, and 51 percent are individuals over age 15 ($N = 242$) (Tung 2003b).

9. Turquoise is sometimes referred to as "semiprecious greenstone" in other studies of Wari artifacts.

10. Individuals 3 and 4 both displayed healed foot fractures, and the adolescent (Individual 8) exhibited a healed break on a hand phalanx. The unsexed adult (Individual 5), who also had spinal arthritis, displayed a healed rib fracture on the vertebral end (near where the rib articulates with the spine), so the two pathologies may be related. That is, the rib fracture may have initiated the degenerative joint disease of the spine.

11. Three females, the male, and the unsexed adult all showed carious lesions.

12. Among the two adults with well-preserved crania, none showed cribra orbitalia or porotic hyperostosis (lesions indicative of iron deficiency anemia). No well-preserved adult teeth were recovered to calculate the frequency of dental caries.

13. The left humerus was not present, so no pathological observations could be made to determine whether the arthritis was bilateral.

14. One infant with a well-preserved cranium showed no cribra orbitalia, porotic hyperostosis, or any other pathological lesions.

15. Although Isbell has hypothesized that a "curaca (lord) or nobleman with 100 wives" was interred in this type of high-status tomb, no adult male was present. Because the tomb was looted, Isbell has suggested that the nobleman may have been removed or disturbed by looters (pers. comm. 2002).

16. How these decorative items were obtained is unknown. They may have been received as gifts or heirloom pieces, or women may have been involved in extensive trade networks.

17. Although copper, gold, and *Spodilyus* shell were present in tombs at the site of Huari, it is not always clear with whom the objects were associated.

18. The absence of cultural material in the D-shaped room could be attributed to sweeping the ritual spaces after each ceremony. If so, this still differs from the practice at Conchopata, where ritual remains were ceremoniously buried.

19. Among the seventeen Conchopata trophy heads for which gender could be determined, fourteen were identified as male or possible male.