

The presented project is a continuation of a long term investigation conducted in Cusco by the Centre for Precolumbian Studies at the University of Warsaw and the Centre for Andean Studies at the University of Warsaw set up in 2008 in cooperation with the local partner Dirección Desconcentrada de Cultura – Cusco (Decentralised Management of Culture in Cusco – earlier called Instituto Nacional de Cultura – Cusco) and especially in collaboration with the department of this institution Parque Nacional Santuario Histórico de Machu Picchu (The National Park of the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu) covering an area of 32 592 hectares located in the valley the Vilcanota–Urubamba river in the region of Cusco, province of Urubamba (Peru) . Its central part is a well-known residential, agricultural and ceremonial complex of Machu Picchu listed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Machu Picchu is covered by the complicated road network with numerous (ca. 60) archaeological sites, which performed different functions, including agricultural and ceremonial ones.

Understanding what Machu Picchu was itself, what functions it performed and how it developed is mostly dependent on the research of its relation at least with the most important satellite complexes. Three sites were appointed for joint research in agreement with the Park Official Management.

Inkaraqay/El Mirador. The site or more precisely one ceremonial structure with a specific function is situated on the north, quite steep, slopes of Huayna Picchu mountain. It also lies on the left bank of the Vicanota River around 200 m. above its bed. The research from 2013 and 2014 indicated that El Mirador/Incaracay was a very precisely planned astronomic observatory, which permitted the observation of the rising sun and the Pleiades' cluster. The stars might have been observed against the background of the nearby Yanantin mountain, which was most probably performed for calendar or fortunetelling functions. The object of the project research will be archaeological recognition of the structure's closest surrounding. The aim of the above is the full understanding of its ceremonial function and the preparation of a conservation report.

Chachabamba. The site is situated on the left bank of the Vilcanota river within the Machu Picchu Park limits. It is connected with Machu Picchu city by the Inca trail running across the Wiñaywayna site and, what is most probable, with another trail running along the bottom of the valley, more or less in the same fashion as the present railway. The site was divided into three sectors the total area of which is 19075,63 m². Its central part is partly tooled granite rock and the architectonic structures were mounted around it. The rock, most probably, might have had the status of the so called “huaca”, which means “cult object”. The “huaca” is clearly oriented at Salcantay, one of the most important sacred Inca mountains (called “Apu” – The Lord). The presence of 14 “baños” (ritual baths) supplied with water by a complicated canal systems is a very interesting trait of this complex. Recognizing the “baños” functions is the object of a separate research project. However, the main research works described in this project will be focused on the aforementioned rock and the buildings nearby.

Mt. Salcantay lakes. The third area of studies are the lakes situated at the foot of the glacier covering Mt. Salcantay, one of the sacred mountains of the Incas. The lakes were connected with Machu Picchu by a trail network. The object of the research, including underwater archaeology research, will be answering the question whether the lakes were the site of sacrificial oblations for the sacred mountain.