

Wari Empire (AD 650-1050) – an ancient polity that most scholars classify as a first pre-Columbian empire – had a decisive role in the most important political, administrative, economic, and ideological revolution in the prehistory of the Central Andes. This shift was reflected in the cult of ancestors, funeral patterns, architecture, art, and social organization, as well as the state government. The impact of new social and religious paradigms gave the corporal ancestors a very special status. In the pre-Columbian illiterate world, noble genealogies served as history, thus far exceeding typical social roles of ancestors in economic production and overall community well-being. However, the most vital potential of the complexity of the ancestor worship that is inferred to have been practiced by the ancient Wari remains unexploited due to scarcity of intact archaeological contexts which would allow to examine material relationships between the living, the dead and the environment. CHULLPA (the Aymara word for mummy, grave, burial tower) is a multidisciplinary project aimed at the study of these phenomena using the unique data gathered during archival and new archaeological investigation in one of the most important regions for understanding the Wari: Peruvian north-central coasts and its key regional center: Castillo de Huarney. Combining methods of inquiry used in different scientific disciplines to obtain a multifaceted, cross-disciplinary perspective, CHULLPA will contribute to our understanding of macro-historical processes, as well as the perception of social memory, time, and the role of corporal ancestors' identities in status, ethnicity, and gender of the Wari Empire.