



BOOK REVIEW

Wari: Lords of the Ancient Andes by Susan E. Bergh et al. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2012. 304 pp. \$60 (hardcover). ISBN 978-0500516560.

Virtually everyone has heard of the Inca Empire, centered in Cuzco, Peru, and some are at least vaguely familiar with Bolivia and Peru's earlier Tiwanaku (Tiahuanaco) culture. Few, on the other hand, have heard of Tiwanaku's powerful contemporary, the Wari, centered in Ayacucho, Peru (circa A.D. 500–1300). This important volume is the only major and comprehensive work on these people of which I am aware, and was issued in connection with a Cleveland Museum of Art–organized traveling exhibition (the Museum of Art Fort Lauderdale, the Kimball Art Museum in Fort Worth) of Wari portable material culture. It should correct, to a significant degree, widespread ignorance of the Wari. The culture's history and the minimal history of its investigation receives attention, as do its beliefs, deities (especially staff gods), rituals, feasting, and built-environment (the latter architecturally far less spectacular than that of Tiwanaku or the Inca, perhaps accounting for the Wari's low profile in contemporary awareness). There follow lavishly illustrated chapters on decorated ceramics (including effigy vessels), textiles, featherwork, metal and inlaid objects, figurines, and wooden containers. Some of these esthetics will appeal strongly to Western tastes. Some of the textile designs, although highly disciplined, have an almost modernistic, abstract look.

I find the tie-dyed textiles to be of particular interest, because tie-dyeing, especially that involving lines of dot-in-square motifs, is shared with parts of the Old World, especially in southern Asia, as well as with greater Mesoamerica, and is associated with religious and/or political authority. Tie-dye dates to well before the Christian Era in Peru. Intriguingly, many Wari tie-dyed cloths are constructed in patchwork arrangements. In Java, (non-tie-dyed) patchwork garments were worn by priests and rulers for protection. I have suggested transpacific importation of the method from Southeast Asia to South America, although a reverse direction of diffusion is also conceivable (Jett 1999).

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Note: This review will also appear in *Pre-Columbiana: A Journal of Long-Distance Contacts*.

Reference

Jett, S. C. (1999). Resist-dyeing: A possible ancient transoceanic transfer. *NEARA Journal*, 33(1), 41–55. Pembroke, NH: New England Antiquities Research Association.