



Cerro de las Monjas, Marcahuamachuco, Peru. Photo by GHF

Marcahuamachuco, Peru

Pre-Inca City of the Dead

Site Significance

During the Andean Early Middle Horizon (300–700 A.D.) a regional highland state starts emerging, having as one of its main principal locations the extended monumental site of Marcahuamachuco in the northern highlands of Peru. Archaeological evidence shows increased articulation of Huamachuco culture to the neighboring northern (Cajamarca) and southern highlands (Conchucos and Callejón de Huaylas), and to some extent to the Pacific Coast (with the Moche tradition).

During the later Middle (700–900 A.D.) and into the Intermediate Late Horizons (until around 1200 A.D.), archaeological evidence suggests that the walls were used for human burials contributing to the ceremonial functions of the site. Marcahuamachuco became a prominent center at the same time that the Wari culture in southern Peru flourished (400–1100 A.D.). Abandonment of Marcahuamachuco was possibly in the 15th century.

Built on top of an isolated plateau 5 kilometers long and 500 meters wide with a vast view of

its surroundings, Marcahuamachuco contains several major compounds surrounded by curved stone walls as high as 12 meters, with inner galleries, rooms and plazas which suggest administrative and ceremonial functions.

Project Goals

Global Heritage Fund is working with the Unidad Ejecutivo Marcahuamachuco (UEM) to prepare a program of planning, conservation and community development to enable long-term site sustainability.

Preservation by Design®

Planning

There is an urgent need to systematically retrieve, digitize and organize information from past publications and graphic material, a good deal of which is not available in Peru. This will be a first component where the GHF project can strengthen and support the work of UEM. This process has already been initiated with a visit to the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at University of California,



Threats

Vegetation overgrowth, Natural disaster

Start Date

2011

Berkeley, to examine the records of Max Uhle which are archived there.

Based on the available information and that to be collected in the field, as well as up-to-date data on the state of conservation and endangerment of the site, GHF in cooperation with UEM will input into the master conservation process and development of a scientific conservation plan detailing conservation technology and techniques needed and retrieving all available information to support key archaeological documentation of the site.

Global Heritage Network (GHN) will serve as the online database platform for site- and project documentation and presentation.

Conservation Science

GHF will implement a joint program with UEM for the conservation of one of the major monumental compounds in the Marcahuamachuco complex (Las Monjas). This model conservation program of one of the most significant compounds will provide the technical skills and roadmap for gradually improving the scientific conservation of the numerous remaining monuments on the site (approximately 19) and surrounding stonewall of the site over the next five years. GHF will sponsor a core group of archaeologists, conservators and engineers and provide scientific support for state of the art mapping of the site.

With the participation of the UEM archaeologists, a research program in support of the conservation program will be conducted in order to better understand the Marcahuamachuco stone walls' construction techniques and conduct a comprehensive analysis of and report on the nature of vegetation within the compounds, including a recommendation of which of the most damaging plants can be safely removed from at-risk areas.

The project will also conduct analysis of existing mortars and research into original engineering principles for stone wall construction, including wooden elements. This will include on-site testing of materials suitable for conservation use, ideally closely resembling the historic materials while, at the same time, being clearly identifiable to the expert observer as new and conservation intervention materials.

Community

At the same time the UEM has considered the need for a community engagement and sustainable development program in which site neighbors as well as residents of Huamachuco town and surrounding rural villages can benefit from the Marcahuamachuco conservation program. Increased numbers of visitors may well open opportunities for visitor's services (lodging, food, crafts) to be provided by locals.

GHF will contribute with additional, locally hired professional expertise on community

engagement through participatory processes to identify and implement activities through which the local communities can find ways to learn about the site and its proper care, establish the cultural and historical links between their heritage and their contemporary rural cultures, and target strategies to generate income opportunities through increased visitation. Activities will include development of a Guides Association and Community-based Tourism Association, promotion of traditional craft development, training in English, development of lodging alternatives and regional attractions encouraging longer stays in the region.

Project Partnerships

GHF and the Patronato Cultural del Perú (Peru Heritage Trust) have jointly started launching a co-funding campaign targeting the Peruvian private sector, particularly the mining companies in the area, as well as Peruvian and foreign corporations from the cities of Trujillo, Lima and abroad. Two institutional members of PCP, the private Fundación Wiese (with a long standing tradition of funding conservation of pre-hispanic heritage sites) and the British Peruvian Cultural Association, have already offered their support in this campaign.



Tourists at Marcahuamachuco. Photo by GHF



Invasive vegetation on site structure. Photo by GHF

The site of Marcahuamachuco was a major regional center in the Andean Early Middle Horizon period (300–700A.D.).



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