



Article

Domestic architecture and the materiality of public-making in pre-Columbian Eastern Peru

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Abstract

Understanding how publics were constituted in specific socio-historical settings is critical to understanding political practice in past societies. Yet the persistent use of terms such as “public space” and “public architecture” belies the influence of binary models of public and private life that still impact understandings of domestic life and residential architecture. I argue that the continued influence of these models results from the notion that publics in pre-industrial societies were produced primarily through large gatherings associated with standardized kinds of places such as plazas and monuments. This paper, in contrast, takes advantage of the exceptionally well-preserved site complex of Tambillo in Eastern Peru in order to explore how the material qualities of architecture, rather than its spatial layout, mediate the production of publics. I consider how three different modes of engagement with domestic architecture in particular—construction, discourse, and affiliation—generated multiple, diverse publics among the communities of Tambillo. This example demonstrates the variety of ways in which built environments create publics and underscores the need to acknowledge the role of domestic architecture within a broader ecology of the built environment as a whole.

Keywords

Public architecture, built environment, domestic architecture, materiality, Andes

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Terminology of “public space” and “public architecture” is central to many archaeological interpretations of the built environment. It is surprising, then, that the theoretical underpinnings of these terms have received so little scholarly attention, especially since critiques of the distinction between “public” and “private” spheres are now widely accepted. More than a mere curiosity, though, the continued use of these terms generates subtle but problematic effects. The notion that certain kinds of places qualify as “public space” while others do not distorts archaeological understandings of the production of space, while simultaneously restricting the kinds of people assumed to have formed publics and taken part in political practice.

This paper examines why this long-deconstructed public/private binary still continues to influence archaeological interpretation in subtle ways. I argue that it is essential to address the full variety of material processes that contributed to the formation of publics in the past, looking beyond exclusively spatial processes that were premised on the phenomenological capacity of built environments to structure the movement of bodies. The paper focuses on two datasets that have traditionally dominated studies of public and private life in past societies: architecture in general, and domestic architecture specifically, which has commonly functioned in archaeological interpretations as a firewall between “public” and “private” space.

I approach these questions from the perspective of the Chachapoyas region in eastern Peru, where distinctions between public and domestic architecture fail to make sense of these built environments. Like much of the Andean highlands during the Late Intermediate Period (1000–1450CE), Chachapoyas was characterized by large settlements that were urban-like in their density and scale but lacked standard types of public architecture common throughout the ancient Andes, such as large central plazas and monumental ceremonial structures (Guengerich, 2015; Schjellerup, 1997). Some researchers, trying to make sense of this puzzling state of affairs, have proposed that alternative kinds of structures, such as perimeter walls and corporate tombs, should be understood as “public architecture” in these contexts (e.g. Covey, 2008; Parsons et al., 2000: 150–155). Yet in Chachapoyas, the monumental character of domestic architecture further complicates this perspective: not only was clear-cut “public architecture” usually absent at residential sites, but much of the architectural energy of these societies was apparently re-directed to houses—a space that has traditionally been understood as the “private space” *par excellence*.

The archaeological complex of Tambillo, with hundreds of extraordinarily preserved stone houses, provides an ideal context in which to examine how the material qualities of domestic architecture contributed to the emergence of public collectivities among a set of clustered residential sites. This paper explores three material attributes of houses: their complex engineering, their elaborate and visually prominent façades, and their formal resemblances to ceremonial architecture. Through processes that I denote *construction*, *discourse*, and *affiliation*, these different attributes facilitated the production of diverse social assemblages at Tambillo. A focus on the materiality of domestic architecture makes it possible

to discern multiple modes through which houses participated in this process, and multiple publics that resulted, opening up space to recognize political practice by actors who would remain less visible within a traditional focus on “public architecture.”

The problem of public and private “space”

Following recent theoretical interest in the concept of the assemblage (cf. De Landa, 2006; Latour, 2005), a number of archaeological works have examined the nature of publics and the mechanics of their formation among past societies (e.g. Bauer and Kosiba, 2016; Inomata et al., 2015; Smith, 2015). In their methodological focus on how social collectivities emerge from disparate sets of human (and non-human) actors, these works also overlap with recent studies of communities as contingent formations constructed through practice (Gerritsen, 2004; Mac Sweeney, 2011; Yaeger and Canuto, 2000). As these authors point out, however, the notion of *the public* differs from that of the *community* in denoting an assemblage that subsumes and produces social difference, rather than integration. In other words, the notion of the public remains intimately tied to that of the *political*, reflecting a long tradition in Western intellectual history (Weintraub, 1997; e.g. Arendt, 1958; Dewey, 1954[1927]). In this paper, the “public” is accordingly defined as a self-recognizing collectivity that enables its participants to effect political action. From this perspective, understanding how publics were assembled in the past is therefore essential to understanding how power relations were constructed.

These recent, theoretically driven approaches to the public, however, differ from most usages of this term in archaeological literature, in which it usually appears in adjective form—“public space,” “public practice,” “public life”—and is not explicitly defined. Given the complex and intertwined genealogies of this term in Western thought and in popular usage, this underspecification can inadvertently conflate different assumptions and has perpetuated problematic interpretive practices. In particular, late 20th century feminist and household scholars attacked the paradigm of “public vs. private space” and of related binaries that negatively impacted representations of gender and domestic life in the past—e.g. male/female, production/consumption, active/passive, ritual/quotidian, and so on (Allison, 1999; Gero and Conkey, 1991; Hendon, 1996; Robin, 2002; Spencer-Wood, 1999). As they make clear, the relationship of public and private domains is historically constructed and therefore contextually variable; nor do these domains necessarily represent poles of a single spectrum.

Although these efforts have led to a general shift in archaeological terminology from “private sphere” to “domestic space,” many scholars contend that these advances have not succeeded in fully overturning earlier representations of public and private as inherently different domains of space and social practice (Allison, 2007; Robin, 2002; Wynne-Jones, 2013). The negative impact of this model is especially visible in domestic contexts, which continue to be represented as largely apolitical—that is, as non-*public*—places (Bowser and Patton, 2004;

Brumfiel, 2007; De Lucia and Overholzer, 2014). Houses themselves are most frequently interpreted as vectors of social *re*-production (e.g. Blanton, 1994), whereas communal and monumental architecture are regularly portrayed as sites of the active production of power relations (Love, 2013; Lyons, 2007). The frequent use of the term “*public* architecture”—despite the general disappearance of the term “*private* space”—belies the pervasive, albeit now-implicit, influence of binary models.

I suggest that the persistence of these interpretive regimes stems from the broader archaeological tendency to use “private” and “public” to refer not simply to different domains of social life, but to particular types of *spaces* with which they are thought to be associated. As Stephanie Wynne-Jones (2013: 14) argues, these terms usually function in archaeological analyses as “categories of space” rather than “categories of social practice.” Obviously, particular qualities of spaces certainly do promote particular embodied practices that are especially conducive to the formation of publics. Yet in practice, the term “public space” generally functions for archaeologists as a shorthand to denote a limited set of commonly recognized architectural forms, such as monuments, plazas, and ceremonial structures (cf. Dillehay, 1992).

Underlying this view of “public space” is the premise that “co-present” (cf. Goffman, 1963) gatherings of substantial scale represent the principal mechanism in the production of publics. From this perspective, these publics are indexed archaeologically in architectural constructions that either result from, or accommodate, assemblies of large numbers of individuals (e.g. Inomata and Coben, 2006; Inomata et al., 2015; Moore, 1996). Since houses are usually not associated with gatherings of significant scale, they are not generally studied as political places that promote the formation of publics. In fact, most archaeological efforts to deconstruct the public/private binary make use of this spatial model by identifying a mismatch between a kind of space (a *private* residence) and a domain of practice (*public* gatherings that take place there) (e.g. Hutson and Terry, 2006; Inomata et al., 2002; Wynne-Jones, 2013).

Models of public-making based on constructions of scale hold an obvious appeal for archaeological interpretation, since the spatial organization of the built environment often represents a principal dataset, especially in areas of reduced architectural preservation. But they fail to capture the full complexity of either spatial or political practice. The idea that particular spaces are correlated isomorphically with particular domains of social practice runs up against the reality of space as socially constructed, multiplex, and subject-dependent (cf. de Certeau, 1984; Robin, 2002). The non-binary, complex spatiality of public practice is amply demonstrated in ethnographic studies, even among societies in which public and private do form normatively recognized domains of practice. George Chauncey (1996), for example, examines how gay men in early 20th century New York relied on busy, anonymous “public spaces” such as parks as one of few locales that allowed for intimate same-sex relations. Alternately, Gabriele vom Bruck (1997) explores the ways in which upper-class homes of modern Yemen

alternately functioned as venues of public gathering and familial intimacy, generating gendered, situationally fluid, and bodily oriented public and “private” (*haram*) spaces. In both situations, the character of space should be understood as subject-dependent, and as a result, it would be virtually impossible to archaeologically discern discrete “activity areas” associated exclusively with public or private domains of practice.

Despite the overwhelming emphasis on co-present gatherings of scale in studies of the formation of publics, a number of archaeologists have examined situations in which this process operated through alternate forms of engagement with spaces and objects. Much of this scholarship is conceptually affiliated with works on “imagined communities” (cf. Anderson, 1983), which trace how social collectivities emerge across significant spatial divides or extensions (e.g. Goldstein, 2000; Isbell, 2000; Mac Sweeney, 2011). Christina Halperin (2014), for example, examines how the circulation of figures in the Maya Ik’ polity generated what was essentially a public sphere of individuals who “participated in the conceptual making of political places” from afar, even though they did not experience these places firsthand (p. 125). Kevin Vaughn (2004) describes a similar process in the Nasca drainage of southern coastal Peru, where fineware vessels crafted by elites at the regional center of Cahuachi circulated among diverse, non-elite villages. Alternately, Ian Hodder (2006) describes how communities formed across Çatal Höyük through the repetition of mundane practices and the use of similar, quotidian items in many, separate households; and Adam T Smith (2015) identifies a similar mechanism at work in the creation of household-based publics of the Early Bronze Age Caucasus.

Although Smith is the only one of these authors who explicitly adopts a terminology of *the public*, all of these cases point to alternative approaches by which archaeologists might explore the spatiality of publics and of public practices. The following sections turn to a consideration of how the material qualities of a particular suite of objects—houses—mediated the emergence of publics among highland societies of late pre-Columbian Peru.

Built environments of late prehispanic Chachapoyas

The archaeological complex of Tambillo is located in the Chachapoyas region of northeastern Peru between the Andes Mountains and Amazon Basin. This area is characterized by high-altitude tropical forest and heavy year-round rainfall, and is known for cliff-tomb necropoli and imposing domestic architecture dating to the Andean Late Intermediate Period (1000–1450CE) (Church and von Hagen, 2008; Schjellerup, 1997). Based on ethnohistoric data, most researchers posit that the basic unit of political organization during this time was either the autonomous village, or a set of several villages associated with a principal, larger town (Schjellerup, 1997; Espinoza Soriano, 1967). Architectural (Alexandrino Ocaña and Guengerich, 2017) and mortuary evidence (Koschmieder and Gaither, 2010; Toyne and Anzellini, in press) indicate that these locally bounded groups were characterized by internal differences in status; but the absence of wealth differences

in domestic contexts suggests that status was not premised on the control of local economies (Guengerich, 2014b).

Late prehispanic settlements in Chachapoyas consisted of dense agglutinations of dozens to hundreds of circular houses that were clustered on mountain summits or strung out along ridge tops in an elongated pattern (Guengerich, 2015; Schjellerup, 1997) (Figure 1). Often described by terms such as “organic,” the majority of settlements lacked forms of integrative architecture common in the prehispanic Andes, such as streets, plazas, and monumental corporate architecture. Instead, the most salient architectural elements of built environments were elaborate, imposing, circular residential buildings (Figure 2).

A number of features distinguish domestic architecture of Chachapoyas from other regional traditions of the prehispanic Andes (Fabre, 2006; Guengerich, 2015). One of the most common was the *platform-base*, a solid foundation that elevated structures up to four meters above the ground surface, enabling them to be built on steep slopes while raising their entrances above the height of the passerby. Regional architecture was also distinguished by the use of *friezes*, mosaic-like bands of geometric patterns that were set into the exterior masonry of houses, tombs, ceremonial buildings, and occasionally terraces (Figure 3). These took the form of five motifs—zigzags, checkerboards, rhombuses, and curvilinear and geometric volutes—or combinations thereof (Alexandrino Ocaña and Guengerich, 2017; Schjellerup, 1997). Additional interior and exterior features of domestic architecture across Chachapoyas included niches, antlers affixed to the walls, plaster, murals, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic engravings, and permanent furniture such as benches and ovens (Fabre, 2006; Guengerich, 2014b; Koschmieder, 2012; Narváez, 1996; Schjellerup, 1997).

Houses were large in terms of both internal area and height. Ethnohistoric evidence combined with floor excavations suggests that most buildings were topped by

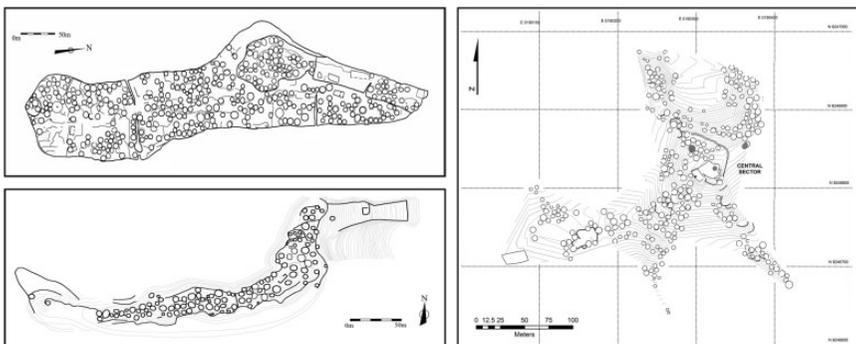


Figure 1. Plans of settlement sites in Chachapoyas: (upper left) Kuélap (adapted from Narváez, 1996), (lower left) Patrón Samana (adapted from Schjellerup, 1997), (right) Monte Viudo (special-purpose buildings in Central Sector are indicated in shading).

conical, thatch roofs that sat directly on the structure walls, without the support of a central post (Davis, 1996). According to Morgan Davis' (1996) experimentally reconstructed model, an average-sized house with a 5-m diameter, 1-m high platform-base, and 2-m high walls would have stood over 7 m high. The internal area of houses ranged from 13 to 50 m² across Chachapoyas, with the majority averaging 20–28 m², providing spacious interiors with ample room for diverse activities (Fabre, 2006; Guengerich, 2015). In light of the large size of houses and the elaborate features of many interiors, a number of scholars have proposed that they served at times as venues for semi-public gatherings (e.g. Koschmieder, 2015), as in



Figure 2. Partially reconstructed house at the ceremonial center of Kuelap in central Chachapoyas. Note “frieze” mosaic on the structure’s platform-base.



Figure 3. Variations in frieze motifs from domestic architecture at La Joya: (clockwise from upper left) zigzag, checkerboard, rhombus, and geometric volute. All buildings demonstrate fine, “type-D” masonry.

other traditions of vernacular architecture that exhibit these features (e.g. Hutson and Terry, 2006; Inomata et al., 2002; Wynne-Jones, 2013). In the Tambillo area, year-round rainfall and the lack of flat open space at many sites suggests that gatherings—ceremonial or quotidian—often took place indoors.

Tambillo, located in the Utcubamba Valley of central Chachapoyas at an altitude of 3000–3800 masl, offers an outstanding opportunity to understand the social role of domestic architecture. As with many sites in this area, the remote location and dense vegetation covering these sites has protected many buildings from collapse, and walls that still stand over 3 m in height are not unusual. The Tambillo cluster comprised a diverse array of sites, which included at least 10 residential sites that ranged from a dozen to over 400 structures; over 350 hectares of agricultural terracing; two large necropoli of cliff tombs; and numerous smaller tombs distributed in rock clefts throughout the landscape (Alexandrino Ocaña and Guengerich, 2017; Muscutt, 1998; Schjellerup, 1997; Toyne and Anzellini, in press). Each residential site was located on a distinct mountain or ridge top, and was overwhelmingly composed of circular structures. Excavation results from the site of Monte Viudo indicate that these structures comprised independent dwelling units, rather than clustered domestic compounds (Guengerich, 2014a). Recent survey recorded a total of 1,518 circular buildings across Tambillo’s residential sites; adopting an approximate figure of five to seven occupants per building, this generates an initial

estimate of 7,600–10,600 people for the entire settlement cluster, although this remains to be evaluated through dating (Alexandrino Ocaña and Guengerich, 2017). Although Monte Viudo is the only residential site presently associated with carbon dates, the period of greatest population density spanned at least 1250–1450CE (Guengerich, 2014a).

Intensive architectural analysis at the well-preserved sites of Monte Viudo and La Joya, along with survey at additional sites, offers insights on the distribution of architectural features. Within each site, and across Tambillo as a whole, the interior areas of circular structures follow a gradual, bell-shaped curve, ranging from 5 to 80 m² (with six outliers), with a single mode at 15–20 m² area (Alexandrino and Guengerich, 2017). Masonry styles span a great variety of forms, and individual attributes such as the presence of mortar or the size of stones do not co-occur in readily identifiable patterns. For heuristic purposes, however, masonry can be grouped in four broad types that resulted from varying inputs of labor: (a) minimally worked, irregularly shaped stones (see Figure 5); (b) worked stones with polygonal form; (c) worked stones with rectilinear form, laid in irregular courses; (d) finely worked stones with rectilinear form, laid in regular courses like bricks (see Figure 3). The proportions of these types vary by residential site, with bricklike-masonry (type “d”) making up between five and sixty-seven percent of the structures at different sites. Analysis of variance indicates that buildings with more labor-intensive masonry were associated with larger interior areas in a statistically significant manner (for La Joya and Monte Viudo together, $F=9.718$, $df=3$, $p < 0.001$).

Buildings with friezes never comprised more than a tiny minority at a given site, ranging from none to 3.7% of the total number of structures, with a maximum number of eight recorded at La Joya. This small number does not allow for statistical analyses, but the interior areas of buildings with friezes are roughly comparable to those without (mean areas = 21.7 and 20.7 m², respectively). Friezes are not found clustered together, but rather occur on buildings distributed throughout sites. These attributes suggest that the use of friezes was governed by social factors other than labor considerations alone. Buildings with platform-bases were associated with slightly larger interior areas than those without (mean = 23.2 and 20.4 m², respectively), but not in a statistically significant manner (for analysis of variance, $F=4.146$, $df=1$, $p=0.042$). Like masonry, the proportion of buildings with platform-bases varied considerably by residential site—comprising as few as 2% to as many as 65% of total structures. Altogether, these data indicate that the presence, absence, and degree of elaboration of various architectural features represented clear axes of social differentiation. However, with the probable exception of friezes, these attributes were not delimited in clear typological categories that governed who could build in particular manners or inhabit particular kinds of buildings.

Most of Tambillo’s residential sites also had several structures with distinctive features that probably served non-domestic purposes including communal ritual. The form of these buildings varied by site and included peripheral plazas, semi-



Figure 4. Special-purpose architecture at Tambillo: (left) rectangular structure with platform, La Joya; (right) aligned plazas on an open ridge between the residential sites of TMB6 and TMB7.

artificial circular platforms, unroofed circular and rectilinear platforms, masonry tombs, and circular buildings with two doorways (Alexandrino Ocaña and Guengerich, 2017; Guengerich, 2014b). These non-domestic, communal structures might be understood as “public architecture” in a traditional sense, yet the architectural context of their built environment suggests that their role in the production of publics was somewhat distinct. Significantly, none of Tambillo’s larger towns was organized around a central plaza. Only one site, Monte Viudo, had a walled plaza, which was located at site’s periphery adjacent to a high-status neighborhood; at 300 m², it was only large enough to have contained a limited portion of the residential population (Guengerich, 2014b). The only other plaza at Tambillo consisted of three aligned plazas, each 37 x 22 m in area, which were located on an open ridge between the settlements of TMB6 and TMB7 (Figure 4). Monumental architecture of a scale significantly larger than houses is present only at La Joya (see Figure 4). The considerable scale of houses themselves, however, complicates how we might understand the relative significance of “monumentality” in this context (Alexandrino Ocaña and Guengerich, 2017). Altogether, these attributes of Tambillo’s built environments suggest that large gatherings in elaborate, centralized locales played only a minor role in the production of publics, and that houses provide a better starting point for understanding these processes.

The materiality of public-making at Tambillo

The material qualities of domestic structures at Tambillo enabled them to mediate the production of multiple publics by means of a number of distinct processes. By *mediate*, I refer to a process in which material things participate in the creation of an assemblage that possesses the ability to effect socially significant outcomes, while these things themselves are produced as social in this process (cf. Appadurai, 2015; Latour, 2005). Since, as far as artifacts go, architecture generally

tends to be long-lasting and relatively large in scale, it often possesses an especially powerful capacity to mediate in this manner. While this definition emphasizes the role that non-human material things play in the process of mediation, it diverges from more radical New Materialist literatures, such as symmetrical archaeologies (Olsen, 2012; Webmoor and Witmore, 2008), in foregrounding the role of humans and the political consequences of human acts (cf. Appadurai, 2015). This role is especially important to acknowledge in the case of domestic and vernacular architecture, since many studies implicitly homogenize its creators and accorded them minimal agency relative to those responsible for the creation of monumental architecture (Hubka, 1979).

The materiality of architecture offers a number of directions for understanding the production of publics, complementing space-based approaches that focus primarily on how built environments structured movement in the past. Materially-driven studies of domestic architecture have, however, long taken a back seat to studies of spatial organization (e.g. Kent, 1990), perhaps inevitably in light of conditions of preservation in most settings worldwide. In recent years, however, researchers have increasingly begun to explore creative ways to model and interpret material aspects of domestic architecture, such as Mirjana Stevanovic's (1997) experimental studies of house-burning in the Balkans, and Serena Love's (2013) consideration of brick recipes and house construction as public performance at Çatal Höyük.

In the following sections, I consider three different modes in which Tambillo's stone houses mediated the production of assemblages that could be understood as publics in the sense referred to earlier. Although a case could also be made for understanding co-residential households as a kind of "public," I focus on supra-household publics due to spatial limitations and for the sake of analytical clarity. These case studies from Tambillo address not only the mechanics by which social collectivities formed, but also the political nature of processes that generated a forum in which social differences were recognized, asserted, or negotiated.

Construction

Tambillo's houses brought publics into being even as they themselves came into being. The construction of a house was a technically and socially complex process that stood at the intersection of multiple domains of practice that also constituted assemblages in their own right—including, for instance, kin networks, rules governing resource access, routes of movement across the landscape, and knowledgeable communities of practice. House construction may have had the effect of reinstating or reinforcing the power relations that inhered in these prior assemblages, but it was also a potential locus for modifying these relations over the course of bringing a new building into existence.

The scale and complexity of house construction at Tambillo brought together an extensive array of humans (architects, artisans, laborers, farmers, cooks) and non-human things (stones, straw, trees, tools, cooking pots, beer, musical instruments,

walking paths) into a relation of interaction. The construction of even the smallest houses at Tambillo required the cooperation of many individuals, certainly more than the members of the household group who would ultimately reside there. An average-sized building with a 5 m interior diameter contained 30 metric tons of limestone in its walls alone, not counting a platform-base (Guengerich, 2014b: 10). The identification of quarries indicates that stone was probably quarried on-site (Alexandrino Ocaña and Guengerich, 2017), yet it still had to be fashioned into blocks, transported to the construction site across steep and irregular terrain (in some cases several hundred meters up- or down-hill), and then assembled in situ. Logs for thatched roofs were probably felled in forests located along the lower slopes of the valley, then transported half a vertical kilometer upward to the construction site. Construction probably also required individuals with specialized skill sets, such as master architects or artisans, as in many traditions of vernacular architecture (e.g. Blier, 1987; Marchand, 2006).

The process of creating a house, however, entailed more than the extraction and arrangement of building materials. In the modern Andes, the construction of houses and roofs is a highly ritualized and festive event that encompasses many domains of material practice, providing an analogue for the social context of construction at Tambillo. In Aymara communities, each element of an adobe house is conceptually associated with particular landscapes, social roles, non-human entities, and temporal frames, such that the proper creation of a house requires an extensive series of rituals enacted at each step (Arnold, 1998). House construction also reinforces certain kinds of social bonds, particularly through the principle of *ayni*, in which those who contribute their labor to a construction project can expect to receive future labor in kind from the beneficiaries (Brush, 1977; Gose, 1991). And above all, house construction is a lively and entertaining event, which includes lavish quantities of food, alcohol, and music provided by the future occupants to those who participate (Leinaweaver, 2009; Malengreau, 2009).

Although at certain moments the construction of houses at Tambillo entailed sizeable gatherings of individuals, the spatiality of this process was more complex than these gatherings alone. For one, the social assemblages it created did not solely inhere in the finite events of construction but extended forward into the future as well. Peter Gose (1991), for instance, argues that re-roofing events in the modern, rural town of Huaquirca served as a moment for the renewal of community identity during an agricultural cycle that otherwise emphasized household autonomy. At Tambillo, principles of *ayni* at work in the process of house construction would have generated social bonds that endured until an unspecified future moment when reciprocal labor would be called for in kind. In addition to this temporal extension of the social bonds that constituted a public, the events of house construction extended spatially beyond any one construction site: they also encompassed the quarries, forests, and paths where laborers procured and transported building materials; the agricultural terraces where farmers sowed and harvested maize for feasting; the kitchens where household members or neighbors brewed the beer to fuel the festivities; and the other houses where building experts

had previously honed their skills at construction. The house, as a material entity, was the linchpin of these domains of action; it was not, however, the sole spatial locus where this public came into being.

Discourse

A second manner in which houses mediated the production of publics was the process through which their façades were perceived and prompted commentary. Builders clearly designed houses in such a way as to embody the values or identities of those who inhabited or created them. Yet, as material entities, houses intervened in the residents' perception of these claims, laying the groundwork for a public sphere of architecturally-centered discourse. Several architectural attributes support the idea that houses were discursively recognized as a form of media (in the popular sense of a material form intended to convey information) and were created with this in mind. In particular, the sheer mass of houses and the effort expended in producing elaborate, labor-intensive exteriors suggest that their visibility toward non-household members was a major goal in their design. Spatial analysis at the site of Monte Viudo further affirms that house façades were easily accessible to an unrestricted set of viewers. Access throughout the site was highly open, and there were no formal paths and few freestanding walls that would have physically limited the movement of pedestrians along certain paths or to certain destinations (Guengerich, 2014b).

The most archaeologically visible aspect of social identity that Tambillo's architects sought to convey was status. This, however, took different semiotic forms that probably contributed to a degree of flexibility in how houses were perceived. In the case of domestic as well as monumental architecture, archaeologists usually interpret labor investment as a reflection of the status of the groups with which the structure was associated (e.g. Abrams, 1989). To a considerable degree, this also took place at Tambillo. Buildings varied a good deal in their interior floor area, the quality of their masonry, the height and presence of platform-bases, and in the presence and quality of special features such as niches. The style of each of these attributes varied as a result of labor input and would inherently have indexed (*sensu* Peirce [Hobbes, 1991]) a household's status as evaluated in terms of their access to social networks necessary for construction. None of these attributes, however, can be readily grouped into clearly distinguishable categories; instead, they exhibit a fine range of gradations, as discussed previously. Households with greater access to labor networks, therefore, apparently took advantage of these social resources to build larger houses with finer masonry; in other words, they were not restricted by social norms to work solely within a particular range of discursively recognized architectural types.

A different semiotic process, however, seems to have been at work in the case of friezes, which never characterized more than a minor proportion of houses at a site. Friezes were clearly linked to status, since they only appear on structures with extremely fine masonry. Yet their limited presence at any given site suggests that

their use was specifically associated with—or perhaps only sanctioned for—households adhering to recognized identity categories. One such form of identity may have been geographical in content, perhaps reflective of kin-group origins, since different motifs were associated with different sub-regions of Chachapoyas (Schjellerup, 1997). In this sense, friezes would have operated not only indexically, but also symbolically (*sensu* Peirce).

The production of meaning through domestic architecture did not occur during its design, however, but in its subsequent apprehension and the ways in which this prompted subsequent actions. Rather than a straightforward sequence of sending and reading messages (cf. Blanton, 1994), this might better be understood as a back-and-forth process of assertion, evaluation, potential critique, and response. Whereas some claims—such as the discursively established content of frieze motifs—were relatively less subject to contestation, others—such as the highly variable style of a building’s masonry—might have been interpreted according to multiple standards of value. Houses, as material objects, thus “bundled” together (*sensu* Keane, 2000) different physical attributes and potential readings and obstructed the privileging of any single interpretation of architectural features. An especially tall platform-base, for instance, might be intended to convey inhabitants’ access to labor networks—i.e. social capital and status—but it could also be read as the last recourse of a household forced to build in a marginal, steep, and rocky periphery of a settlement, as in the case of Monte Viudo’s Structure 61 (Figure 5). Additionally, although the social composition of households undoubtedly changed over time, the stone construction and self-contained circular form of houses apparently discouraged renovation, as indicated by a total absence of evidence for architectural modification from excavations at Monte Viudo (Guengerich, 2014b). This would have opened up discrepancies between the claims asserted by the original builders of the house and the changing realities of future generations of inhabitants.



Figure 5. Structure 61 at Sector Northwest of Monte Viudo: impressive in scale, (left), but located in a less-than-desirable setting (right).

Note “Type-A” masonry.

It was precisely this quality of indeterminacy that produced a *public* of discourse and interaction, rather than simply an *audience* of disparate viewers who passively “read” these buildings. The durability of stone architecture, the resistance of its circular form, and the specificities of construction sites ensured that the interpretation of a building and of its occupants was not foreclosed at the moment of design. Although the resulting public emerged over the course of embodied and emplaced acts of apprehension, spatial organization was less critical than material affordances in this process. Gatherings may have been a part of facilitating this public discourse among individuals, but gatherings need not have been large in scale nor associated with particular settings in the built environment.

Affiliation

A final manner in which houses contributed to the production of publics at Tambillo was the way in which their form dialogued with communal architecture. Houses shared a number of features with ceremonial buildings, the most apparent of which was their circular layout. The reiteration of shared forms and features in different buildings may be understood as a “practice of affiliation”—an action that, according to Jason Yaeger (2000: 125), serves to represent “certain commonalities and affinities among individuals” and thereby establish “the community as an explicit identity with definite membership.” Houses, in this instance, assembled this kind of public through the repetition of architectural forms that also characterized places of shared value.

Although ceremonial architecture throughout Tambillo was distinguished by its diversity, a significant subset was characterized by features shared with domestic architecture. Several sites had circular platforms and special-purpose circular buildings (Alexandrino Ocaña and Guengerich, 2017). Excavations at Monte Viudo ascertained that these structures housed predominantly ritual practices (Guengerich, 2014a: 222–236). Structure 90, for instance, resembled a house in nearly all aspects, with the addition of a tenoned stone head on its exterior, a



Figure 6. Structure 90, a circular ceremonial structure at Monte Viudo, with locations of figurative images indicated. The two doorways are visible in the image on the left.

bas-relief anthropomorphic face on the interior, and two adjacent doorways located on the west side (Figure 6). Excavations in the interior, though, revealed non-domestic assemblages distinguished by burning events and the absence of lithic debris or meat consumption. A smaller circular building, Structure 93—now entirely collapsed—was associated with feasting events that entailed the consumption of camelids and the use of thin-walled orange fineware bowls, rather than the brownware jars used in domestic contexts. Structure 33, which was not excavated, consisted of a circular platform that was characterized by a stone-lined interior shaft that resembles the pits found in many house interiors in the Upper Atué and Pusac drainages (Schjellerup, 1997).

A number of attributes suggest that the formal similarities between these structures and domestic architecture were discursively recognized by the residents of Monte Viudo. For one, all of the ceremonial structures were clustered at the center of the site, where its four residential sectors converge (see Figure 1). Although it is difficult to determine whether inhabitants of each of these sectors actually participated in rituals that took place in these buildings, their central location suggests that they represented places of shared value for all neighborhoods. In addition, the use of rectilinear layouts for some constructions at Tambillo, such as cliff tombs, indicates that circular templates did not merely represent the only construction style with which local architects were familiar, but that this form was chosen intentionally for these ceremonial structures. Moreover, ethnographic evidence attests that cohesive traditions of vernacular architecture are usually associated with strongly developed oral literatures detailing their symbolism, ontology, and associated values (e.g. Arnold, 1998; Blier, 1987; Henderson and Ostler, 2005). In sum, it is likely that Monte Viudo's households were consciously aware of the resemblance between their houses and other circular structures.

For those who built, used, and dwelled in these structures, Monte Viudo's residences facilitated and reaffirmed their self-recognition as a group—functioning, in other words, as a “practice of affiliation” (cf. Yaeger, 2000). This, in fact, represents a fairly common architectural pattern worldwide. The use of houses to provide an architectural vocabulary for community structures of shared value, or vice versa, has been documented in archaeological contexts ranging from proto-historic Cherokee town houses (Rodning, 2009) to the various forms of “holy houses” found throughout Austronesia (Kirch, 2000). In each of these instances, the use of a shared architectural template served to reinforce individuals' connections to the social group through the repetition of familiar and deeply meaningful forms. Furthermore, such examples demonstrate the problematic nature of efforts to categorize architectural spaces as “sacred” or “quotidian”—or public and non-public—according to Western parameters of meaning (Banning, 2011).

At Tambillo, the process of producing a public through these practices of affiliation included actions that took place at non-domestic, ceremonial structures (i.e. “public architecture”), but it did not encompass large, or even necessarily inclusive gatherings that took place in and around such structures. These buildings were no larger than houses, and in some cases they were, in fact, smaller. Instead, these

publics were characterized by a distributed spatiality that emerged through numerous acts of construction and dwelling that took place throughout residential sites. A similar spatial economy is attested in Hodder's (2006) and Smith's (2015) studies of the creation of the communities and publics at Çatal Höyük and in villages of the Early Bronze Age Caucasus. Both accounts depict a decentered process in which social collectives emerged over a series of practices that were spatially discontinuous, and instead entailed the use of shared objects of value and ways of doing across numerous discrete spaces. Notably, in both contexts houses were the principal locus for this process. Like these cases, Tambillo demonstrates the need to examine built environments as integrated wholes: in this instance, the production of this public not only transcended different sites, but also different kinds of spaces. Publics emerged not in the activities associated with any one place, but from the material connections between multiple places.

Finding publics beyond “public architecture”

The foregoing examples have sketched several possible modes through which publics may have coalesced in built environments that lacked settings for large-scale gatherings, and in which domestic architecture possessed distinctly monumental qualities. At Tambillo, houses were not the exclusive site for the production of publics—a small suite of ceremonial constructions probably also served this function—but they were instrumental in this process. The scale of houses alone provides a strong indication of this role; but a consideration of their material qualities enables the approximation of a more precise mechanics of how this took place. One of the most significant outcomes of this approach is the ability to discern multiple publics that were produced through different modes of engagement. These different publics allowed varying affordances for political action on the part of those involved. These publics were also associated with complex spatialities that cannot be isomorphically mapped onto particular locales in a built environment. Tambillo's houses resist categorization as public or private space; not only would they have functioned differently for different individuals at different moments, but there was also more than one kind of “public” associated with any one architectural locale.

The study of how the materiality of objects and places—above and beyond the spatial organization of architecture—mediates the emergence of public collectivities offers a number of advantages in the analysis of past societies and their built environments. As the example of Tambillo makes clear, this approach facilitates the understanding of how publics emerged in contexts in which built environments lacked the kinds of large-scale settings conducive to gatherings of scale. When confronted with such a context, researchers need not look elsewhere, beyond the bounds of a settlement, to identify “public spaces,” although such spaces may certainly have existed; rather, these attributes may serve as a prompt that, in a given socio-historical setting, it may be necessary to re-evaluate how publics were constituted.

Perhaps most importantly, a focus on materiality allows researchers to discern *multiple* publics associated with different places, persons, and mechanisms of formation. This is especially critical in light of the now-prevalent consensus across the social sciences that the nature of publics (or the private) is socially and historically variable. There is no reason to assume that large gatherings in locales such as plazas represent a one-size-fits-all answer for a society to generate a public. In turn, the recognition that multiple publics may have been present in a given setting may be helpful in illuminating the political agency of additional members of a society beyond those at the top. A focus on how the material properties of objects enable them to intervene in the creation of publics not only reveals the presence of multiple and diverse publics, but it also renders them visible in places such as Tambillo where traditional categories of “public architecture”—and traditional kinds of “political actors”—are not easily found.

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