I

The contemplation of ruins: archaeological approaches to architecture

At this time the fortress serves only as a witness of what it once was.
Cieza de Leon, 1550–52, on the site of Paramonga

Ancient traces of stone suggest humans have lived in buildings for at least 350,000 years. If the features and dates from the Paleolithic site of Terra Amata, France, are interpreted correctly (de Lumley 1969; cf. Villa 1983), early humans built small, temporary huts of saplings, cobbles, and brush on the edge of the Mediterranean during the Holstein interglacial. More permanent dwellings date from ca. 12,000–10,000 bp, as proto-agricultural Natufian peoples crowded around permanent springs in the post-Pleistocene Levant (Henry 1989) and sedentary hunters and gatherers using Jomon pottery settled the forested river valleys of the Japanese islands (Aikens and Higuchi 1982; Pearson 1986; Watanabe 1986). An unbroken legacy of human buildings stretches from the massive walls and tower built 9,350 years ago at Jericho, perhaps the oldest example of communal construction (Kenyon 1952, 1972; cf. Mellaart 1975; Bar-Yosef 1986), to the Louisiana Superdome, the world's largest arena with seats for 95,000. And with an apparent inevitability which is simply an artifact of hindsight, humans translated early dwellings into other architectural forms as rooms served as burial crypts, pithouses became kivas (Cordell 1979: 134; Scully 1975), and houses of men were transformed into dwellings of gods (Bukert 1988; Fox 1988). Over the last 10,000 years, the built environment has become coterminous with the human environment, as people have raised artificial boundaries defining private and public, secular and sacred spaces.

As we move through this constructed reality, it is rare to consider architecture except in a personal manner, as series of ugly strip malls, imposing skyscrapers, or comforting homes that we use, view, or live in but rarely think much about. When some commentary is required, a historic building may be dubbed "interesting," a national monument described by the patriotic feelings it elicits, or a home characterized as spacious, tiny, or comfy. Simply, these buildings have become such an integral part of our cultural existence that it is hard to think of them as something separate from our Self. We are usually, to use Edward Relph's (1976) apt phrase, "existential insiders."

Yet, the patterns and meanings of architecture stand separate from personal experience. How could I or any other outsider correctly intuit that an Ainu house on Sakhalin Island was oriented to the dwelling place of the forest deities

(Ohnuki-Tierney 1972) or that the longhouses of the Pirá-paraná of lowland Colombia (Hugh-Jones 1979: 238–251) are alternately thought of as a model of the universe, a womb, and an enormous bird with the head of a tapir? Would it be possible to identify the significance of Navaho hogans in the Blessingway ceremonies (Jett and Spencer 1981: 14)? How could any foreigner recognize that the small hole in the dirt floor of a Hopi kiva was an opening into the underworld, the navel of original emergence (Frigout 1979: 568)? Is it true (Griaule and Dieterlen 1954) or false (Van Beek 1991) that the organization of the Dogon house is based on body symbolism, and how could an outsider's ethnographically uninformed architectural experience lead to either conclusion? And specifically, how could an archaeologist learn such emic knowledge?

These examples are more than ethnographic exotica, not merely the "spoilers" which archaeologists find so frustrating. The patterns and meanings associated with the built environment reflect fundamental cultural concepts uniquely shaped by particular societies at specific times (see Wilson 1988: 57–78). Does this imply that architecture falls outside the limits of archaeological inquiry? Hopefully not, or this book would be very brief. But such concerns do lead to questions about how to think about buildings, and, more specifically, how we can think about constructions from another time built by another culture. How is it, as Cieza de Leon remarked, that a building can be a witness of what it once was?

In this book I attempt to address some of these questions by developing a small body of theory and a handful of analytical methods, and applying them to a corpus of architectural data from the prehistoric Andes. This study intentionally balances generalizing theory and specific substantive results in a manner I hope will be relevant to Andeanists and archaeologists working in other regions. I hope to provide useful analytical examples and provoke new lines of inquiry. My goal is to illustrate the directions a well-developed archaeology of architecture might take, exemplified in a study of prehistoric public architecture.

Public architecture and political power

Architecture may reflect a variety of cultural behaviors, from artistic styles to planning for seismic stresses, but I am interested in the ways public architecture reflects larger dimensions of social order; loosely stated, I am interested in buildings and politics. Following Swartz, Turner, and Tuden (1966: 7), "The study of politics . . . is the study of *processes* involved in determining and implementing public goals and in the differential achievement and use of power by the members of the group concerned with those goals" (original emphasis). Such a definition negates a sharp, a priori division between religious ceremony and public spectacle (Adams 1977: 28); the social separation of church and state is an empirical matter. Instead, I am interested in understanding the bases of public actions in ancient Andean societies, and I assume that public buildings – whether impermanent ritual structures or massive royal compounds – are evidence of differing public orders and social motives. Public buildings are physical testimonies of the use of power.

If, as a rough agreement in the anthropological literature suggests (e.g. Adams

1970: 117, 1977: 388; Balandier 1970: 37–39; Haas 1982: 156–158), power involves a dissymmetry in social relations – even if only temporarily – then it seems equally clear that power rests on the twin foundations of legitimacy and force, consensus and coercion (Swartz et al. 1966: 14–16). It also seems certain that different social entities – from hunting bands to complex bureaucracies – vary in their relative reliance on consensus and coercion. And finally if one expression of power is the direction of social effort, then public constructions may reflect the exercise of power in concrete form.

This is familiar ground: archaeologists have discussed public architecture as the material expression of power since at least the time of V. Gordon Childe (1974 [1950]: 11), citing "[t]ruly monumental public buildings . . . [that] symbolize the social surplus." This approach to architecture as the physical index of social effort is discussed in Chapter 3. But architecture is more than a passive product of potential labor investment; it reflects other dimensions of public life and, in turn, helps shape the nature of social interaction. It is this larger arena of inquiry that concerns me.

Those concerns are shared with scholars of landscape, particularly those who consider the cultural modification and interpretation of the environment, built and natural. For example, Denis Cosgrove (1984: 15) defines landscape as an explicitly ideological concept, representing the "way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature, and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others with respect to external nature." Given the subject of this book, I focus on the built environment rather than on Cosgrove's broader "external nature," but his emphasis on the communicative nature and social context directly parallels my approach to prehistoric Andean architecture. Public architecture as a medium contains information about social relations associated with power; as Tuan (1974: 151) noted, "Power is seldom expressed directly as a physical force even in the animal world. In the human world it is exercised through the recognition and acceptance of the symbols of legitimacy."

Archaeologists accept the notion that architecture may reflect the exercise of power; the theory linking settlement hierarchies to administrative states is an example (Wright and Johnson 1975; Isbell and Schreiber 1978). But such approaches treat architecture as a passive, though concrete, reflection of political structure often expressed in levels of socio-political complexity. Rather than wonder if a particular society "was" a chiefdom or a state, I am interested in the varying modes of political process which produced and were reproduced by public architecture. I assume it is at least *conceivable* that specific Andean societies – like the Balinese supralocal polities described by Geertz (1973: 336):

> did not consist of a neat set of hierarchically organized sovereign states . . . [nor] . . . did it consist of any overall domination by a "single-centered apparatus state" under an absolute despot, "hydraulic" or otherwise. What it consisted in was an extended field of highly dissimilar political ties, thickening into nodes of varying size and solidity at strategic points on the landscape and then thinning out again to connect, in a marvelously convolute way, virtually everything with everything else.

Equally, I recognize there were periods of Andean prehistory – most notably under the Inca Empire – when strong centralized states did reshape the nature of social existence. The architecture discussed in this book was the creation of social units ranging from families to empires, but the political process was common to all of them once they decided to build public constructions. Hilda Kuper (1972: 421) has written:

> The process of political interaction may be expressed empirically through disputes over or manipulations of sites, and symbolicallly in the language of sites. It does not matter whether the site be a cattle byre, a house of parliament, a public hall, or even a university! Though the process is similar, the range of people and groups affected may vary from a few individuals to an entire nation.

Thus the political process cross-cuts social units of different scales, although different political concerns and configurations are associated with different groups. The problem is how to discover architectural evidence for such different configurations of power.

Public architecture is a particularly useful body of evidence because it so multidimensional. Public buildings may serve as monuments, commemorative constructions to be viewed (Chapter 3). Public architecture also may be used, in a very tangible way, as stages on which social dramas occur (Chapter 4). Not all public constructions are involved in similar social dramas; some constructions may serve as the visual focus of large numbers of people, while others may be restricted to a handful of initiates. Not all public structures are catalysts for social coalescence; buildings may be designed to define, separate, or exclude (Chapter 5). Yet it is the multiplicity of uses for public architecture which makes its analysis so interesting, because different types of buildings reflect and shape different configurations of social life. In this study, I attempt to illuminate the prehistoric configurations of power by an examination of ancient Andean architecture. And that attempt requires a perspective distinct from traditional archaeological approaches to architecture.

Traditional archaeological approaches to architecture

Traditionally, archaeologists have pursued two lines of inquiry when considering architecture, which I will call "art historical" and "art critical." The first approach views architecture from the classic perspectives of traditional art history: architecture embodies a large set of stylistic features and construction techniques that represent shared knowledge, and a taxonomy of buildings based on their similarities allows for the delineation of tradition and the recognition of genius. Derived from a tradition that considers architecture one of the fine arts, the scope of inquiry is centered on objects that exhibit "an artistic-aesthetic intention" even if the architectural expression of intent includes "space-configurations and organization of mass, planning of roads and squares, and, in the higher cultures, town-planning" (Haselberger 1961: 342). This approach, emphasizing the formal properties of art and the aesthetic responses they evoke, has a long history in Western culture, and it shaped initial anthropological approaches to art (Layton 1981: 4–5).

A classic example is Franz Boas' *Primitive Art* (1951 orig. 1927), which demonstrated the aesthetic intent of traditional artists by citing their mastery of technique, variation of motif, and use of symmetry and rhythm in media ranging from birch-bark buckets to face painting. Boas' view of human societies in "constant flux" – so inconstant that "the cultural form may become a kaleidoscopic picture of miscellaneous traits" – led him to emphasize the role of diffusion in the spread of isolated traits. Boas sharply criticized attempts by Clark Wissler and Alfred Kroeber to order traits chronologically based on the age–area hypothesis (Boas 1951: 6–7). That debate turned on the extent to which complexes of traits were adopted en masse. Wissler, for example (1914: 491), argued that material traits diffused "as to take over whole complexes with all their concepts." The debate was not over whether cultural complexes could or should be viewed as sets of traits; that was given.

Alfred Kroeber's (1931) resilient analogy between culture change and organic growth led to the conclusion that "one may compare species to culture traits or elements, and genera or families to culture trait complexes." Via his early researches in Peruvian archaeology, Kroeber's general view of culture and traits specifically shaped archaeological approaches in the Andes. In his work on ceramics (e.g. Kroeber 1925; Gayton and Krober 1927) and textiles (O'Neale and Kroeber 1930), Alfred Kroeber expanded on Max Uhle's work (Rowe 1954a) and outlined an approach to the study of stylistic change and cultural processes that was absolutely fundamental to Peruvian prehistory. Kroeber's research shaped the "Berkeley school" of Andean archaeology, whose preminent practitioners were John Rowe (e.g., 1946, 1962b) and Dorothy Menzel (1977; Menzel et al. 1964), among others. Kroeber's conceptual contribution was the recognition of horizon styles vs. local styles; more broadly, his consideration of artistic style was influential among anthropologically inclined art historians. Kroeber's significance, for example, has been acknowledged explicitly by George Kubler (1962: 2; Rowe 1963a; however, *vide* Kubler 1991: 176–178 for a sharp retrospective). Although Kroeber's (1952) "Great Art Styles of Ancient South America" focused primarily on ceramic and sculptural traditions, architecture was subsumed in this scheme in brief references to Inca masonry and the "'Arabesques' of more or less geometrically patterned adobes" found in Chimu architecture. But such a scheme introduced the concept of horizons and periods so influential in Andean archaeology (Rowe 1962a), viewing architectural patterns as one class of archaeological traits which could be used to plot the growth, expansion, and decline of pan-Andean traditions or more restricted, regional styles.

This approach to Andean architecture has a rich literature. Given the interest in Inca society and empire, the distinctive Inca masonry architecture has received extensive study (Agorto Calvo 1987; Gasparini and Margolies 1980; Kendall 1985; MacLean 1986). In some cases the rich ethnohistoric record allows for identification of specific Inca settlements and installations (Morris 1967, 1972; Niles 1987), but more importantly the ethnohistoric record of Inca conquest and domination of the Andes can be traced by the imposition of architectural forms such as storehouses (Morris 1967; D'Altroy and Hastorf 1984), roads (Hyslop 1984), or provincial capitals (Morris and Thompson 1985; Hyslop 1985). Thus, in the Inca case, the spread

of architectural traits marks the expansion of empire, a point made more than three decades ago by Dorothy Menzel (1959: 127–131).

Thus, studies of the temporal and spatial distributions of architectural traits have been associated with the spread of specific prehistoric cultures and usually with the expansion of Andean states. For example, discussions of the territorial growth of the Chimu state – which is the subject of much of Chapter 5 – are based partially on the recognition of certain architectural traits as being distinctively Chimu (e.g. Keatinge and Conrad 1983; Mackey 1987). Similarly, supposed shifts in the center and peripheries of the Moche state are associated with changes in the location and scale of large pyramidal mounds (e.g. Moseley 1992: 166, 212–214). Yet arguably, it is with the study of the Middle Horizon and the spread of Huari culture that architecture has been most consistently used to trace the expansion of an Andean state. This concern begins with Rowe's (1963b: 14–15) statements about the distinctiveness of Huari architecture, its widespread distribution, and his inference that Huari was an administrative empire which expanded through military conquest. With William Isbell's work at the site of Huari (1978a, 1991) and subsequent investigations of Huari provincial centers by Martha Anders (1981, 1991), Gordon McEwan (1984) and Katharina Schreiber (1978, 1987a, 1987b, 1992), issues about architectural traits and imperial expansion become central to a major debate in Andean archaeology: what was the nature of Huari? An answer to this question is beyond the scope of this chapter and its author's expertise (for discussions, see Isbell 1987; Isbell and McEwan 1991; Isbell and Schreiber 1978; cf. Shady Solís 1982). But it is important to note that the analytical treatment of architecture employed by these studies is almost identical to that outlined by Kroeber: architecture consists of traits and the spread of those traits forms the basis of historical reconstruction. The mechanisms of diffusion or the causes behind the spatio-temporal distribution may be different; the theoretical reasons which prompt modern scholars to look at the distribution of Huari architectural traits are different from those envisioned by Kroeber. But the basic architectural approach is the same: the delineation of an architectural tradition and the explanation of its spread through space and time.

The second traditional approach to architecture is borrowed from architectural criticism. Minimally, architectural criticism conveys a critic's informed aesthetic response to a larger audience. Architectural criticism, as Witold Rybcsynski (1992) recently noted, has a long tradition dating back to Vitruvius, but it is a genre that, for better or worse, has seen major growth in the twentieth century. Architectural criticism may rival other forms of art criticism, or it may serve as a camouflaged polemic of normative dicta or even decline into a murky hucksterism, touting an architect's unique vision to justify the award of a contract (for examples by Frank Lloyd Wright, see Gill 1987). Of course, critical statements about Andean architecture are never so malign; their sole intention is to draw attention to specific elements of prehispanic constructions.

The cross-fertilization of precolumbian anthropology and art history has been alluded to above, and in the work of George Kubler (1984; Reese 1985) one finds

well-defined examples of critical statements about Andean architecture. Kubler's panoramic view of native American art encompassed a wide range of media and regions (Klein 1982; Kubler 1984), but though he mastered diverse data and developments in American archaeology, Kubler's approach was almost vehemently non-anthropological:

> Archaeology is a scientific technique rather than a fully autonomous discipline. It is important whenever documents fail to yield direct evidence of the past. In the hands of the anthropologists, it is applied to the recovery of information about social structure and economic life. In this context works of art are used as sources of information rather than as expressive realities.
> (Kubler 1984: 33)

A case can be made that Kubler's assessment of archaeology as practiced in the 1930s was essentially accurate, though not true of research fifty years later when the third edition of *The Art and Architecture of Ancient America* was issued. But more importantly, Kubler's work is an explicitly critical piece of writing, emphasizing – as Boas had – aesthetic intention and evocative response. Writing for Western art historians, Kubler attempted to show that precolumbian art was art and not merely ethnographic curio. Kubler (1984: 39) wrote:

> When a building or an object is discussed and illustrated here, it is because of a peculiar perceptual quality. Unlike physical or chemical properties, this perceptual quality cannot be measured. Its presence is unmistakable. It is altogether absent from no artifact. Works of art display it more than utilitarian objects. It is present in nature wherever humans have been active, as in pure-bred animals[!], and in some landscapes. It appears in scenes and things called beautiful as well as in those that arouse disgust.

Kubler went on to outline three properties serving to distinguish art from artifact: a work of art is the product of a cumulative technical tradition, it is imbued with complexity of meaning, and it exhibits its maker's sensibility. And finally, Kubler constructed a conceptual barricade to defend aesthetic recognition – kept intrinsic and pure – from evolutionary, neo-Marxian, or "configurationism," the latter having its roots in structuralism and Gestalt psychology (1984: 41–42).

If this is a fair sketch of Kubler's position, and I hope it is, then how is this characterized by his assessments of Andean architecture? A few examples should make the point:

> Building in the Andes lacks the spatial complexity of Maya and Mexican architecture.
> (Kubler 1984: 359)

> Huaca de los Reyes in the Moche Valley exhibits a symmetry of plan more rigorous than anything else in ancient America. Only La Venta in Mesoamerica is comparable.
> (Kubler 1984: 360)

> The architectural forms [associated with Chavín] are grandiose terraced platforms.
> (Kubler 1984: 363)

> The relation of the masses [of the *castillo* at Chavín de Huantar] to enclosed volumes is like that of a mountain range, where geological formations enfold caves and vents of bewildering complexity.
> (Kubler 1984: 369)

> The Chimu tradition of imperial rule, manipulated by aggressive expansion and by economic regulation, must surely have become the heritage of the Inca dynasty in the fifteenth century. One of the prices paid for this imperial political organization seems to have been the progressive loss of aesthetic vigour and inventiveness.
> (Kubler 1984: 408)

These statements are extracted from their context, and most of Kubler's text is concerned with location, chronology, and description (e.g., his 1984: 383–387 excellent summary of Moche architecture). Yet such passages capture his critical approach to precolumbian architecture, in which aesthetic judgment is seldom distant, as in his repeated references to prehistoric builders' "slovenliness." Kubler rarely considers the significance of a work of art in the context of a specific, prehispanic culture because that was never his critical aim. Simply, Kubler's goal was not anthropological.

One might reasonably include several of Terence Grieder's (1978, 1982, 1988c) discussions of Andean architecture within this critical tradition, although Grieder is more concerned with the aesthetic significance of art to its prehispanic makers than Kubler is. For example, *Art and Archaeology of Pashash* (1978) links the magnificent ceramic and metal artifacts associated with a burial chamber to a symbolism intertwined with shamanism. In a free-ranging appeal to disparate ethnographic examples of art and shamanic cosmology, Grieder (1978: 189) concludes:

> Perched on its high ridge behind its massive walls, Pashash is a dramatic image of insecurity. The militaristic foreign elite who ruled there asserted their right by an art style which manifested their alliance with the divine powers that rule the cosmos. Mortality, the ultimate insecurity, inspired the greatest outpouring of ritual power to maintain the stability of earthly order by an access of divine energy.

This is evocative critical writing; it is, also, unverifiable. This does not mean that Grieder comes to such conclusions with no evidence. Rather, like all critical statements, these phrases are designed to draw our attention to the previously unnoticed, to mimic an aesthetic response, or to weigh merit. They are not necessarily designed to be proved.

William Conklin's critical writings (1990; Conklin and Moseley 1987) on ancient Andean architecture are particularly important. A practicing architect and expert on

ancient Andean textiles and architecture, Conklin's work is filled with insight. When compared with other Andeanists, Conklin's unique combination of training and interests leads him to a unique view of Andean architecture. His writings also are the best examples of architectural criticism in Andean studies, and in them the limitations of this approach are bared:

> The U-shaped mound [at Los Chinos in the Moche Valley] faces directly toward a symmetrical three-part mountaintop to the north. The visual conversation and implied relationship between the man-made mountain and the actual mountain perhaps invoked the transfer of power to the *huaca*.
> (Conklin 1990: 48)

Well, perhaps – but how can we ever know? Conklin's critical statement draws our attention to the relationship between mountain and mound, yet the inferred relation is intriguing but unverifiable. And thus his work frequently falls within the tradition of architectural criticism, a tradition with specific but limited utility to the archaeologist.

Critical comments are often problematic. Critical statements can be misleading because they can masquerade as descriptive observations. An example makes the point. Archaeologists blithely cite Louis Sullivan's famous rule, "Form follows function." Archaeologists are comfortable with notions like form and function and, equipped with a utilitarian view of culture, we can accept that function would have a certain causal priority; the fact that jars are hollow, taller than they are wide, and have an opening at the top rather than the bottom is because they function as containers. Yet, such an interpretation misses a very important element of Sullivan's statement: his was a prescriptive statement, literally "Form [should or ought to] follow function," an architectural battle-cry which was a reaction to the functionally irrelevant gingerbread and filigree of late Victorian architecture. Sullivan's statement was not descriptive; it was critical.

Like other critical genres, architectural criticism may assume a metaphorical property, using vivid language to highlight (but not necessarily explain or measure or define) specific features of buildings. This may lead to a certain impressionism in language, as the architect Bruno Zevi complained over three decades ago:

> The average reader, leafing through books on the aesthetics and criticism of architecture, is horrified by the vagueness of the terms: *truth, movement, force, vitality, sense of outline, harmony, grace, breadth, scale, balance, proportion, light and shade, eurhythmics, solids and voids, symmetry, rhythm, mass, volume, emphasis, character, contrast, personality, analogy*. These are attributes of architecture which various authors use as classifications without specifying what they refer to.
> (Zevi 1957: 21, emphasis in the original)

While some of these terms (e.g., mass, volume, scale) could be reduced to measurable dimensions, most cannot be and none were meant to be, as they are value-laden terms of an implied aesthetic code. In short, the principal difference

between architectural criticism and archaeological inquiry is that in the former we are interested in the critical response as communicated to a contemporary audience and in the latter we are not.

At its best, architectural criticism is instructive, pointing out unnoticed elements and unseen patterns and sharing the informed observations and insights of the critic with an audience. We applaud critics who, writing with knowledge and brio, allow us to see buildings in new ways by sharing with us their critical response. But archaeological inquiry has a different goal: we want to know about the people who constructed, inhabited, and lived in a built environment. Ideally, we want to know what *they* thought about their architecture, and no number of intriguing observations by a modern observer is a substitute for that. And thus architectural criticism and archaeological analyses of architecture have quite different obligations and goals, and to confuse them is an error.

As anthropologists of the past, archaeologists attempt to understand the cultural construction of built space, the ways humans create and conceive of architecture. This approach has many difficulties, and there are undoubted limits to what we can retrieve from prehistory. And yet, the archaeological enterprise has distinct, unrealized potential for which architectural criticism is no substitute. For that reason, I argue that archaeological approaches to architecture should be grounded in that worn, but useful, anthropological concept – holism.

Anthropological holism and approaches to architecture

The archaeologiocal analysis of architecture, I believe, must be derived from basic anthropological concerns and perspectives. First, the built environment is a culturally constructed landscape which, like other cultural dimensions, includes utilitarian and non-adaptive, innovative and conservative elements. Humans both shape and are shaped by the built environment, a point of view captured in Clifford Geertz' phrase, "man is the only animal suspended in webs of meaning which he himself has spun" (Geertz 1973: 5). And thus while architecture and landscape are created by humans, they are not passive creations; rather those creations, reified by society, in turn may mold subsequent human action. So at a basic level, an anthropological perspective on architecture focuses on how human societies create, conceptualize, and are influenced by cultural modifications – physical and symbolic – of the environment.

A second element is the importance of a truly holistic approach to architecture. A single building may embody a wide range of cultural decisions (e.g., retention of heat, expression of social status, or orientation with cosmic forces; see Wilk 1990: 34–35 for discussion). No single scholar gives equal attention to every dimension of the built environment, which is one reason why there are such diverse approaches to architecture (Lawrence and Low 1990). This study is no exception; in the following chapters I explore how one class of architecture (public constructions) may have functioned in religion and politics in prehispanic Peruvian societies. Yet, my choice to explore that question does not imply that I discount other factors such as the availability of materials, engineering constraints, the relationship between construction