

Between the Sacred and the Profane Spatial Transitions to the West of the Akapana Pyramid

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Beginning in 2004 the PAPA project conducted GPR-assisted excavations in the poorly understood area directly west of the Akapana Pyramid that was previously conceived of as an open space without an assigned function (figure 1.1). We found the activity in this area to be more varied and complex than we had anticipated, and the remains of small-scale domestic contexts, large paved plazas, and previously unknown monumental structures were located by our excavations. Because of the interest these initial excavations generated, we continued our investigations of this location during the 2005 field season. Through these excavations, our understanding of this area was greatly expanded upon and we are now beginning to understand how the evolution of this area relates to the broader site-wide changes seen elsewhere at Tiwanaku's monumental core. To put it more directly, we believe that the region to the west of the Akapana and south of the Putuni Complex was subject to the same pattern of building, transition, and abandonment seen throughout Tiwanaku.

The archaeology to the west of the Akapana is complicated and intriguing. Although it appears as if the task of interpreting this area has only just begun, much can be said at this point. The earliest evidence of occupation of this area dates to the Early Tiwanaku IV period (ca. A.D. 400 – 600) based on ceramic evidence. At this time several modest domestic areas existed within the research area. During or directly after the transition to the Late Tiwanaku IV (ca. A.D. 600 – 800), the domestic contexts were removed and the first of several expansive pebble plazas was constructed. Unlike the area to the east of the Akapana that experienced only one plaza construction event (VRANICH CHAPTER NUMBER), the area to the west was resurfaced numerous times. These surfaces were constructed out of varying sizes of gavel mixed into semi-compact matrices. Based on the high quality of artifacts associated with these plazas and the lack of corresponding structures we speculate that space to the west of the Akapana served as some sort of open staging area from the Late Tiwanaku IV up until the site's abandonment. The collection of smashed ceramics from these surfaces closely resemble the assemblages recovered from the Akapana pyramid as described by Sonia Alconini (1995) which indicates that there may have been extensive ritual activity in this area. These plazas were drained by Tiwanaku's extensive conduit network.

Also located during our investigations was a monumental structure excavated by Maeve Skidmore. This structure was implied by the topography but never before formally investigated. Based upon onsite pottery analysis this platform was constructed in the Late Tiwanaku IV period and then heavily looted for stones at some point afterwards. It appears as if the building fell into disuse and may have even been dismantled during the transition from the Late Tiwanaku IV to the Tiwanaku V period (ca. A.D. 800-1150) as the removal of stones seemed to be systematic in nature and related to possible termination events. It was during this transition that various artifacts were placed upon the open gravel surface in a similar manner to what Couture and Sampek identified as termination offerings in their excavations to the west of the Putuni. It is unclear how this ruined building related to the large pebble plazas that extended to the east of it.

Units L-14, L-23, and L-24: Early Households to Public Plazas

During the Early Tiwanaku IV period, the majority of Tiwanaku's population lived within the

roughly 1 kilometer square of the site's core. The core of this period was very different place than what we see today: the Akapana and Putuni did not exist, and in the general vicinity of our area of study, the Kheri Kala was in use. At this time a domestic area, part of which was located in the 5 meter by 5 meter unit L-14, was in use. This context included a small hearth on a compacted surface (figure 1.2). The hearth was semicircular in shape with no associated hearthstones. An extended period of firing, apparently from wood fuel, caused much of the hearth matrix to bake into a bright orange color. Utilitarian pottery, some camelid bones and a mano were recovered from the surface associated with the hearth. An east-west laying extended adult burial was located beneath the surface. Although only the legs were visible within the unit, it is clear that this individual was associated with the domestic surface and was most likely buried beneath the structure in which he or she had once lived.

This same domestic occupation level extended northwards into unit L-24 where we recorded a small midden filled with household refuse. This context is comparable to a higher-status domestic area uncovered to the west of the Putuni, in particular a clay platform with associated middens and domestic wares (B.P. 1560 ± 25, from Couture and Sampeck 2003:230). As the Putuni had not yet been built, Couture and Sampeck suggested that the contexts they located might have been associated with Kheri Kala or Kalasasaya function, perhaps housing retainers or pilgrims. The domestic areas we uncovered may have served the same purpose but, as Tiwanaku had not yet become a large metropolitan center, we raise the possibility that our contexts represent an independent household. The small scale of the domestic area's features and the presence of the simple subsurface interment support this suggestion. As it stands, we have only caught a glimpse of the early occupation of this area. Further investigation of this period is warranted.

During the late Tiwanaku IV period (ca. A.D. 600 – 800) the area in question experienced a major shift in function. At this time the entire core of Tiwanaku appears to have been reorganized including razing the domestic contexts to the south of the Putuni complex (Couture and Sampeck 2003). The site of Tiwanaku appears to have grown rapidly and for the first time residential complexes are seen outside of the 1 km site core (Kolata 2003, Couture 2003, Janusek 2003, Janusek 2004). It is possible that the people living in our area were moved outwards into this growing periphery and their small-scale habitation demolished, effectively rezoning this valuable area at the center of the expanding metropolis for other uses. The area, now cleared of domestic habitation, became a paved open space for ceremonial or ritual activity.

Thus in the Late Tiwanaku IV period large plazas made of pebbles were constructed to the west of the Akapana. As can be seen particularly well in unit L-14, these plazas were often resurfaced and new pebble layers were placed directly upon older ones (figure 1.3). This is in contrast to the PAPA project's findings to the east of the Akapana where only one expansive plaza was constructed over the whole area and no new surfaces were built upon it. Each of these superimposed plaza surfaces yielded a similar artifact assemblage and though reasonably clean, they each contained a formidable amount of broken polychromes along with a very high number of undecorated ceramics. Also recovered were large amounts of camelid bones, many of which were still partially articulated though strewn directly upon the floors. Special finds include copper pins, lip and earplugs with copper inlay, pigment in all shades, and several small gold bangles. It is clear that this area was no longer used for private residences or low-level activity, and though speculative, we think this area might represent a temporary staging area for a variety of ritual or functional activities at a prime location near the city's imposing monuments. Ceramic analysis from this period seems to confirm this hypothesis. The lack of any walls or other building elements in this area may indicate that any structures at this location were temporary in nature further supporting the idea of these large plazas as versatile outdoor spaces.

Also notable was a north-south oriented subterranean drainage conduit that was uncovered in unit L-24 (figure 1.4). The conduit's construction resembles that of the secondary canals located to the west of the Putuni complex (Couture and Sampeck 2003:237). It consisted of reused blocks of varying size and shape and the base of the conduit's inside was lined with clay. The conduit was

contemporaneous with a pebble plaza and disturbances in the plaza's matrix may indicate maintenance operations while it was in use. After the conduit was opened and reburied, the pebble plaza surface was restored, though this restoration work was of lesser quality than the rest of the surface. This plaza was also identified in units L-14 and L-23 but, as the surface in question was only partially excavated in these units, the conduit was not seen.

The Tiwanaku IV to Tiwanaku V transition was a major site wide event that was clearly visible in our excavations. To the west of the Putuni, the transition was marked by a variety of termination offerings excavated by Couture and Sampeck (2003:245-248). Several contexts in our research area closely resemble these Putuni Complex offerings and appear to be related as they date to the same time period. The final Late Tiwanaku IV plaza to be built in our research area was detected in all three of the units excavated there. In unit L-14 three distinct piles of mica temper were placed upon the plaza floor along with several ceramic-shaping tools. Also located on this floor was a deposit of blue pigment placed in a small cavity dug into the surface and covered with half of a camelid ribcage. Couture has noted that mica temper, pigment, and pottery shaping tools have been located in sub floor offerings in and around the Putuni (Couture personal communication). The floor was then resurfaced with the new plaza floor's fill resting directly upon and covering the apparent offerings.

In unit L-23 this same Late Tiwanaku IV pebble floor was closed with two offerings placed directly upon its surface. The first consisted of a disarticulated collection of human bones including a skullcap, several mandible fragments and over 40 teeth, mixed with camelid bone fragments. This collection is comparable to the disarticulated human skeletal remains excavated again by Couture and Sampeck in contexts to the west of the Putuni. A unique context located on the same surface as the human remains was a carefully arranged pile of 8 deer antlers (figure 1.5). The rounded tips of these antlers indicate that they were probably lithic shaping tools that were in a usable state. Antlers are comparatively rare at Tiwanaku and the deposition of a functional toolkit would have been a significant offering. As seen in L-14, the surface that these potential termination offerings rested upon was covered by the fill for the subsequent plaza's construction, sealing the two contexts.

In L-24, the termination of the use of the subterranean conduit was accompanied by a ceramic jar containing blue pigment that was found directly upon the same final Tiwanaku IV plaza surface as the previously discussed contexts. Within the same matrix as this jar we recovered copious amounts of andesite and basalt dust. It is possible that stones for the construction of the nearby Putuni (built ca. A. D. 800, roughly contemporaneous with this surface) were finely finished in this area. As the Tiwanaku V plaza that was constructed above this surface displayed no disturbances resulting from canal repairs, it appears as if the canal was no longer actively maintained after the transition from Late Tiwanaku IV, though it had not been filled in with soil.

After the Tiwanaku IV to Tiwanaku V transition, large pebble plazas with high concentrations of fine polychromes and other high end artifacts were still constructed and utilized to the south of the Putuni complex, which had been built by this time. In L-14 and extending into L-24 a large and well-made pebble plaza from this time period was discovered. In L-14 the plaza was modified after initial construction by the addition of an adobe surface that cut into and extended the pebble floor. It is this adobe surface that covered the mica piles and the camelid ribcage/pigment cut. In L-24, five finely carved stone blocks were uncovered in association with this plaza. Two north-south oriented blocks and three east-west oriented blocks were placed at a right angle and resembled a corner of the base of a wall, though no indication of higher courses or adobe melts were present. The potential wall does not appear to have delineated indoor and outdoor space as the same pebble plaza surface was detected on both sides. There is no further evidence for the continuation of this wall it is unclear what purpose these stones served.

In unit L-23 another pebble plaza was constructed that covered the whole unit. This surface appears to have been roughly contemporaneous with those seen in units L-14 and L-24, though the previously mentioned adobe surface was confined to L-14. It is beneath this surface that the deer antler

and the fragmentary human remains were placed. After this plaza was constructed, an east/west oriented adobe wall was built upon the floor. The wall did not have a stone foundation and was almost completely ruined by the melting of the adobe bricks. This wall may have been accompanied by an extremely ruined adobe surface placed on the pebble floor to the south, though it is possible that the adobe detected in this area represents wall melt. The area around the wall appears to have been heavily used and eventually both the floor and the melted remains of the wall itself became covered in successive layers of artifact heavy soil. Polychromes and camelid bones were found in abundance and this artifact assemblage continued to be present in this area after the wall was ruined. It could be that during at this time the plaza in units L-14 and L-24 were kept clean by sweeping refuse southwards onto unit L-23.

Based on their excavations, Couture and Sampeck (2003:234-236) suggest that food and drink were prepared and stored inside the building complex they excavated to the west of the Putuni, but found no evidence of the consumption of this food. We believe that the open gravel plazas located to the south of the Putuni Complex may correspond to these large kitchen areas. The great amount of smashed ceramics and the large camelid cuts recovered from the plaza surfaces as well as their proximity to the Putuni kitchens support this hypothesis. We envision these plazas as congregation areas related to site-wide activity not unlike what can be seen at Tiwanaku today (figure 1.6). During Willkakuti, the Aymara New Year, modern Tiwanaku groans under the weight of thousands of revelers and pilgrims. On the street leading to the site people purchase food, drink and coca from temporary stands while they wait for the festivities to begin. Before the site gates are opened, the visitors mash themselves against the fence and spill out onto the flat museum parking lot awaiting entry and the start of ceremonies in honor of Willkatata, Father Sun, in the Kalasasaya. After the sun is greeted, all those attending stagger out of the temple to the museum parking lot, the road, and the modern town plaza for more food, drink and revelry. It is not at all unreasonable to imagine that the plazas uncovered by our excavation served a similar function at ancient Tiwanaku. The lack of permanent structure, the artifact assemblages, and indeed the very location of the plazas in relation to the site's monumental constructions add credence to this vision. If modern Tiwanaku can be used as an indicator, we imagine it was quite a party.

We believe that these surfaces represented a significant aspect of Tiwanaku function as the plazas were clearly important enough to be repaved, reconstructed, and reutilized over an extended time. Further investigation is needed to explore the boundaries of these plazas and their possible relations to the Putuni Complex. Archaeobotanical and faunal analysis will no doubt provide helpful insights. Excavation is needed to probe the earliest occupation levels of this area. Though our research is at an early stage, we believe that the existence of complicated and large plaza spaces to the west of the Akapana is rather exciting.

Units L-9, L-11, and L-13: A Monumental Structure Dismantled

Excavation in units L9 and 11 undertaken by Maeve Skidmore during the 2004 field season revealed the eastern wall of a 40 x 50m structure predicted by the GPR survey. Although only a 2 meter stretch of the structures andesite foundation stones remained, it was clear from the basal moldings on their surfaces that the stones would once have supported masonry above. Intact, the wall would have retained a reddish fill to the east, rising to create a platform into which several cut stones were set. Inconsistencies in the fill indicate that it may have been added by the "basket load", a construction technique described by Janusek and Earnest in the platform of the Putuni and very similar to the fill placed in layers at the Pumapunku (Vranich, personal communication).

Other worked andesite stones in a variety of shapes and sizes were scattered in the vicinity and it was clear that the structure had been systematically dismantled, most likely at some time during or after the Late Tiwanaku IV to Tiwanaku V transition, and its stones hauled off for subsequent building

projects. Among the stones abandoned after dismantlement was a monolithic andesite pillar or lintel, nearly 2 meters tall. Abutting the wall to the west lay an open court area with a gravel floor. A few centimeters off of the southernmost foundation stone, in an approximately meter-square area, this floor changed to a flagstone pavement (figure 1.7). This too had been a victim of stone robbing and its original extent is unclear. Similar pavement has been described in other structures within the monumental core, including areas of the Putuni and Akapana, both of which have been dated toward the later end of the Tiwanaku trajectory. While it may be presumptuous to consider such pavement diagnostic of the Late Tiwanaku IV period, its presence does suggest to us that we are dealing with a structure from around that time.

More shaped andesite stones were uncovered in a trench placed to investigate the northern limits of the structure. No masonry was defined since these too had been disturbed, though in this instance the cause of the disturbance seemed to be from modern looting. The presence of stones solely in the southwestern part of the trench may indicate that they once made up the corner of a wall, as a construction fill was found not only to the east, but north of them as well. The reddish fill was similar to that found in the south, though more homogeneous. Excavations below the fill showed that it had a depth of 25cm and had been laid above an extensive layer of ash to the east and a compact clay floor to the west, bordered on its northern edge by an intrusive canal from a later period. Where the ash and floor met a shallow burial had been cut and the remains of a flexed adult with a modified skull lay facing west (figure 1.8). This internment is in contrast with the burials in the Late Tiwanaku IV (ca. A.D. 600 – 800) mortuary complex located to the West of the Putuni as the body was not placed in a bell-shaped or shaft tomb and no grave goods were recovered (Couture and Sampeck 2003:238-243). This burial more closely resembles those that Couture and Sampeck identify as being part of the termination process of the structures to the west of the Putuni. This individual may have been interred in dedication to the building before construction began or perhaps during the building's termination and dismantling.

At present, much of the structure remains unexcavated and more work will be required to determine the full form of the building and exact nature of its use. The west side of the building remains untouched and the eastern limits of the excavated platform have yet to be defined. We can draw some limited comparisons to the Putuni, for certainly a platform of red fill retained by ashlar masonry surrounding an interior courtyard is reminiscent of this structure. We postulate that like the Putuni this structure had a ceremonial function but more extensive excavation is required to identify what that function was as well as how this structure related to the pebble plazas that extended outward to its east.

Units L-7 and L-28: Stone working to Public Space

The preliminarily identified Early Tiwanaku IV occupations in units L-7 and L-28 were characterized by domestic space that was reminiscent of similar contexts recovered in units L-14, L-23, and L-24 to the north. In L-28, a deep midden containing household refuse (including burnt utilitarian ceramics and camelid bones) was excavated approximately 110cm below the modern surface, and in L-7, an assortment of burnt artifacts was recovered from a similar context. Though no domestic architecture was detected in our excavation units, the presence of this artifact assemblage strongly suggests that such structures were located nearby. As in the area to the north, further excavation at this depth must be carried out in the vicinity of units L-7 and L-28 to fully gauge the exact nature of the activity detected.

In unit L-28 the domestic assemblage halted abruptly at 75 cm below the modern ground surface. At this level an extensive lens of andesite dust (figure 1.9) was uncovered signifying that, like the units excavated to the north, the prescribed use of the area was changed during the transition to the Late Tiwanaku IV period and whatever occupants that were present were moved out of the site core.

The presence of the andesite dust may indicate that the area was used as a space for fine stone working at this time. If this is the case, this context could be interpreted as a final stopping point where construction stones were given their exact shape and smoothed edge before being fitted into the nearby monuments. A context containing human and animal bones was excavated in L-7 above the possible domestic context. In association with these remains, a collection of stones arranged in a haphazard manner was excavated. It is unclear how this unusual context is associated with the events seen in L-28 and elsewhere.

At some point a thick layer of compact red clay was placed directly above the andesite lens in unit L-28, and upon this surface an outdoor plaza and an adobe structure were built. The only remnant of the structure was a 225cm by 70cm section of an east-west oriented adobe wall. To the north and west of this wall were the remains of two gravel plazas. A compact matrix and ubiquitous small rounded pebbles characterized both of these surfaces. We believe that the two surfaces were actually one larger plaza when in use and that they were later separated by an intrusive conduit. It should be noted that the northern section of this plaza was very poorly preserved. The plaza surface extending to the west, however, was far more extensive and better defined. The compact and pebbly matrix of this gravel plaza was reminiscent of the surfaces found in the units L14, L23, and L24 that date to the same time period. Indeed, the plaza identified in unit L-28 produced the same artifact assemblage as the units to the north (including camelid remains and extensive amounts of broken pottery), indicating extensive food consumption had taken place here. A thick layer of green-gray ash was found to the south of the east-west adobe wall. This area was identified as the inside of the structure based on its position relative to the plaza. The copious amount of ash seen in this context seems to indicate that the structure may have been partially destroyed by fire, perhaps intentionally. Couture and Sampeck (2003:245) identify a similar phenomenon during the Tiwanaku IV to V transition at the Putuni, where the grass roofs of kitchen structures had apparently collapsed and been burned. The wall did not have a stone foundation, and it appears as though the structure that it once belonged to was raised during the transition to Tiwanaku V (ca. A.D. 800 – 1150) to make way for a clay platform.

After the pebble plaza and adobe structure were abandoned and destroyed, a massive clay platform was constructed. This appears to have been a Tiwanaku V construction event and the platform closely resembles the red clay platform of the Putuni that has been dated to this time period (Couture and Sampeck 2003:248). Cutting through the platform was a north-south oriented subterranean conduit of similar construction to the one located in L-24 in its form and construction material (figure 1.10), though we do not believe it represents a section of the same conduit. The stones making up this conduit were reused blocks, including finely cut andesite blocks and various partially worked stones such as batons. Another gravel plaza was constructed upon the clay platform and above the conduit. This plaza displayed a similar gravel matrix to the earlier surface detected in this unit except the later plaza was built upon a prepared clay platform. The conduit and plaza also appear to have been Tiwanaku V constructions based on preliminary ceramic analysis. An extraordinarily high density of ceramic sherds (many of which were fine polychromes) was recovered from the surface of this plaza, which again mirrors the artifact assemblages seen in the plazas of units L14, L23, and L24.

The Big Picture

In our excavations to the west of the Akapana Pyramid we have seen every indication that over the course of Tiwanaku's history the area in question was utilized in a strictly governed manner. One must consider this area to be prime real estate that was used to serve a variety of different functions effectively catering to the most important need of each subsequent epoch. During the Early Tiwanaku IV period when the site was much smaller, the area in question was far enough away from the existent temples (the Kalasasaya and the Semi-Subterranean Temple) to be used to house the less elite members of Tiwanaku's population. This occupation appears to have been on a lower level than the contexts identified by Couture and Sampeck near where the Putuni would later be built and certainly was less

austere than activities at the contemporaneous Kheri Kala. To be blunt, during the early Tiwanaku IV period people needed a place to live and this is where they lived.

As the site center expanded it became less and less feasible to have low-end domestic activity take place so close to the site's monuments and elite residences. The wave of new construction that has emerged as the hallmark of the Early Tiwanaku IV to the Late Tiwanaku IV transition appears to have inspired the eviction of whoever was living to the west of what would later be the Akapana. The former core residents most likely relocated to the growing city that was beginning to surround the center and the resulting free space was used for more pressing purposes. For a short time, it seems as if parts of the area were used for fine stone working, probably related to the buildings that were being erected around the time of the transition. Afterwards this area became open plaza space and served the valuable and important function of holding people. As the importance of the site grew, the monumentality of the site increased, and the number of people attending site functions no doubt ballooned. These people desperately required an area of congregation for any number of purposes, as can be seen at modern Tiwanaku in the events surrounding the Aymara New Year celebrations.

At some point a large stone structure was deemed necessary and was constructed. This structure was then razed, probably around the time that the Putuni Complex (as we know it today) was being constructed. Indeed, ruined as it may be, the structure identified by our excavations had many Putuni-like qualities and it may be that the much larger Putuni negated the need for this structure leading to it being dismantled. The need for gravel plazas, however, did not wane as the site entered into its later phases and the construction of these superimposed plazas only ceased when the sociopolitical structure of Tiwanaku began to crumble and the site went into decline.

Thus an empty space on the social and political map of Tiwanaku's monumental core has been at least partially filled. That said, it is clear that our excavations have but scratched the surface and further excavation, particularly of the very earliest layers, to the west of the Akapana Pyramid is surely warranted. The area to the west of the Akapana was part of how the people of the past experienced Tiwanaku and was clearly heavily used. We cannot begin to understand this site's grandiose structures if we do not understand the areas around them.

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