

The Interaction Between Ritual and Domestic Space: Excavations on the West Side of the Akapana Pyramid

By Donna Yates and Maeve Skidmore

Presented at the 70<sup>th</sup> annual meeting for the Society for American Anthropology, Salt Lake City, UT.

In defining sacred space, scholars often point it out in contrast to another type of space: the profane. Profane can be defined in many ways, but in this case we think of it as the mundane, the ordinary, the every-day. Places where people live and work are considered “profane” while places of worship or reverence are “sacred”. Mentally, we draw a line between the two. The site of Tiwanaku is no stranger to this paradigm. Early investigators, noting its monumental core and lasting ceremonial significance, described Ancient Tiwanaku as a site of primarily sacred function: a ceremonial center with actual inhabitation kept not only separate, but to a minimum.

This idea was thrown out in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when research by Bolivian archaeologists and Alan Kolata revolutionized investigations at Tiwanaku. (CLICK) They not only proved that this area of the *altiplano* was capable of supporting a large population, but also, for the first time, went about looking for residential sectors of the site. Recent work at Tiwanaku has focused more and more on these occupations. (CLICK) John Janusek’s excavations at Akapana East, (CLICK) Claudia Rivera’s at Ch’iji Jawira, as well as (CLICK) Javier Escalante’s excavations at La Karaña have all produced clear domestic contexts and domestic structures around the site’s periphery.

Nevertheless, our view of the Tiwanaku settlement core remains, for the most part, unchanged, still focusing primarily on its monumental structures and the ceremonial activities

thought to have taken place in them. To some degree, residential life in the core has been addressed in investigations in and near the Putuni. (CLICK) Couture has identified what appear to be elite residences associated with the monumental structures, but even these, she suggests, were occupied by priests and royalty, people who held ceremonial roles in society.

(CLICK) Part of the PAPA project of 2004 focused on an area within the core, west of the Akapana. Going into excavations, we expected to make more finds relating to ceremonial activity at the site. (CLICK) Ground Penetrating Radar data collected two seasons before had predicted the presence of monumental architecture and possibly a plaza floor. The first of these expectations was met, the second was not, but what proved to be more interesting than either of these things was the evidence recovered that indicates that the boundary between the sacred and profane at Tiwanaku may not be as distinct as archaeologists would like to think.

(CLICK) Excavation in units L9 and 11 revealed the eastern wall of a 40 x 50m structure predicted in the GPR survey area. (CLICK) Only a 2m stretch of its foundation stones remained *in situ*, but from basal moldings on their surfaces, it was clear that they would once have supported masonry above. Intact, the wall 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.

A slew of other worked andesite stones (CLICK), in a variety of shapes and sizes were scattered about in the vicinity. The architecture of this sector had clearly been dismantled and its stones hauled off for subsequent building projects, a practice common from Pre-Columbian times up to more recent decades. Although this makes it difficult to speak of the structure’s form, using the assemblage of stones present, we can hypothesize somewhat. (CLICK) Among

the stones abandoned after dismantlement was a monolithic andesite pillar, nearly 2m tall.

Vertical pillars (CLICK) alternating with areas of smaller ashlar-like cut stone (CLICK) is common stylistically throughout the monumental architecture of Tiwanaku and it is likely that the face of this wall held a similar configuration.

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, the floor changed to a flagstone pavement (CLICK). This too had been a victim of quarrying and its original extents were unclear. Similar pavement has been described in other structures within the monumental core, including areas of the (CLICK) Putuni and (CLICK) 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 Tiwanaku IV and V periods, its presence does suggest to us that we are dealing with a later structure.

(CLICK) More shaped andesite stones were uncovered in a trench investigating the northern limits of the structure (CLICK). No masonry was defined since these too had been disturbed, though in this instance the cause of the disturbance seemed to be from looting. Their presence solely in the southwestern part of the trench may indicate that they once made up the corner of the wall previously located, 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 but here it was much more homogenous. 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 a simple canal. Where the ash and floor met (CLICK), a shallow burial had been cut and the remains of a flexed adult laid facing west without significant grave good accompaniment. This individual may have been interred in dedication to the

building before construction began. Such practices have been documented for various types of architecture at Tiwanaku, ranging from residential compounds on the periphery of the core to other monuments within it.

Still further below this stratigraphy lay evidence for a Formative occupation of the area. Once again, the structure has not been securely dated, as ceramic analysis awaits completion, but this rough sequence appears similar to that compiled for the area directly to its north. Excavations by Couture and Sampeck have shown that the area west of the Kalasasaya was initially developed in the late Formative II then renewed in Tiwanaku IV and again on quite a different scale in Tiwanaku V with the construction of the Putuni Platform and the elite residential architecture associated with it. The same may hold true for our area of interest.

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 comparison to the (CLICK) Putuni, for certainly a platform of red fill retained by ashlar masonry surrounding an interior courtyard is reminiscent of this structure. We can postulate that it too had a ceremonial function, but at the moment we have no real data to back this up. Results from excavations in other units west of the Akapana may provide further information.

(CLICK) Unit L8, 20 meters east of the structure and south of the Putuni, was placed so as to investigate several anomalous GPR readings. (CLICK) One of these anomalies has been identified as a trampled floor with an associated hearth. (CLICK) The artifact assemblage from this floor matches those found at many other domestic locations around Tiwanaku. Manos, domestic pottery, camelid and fish bone, modified bone tools, and charred sherds and bones were

all found scattered along this domestic surface. (CLICK) The hearth itself was semicircular, cardinally oriented, blackened and hardened with use. (CLICK) Three stones were associated with this feature and each displayed blackening from controlled burning. Burnt pottery and bone were recovered embedded in the hearth matrix.

The domestic context at Unit L8 is decidedly non elite. The pottery is utilitarian, and the floor is not finely made. No wall foundations were detected in relation to this floor meaning the structure was either made of mud brick that has since eroded or the foundations lay beyond the extent of the unit. (CLICK) The only anomalous artifact associated with the floor was a single ceramic head with coffee bean shaped eyes typical of Amazonian figurines which probably once decorated a bowl. This object may indicate the ethnicity of the people who utilized this domestic area, but it is most likely just a found object: an interesting keepsake, as no other Amazonian artifacts were recovered.

Dating of this context is at a preliminary stage. Onsite pottery analysis places this domestic layer to the Tiwanaku IV or V time periods, but we await final results. More in-depth investigation of the ceramic assemblage as well as analysis of carbon samples will no doubt clarify the dating of this context.

(CLICK) Unit L14 also was placed to investigate a GPR anomaly that appears to have been a series of superimposed floors. (CLICK) Below several of these floors another trampled surface and associated hearth were located. Again the artifact assemblage was comparable to that from Unit L8 and from other domestic areas around the site. A mano was recovered as well as camelid bone, utilitarian pottery, and burnt sherds and bones. (CLICK) The hearth feature was slightly different than the one previously mentioned. Though it was semicircular in shape and cardinally oriented, it did not contain associated stones. It did, however, display evidence

for heavy use: the hearth matrix consisted of black carbon and earth baked to a bright orange color in places. Several large carbon samples were recovered including a piece around 10 cm long that still displays some of the characteristics of the original wood. A burial was located directly below the surface and was associated with the trampled floor. The location of a burial in or near a domestic context is a common occurrence at Tiwanaku, as has been observed by Janusek at Akapana East, Couture in the Putuni Area, and at other domestic locations around the site. As with all other units, ceramic analysis is in its preliminary stages, but this context was sealed by several floors that yielded a significant amount of pottery stylistically dated in the field to Tiwanaku IV or V. The level in question has been preliminarily dated to Tiwanaku IV or just before, but until more thorough analysis is completed, this date is not final.

Much like Unit L8, the domestic surface found in Unit L14 was decidedly non elite. No fine pottery, elite artifacts, or architectural elements were found associated with the domestic area. (CLICK) The remaining question is, of course, what were these people doing where they were, and how do they relate to the monumental complexes at their doorstep?

Janusek has uncovered evidence for kitchens associated with feasting in his excavations at Akapana East. Couture detected similar facilities to the west of the Putuni. These contexts are characterized by multiple hearths, large areas of burning associated with waste disposal, and large storage pits. Neither of the domestic contexts identified by our project appears to fit this pattern: they are characterized by small hearths, limited preparation areas, and a lack of an unusual amount of burnt refuse. These areas do not appear to be kitchen facilities related to Putuni function or feasting activity.

(CLICK) Unit L14, which consists of a series of superimposed gravel and trampled floors, may show some evidence for pottery production. Mica temper along with ceramic sherds

modified into pottery shaping tools and blue pigment were located directly below one of these floors. (CLICK) The floor on which the mica was deposited formed the base of one of several that were scattered with numerous fine slipped and painted wares displaying geometric as well as anthropomorphic designs. Though this pattern of multiple super imposed patios which could have been used for pottery shaping and drying does seem to match the pattern of the nearby kiln area at Ch'iji Jawira, the lack of wasters, molds, or coils in Unit L14 does not support the identification of the area as an artesial site attached to the Putuni complex or the structure previously discussed. Couture has noted that mica temper, pigment, and pottery shaping tools have been located in sub floor offerings in and around the Putuni. (CLICK) As the mica was found in distinct piles and the (CLICK) pigment was found placed carefully beneath half of a camelid ribcage, we believe that this assemblage represents a similar sub floor offering, perhaps dedicatory in nature.

(CLICK) The original question lingers: how do these people relate to the monumental structures around them. A conservative conclusion would be that that these people are servants, courtiers, or serve some other modest function important to the activity of the Putuni or the building just discussed. This conclusion would support Couture's excavations on the West side of the Putuni and would maintain the idea of the "barrio" nature of Tiwanaku domestic settlement (i.e. these domestic areas would be part of the "Putuni neighborhood"). Simply speaking, the monumental facilities needed modest people to function and to support the elite and these people lived to the south of the Putuni. It is possible, however, that the domestic areas that we found do not relate to the complexes at all, rather they are independently functioning domestic units that happen to be within the monumental core. Either way, our ideas about spatial

organization and the boundaries between the sacred and profane at Tiwanaku are seriously being challenged.

Our findings are exciting but preliminary. Ceramic, Microartifact, Paleoethnobotanical, and other analysis will no doubt begin to answer some of the questions that we still have about the west side of the Akapana. Further geophysical work with regards to our findings as well as further excavation should play a large role in future study of the Monumental Core. Though our investigation of this area of Tiwanaku is in its infancy, we can already say that the ancient activity on the west side of the Akapana is far more complex than we imagined. The line dividing sacred from profane is now blurred and the boundaries between religious life and secular life, elite residence and non-elite domesticity at Tiwanaku are being redefined on the west side of the Akapana.

References Cited:

Berman, Marc

2004 *Lukurmata: Household Archaeology in Prehispanic Bolivia*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.

Couture, Nicole C.

2003 Ritual, Monumentalism, and Residence at Mollo Kontu, Tiwanaku. In *Tiwanaku and Its Hinterland, Archaeology and Paleoecology of an Andean Civilization: Urban and Rural Archaeology*, Alan L. Kolata Ed., Smithsonian Books: pp. 202-225

2004 Monumental Space, Courtly Style, and Elite Life at Tiwanaku. In *Tiwanaku: Ancestors of the Inca*, edited by Margaret Young Sanchez. University of Nebraska Press. pp.126-149.

Couture, Nicole C. and Kathryn Sampeck

2003 "Putuni: A History of Palace Architecture at Tiwanaku" In *Tiwanaku and Its Hinterland, Archaeology and Paleoecology of an Andean Civilization: Urban and Rural Archaeology*, Alan L. Kolata Ed., Smithsonian Books. pp. 226-265

Eliade, Mircea.

1959. *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard R. Task. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Escalante Moscoso, J.

1992 *Arquitectura Prehispanica en los Andes Bolivianos*. Producciones CIMA, La Paz.

2003 "Residential Architecture in La Karaña, Tiwanaku" In *Tiwanaku and Its Hinterland, Archaeology and Paleoecology of an Andean Civilization: Urban and Rural Archaeology*, edited by Alan L. Kolata. Washington: Smithsonian Books. pp. 316-326.

Janusek, John Wayne

2003. The Changing Face of Tiwanaku Residential Life: State and Local Identity in an Andean City. In *Tiwanaku and Its Hinterland: archaeology and paleoecology of an Andean civilization*, Alan L. Kolata, Ed. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press. pp.262-295.

2004 *Identity and Power in the Ancient Andes: Tiwanaku Cities through Time*. New York: Routledge.

Janusek, John Wayne and Deborah E. Blom

2004 "Identifying Tiwanaku Urban Populations: Style, Identity, and Ceremony in Andean Cities." *Population and Preindustrial Cities: A Cross-Cultural Sampling*, edited by Glenn R. Storey. University of Alabama Press. pp. 200-227.

Kolata, Alan L.

1993 *The Tiwanaku: Portrait of an Andean Civilization*. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers

- 2003 Tiwanaku Ceremonial Architecture and Urban Organization. In *Tiwanaku and Its Hinterland: archaeology and paleoecology of an Andean civilization*, edited by Alan L. Kolata. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press. pp. 175-201.
- 2004 The Flow of Cosmic Power: Religion, Ritual, and the People of Tiwanaku. In *Tiwanaku: Ancestors of the Inca*, edited by Margaret Young Sanchez. University of Nebraska Press. pp.96-125.
- Kolata, Alan and Carlos Ponce Sanginés.  
2004. Two Hundred Years of Archaeological Research at Tiwanaku: A Selective History. In *Tiwanaku and Its Hinterland: Archaeology and Paleoecology of an Andean civilization*, edited by Alan L. Kolata. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press. pp. 13-29.
- MacDonald, Mary N.  
2003. Place and the Study of Religion. In *Experiences of Place*, edited by Mary N. MacDonald. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Manzanilla, Linda and Eric Woodward.  
1990 "Restos Humanos Asociados a la Piramide de Akapana (Tiwanaku, Bolivia)." *Latin American Antiquity*, Vol.1, No.2. pp133-149.
- Rivera Casanovas, Claudia  
2003 "Ch'iji Jawira: A case of ceramic Specialization in the Tiwanaku Urban Periphery" In *Tiwanaku and Its Hinterland: Archaeology and Paleoecology of an Andean Civilization*, edited by Alan L. Kolata. Washington: Smithsonian Books. pp. 296-315.
- Williams, Patrick Ryan, et. al.  
2004 "Ground –Based Remote Sensing and Early State Development in the South-Central Andes" *International Conference on Remote Sensing Archaeology*, Beijing, China. pp. 149-157