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Colonial Peru

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Witnessing the In-visibility of Inca Architecture in Colonial Peru

Chinchero, Peru, January 9, 1999

I had awoken that morning full of excitement and anticipation. As I ate breakfast with Simeona and her children in the warm adobe kitchen, I could not wait to begin that day's work. The day before I had spotted in the distance what appeared to be a beautiful Inca wall. As I had found very little surviving Inca architecture in this portion of the town, I was thrilled. The wall could be a critical piece of the puzzle, help me to reconstruct what the Inca royal estate had looked like, and I began to envision the various possibilities. As Jacinto and I hiked over the hill from Simeona's house to the new wall, I felt my chest tighten, not only due to the altitude (11,000 feet) but also because of my own towering expectations.

However, upon arriving at the wall, I was filled with disappointment. Although the wall had the formal elements of an Inca wall (which I had noticed from afar), up close the wall revealed some surprising evidence. Staring back at me on the stone blocks were the small, evenly distributed tool marks unmistakably left by a particular metal chisel, a tool that was brought to the Andes after the Spanish invasion in 1532 CE. This made the wall useless to my study of imperial Inca architecture. Since the wall was clearly erected after 1532, it could not have been part of the original Inca royal estate, which had been built for the ruler Thupa 'Inka sometime between 1480 and 1500 CE (Figure 1). Thus, at first I dismissed the wall as an anomaly of the colonial period and returned to study the architecture at Chinchero that was built during the imperial Inca period. Yet, in the next few months, more and more anomalous walls appeared, and the questions regarding their significance con-

tinued to grow in my mind as I measured and mapped the indigenous town.

After a few months, the rainy season came full force to the south-central Andes, turning the steep, stone-lined streets in town into cascading fountains and mountain paths into muddy traps, rendering fieldwork impossible. I escaped to the archives and libraries of Cuzco and began to focus on the issue of the anomalous walls from the Spanish occupation. I searched the literature on Inca architecture built in the colonial period, only to discover that there was very little written on the topic. As I read further, I also realized that there was no actual place for Inca—or for that matter indigenous—architecture in the current definitions of Latin American architecture in the colonial period, at least not in any meaningful way. Instead, I found that any opportunities to allow for its existence seemed to disappear, occluded by rhetorical conventions (such as architectural categories and naming practices) and falling between disciplinary boundaries and scholarly assumptions (such as the relationship between style and ethnicity, as well as historical and cultural ruptures and periodizations). My discovery of these slips and occlusions not only revealed how a part of the architectural record had been overlooked, it also uncovered a larger problem of how colonial-era indigenous architecture has been seen or, more accurately, not seen by scholars.¹

Architecture as a Product of Empire

Inca architecture is ubiquitous in the Andes; its proliferation is understood as a visible manifestation of the power of the Inca Empire. The Incas were the last of a series of indigenous nations that ruled over most of the western rim of South

America during the fifteenth century. The Incas rapidly built a powerful, well-organized empire that stretched from modern Colombia in the north to Argentina and Chile in the south. Along the way, they implemented an impressive building campaign in the newly colonized lands, one that incorporated a distinctive architecture, was easily recognizable, relatively simple and quick to build, and adapted to diverse environments and uses.² As part of their conquest strategy, the Incas built. Their architecture was marked by its unique stone masonry, walls that had an inward batter and by an emphasis on single-room, rectangular structures with trapezoidal doorways, niches, and windows (Figure 2).³ While adapting skillfully to local contexts (hence, allowing for regional expressions and variability in the imperial architecture), Inca architecture read—much as it does today—as distinctly different from other built environments, visually proclaiming the expanse and power of the Inca Empire. However, in 1532 the Spanish arrived on Andean soil, quickening the dramatic decline of the Inca Empire, and, it is often assumed, bringing an end to Inca architecture.⁴

Just as the proliferation of Inca architecture across the Andes has been seen as visual evidence of the might of the Inca empire, the destruction of indigenous cities and buildings and their replacement by European counterparts has been seen as a visual manifestation of the power of the Spanish empire over indigenous empires. Indeed, European architecture spread rapidly across the Americas. As historians Burkholder and Johnson have pointed out, “in a remarkably short time, the conquerors’ cathedrals, convents, administrative buildings, and private residences replaced the pyramids, elevated plazas, ball courts, and palaces of the indigenous elites.”⁵ Imperial capitals such as the Mexica capital Tenochtitlan and the Inca capital Cuzco were transformed into visual attestations of Spanish power. In indigenous towns and cities, Spaniards “destroyed many of the Indian structures to make room for churches, government buildings, and Spanish residences.”⁶ In addition, the Spanish imposed new urban plans in a demonstration of their power to resettle indigenous communities across the New World.⁷ Research has shown that much of this dramatic change seems to have



been deliberate and self-conscious, as was the Spanish practice of intentionally leaving visible remnants of the prior buildings under or within the new structures to serve as clear reminders of the changes in power.⁸

These dramatic changes have captivated art historians, whose studies have explored the introduction and transformation of European styles and architectural practices in the New World. These studies have shown the rapidity with which European influences moved across the Americas. One of the leading authorities on colonial Andean architecture, Valerie Fraser, states that,

within a hundred years of Columbus’s landfall in the Caribbean, the Spanish settlers had superimposed a recognizably European imprint on the landscape from Mexico to Chile, burying the vast religious and urban complexes of the indigenous inhabitants, especially the Aztec and Inca, beneath uniform grid-plan towns, straight streets and arcaded squares, stone-fronted government buildings, palaces and town houses, and above all, religious foundations: churches and monasteries with generous dimensions, and imposing facades and bell-towers.⁹

The resulting image is of an indigenous landscape that was rapidly destroyed and thoroughly supplanted by a European one.

But in this sweeping introduction and imposition of European architecture, what happened

Figure 1.

View of the street *Conquista* in Chincho. Note the stone walls topped by adobe blocks. From a distance, the stone walls appear similar to imperial Inca walls at Chincho, with their inward batter, height, and stone blocks. However, on closer examination, one notices that many of the blocks have been worked with metal hammer tools introduced by Europeans immigrants. These hard metal tools do not deform noticeably with continued use and leave the distinct wear pattern found. By contrast, imperial Inca masons used a series of stone tools, which also left a distinctive tool mark. From this evidence I was able to determine that many of the walls lining the street were made after 1532. In addition, remnants of a series of parallel imperial Inca walls and one finely made building were found embedded in the fabric of the colonial era street. Photograph by author.

Figure 2.

View of an interior building at Pisac, a site attributed to Thupa 'Inka's father Pachakuti. This structure shows the typical niche form, niche arrangement, stone masonry, and slight inward wall batter that characterized imperial Inca architecture. Photograph by author.



to indigenous traditions? Did any indigenous traditions survive the onslaught of European artistic and construction practices? Scholars have long noted the abundance of indigenous traits in colonial material culture. Early scholarship held that these traditions were lingering, often meaningless aspects of the past that were soon to disappear.¹⁰ However, subsequent research on colonial-era paintings, tapestries, drinking vessels, and other movable arts demonstrated that indigenous traditions were vibrant and varied during the European occupation of the Americas. Indigenous artists, who rejected, transformed, or embraced European traditions in their own work, remained active during this period. Colonial arts were dynamic expressions of complex cultural interactions.¹¹

Art historians, trained to pick up on the multiple inspirations and layers of meaning in works of art, have increasingly focused on these manifestations of cultural entanglements, yet architectural historians exploring colonial Latin America have not been as thorough in reading layers of influence. The focus on tracing European-derived styles has tended to obscure complex cultural transformations. Although there have been a few important studies that have highlighted indigenous practices in colonial architecture, these

have often been dismissed as regional manifestations that do not call into question the belief that colonial Latin American architecture is still fundamentally European in character.¹²

One of the reasons architecture is treated as a distinctly different type of material culture is its presumed association with the state and its institutions. Due to this belief, architecture in the colonial period is thought to reflect the intentions of the Spanish government and its elite citizens and associated institutions (such as the Roman Catholic Church). The speed with which European architecture overtook indigenous forms in the Andes is seen as an expression of the rapidity with which the Spanish forces overcame their indigenous cultural counterparts. However, it is important to remember that what the Iberian powers claimed to be in their control was often not, at least not in the beginning. Historians in the last several decades have challenged the idea of a swift and complete transition from indigenous to Spanish control in the Americas, and their work has revealed the nuanced, multifaceted dynamics of invasion, resistance, and adaptation that characterized the first centuries of the European invasion.¹³ For example, studies conducted on the extended Maya resistance and the mid-colonial Aymara revolt have exposed how

fragile Spanish control in parts of the Americas could be. There was often a significant difference between the intent of the colonizers in terms of their conquest strategy and what they were actually able to enact on the ground, a disparity that varied greatly across space and time.

In the Andes, such a disjuncture is most evident in the vast mountainous areas, which made up a significant portion of the new territories in Viceroyal Peru and housed the preponderance of the people, the majority of whom were indigenous.¹⁴ In 1532, the Europeans arrived on the north coast of South America, encountering an Inca empire devastated by a brutal civil war and the introduction of European diseases.¹⁵ The Spanish kidnapped the Inca ruler Atahualpa and demanded an enormous ransom for his freedom. However, upon receiving the treasure, the Spanish killed Atahualpa and proclaimed control over the lands in the name of Spain.

As we now know, this declaration of Spanish imperial dominion was premature, as the brutal murder of the Inca ruler anticipated a lengthy period of negotiation, during which various indigenous and European groups vied for power, each manipulating the other in hopes of (re)gaining full control over the Andes. During this period, lasting from 1532 to 1570, there were proportionally few Europeans in the Andes, fostering a practice in which Spaniards relied on indigenous leaders to mediate their intents and carry out their plans, as well as build their architecture. Continuing well after the Spanish were able to bring the high Andes under firm Spanish control, the use of indigenous intermediaries was particularly evident in areas of large indigenous populations, such as the Inca heartland, where indigenous resistance and cultural production remained strong.

Hence, while the Spanish colonizers deployed architectural projects as part of their conquest strategy, they did not have the power to completely transform the built environment of their newly conquered lands. In many parts of the Americas, indigenous individuals, groups, and communities continued to wield some form of control over the built environment, particularly in their own cities and homes where there was limited European influence.¹⁶ The architecture

ranged from those sponsored by individuals to those sponsored by indigenous organizations and included domestic, religious, and civic buildings, as well as urban places, such as the Inca city of Vilcabamba and the Itza Maya city of Tayasal. With so many areas jostling for control and other areas far from Spanish reach, we must rethink the assumption that the Spanish government controlled the Americas to the extent that it determined the architectural landscape and eclipsed indigenous practice completely.

Monumental versus Vernacular Architecture

If the Spanish governments and its elite patrons did not have complete control of the built environment, what was being built in areas in which struggles for power continued or where Spain loosely held sway over a large and not readily controlled indigenous population? What type of architecture did indigenous people build for themselves during the Spanish occupation? Unfortunately, we know very little about the buildings made in the colonial period for patrons not directly aligned with Spanish authorities. Most of the architectural studies in the Andes have focused on the major monuments of the European conquest, specifically those buildings associated with the Spanish government, its elite citizens, and the Catholic Church. This bias is due to assumptions and practices within the field of architectural history, rather than an issue related exclusively to the study of colonial Latin American architecture.

Architectural historians in Europe and the Americas (North, Central, and South) have focused primarily on “high-style” or monumental architecture. This category is an elusive one but tends to concentrate on the architecture of powerful state institutions and the elite. Some scholars have called the focus of these studies “Architecture with a capital A.”¹⁷

By contrast, all other architecture has tended to be grouped under the rubric of “vernacular.” This category is equally difficult to define. Some have attempted to do so on the grounds of the training of the builders, systems of construction, scale, or the state of development of a culture who builds.¹⁸ However, Dell Upton has pointed out that the actual definition of the category of the

vernacular is not as important as understanding how the category has served as a foil for high-style architecture, which is at the core of Western architectural history. He notes that vernacular and high-style architecture are not normative categories but are a culturally constructed dichotomy that enables a hierarchy of buildings to be established, such that those made for the elites in power can be placed above all others.¹⁹ One does not need to read very far in the architectural literature to see the examples of this. Until recently, studies of architecture have focused almost exclusively on the architecture of the powerful rather than the modest architecture of the everyday.

Differences of materials have reinforced the dichotomy, such that the architecture that has endured has tended to be large scale and built of durable materials. Usually this requires the resources of a state. By contrast, architecture created by individuals of modest means tends to be made of perishable materials and on a much smaller scale. With time, these buildings visually disappear, leaving us with the enduring architectural complexes that are often the deliberate gestures of imperialism.

The availability of written sources has bolstered this emphasis on high-style or monumental architecture. In areas of the world where there is a vibrant writing tradition, architecture created by elites and powerful institutions is more likely than vernacular architecture to be referred to in written material. Thus, architectural historians have much more evidence available to study when looking at architecture of elites. This has reinforced which types of buildings architectural historians study, namely architecture of literate elites and their institutions rather than structures built by nonliterate groups, historically often the majority of a population.

True to disciplinary practices, the study of colonial Latin American architecture has emphasized the grand and enduring monuments of the colonial period, such as the impressive and costly structures relating to the Spanish government, the Catholic church, and the homes of the elite (usually Spanish) citizens. What could be classified as Andean vernacular architecture (primarily structures built for people not directly associated with European powers nor designed

by architects trained in European academic institutions) has been largely ignored. Thus the architecture covering the majority of the Andes and its largely indigenous population built after 1532 has escaped study.

Naming Colonial Architectural Categories

The influence of the monumental/vernacular dichotomy can be seen in the practice of naming colonial Latin American architectural categories. This has been set in motion by a disciplinary divide between archaeologists on one side and art and architectural historians on the other, with archaeologists focusing primarily on indigenous architecture built before 1532 and art and architectural historians studying European architectural traditions after this date.²⁰ Disciplinary boundaries have resulted in a divergent language for pre- and post-1532 architecture, one that implies an end of indigenous architectural practices and their replacement with European designs. For example, architecture built before 1532 in the Andes carries the names of the many indigenous groups with which they are associated, such as Aymara, Moche, Inca, and Chachapoya architecture. However, for architecture built after 1532, there are just two categories, Spanish and mestizo, suggesting the end of the diverse indigenous architectural practices. Spanish architecture tends to be equated with the monumental and hence is often the focus of research, while mestizo is a more nebulous category, frequently applied to more modest structures, a type of Andean vernacular expression.

These naming practices have played a critical role in how we understand architecture in the colonial period. Spanish architecture (Figure 3) has traditionally been analyzed in terms of its European elements, and mestizo or hybrid architecture (Figure 4) has been highlighted for its unusual mixing of European and indigenous elements.²¹ In addition, Spanish and mestizo styles are assumed to reflect the ethnic groups that designed, built, and often inhabited the structures. Spanish architecture is usually found in the major cities, while mestizo architecture tends to be found in secondary centers, usually in the form of provincial churches. The prevalence of mestizo style in remote settings is seen as a lack of Spanish influence and control in more

hard-to-reach locations. The Spanish and mestizo categories focus on structures built by Spanish institutions, such as the Catholic Church, as well as by wealthy individuals. They reiterate an emphasis on European powers and cultures, but they also hint at the possibility that other players may have been involved in the colonial fabric of the New World.

Clearly these two categories do not sufficiently encompass all of the architecture built during the Spanish occupation of the Andes. For example, indigenous structures built in the colonial period fall into neither category, potentially threatening the stability of these rubrics. An example of excluded architecture is neo-Inca architecture. Scholars have used this catchall label to describe a variety of buildings that have clear links to imperial Inca architectural traditions.²² It ranges from architecture that looks nearly identical to structures built before the arrival of Europeans on Andean soil, to Inca architecture that includes Spanish influences.

This category of buildings has received almost no attention by scholars. Federico Kauffmann Doig is one of the few scholars to examine the continuation of Inca architecture practices.²³ One reason for this lack of attention is the previously stated notion that indigenous material culture stopped being produced soon after the European invasion. Kaufmann Doig's important work could have easily destabilized these assumptions and practices but was prevented from doing so by the author himself. He described his "Inca-influenced" architecture as being part of the category "mestizo." In doing so, he effectively removed this architecture from a longer indigenous tradition. Instead, he has placed it as a subset of a new European-dominated architectural category, thus reinforcing the notion of a Spanish-dominated colonial landscape.

However, even the name "neo-Inca," used by subsequent scholars to describe this perceived subset of mestizo architecture, does not menace the pervasive belief in the dramatic cultural and architectural rupture of 1532. Instead, the name suggests that this category of buildings is part of a revival, therefore reinforcing the assumed rupture. When used to describe architectural traditions, "neo" means a revival, a rebirth of a



tradition that has died. As we can see in examples such as neogothic or neoclassical, architectural revivals are usually introduced after a significant period of time, usually measured in centuries rather than decades.²⁴ Furthermore, revivals are often the products of groups that are culturally and geographically distant from the original creators of the style. The revived style is also frequently used in different contexts. Examples are the monuments to North American governance, such as the neogothic parliament building in Canada or the neoclassical Capitol in Washington, D.C. Both are far removed in time, space, and ethnicity from where these styles were first used. Likewise, neo-Inca suggests a revival of Inca style after a significant time of abandonment and the style may have had little

(top) Figure 3.
Cathedral of Cuzco, Peru.
Front façade. Photograph
by author.

(bottom) Figure 4.
San Pedro Church, Lake
Titicaca, Zepita, Peru.
Photograph by author.

Figure 5.
Exterior view of two colonial-era buildings from shared private courtyard. These structures were separated by an entrance space that opens out to the public street. Chinchero, Peru. Photograph by author.



to do with Inca descendants or have carried the same original meaning.

Problematizing terms like “neo-Inca” leads to other questions such as when did Inca architecture die? For how long was it abandoned? When did the revival begin? As no one has seriously investigated these questions, we must turn directly to the physical evidence. Indeed, a study of the surviving evidence—and there is an abundance in Cuzco—reveals that there is *no time* in the early colonial period when we can say that Inca architecture was no longer being built. Rather, neo-Inca architecture appears in seamless continuity with imperial Inca constructions. Sometimes it is impossible to separate the types stylistically. This suggests that the name neo-Inca is historically misinformed and highlights the subtle yet profound effect that scholarly naming practices can have on how we understand the past.²⁵

The name *neo-Inca* appears to have been erroneously given to this category of buildings because of their assumed link with a political entity, the neo-Inca state.²⁶ This implicit relationship reflects a tendency to interpret all (colonial) architecture as products of a state and its associated institutions. Yet, linking all architecture with political bodies or movements disregards

the many types of buildings that are produced separately from or contrary to the state, and it ignores the complex ways that architecture functions within a culture. In the case of the buildings labeled neo-Inca, most of these structures had nothing to do with a political movement but were the individual or communal efforts of local ethnic Incas in the form of shared spaces or private homes.²⁷

Inca Architecture in Chinchero, Peru

Examples of Inca architecture produced in the colonial period can be found in the very walls that had so confounded me during the early days of my fieldwork. These “anomalous walls” lie in public spaces such as the town plaza as well as in private homes, where they are frequently found today. In one section of the inhabited town of Chinchero, one finds a collection of colonial homes built by indigenous commoners and elite Inca residents (Figure 5). The spatial arrangements of these buildings are classic Inca. They are freestanding, single-room, single-story rectangular structures. The buildings are often arranged parallel with one another or at right angles. An open space usually separates the structures. Infrequently the buildings are arranged in a courtyard design, one that

follows the layout of the *kancha*, or household compound, as seen in the imperial Inca site of Ollantaytambo rather than the continuous construction typical of Spanish courtyard housing. These structures are unlike most vernacular traditions in Spain, where even modest homes were often contiguous, multiroom, multiple-storied structures. In addition, the floor plans of Spanish vernacular housing ranged from rectangular to round and most had interior connections, such as doorways connecting two interior rooms. One of the only Spanish spatial patterns found in the Chinchero buildings is the occasional entrance hall.

While the spatial layout of the structures are almost entirely Inca, the construction and iconographic influences in the Chinchero houses draws from both Inca and European traditions. The private homes are constructed from adobe on a stone base. This was the standard combination found in imperial Inca Chinchero but in different proportions. The colonial adobe bricks in the house walls were made in molds. Even though form molds were used in the northern coastal Andes, the traditional method in the central highlands had been to form adobe bricks by hand. In the colonial period, the Spanish are credited with introducing the use of the standard form mold in the central highlands.²⁸

The iconographic choices found in the colonial structures creatively employed both Inca and European-derived design elements. Niches were ubiquitous elements in Inca architecture. In the colonial homes at Chinchero, niches are often evenly spaced and arranged in a single row, one of the most common niche patterns in Tawantinsuyu (Figure 6). Yet, like their imperial Inca predecessor, the colonial Chinchero residents experimented freely with a variety of patterns. The colonial Chinchero residents introduced Spanish elements in the form of arches. In the private homes, arches were creatively combined with rectangular and trapezoidal doorways and niches (Figure 7).

The incorporation of Spanish arches into the private homes of indigenous residents reveals problems with facile association of architecture and iconography with ethnicity. These indigenous inhabitants incorporated the Spanish arches into

their own Andean houses; the arches cannot be a reflection of Spanish ethnicity. Also, the use of both expressions within a single structure reveals the problem with seeing the two styles as always existing in opposition. The arches in the colonial indigenous homes remind us that the meaning of architectural styles and iconography is not set but rather changes over time and across space, depending on the context.²⁹

The use of Spanish style motifs in Inca architecture of the colonial period also highlights the issue of change in Inca architecture. Until recently, the prevailing view has been that Inca architecture did not change. This belief was not based on an analysis of the evidence but originated in an antiquated assumption in Western scholarship that indigenous cultures were essentially static.³⁰ Therefore, scholars tended to interpret change in colonial indigenous material culture as a loss of once-pure traditions rather than as an adaptation to evolving contexts. This viewpoint is in stark contrast to the interpretation governing European architecture, where change and adaptation are seen as normal progressions and evidence of its complexities.

It has been only recently that imperial Inca architecture has been recognized as dynamic, and research has begun to give us insights into Inca adaptations to local influences. The research of Jean-Pierre Protzen and Craig Morris at Tambo Colorado highlight two examples. The first is the raised floors, or beds, found in many of the rooms at Tambo Colorado. This design element is not found in Inca architecture from the Cuzco region and appears to be an adaptation of local coastal architecture. The second example is the use of *tapia*, or tapped earth, rather than adobe. *Tapia* is a common construction method of the coast, and the Incas incorporated this technique when they conquered the area.³¹

The Islands of the Sun and the Moon, two of the most sacred of Inca sites, provide other examples of change in Inca architecture. Here, the Tiwanaku style in the form of elaborate stepped frets and the Andean cross were incorporated into Inca architecture. Tiwanaku was one of the most important centers of artistic production before the Incas and Lake Titicaca, where the Island of the Sun lies, was considered an important spiri-

Figure 6.

View of niches in the interior of a colonial house. Niche pattern is in typical horizontal arrangement with even spacing, typically found during the imperial Inca period. However, two of the niches have pointed lintels (made by placing adobe blocks diagonally) while the other two have flat lintels (supported by horizontal wooden beam). Chinchero, Peru. Photograph by author.



Figure 7.

View of niches in interior of a colonial house. This is just one example of the creative ways in which local residents experiment with niche shape and pattern placements. Chinchero, Peru. Photograph by author.



tual center for the region. Hence, coopting Tiwanaku iconography into their regional architecture may have been a strategic act on part of the Incas. Throughout their empire, the Incas adapted their construction and design to the particular circum-

stances of their buildings. Therefore, the change that is apparent in colonial Inca architecture should not be seen as a loss or a corruption of an indigenous tradition but as an *expected development*, one that was driven by human intentions.

The adoption of foreign elements was a continuation of Inca cultural patterns, architectural or otherwise.³² Hence we must be careful to examine all aspects of Inca architectural practice to understand the dynamic forces at work. To look only at form rather than at process leads to overly narrow understandings. The changes evident in Andean architecture in the colonial period reflect a larger process of cultural change that has been brought to light by ethno-historians.

Painting and Performance in Chinchero

To understand the circumstances that gave rise to a particular building, we turn to relevant written documents and material culture. Yet, in many indigenous areas such as Chinchero, there are few written sources. Therefore, the study of the material culture becomes even more critical. In the case of Chinchero, a painting provides some compelling insights into the indigenous residents, their use of both Inca and Spanish iconographies, and their use of public space. This painting is complex, hence I will summarize some of the most compelling elements from a previous study that are relevant to an analysis.³³

Francisco Chivantito was an indigenous artist born and raised in Chinchero. In 1693, he completed a painting of the Virgin of Montserrat. The right side of this painting depicts the town center of the colonial period, with the church and plaza of Chinchero (Figure 8). In the plaza, against the backdrop of the Inca niche wall, stands the local *kuraka*, or village leader, surrounded by elite men and women and lower status musicians. The public performance in the plaza is reminiscent of imperial Inca use of the plaza where Inca leaders would display their authority in a variety of choreographed ceremonies, suggesting that the function of space resonates with a longer Andean tradition.³⁴

In this painting, the importance of the Andean elite is clear, as is its close relationship with both European and Andean cultures. Research on the depiction of indigenous and Spanish clothing has shown that the higher the prestige of a person, the fewer indigenous elements he or she is shown wearing.³⁵ The *kuraka* in the center dons a Spanish coat, jacket, shirt, shoes, pants, and leggings. However, he also wears the traditional Inca tunic.

The musicians, on the other hand, show more of a mixture in clothing types. Most wear Iberian pants and coats, yet all wear Inca shirts decorated with indigenous patterns. As a lower-class group, their clothing contains more indigenous elements than does the clothing of the *kuraka*.

This portrayal of indigenous men in the Chinchero painting provides key insights into the material culture of the residents, particularly into how the body was adorned and how class and ethnicity were articulated. Clearly, the assumption that style directly reflects ethnicity is false. Here, indigenous elites as well as indigenous commoners draw from pan-Andean, Inca, and Spanish material culture to represent class status, as well as local indigenous identity. Spanish elements do not appear to represent a lessening of Inca or indigenous identity but serve as signifiers of authority that are incorporated and translated into indigenous cultural performance.

In terms of architecture, this provides an important clue into understanding the addition of Spanish styles and construction techniques, suggesting not only functional aspects due to economy and ease but also suggesting that Spanish-derived aspects in Inca vernacular architecture did not signify the presence of Spaniards in what we know to be an indigenous town, nor

Figure 8.
View of plaza scene depicting local residents and architecture in Chinchero. *Virgin of Montserrat*, Francisco Chivantito, 1693. The Church of Nuestra Señora de Montserrat, Chinchero, Peru. Photograph by author.



represent a shift from indigenous and Inca identity to that of a Spanish or mestizo one. As a parallel to the architecture, the Chinchero painting highlights how aspects of Spanish culture were incorporated into town life in a dynamic and meaningful way. Indeed, this was in the tradition of Inca culture that predated the European invasion, one that was always dynamic and adaptive.

However, that is not to suggest that Spanish material culture was seen as benign or was easily translated into all aspects of Chinchero daily and ceremonial life. In the town scene, Chivantito depicts two women walking behind the kuraka while two other women carry large Inca jars. Despite the 150 years since the Spanish invasion, their clothing shows almost no sign of Spanish influence. They wear the traditional shawl and the Inca dress, the patterns of which are entirely Andean.

Chivantito's image of women in Chinchero reveals the divergent ways in which indigenous people may have interacted with Spanish culture and oppression. These images of women indicate that a rejection of things Spanish and an embracing of Inca material culture could also articulate authority. This image also reveals the profound impact that gender could play in the experience of the Spanish occupation, suggesting that how we interpret the Inca buildings of colonial-period Chinchero and the surrounding region is dependent also on understanding the gender dynamics of the household and town.

Chivantito's painting reflects the roles defined by class, gender, and ethnic conflict in colonial Chinchero and thus suggests some of the distinct and varied experiences of the conquest. The adoption of Spanish artistic elements did not cause people to become Spanish; instead Spanish-derived aspects were recast with new meaning in the Andean landscape. For the elite men, Spanish style became one method of showing their access to another system of authority. For elite woman, the rejection of Spanish influences—and their celebration of Inca signifiers—emphasized their important role in maintaining critical continuities with indigenous traditions and thus their own source of authority. Relying on a diversity of evidence allows for a deeper understanding of colonial architecture. In the case of Chinchero,

a single painting can provide a glimpse into the people who designed, built and experienced the architectural landscape.

The painting provides insights into the rich Inca architecture from the colonial period in Chinchero, and it suggests paths for further research. The persistence of Inca spatial patterns indicates the continuation of some Inca social practices within the home. However, the addition of the European-derived entrance hall indicates accommodation to Iberian influences in private life, one that mediated the dynamic life of the town streets with that of the intimate family scene. This choice in adaptation can be seen in construction practices as well, such that Inca construction practices continued, although with the significant addition of molds used to form adobe bricks. This may be a reflection of the fact that indigenous men were brought in by the Spanish as labor to erect their homes and settlements, and in the process they introduced indigenous men to Iberian construction practices.

A more complicated question regards the diversity of iconographic influences found within the private homes. Ranging from the standard imperial Inca iconography of trapezoidal niches in a row, to creative mixtures of European-inspired arches next to Inca-style niches, these arrangements reveal the diversity of options open to residents and the distinct choices they embraced. Was this a reflection of the dramatic upheaval of the time or of the diverse ethnic, class, and gender differences of the indigenous inhabitants in Chinchero, who each experienced the Spanish invasion in distinct ways? Or did this patterning reflect the changing meaning of the forms and styles, as each became introduced and translated in a distinct way? While we do not know at this stage in the investigation, we can say with certainty that Inca architecture continued well into the colonial period in Chinchero and that it was as adaptive and creative as it was during imperial Inca times.

Andean Built Environments: Another Look

The preceding examples of Inca architecture in colonial Chinchero also force us to consider whether they were unique or representative of larger Andean architectural practices. Can similar

structures be found elsewhere? Evidence suggests that the answer is yes, particularly in the former Inca capital of Cuzco and in the surrounding Inca heartland. The numerous structures labeled “neo-Inca” are a case in point. Examples can be found in the Sacred Valley (Figure 9) or in Cuzco, where one can walk down almost any of the old streets to find examples of Inca-style architecture built in the colonial period. Ranging from structures that were constructed with the traditional stone tools of the imperial Inca period to those built with European metal hammers, the colonial architecture of Cuzco shows a range in incorporating elements of European construction and form into Inca architectural practices.

While these structures indicate the prevalence of this category of buildings in the colonial period, they do not necessarily proclaim the ethnicity of their inhabitants or patrons. Unlike the examples of Chinchero, Cuzco was home to Spaniards and Incas, as well as other indigenous and European groups. Hence, we can begin to question how cultural interaction may have impacted the built environment in the colonial period beyond Inca architecture for Inca elites. For example, did Spaniards adopt Inca architecture styles for their own homes?

When we look at this evidence more closely, we will likely find a very complicated picture, one that involves not just Inca and Spaniard but various indigenous and European groups. In Cuzco alone, there is evidence suggesting not only a vibrant Inca architecture in the colonial period, but also a Chachapoya one. The plan and perspective of two parishes in Cuzco (dated 1643) reveals the distinct rooftops and housing arrangements of a densely inhabited Chachapoya neighborhood. Now we can begin to discuss the evolution of different indigenous architectural traditions before *and after* 1532.

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As I sit on my balcony, watching the setting sun turn the desert mountainside from warm beige to a glowing purple, I think about what I missed those first months in Chinchero. A key problem is that I had looked first to the definitions of colonial architecture as form and iconography and not as process. However, as Dean and Leibsohn have so eloquently shown, it is what we don’t readily see that can be as (and perhaps more) important as what we *do* see. Those tool marks, which were such an early source of frustration to me, were the keys to understanding the importance of the



Figure 9.
Colonial-era house in the Sacred Valley. Has often been attributed to an early colonial Inca leader, Sayri Topa. Yucay, Peru. Photograph by author.

structures, as well as a reminder of the complex process of making that is central to understanding architecture. In the early colonial period, the labor force, which built even the most European-looking buildings, was almost if not completely indigenous. The tool marks on the Chinchero walls only begin to hint at the complex stories of architecture in fracture, rather than just in form, that remain to be written for the Andes in the colonial period.

As the examples in Chinchero and Cuzco show, the Andes during the colonial period were not only a Spanish architectural landscape but also an indigenous one. Inca architecture was always dynamic, actively incorporating other influences. These changes never made Inca architecture less Inca or less indigenous. Instead, new influences were translated into an Inca vocabulary of material culture, adding to its richness and meaning. Architecture is dynamic and can reflect the specificity of the context in which it was built and the people who inhabited it. Hence, we architectural historians need to rigorously question our own disciplinary practices in order to more fully understand the complexity of colonial Andean life being explored by social and art historians.

We must be careful with the names that we give architectural styles. Terms such as “neo-Inca” and even “mestizo” can create fundamental misunderstandings and mask important continuities. As the painting and domestic architecture in Chinchero suggests, to read style as reflecting ethnicity is to miss important issues of cultural translation occurring in colonial material culture in the Andes. We must also be cautious reading larger ethnic and political battles into architecture, for we can make assumptions of linkages that never existed. In many ways, we have only begun to grapple with the issue of contact and continuity in Andean architecture in the colonial period.

Indigenous architecture in the colonial period—its space, construction, and iconography—can provide a new avenue of research into the study of the Andean past, but only if we acknowledge its complexity and relationship to a broader landscape and historical processes. As the architectural historian Dell Upton has said, “the relationship between artifacts and ethnic-

ity or culture is ambiguous and evanescent. The object does its work by contrast and comment, inflection and reflection, by imagery and detail: it requires the context of a landscape on a large scale.”³⁶

As noted by travelers and scholars alike, the architecture of Europe did spread rapidly across the landscapes of the Americas, and we are only in the early stages of exploring that remarkable process and the diversity of expression and players within it. But this Europeanization aspect of the architectural landscape must not shield us from looking with equal concentration to the vast indigenous built environment that developed simultaneously and equally defined the colonial period. We must always be cautious in focusing solely on the architecture of the state and its elite citizens and institutions when discussing the architectural history of a time, and also look to the vast built environment erected by people with little or only loose ties to powerful authorities, European or indigenous. This call relates not only to the Spanish occupation of the Americas but also to that of the imperial Inca era. One may wonder, as we look across the Andes and note the numerous and impressive imperial Inca installations, what other buildings were erected by those populations colonized by the Inca? Architectural historians need to incorporate these building projects into the scholarship of the imperial Inca landscape, a landscape that was marked by Inca architecture but not limited to it.

NOTES

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1. This is relevant for not only the Andes region but for indigenous architecture across the Americas. The use of architecture in the discourse of native North America is one example. During the discovery, colonization, and western expansion of North America by Europeans, architecture was invoked to substantiate the views that native Americans were savages, Satan's children, or merely less developed. Dispersed settlements and ephemeral architecture (such as tents) were cited as examples of native Americans' lesser status. By contrast, when the existence of urban centers and more permanent or "monumental" architecture were found, innovative narratives were devised to explain them away. In the early days, these histories credited the urban and monumental (i.e., "civilized" architecture) as belonging to migrating Welshmen, Vikings, and other (primarily Northern European) groups. It was argued that these wandering Nordic men built the cities and durable structures before the arrival of the "less civilized" native North American people and the creation of their "inferior" ephemeral architecture. Thus architecture was invoked to visualize the view of indigenous history that suited nonnative needs and beliefs. When architecture surfaced that countered these narratives, a new story was created to explain away the architecture so that the paradigm of the less developed indigenous population was preserved.

Eventually, the testament of the indigenous built environment could not be ignored and the surviving cities and related architecture forcefully unraveled the misconceptions of native North American history and material culture. An example can be seen with the Late Woodland and Mississippian cities. Having successfully ignored written accounts of European encounters with the Natchez living in one of these earthen cities, as well as indigenous oral histories relating distinct groups to these settlements, scholars and nonindigenous laymen were eventually forced to accept the overwhelming archaeological evidence indicating that these impressive sites were built by native American people. In particular, careful analysis of the material culture excavated from these sites, such as Shawnee-style burial boxes, convinced scholars and began to shake views of native North Americans as entirely

"uncivilized." Due to the perceived link between a people and their architecture, evidence that native North Americans created monumental architecture and lived in cities, both understood as visual hallmarks of a civilized people, problematized the notion of natives as uncivilized.

2. The Inca Empire was a relatively new empire. The Inca Empire is believed to have spread rapidly, with much of its expansion occurring in about 100–150 years, right up to the Spanish invasion. Therefore, when the Spanish arrived, some of the Inca lands had just been conquered, while most others had been occupied for only a generation or two. Architectural infrastructure appears to have been a key part of the expansion process, much in the same way architecture was employed by the Roman Empire as part of its conquest strategy.

3. The Incas also built in adobe, a much-neglected aspect of Inca architecture in the scholarly literature. For a discussion on Inca architecture, in particular its standard characteristics and how those elements could be arranged to create a diversity of building complexes, see Jean Pierre Protzen, "Inca Architecture," in *The Inca World: the Development of Pre-Columbian Peru, A.D. 1000–1534*, ed. Laura Laurencich Minelli, 193–222 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).

4. The Andean empire began to unravel before the physical arrival of Europeans in the Andes. Disease, believed to be of European origin, spread ahead of the Spanish invasion in the Andes, leading to the untimely death of the ruler Wayna Capac and resulting in a battle of succession between two of his sons. Hence, when the Spaniards arrived in the Andes, the Inca Empire was already racked by a terrible epidemic, which had wiped out a large portion of its subjects, and a brutal civil war, which left the war-torn region vulnerable to outside attack.

Scholarship on the conquest traditionally described the transition from Inca to Spanish rule as relatively swift, symbolized with the Spanish decapitating the *Sapa Inka* (ruler) Atahualpa soon after their arrival in the Andes. However, research during the last several decades has emphasized the length and details of that transition, emphasizing how complex and uneven it was and, in particular, that Spanish control was frustrated by frequent indigenous rebellions and the reconstitution of a minor but defiant neo-Inca state. However, it is generally accepted that the Inca Empire—and its imperial building program—ended

soon after the arrival of Spaniards on Andean soil.

5. Burkholder and Johnson refer to this progression as “indigenous to mature colonial,” discussing its relationship to the Spanish conquest strategy, such that “colonial authorities decided, for political reasons, to rebuild the cities as Spanish centers” because “rebuilding them symbolically legitimized the authority of the new colonial order.” Mark A. Burkholder and Lyman L. Johnson, *Colonial Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 235.

6. Ibid., 236.

7. Ibid., 236–44.

8. For an example of the intentional destruction and reuse of Inca sites by Spanish authorities see Carolyn S. Dean, “Creating a Ruin in Colonial Cusco: Sacsahuaman and What Was Made of It,” *Andean Past* 5 (1998): 161–83. For an example of the intentionality of Spanish architecture and iconography being used to visualize authority over indigenous landscapes, see Thomas Cummins and Joanne Rappaport, “The Reconfiguration of Civic and Sacred Space: Architecture, Image, and Writing in the Colonial Northern Andes,” *Latin American Literary Review* 26, no. 52 (1998): 174–200.

9. “During the colonial period, the dominant manifestation of European culture was architecture. . . . Another hundred years on and allowing for local and regional differences, especially in the Portuguese territories of Brazil, this approximately Mediterranean pattern extended from California to Patagonia. Even in the countryside, where the land itself was still largely shaped by traditional native American agricultural practices, the cupolas and bell-towers of the parish churches effectively ‘Latinized’ the landscape.” Valerie Fraser, “Art and Architecture in Latin America,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Latin American Culture*, ed. John King (London: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 202–3.

10. George Kubler, “On the Colonial Extinction of the Motifs of Pre-Columbian Art,” in *Essays in Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology*, ed. Samuel K. Lothrop, 14–34 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961).

11. There has been an abundance of art historical research, far too numerous to list here, that has successfully interrogated colonial Andean art as an expression of complex cultural interactions. Excellent recent studies, which explore drinking vessels, clothing, performance, metalwork, furniture, painting, and other movable arts include Thomas B. F. Cummins, *Toasts*

with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Quero Vessels (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); and Elena Phipps, ed., *The Colonial Andes: Tapestries and Silverwork, 1530–1830* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004).

12. Valerie Fraser states, “identifying such [indigenous] elements requires detailed scholarship and understanding of native culture and does not undermine a broader view of early colonial architecture as essentially European in form and function.” Valerie Fraser, “Art and Architecture in Latin America,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Latin American Culture*, ed. John King (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 204. See also Valerie Fraser, *The Architecture of Conquest: Building in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1535–1635* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

13. It is one that coincides with what art historians have discovered in the movable arts.

14. The vast Andes landscape was also a site of rebellions against the Incas, frustrating imperial Inca control in many areas of their empire.

15. European diseases are believed to have spread ahead of European migrations in the New World. Diseases such as smallpox were introduced by Europeans into the Caribbean, North America, and Mesoamerica; the diseases moved down the landmass at a rapid pace, eventually reaching the Andes and causing widespread illness and death in the Inca empire. This is believed to have precipitated the Inca civil war, such that Wayna Capac died suddenly, possibly of smallpox, without a clear successor, thus allowing for the beginning of the civil war.

16. This could range from small pockets of land, to huge territories. An example of the latter was the vast tropical interiors of South America, which Europeans had difficulty penetrating.

17. Marvin Trachtenberg and Isabelle Hyman, *Architecture from Prehistory to Post-Modernism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Abrams, 1986), 42.

18. Trachtenberg and Hyman summarize some of the traditional definitions of vernacular architecture. They state, “the essence of vernacular architecture is its unchanging quality, having generally come into being in response to the ahistoric conditions of agrarian, backwoods, or primitive societies. Sometimes called ‘architecture without architects,’ it can also be termed

'architecture without history' . . . the subject has great appeal today—being functional, ecologically based, collectively planned, and often charming." Ibid., 41.

19. Dell Upton, "The VAF at 25: What Now?" paper given at the Vernacular Architecture Forum 2004.

20. This is slowly changing. Recently, a number of archaeologists have begun actively examining sites in both the pre- and post-1532 context. See for example, recent research by Steve Wernke, "Analogy or Erasure? Dialectics of Religious Transformation in the Early *Doctrinas* of the Colca Valley, Perú," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 11, no. 2 (June 2007): 152–82.

21. For an excellent summary and discussion of the mestizo style and other related categories in the Andes and Mexico, see Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn "Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America," *Colonial Latin American Review* 12, no. 1 (2003): 7–9.

22. This term has been used extensively in the Inca heartland to describe Inca-style architecture built in the colonial period. For example, see Arminda Gibaja, "La ocupación neoinca del valle de Urubamba," in *Arqueología de Cuzco*, ed. Italo Oberti (Cuzco, Peru: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1982), 81–96.

23. Federico Kauffmann Doig, *Influencias "Inca" en la arquitectura peruana del Virreinato: 'el fenómeno huanquino'* (Lima, Perú: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 1965).

24. It is important to note that these "neo" categories are now being questioned in the Western context. While being recognized as descriptive of trends within space and time, the terms are being challenged on the grounds that they should no longer be understood as births and declines. Rather, they should be understood as expressions of artistic modes or languages that have always existed in Western architecture but are employed in different ways across time.

25. One of the first studies to elucidate the importance of naming in colonizing situations was Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

26. The term "neo-Inca" was first coined to refer to a political entity, which was the Inca government that fled in the invasion of Cuzco and whose remnants, reconstituted a new Inca government in Vilcabamba. See George Kubler, "The Neo-Inca State (1537–1572)," *HAHR: Hispanic American Historical Review* 27, no. 2 (1947): 189–203. However, this term was then used to refer to Inca architecture built after 1532.

27. The buildings may have also been built for non-Incas, especially in the colonial period.

28. The introduction of this method of construction in the Cuzco area may have been the result of Andean migration and technology exchange between indigenous groups and not necessarily a sign of Spanish technology.

29. These stylistic concerns were occurring in Europe as well. For example, Gothic and Italianate in 16th century architecture were terms that referenced ethnicity. However, recent research has indicated the alternative employment of these modes were actually responses to ideological and rhetorical issues (I thank Monica Dominquez for pointing out this parallel).

30. Note how this view of the unchanging parallels views of the vernacular. See Trachtenberg and Hyman 42.

31. Jean-Pierre Protzen and Craig Morris, "Los colores de Tambo Colorado: una reevaluación," *Boletín de Arqueología PPUC* 8 (2004): 267–76.

32. This highlights the problematic associations of the idea of "tradition" as unchanging, timeless practices associated only with "primitive" peoples. Change, or more specifically the incorporation and modification of elements from other cultures they came into contact with, was an important aspect of Inca culture and is one of the reasons that the Inca state was so successful in its conquest strategy. Examples can be seen in Inca religion and customs.

33. For an extensive analysis of this painting, see Stella Nair, "Localizing Sacredness, Difference, and *Yachacuscamcani* in a Colonial Andean Painting," *Art Bulletin* 89, no. 2 (2007): 209–31.

34. For a discussion of the important roles that architecture played in Inca elite life, particularly in governance, religion, public and private life, and the remembrance of history, see Susan Niles, *The Shape of Inca History: Narrative and Architecture in an Andean Empire* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999).

35. John H. Rowe, "Colonial Portraits of Inca Nobles," in *The Civilizations of Ancient America*, Proceedings of the Twenty-ninth International Congress of Americanists, ed. Sol Tax, 1:258–68 (Chicago: International Congress of Americanists, 1951).

36. Dell Upton, "Ethnicity, Authenticity and Invented Traditions," *Historical Archaeology* 30 (1996): 5.