

The Juxtaposed Arcades of the Main Square in Arequipa, Peru



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Abstract

The arcades of the main square of Arequipa (Peru) founded during the Spanish colonization in 1540, have been slowly consolidated and being enhanced by the reconstructions imposed by the earthquakes. Evolution shows that they constitute a different type from those of the Hispanic tradition, because the arches are juxtaposed to the existing buildings and there are no houses on the top floor. The appropriation of the use of the space on the upper floor changes from public to private. The new arcades from the second half of the 20th century homogenize the perimeter, maintaining circulation and public promenades on the ground floor; and those on the upper floor constitute viewpoints that hide the facades and roofs of the buildings behind, eliminating the presence of other unique elements.

Keywords: Arcades; Main Square; Arequipa; Colonization; Homogeneous

Introduction

The arcades are a contribution of the Spanish colonization to Ibero-American urbanism. These are arches or lintel structures with wooden posts or stone pillars, located in front of the squares or streets of artisans or merchants, generally interrupted at the entrance streets to the main square or the streets pass under the arches that make up the arcades. They are structures that accompany the main squares because in the Compilation of Laws of the Kingdoms of the Indies published under Carlos II in the 16th century, it is dictated that the main square be proportional to the number of residents and the dimensions are fixed so that “no be less than two hundred feet wide and three hundred long, nor more than eight hundred feet long and five hundred and thirty-two wide, and it will remain of medium and good proportion, if it is six hundred feet long and four hundred wide” [1]. The same law indicated the need for the main square to have portals for the comfort of the dealers (merchants) who usually attend, that is, to protect them from the weather, for which reason it was also used in the configuration of the streets adjacent to the medieval markets [2].

The arcades are the public-private transition space for access to shops and public buildings such as the town hall and to the houses built on top of them, occupying one, two or even three

floors (Valladolid main square, 1562-1592). So, the windows or balconies of the houses make up the facades on the upper floors. As for the ideal material for the arcades, in an edict of 1591 it was recommended to replace the wooden posts with stone ones in all the squares of Madrid [3]. The arcades were also a design resource in the colonization towns that were built after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) to prevent rural exodus. The perimeter of the curved square of Entreríos (Badajoz) projected in 1953 is made up of a portico that connects the public buildings [4]. The term portal is also used as arcade in this article.

The basic grid of the Spanish-founded city of Arequipa located in southern Peru, was drawn from the main square, barrack-square and also market square, where the pillory (stone column where the heads of the executed or prisoners were exposed). The pre-Hispanic ethnic groups dedicated to agriculture in the Chili river basin [5] located to the west of the main square, would look with respect at the “apus” or sacred divinities, a chain of three volcanoes that surround the city, Misti, Chachani and Pichu Pichu. The ignimbrite from the eruptions of the first two volcanoes was the raw material to build the masonry of the main monuments [6], which have been rebuilt, to repair the damage caused by the frequent earthquakes in this Andean region.

Analysis and Discussion

The arcades of the colonial main square

The main square of Arequipa is almost square, and its dimensions from north to south are equivalent to 476.16 Castilian feet (including 41 feet from the atrium of the cathedral), by 469.24 feet from east to west, considering the Castilian foot equal to 0.2789m. Dimensions that would later be reduced on three fronts of its perimeter, approximately 5m [7], equivalent to 18 Castilian feet, to build the arcades, since their outer limit does not maintain the continuity of the north-south and east-west street façades, but that invade the square.

The epistle side of the cathedral constitutes the north front and the author projected the two towers towards the square reproducing the image of the civil towers of the Spanish squares. For example, the towers of the Casa de la Panadería in the main square in Madrid, or the towers finished with spires of the town hall on the west front of the main square in León, one of the most representative squares of the 17th century [3].

In a topographical plan in Castilian rods (undated) but which would correspond to the 17th century after the earthquakes of

1600 and 1604 [8], 6 arches are drawn on the three fronts, the portal of the municipality to the south where the town hall and jail, the Flores portal to the east and the San Agustín portal to the west with the shops of the convent located on this block. The main square was the place of the market with the installation of the stalls of the indigenous merchants and some small shops were even built in the 18th century in front of the cathedral [8], which were later demolished. The population was then 37,241 inhabitants [9].

The main square and the arcades in the Republican era

The rebellions against the Spanish crown occurred from 1780 to give way to the Peruvian Republic in 1821, and the main square witnessed these events. But also, the most appropriate place to celebrate local festivals, carnivals or processions. Before the 1868 earthquake, you can see the arcades of the Flores portal and the two-story arcade in the municipality portal, with nine arches to the left of the entrance to the town hall, which stands out for the more pronounced central arch (Figure 1). The section of the arcades on the upper floor towards the church of the Company of Jesus, seems open.



Figure 1: Two-story arcades in the town hall portal (right) [10].

As a result of this highly destructive earthquake, this same corner collapsed (Figure 2), which affected the shops, since the main square was in a precarious state, occupied by tents and little shops. An example of the juxtaposition of the structure of the arcades in this portal can be seen in the plan of the five barrel vaults (entrance hall and four shops) of the house of Ensign Flores, which are perpendicular to six arches of the arcades. (consulted plans). The tower of the Compañía de Jesús church had also been rebuilt, with a different appearance from the one it had before the earthquake. The reconstruction phase of the arcades or portals that began in 1875 was slow, in such a way that the works ended in 1879, using pink ignimbrite [8]. In 1900, due to a military concentration, the arcades can be seen along the entire eastern

front with spectators watching from the terrace. This composition of the arcade is the one that is currently maintained, 30 columns on which 29 arches or portals rest (Figures 3&4).

The treatment of the main square also underwent transformations to arrange the gardens according to the fashion of the time. It should be added that elevation 2339 is located at the corner of the cathedral with the Flores portal and elevation 2332 is at the corner of the town hall portal with the San Agustín portal, that is, a difference of 7m in height diagonally [7]. As a result of the 1913 earthquake, the arcades of the municipal portal were rebuilt and the city council ordered the owners of the stores in the three portals to build their tops [8]. Compliance with the ordinance can

be seen around 1930 in Figure 5. The windows on the top floor of the municipal portal demonstrate the private use of the premises, also on the east front. The slope of the floor of the main square

east-west is manifested in the stepped façade; a balustrade that crowns the facades.



Figure 2: State of the arcades after the earthquake of 1868 [10].



Figure 3: Arcades on the eastern front of the main square around 1900 [11].



Figure 4: State of the arcades at the beginning of the 20th century [12].



Figure 5: State of the arcades of the municipality [13] around 1930.

State after the earthquakes of 1958-1960

The earthquakes of 1958 and 1960 caused twenty years of restoration and reconstruction works in the historic center, including work on the arcades, such as the demolition of the upper floor of the San Agustín portal [8]. Around 1961, the city had 156,000 inhabitants [9]. The current neoclassical arcades are the result of an intervention completed in 1967 [11], consisting in granite pillars on the ground floor, white ignimbrite pillars

on the upper floor and brick vaults. The upper floor eliminated the possibility of having different facades and identifying the perimeter buildings as in other Peruvian main squares, favoring the uniformity of the environment (Figure 6). This new image was more in line with the population and economic growth experienced by the city from the second half of the 20th century. The reason would be due to the fact that the fronts were not homogeneous and lacked significance.



Figure 6: Current arcades of the main square of Arequipa (the cathedral to the north with the view of the Misti in the background) (Getty images).

The length of the arcades is 105m on the south side, 108m on the west side and 109m on the east side, with 30 pillars and 29 arches each (2.87m span of each arch), for a total of 90 pillars and 87 arches or portals. The floor-ceiling height is 5.40m on the ground floor and 5m on the upper floor [7]. The proposal maintains

the memory of the existing arcade, with autonomy on the ground floor that facilitates walking, conversation and observation of all the activities that take place in the square, and the upper floor for a viewpoint that served as a tribune for the Spanish monarchs when they visited the city in 1978. Currently the upper floor is

used by the two hotels located in the Flores portal, the various owners who have made their direct access and occupy the San Agustín portal, and the municipality prefers to keep it closed for control and cleaning, and it is only open in some events.

Until the 1990s, the benches in the main square towards the south front were the workplace of processors who, with their typewriters, filled out the paperwork forms to be carried out at the town hall. Since 1995, with the growth of tourism in Peruvian cities [14], the arcades primarily register the tourist walk, access to hotels, shops and cafeterias, given the gentrification of the historic center, which attracts some street vendors.

Conclusion

The project conception of the arcades of the main square of Arequipa is different from that of the Spanish arcades whose upper floors are occupied by houses. These arcades have been changing physically according to the evolution of the city and the repair works for the destruction caused by the earthquakes, so both factors have influenced the changes in the image of the tectonic perimeter, which has become an exclusive viewpoint of the main square and the cathedral. But the appropriation of the use of the upper floor of the arcades has also been changing due to the use that inhabitants make of it, from public to private.

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