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Chaco reloaded

Discursive social memory on the post-Chacoan landscape

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ABSTRACT

Archaeologists have recently begun to address the ways in which past peoples revived, referenced, utilized, and amended their own, more distant pasts for diverse social and political ends. Social memory refers to shared ideas about the past. Monumental architecture entails the discursive construction of memory. Memory can be grounded in direct connections to immediate ancestors, or it can involve tenuous links to remote antiquity. In the terrain between, ideas about the past are both replicated and distorted. The concepts of citation and translation help clarify these processes. In the Southwest USA, architects in diverse temporal and social contexts invoked the memory of the prominent ritual center Chaco Canyon. At the twelfth-century site of Aztec, builders cited Chacoan architecture to legitimate ritual and political organization. In the thirteenth century in the Four Corners region, builders translated Chacoan ideas into McElmo-style towers to stabilize and transform a world in chaos.

KEYWORDS

Chaco Canyon ● citation ● discursive consciousness ● monumental architecture ● social memory ● Southwest USA ● translation

In a river valley in northwest New Mexico in AD 1100, hundreds of people gathered to build a massive, multi-storied group of stone buildings that followed rigid patterns of configuration and orientation. Along the canyon rims of southwest Colorado a century later, tens of people erected circular and rectangular multi-storied stone towers that connected the sky with subterranean spaces. Builders in both circumstances were referencing the ideas and the monumental architecture found in Chaco Canyon, the center of the Pueblo world in the Southwest USA during the AD eleventh century.

Although some archaeologists are interested in memory as practical consciousness, most have been focused on the instrumental role of memory as a tool for social or political ends. Monumental architecture best represents the discursive construction of social memory. As the word 'monumental' implies, the builders of monuments are always thinking in some sense about representing pasts for the future. Old monuments become focal points for new interpretations, so many studies of memory and monumental architecture focus on one place that is repeatedly re-interpreted. However, pasts may also be invoked through the construction of monumental architecture when new places are founded.

The past is a moving target. As memory recedes beyond the scope of those still living, the past becomes ever more tenuous and flexible, more open to multiple and contested interpretations. At one end of the temporal spectrum, people create knowledgeable links to the immediate past, to ancestors within the scope of genealogical memory; at the other end, people invent relationships with mythical antiquity out of whole cloth. Between the genealogical and the mythical pasts lies a fertile yet relatively uncharted memory terrain where original meanings may be replicated, emended, skewed, or ultimately transformed. In the discussion that follows, I contrast two memory processes that fall within this intermediate temporal terrain – *citation* and *translation*. In the centuries immediately post-dating the collapse of Chaco Canyon as a regional center in the American Southwest, it is possible to see both of these memory processes at work.

DISCURSIVE SOCIAL MEMORY AND MONUMENTAL ARCHITECTURE

The recent proliferation in social memory studies has led to some new and interesting perspectives, particularly with respect to social power and identity (Alcock, 2002; Bradley, 2002; Bradley and Williams, 1998; Jones, 2007; Joyce, 2000a; Lillios, 2008; Van Dyke and Alcock, 2003; Yoffee, 2007). Memory is often a potent tool of ideology, a means through which to create the appearance of a seamless social whole (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983). Memory may be used to naturalize or legitimate authority, to create a sense

of community identity, or to disguise or ameliorate rupture. Memory is a particularly contested and contestable domain, as aspects of the past are memorialized, erased, celebrated, hidden, reinvented, and fabricated. Official memories created by elites may be counterposed against, and indeed challenged by, popular memories created by subjects (Alonso, 1988). Memorialization may focus on the deliberate destruction of objects, rather than on their curation (Crawford, 2007; Küchler, 1988, 2002; Mills, 2008).

Archaeological inquiries into social memory have tended to follow the ideas of Paul Connerton (1989). In his influential work, *How Societies Remember*, Connerton distinguished between inscribed memory, involving monuments, texts and representations, and incorporated memory, encompassing bodily rituals and behavior. Although these categories are widely recognized as too simple – one cannot envision an example of social memory that is purely inscribed, nor one that is purely incorporated – they do highlight the fact that social memory involves both intentional acts (such as the construction of monuments) and habitual practices (such as the chanting of a liturgy). To use Giddens' (1984: 4–7, 45–51) terminology, memory encompasses both discursive and practical consciousness (see also Joyce, 2008). Following Giddens, then, we might distinguish between discursive and practical social memory. Discursive social memory would refer to the intentional construction of pasts and counter-pasts – a process well illustrated by, but not limited to, Hobsbawm and Ranger's 'invention of tradition'. Most archaeological studies have investigated discursive memory – the intentional employment of ideas about the past for political and social ends. Practical memory would involve the unthinking activities, the doxic practices that comprise much of social life. Accordingly, the authors in a recent edited volume on memory examine repetitive depositional practices such as caches, shrines, burials, and the creation of complex stratigraphy (Mills and Walker, 2008).

But the issue of intentionality poses a problem for archaeological studies of social memory. Clearly, unintentional consequences can lead to profound long-term changes (Giddens, 1984: 8–14; Pauketat, 2000). Social memory is, one senses, fundamental to the way we learn and transmit cultural knowledge; hence the frequent conflation of the term 'social memory' with 'tradition' (Crumley, 2002) and 'oral history' (Goody, 1987; Walker, 2008). Information about recent as well as more distant pasts is everywhere around us, all the time, but not all of this information about the past is equally meaningful. Where does practical social memory diverge from practical consciousness, and where does practical consciousness diverge from 'culture'? A rash of recent archaeological work finds social memory under every stone. If something stays the same over time, it is memory; if it changes, it is erasure. If a building is reoccupied, it is in reference to the past; if it is avoided, it is to negate or deny the past. But the reuse of settlements or the continuation of material styles over time is not always best

interpreted as meaningful engagement (or disengagement) with the past (Blake, 2003). Intentionality matters. Social anthropologists have recognized the dangers of conflating 'social memory' with 'identity' and 'culture' (Berliner, 2005: 202–3; Fabian, 1999: 51). If what we are really studying is Culture by another name, then we have overextended the concept of social memory to a point where it is not useful.

Following Nora (1989), I do not think we can meaningfully discuss social memory unless we have at least one foot planted in the realm of the discursive. This is not to say that unreflective liturgies, habitual practices, and unforeseen consequences play no role in social continuity and change. Nor do I suggest that it is possible or desirable to try to categorically disentangle the discursive from the practical. Rather, I argue that we should hold investigations of 'social memory' separate from inquiries into 'tradition', 'culture', or 'practical consciousness', so that memory retains its analytical utility. Social memory has something interesting to tell us when it is about imagined, remembered, invented, contested, but, above all, self-aware connections with the past.

Monumental architecture clearly falls within this discursive purview. Although monuments evoke multiple, contested meanings and are subject to continual reinterpretation over time, their builders are engaged in memory-making, attempting to project ideas about the past into the future (Bradley, 2002: 82–111). Monumental architecture could be defined as architecture constructed by, and for the non-domestic use of, a social group larger than the household. Some monumental architecture – such as wooden henges in the British Neolithic – may have been meant to decay and pass away. Stone monuments, by contrast, were almost certainly meant to endure (and much has been made of this material shift in certain circles [e.g. Parker Pearson and Ramilosonina, 1998]). The multidimensionality of monumental places is captured by Lefebvre's (1991) tripartite schema of spatial experience (architecture, the material), perception (movement, symbols, representations), and imagination (emotions, ideologies, memory). Or, in Connerton's terminology, monumental architecture is both inscriptive and incorporative. Monuments may be meant to symbolize ideas, evoke associations, or elicit emotion. And, monuments are experienced through the body – they are seen, heard, and otherwise sensed. Physical movements and lines-of-sight among and within them may be suggested and circumscribed. Stone walls are not actually immutable, nor are our modern perceptions of them synonymous with past spatial experiences, yet standing monuments connect us in some sense with the lifeworlds of their builders. They are evidence of 'having-been-there' in a Heideggerian sense (Thomas, 1996, 2004).

Much memory work has focused on 'persistent places' (Schlanger, 1992) – the repeated remodeling, re-use, and reincarnation of specific buildings, tombs, stelae, and other archaeological features (e.g. Bender, 1993, 1998;

Blake, 1998; Bradley, 1998: 91–100, 2002; Dietler, 1998; Gillespie, 2008; Khatchadourian, 2007). But monumental architecture also invokes the past when new places are founded (Alcock, 2002; Pauketat, 2008; Sinopoli, 2003). Not all discursive acts of memory involve knowledgeable references or repetitions. Understandings of any past are always partial. As time passes and distance increases, original meanings and intentions are lost or skewed, and ancient monuments are subject to reinterpretation. Recognizing these distinctions, Gosden and Lock (1998) contrasted genealogical histories (social memory focused on links to known ancestors) with mythological histories (generalized links to a mythic antiquity), and Meskell (2003) contrasted short-term commemorative performances with long-term memorializations.

When new monuments in new places are meant to reference older monuments in older places, we see a range of possible kinds of connections, from knowledgeable replication, to the wholesale invention of tradition. For example, the US Capitol building, designed by William Thornton in 1793 and approved by a commission led by Thomas Jefferson, deliberately references the Roman Pantheon (Allen, 2001). Thornton and Jefferson were evoking an illustrious, non-specific past for the United States grounded in the civic ideals of the Classical world. But when the emperor Hadrian erected the Roman Pantheon ca. AD 126, using Greek architectural precepts, on the site of an earlier temple constructed by Agrippa, his intentions probably had more to do with personal aggrandizement and imperial legitimation than with the expression of democratic virtues. Thornton and Jefferson's reference to the Roman Pantheon works, but only in a general, mythological sense. In subsequent centuries, the architects of many US state capitol buildings designed structures that closely resembled the federal Capitol in Washington; the Texas state capitol, built in the 1880s, is a good example (Robinson, 1988). These architects were making knowledgeable attempts to reference and replicate the US Capitol building, and, by extension, to invoke the ideals it is meant to embody.

Recently, archaeologists have employed the term 'citation' to mean the construction of knowledgeable references to the past (Jones, 2001, 2005, 2007; Joyce, 2000b; Mills, 2008; Pauketat, 2008; Pollard, 2008). Citation is derived from the work of Judith Butler and is grounded in Derrida's (1977) notion of iterability. Derrida's classic example of iterability is a signature. A signature can be replicated because it has a recognizable form, but these same, recognizable characteristics create the possibility for a signature to be counterfeited. Paradoxically, just as a signature denotes authenticity, it also establishes the potential for inauthentic copies. Judith Butler (1990) applied citation to gender theory, arguing that gender is a performance that cites all previous performances of gender (see also Austin, 1962; Butler, 1993; Hall, 2000). Archaeological interest has focused on the ways in which citational performances are entangled with the material. Jones (2005: 200) explains that 'the social practices related to making, using and depositing

material objects can be thought of as "material citations" – each material act references and gains its meaning from that which has gone before'. Thus, Pollard (2008), for example, invokes citation to explain the deposition of cattle skulls within a Neolithic enclosure at two wide removes in time.

Attempts to invoke or replicate past meanings grow ever more tenuous with increased social, temporal, or spatial distance. We could characterize the founding fathers' attempts to connect the new US republic with Classical antiquity as Hobsbawmian invented tradition, and we could see the emulative state capitol buildings as citation. But what about situations in between these two extremes, where connections exist between old and new places, just outside of living memory? If the people engaged in memory construction are connected with the past they are invoking, but at some remove in time and space, original meanings may not be lost but merely distorted. The process may be seen as analogous to language translation. The partialities and disjunctures in meaning that confront the translator are well known. When we translate the German term *zeitgeist* into English as 'spirit of the times', for example, we lose several layers of the term's original Hegelian connotations. So, I introduce the term 'translation' to describe situations where a known past is referenced – not invented – but meanings are skewed or rearranged.

In the remainder of this article, I contrast citation and translation by means of two case studies from the Southwest United States. Chaco Canyon, in northwest New Mexico, was the center of the Pueblo world during the AD eleventh century, and contained monumental architecture representing key elements of a Chacoan ideology. During the AD twelfth century, Chacoan architecture and ideas were *cited* by the builders of monumental architecture at the Aztec complex, 90 km to the north. A century later, and another 75 km to the northwest, Chacoan ideas were *translated* by the builders of McElmo-style towers in the Four Corners region. My intentions are to tease apart some of the nuances in the ways that social memory is discursively deployed in the past across time and space, within diverse social contexts.

THE CHACOAN LANDSCAPE

Before discussing the ways in which later builders referenced Chaco, it is necessary to briefly review some of the meanings and ideas represented by monumental architecture in Chaco Canyon. Chaco Canyon was the social, political, and ritual center of the ancient Pueblo world during the AD eleventh century in the North American Southwest (Cordell et al., 2001; Judge, 1989; Lekson, 2006; Mills, 2002; Sebastian, 1992). Chacoan relationships and influences extended through approximately 100 surrounding 'outlier' communities from southeast Utah and southeast Colorado to

northeast Arizona and western New Mexico (Kantner and Mahoney, 2000) (Figure 1). Peoples from across this broad area shared aspects of a Chacoan ideology. Inhabitants from outlier communities gathered in the canyon for ceremonies probably timed to coincide with solstices or equinoxes (Sofaer, 2007). By the latter half of the eleventh century, these ritual gatherings were

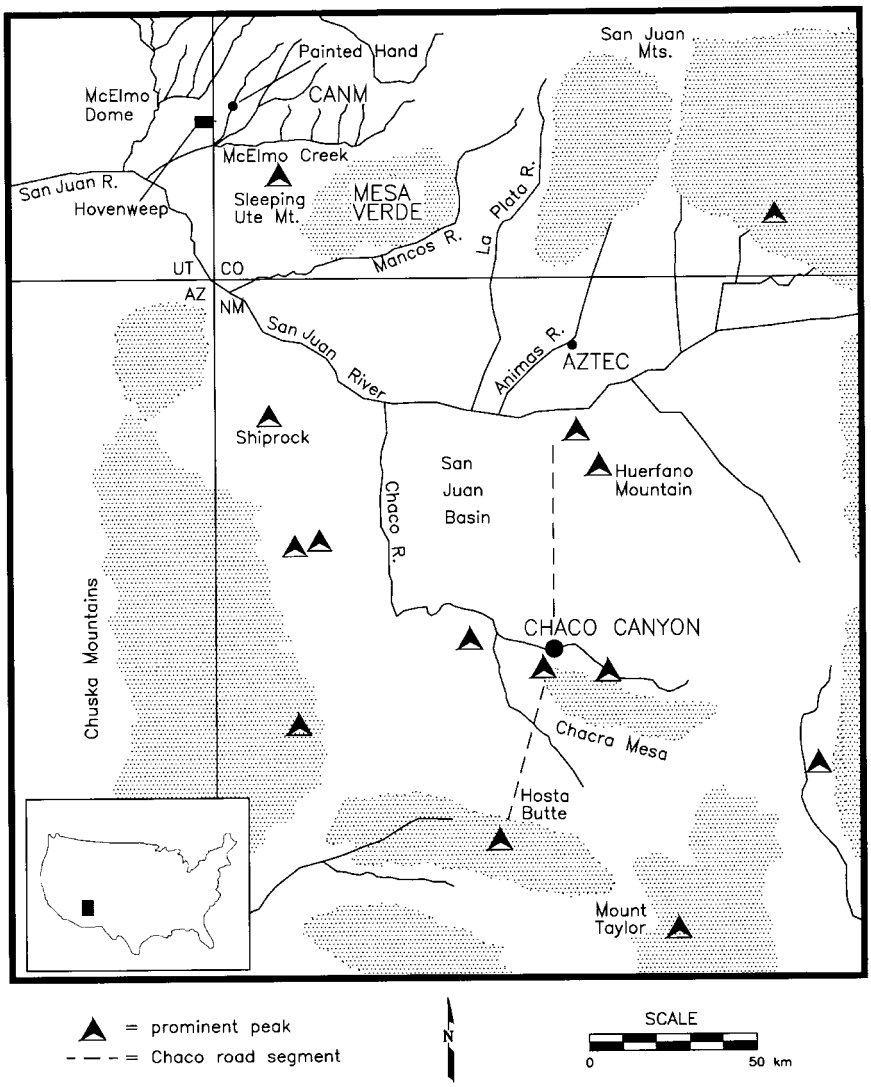

Figure 1 Locational map for Chaco Canyon, Aztec, McElmo drainage towers, and other sites mentioned in the text. Figure drafted by Ruth Van Dyke

presided over by a small group of priestly elites. A shared Chacoan ideology legitimated the elites' authority and prestige; it also provided a sense of common purpose and identity among disparate groups of outlier dwellers who came to the canyon to participate in or observe ritual events, and who contributed their labor, resources, bodies, and energy to the greater glory of Chaco. This Chacoan ideology was grounded in powerful tropes with long histories, finding formal expression in the architecture and on the landscape (Stein and Lekson, 1992). In Chaco Canyon, builders erected monumental architecture including great houses, great kivas, road segments, shrines, and earthworks (Figure 2). Elsewhere (Van Dyke, 2007) I have developed an argument that Chacoan architects created an aesthetic spatial experience that resonated with core Puebloan ideas, including balanced dualism, directionality, visibility, center place, and memory.

Balanced dualism is one of the tenets of a contemporary Pueblo worldview (e.g. Fox, 1972; Ortiz, 1965). Chacoan monumental architecture expressed dualism at multiple levels: within the buildings themselves, within site complexes, as great houses and great kivas were juxtaposed against one another, and across the landscape, as great houses were positioned in visible high and hidden low places (Fritz, 1978; Stein, 1987; Vivian, 1990: 265–92). The core of the Chaco Canyon landscape consists of two great houses – Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl – with Pueblo Alto between them on the mesa top to the north, and the Chaco Wash to the south (Figure 3). Dualism at Chaco also takes the form of opposing directions intersecting at a center place. North/south and up/down are strongly referenced by Chacoan construction. For example, Chacoans built two major, equidistant road

Figure 2 Pueblo Bonito, the central great house in Chaco Canyon, as seen from the cliff above, looking south. Photo by Ruth Van Dyke

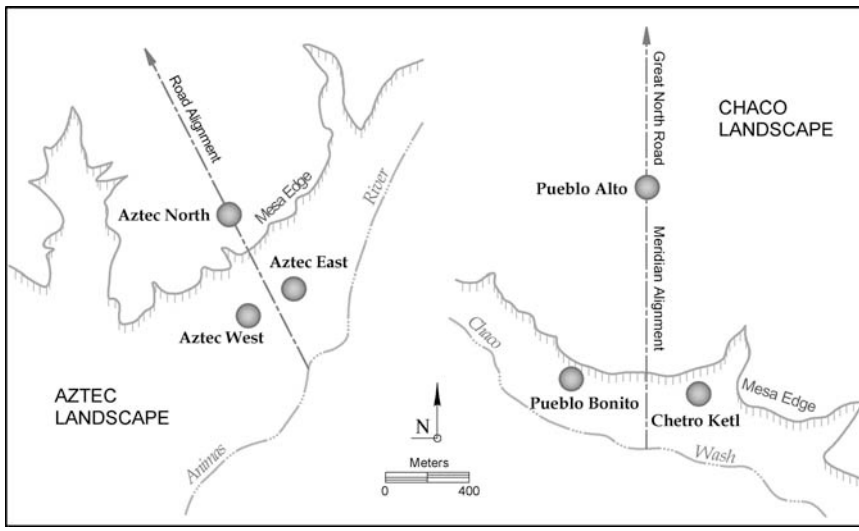

Figure 3 Landscapes of Aztec and downtown Chaco Canyon, demonstrating spatial similarities of constructed and natural features. Figure drafted by Catherine Gilman, used with permission of the Center for Desert Archaeology

alignments: one extending from Chaco to Kutz Canyon to the north, and the other extending from Chaco to Hosta Butte, to the south. These two alignments positioned Chaco Canyon as a center place or balancing point between north and south, up and down (Marshall, 1997).

As the Chacoans juxtaposed high and low places, they also balanced visibility and invisibility. Chacoans built tower kivas in at least two outlier great houses – Kin Klizhin and Kin Ya'a – in the early 1100s (Marshall et al., 1979: 69–72, 201–6). In these buildings, three or four kivas – normally hidden, dark, underground spaces – were stacked atop each other to create a highly visible tower reaching into the sky (Figure 4). Chaco Canyon itself embodies a celestial/subterranean duality. Although the inner space of the canyon is sheltered and secluded, the mesas through which it cuts – Chacra Mesa, Fajada Butte, South Mesa, West Mesa, and North Mesa – are elevated and highly visible. These landforms afford stunning vistas of the surrounding San Juan Basin, its encircling mountains and uplifts, and its prominent topographic landmarks. From the great house of Pueblo Alto on North Mesa, for example, the horizon is punctuated by the dramatic shapes of Huerfano Mountain, Mount Taylor, Hosta Butte, and Shiprock. Chacoan builders positioned some outlier great houses to create line-of-sight connections with these and other prominent peaks (Van Dyke, 2004a, 2007). Chacoans also intentionally constructed references to the past. Elites employed memory to establish legitimacy, to create a sense of social

Figure 4 The tower kiva at the early 1100s Chacoan outlier of Kin Ya'a, northwest New Mexico. Photo by Tucker Robinson

continuity, and to emphasize exclusive access to powerful objects and ideas. Chacoans cached inalienable objects (Mills, 2008), periodically refurbished kiva features and designs on cylinder vessels (Crown and Wills, 2003), and utilized the oldest rooms in Pueblo Bonito for elite burials (Ashmore, 2007).

They built linear alignments, such as the Red Willow–Los Rayos road, to connect sites across time (Fowler and Stein, 1992; Van Dyke, 2003). These key Puebloan ideas of balanced dualism, directionality, visibility, center place, and memory, informed and were referenced by Chacoan monumental builders as they created a landscape encouraging particular spatial experiences. When people came to Chaco to participate in or observe ceremonies, as they moved through the modified canyon landscape, their emotionally charged spatial experiences emphasized the canyon as the center place, the best possible place in which to conduct the rituals necessary to keep the world in balance and to ensure continued agricultural success. A shared spatially experienced ideology legitimated the authority of Chacoan ritual leaders.

After the collapse of Chaco in the mid-1100s, the memory of Chaco reverberated through the Puebloan world for centuries. Several scholars (Bradley, 1996; Fowler and Stein, 1992; Kintigh, 1994) have examined some of the ways in which Chaco was referenced in post-Chacoan, Pueblo III period (AD 1150–1300) communities. In the remainder of this article, I examine two contrasting examples of discursive, post-Chacoan references to Chaco – one illustrating citation, the other translation. At the twelfth-century site of Aztec, builders directly cited Chaco, attempting to replicate specific meanings and to create a new central Puebloan gathering place. By contrast, at thirteenth-century McElmo towers, builders translated ideas derived from Chaco into an attempt to create social stability during chaotic times.

AZTEC: POST-CHACOAN CITATION

Aztec is an architectural complex located in the relatively lush surroundings of the Animas River valley 90 km north of Chaco Canyon. This formalized, planned landscape contains three great houses – Aztec North, West, and East – as well as great kivas, tri-wall structures, and road alignments (Brown et al., 2008; McKenna and Toll, 1992; Morris, 1919, 1928; Stein and McKenna, 1988). Architectural and other material connections between Chaco Canyon and Aztec are clear (Lekson, 1999; Reed, 2008). The builders of Aztec were probably Chacoans who left the canyon in the AD 1080s, either because of intense competition for leadership in the canyon, or perhaps as part of a colonization effort. The architects of Aztec emphasized in their new locale concepts that had been paramount in Chacoan architecture and landscape for several centuries. Some Chaco scholars, myself included, contend that Aztec represents an overt attempt to replicate Chaco Canyon (Lekson, 1999; Stein and McKenna, 1988) and to replace it as the center of the Pueblo world (Judge, 1989: 245; Toll, 2008).

Aztec North, probably the earliest and largest of the three Aztec great houses, was positioned in the center of the terrace above the Animas River (Brown et al., 2008: 245–6; Stein and McKenna, 1988). The unexcavated structure follows the bracket-shaped layout exhibited by Chacoan great houses, but it is built of adobe, whereas most Chacoan monumental architecture is constructed of stacked tabular sandstone. Once completed and plastered, however, an adobe-walled great house would have been virtually indistinguishable (at least in the short term) from a masonry-walled great house. The nearest source of tabular sandstone is several kilometers distant, but river mud and cobbles are available nearby. So, the choice of adobe as a construction material suggests that the builders of Aztec North were short of labor, time, or both.

The builders of the second great house – Aztec West – made extensive use of explicitly Chacoan construction techniques, however. Tree-ring dates show that this massive masonry building was planned as a unit and was erected rapidly in several bursts of activity between AD 1100 and 1130 (Brown et al., 2008). Aztec West resembles bracket-shaped great houses in Chaco Canyon and at other sites across the Chacoan world; it is the third largest great house after the two canyon great houses Chetro Ketl and Pueblo Bonito (Powers et al., 1983: 313, Table 41). Like the great houses of Chaco, Aztec West embodies ideas of balance and directional dualism. The symmetrical, southeast-facing building pivots around a central, two-storey enclosed kiva and embraces a plaza containing a great kiva, balancing celestial and subterranean directions (Figure 5). In Chaco Canyon, Classic Bonito great houses have banded sandstone masonry veneers. Local Aztec stone did not lend itself well to banding, but builders incorporated a stripe of greenish sandstone through the west wing of the building that evokes the banded sandstone masonry of Chaco.

Aztec East consists of a balanced pair of compact, McElmo-style buildings surrounding a great kiva. Planning and construction began in the early 1100s at the same time as Aztec West, but construction, additions and remodeling continued across the 1100s and into the 1200s (Brown et al., 2008). McElmo-style architecture involves the use of blocky sandstone masonry to construct a squarish, multi-storey building comprised of rectangular rooms surrounding an enclosed kiva – builders used this style in Chaco Canyon and throughout the Four Corners region during the 1100s and 1200s. The origin, significance, and direction of the spread of McElmo-style architecture are poorly understood (Lekson, 1986: 267–9; Vivian and Mathews, 1965). The relationship of these buildings to other McElmo style masonry in Chaco Canyon and in the Four Corners is one of the most intriguing dimensions of the Aztec puzzle.

Tri-wall structures are another enigmatic feature of both the Chacoan and the Aztec landscapes (Vivian, 1959). Pueblo del Arroyo in Chaco Canyon lacks a great kiva, but contains a tri-wall structure behind the great

Figure 5 Aztec West aerial overview. Photo by Russ Finley, with permission from Finley-Holiday Films

house. At Aztec, two tri-walls, north of Aztec West and Aztec East, respectively, are spatially balanced against the great kivas of Aztec West and Aztec East. Another sits on the central dividing line that extends southeast from Aztec North and bifurcates the Aztec West and East ruins (McKenna and Toll, 1992: 136).

However, it is the overall layout and design of the Aztec landscape that most clearly indicates Aztec was planned to be a rival or successor to Chaco Canyon (Figure 3). Aztec North is atop a high mesa facing the southeast. A line drawn to the southeast and off the mesa bisects the space between the two other great houses – Aztec West and Aztec East. Further to the southeast, trending roughly east-west, lies the Animas River. These spatial relationships are exactly the same, in terms of general orientation and layout, as the relationships between Pueblo Alto (represented by Aztec North), Pueblo Bonito (represented by Aztec West), Chetro Ketl (represented by Aztec East), and the Chaco Wash (represented by the Animas River). A road alignment analogous to the Great North Road at Pueblo Alto heads northwest from Aztec North. Standing atop Aztec North looking down over Aztec West and East towards the southeast, it is clear that the builders of Aztec had the landscape of Chaco in mind.

The builders of Aztec were directly citing Chaco Canyon. They were building a new Chaco that replicated many of the alignments and

architectural and topographic relationships found in the original. As they sought to recreate Chacoan monumental architecture, they also most likely sought to recreate Chacoan social, ritual, and political organization. This formalization of old, Chacoan ideas on a new landscape would have encouraged people to envision Aztec as a new cosmographic, social, and ritual gathering place. The builders of Aztec sought to attract outlier dwellers and ritual participants away from Chaco Canyon and towards the new center on the banks of the Animas. They sought to establish a new ritual order grounded in the old, Chacoan traditions. Perhaps initially, Aztec leaders did not attract much of a following, as evidenced by the hasty adobe construction of Aztec North. However, as social and environmental pressures escalated in Chaco in the last decades of the eleventh century, the verdant Animas began to look more attractive to the inhabitants of the San Juan Basin. Rather than making periodic ritual pilgrimages to drought-ridden Chaco Canyon, people were attracted towards a newer and wetter locale. The builders of Aztec followed familiar Chacoan design tenets in constructing a new ritual landscape which would sustain familiar ceremonial experiences and cosmographic and social balance. But Chaco Canyon was far from over. In the early 1100s, the ritual leaders of Aztec found themselves in direct competition for followers with the leaders of Chaco, as Chacoan builders responded with a new monumental building program of their own (Van Dyke, 2004b).

Ultimately, Aztec leaders' attempt to create a new Chaco was unsuccessful. Changes in architectural styles, material technology, subsistence remains, and burial practices indicate that areas of Aztec West were used for small-scale domestic habitation during the 1200s (Morris, 1919, 1928). This shift away from Chaco-derived great house ceremonialism took place against a backdrop of increasing social and environmental instability across the Four Corners region.

McELMO TOWERS: POST-CHACOAN TRANSLATION

The Four Corners region is shorthand for an area that encompasses Mesa Verde, the San Juan River drainage, and the McElmo dome in southwest Colorado, southeast Utah, and adjacent locales. The Pueblo III period (AD 1150–1300) in the Four Corners was a time of social upheaval, fluidity, and conflict. Regional population doubled between the late eleventh and the late thirteenth century, increasing from an estimated 6–7000 to 12–14,000 people (Wilshusen, 2002; see also Varien et al., 2007). Fluctuating climatic conditions may have contributed to uncertainty and anxiety over subsistence resources (Dean et al., 1985). Violence and warfare escalated (Kohler and Cole, 2005; LeBlanc, 1999: 192–245). Women were mistreated

and may have been enslaved at twelfth-century sites in the La Plata Valley (Martin et al., 1999). Cases for violence and cannibalism have been made for the Mancos Canyon site 5MTUMR 2346 (White, 1992) and Cowboy Wash (Billman et al., 2000) in the first half of the twelfth century, and for Castle Rock Pueblo, which was catastrophically destroyed between AD 1280 and 1285 (Kuckelman, 2002). Between AD 1225 and 1290, people built cliff dwellings, believed by some researchers to represent defensive structures (Farmer, 1957; LeBlanc, 1999: 203). By the latter half of the thirteenth century, two-thirds of the population had aggregated into large pueblos, often located at the heads of canyons (Bradley, 1992; Varien, 1999: 148–9; Wilshusen, 2002: 117–18).

Towers are an enigmatic class of architectural feature dating to this period. The inhabitants of the Four Corners region built masonry towers in cliff alcoves, on canyon rims, on mesa tops, and in canyon bottoms (Lipe and Varien, 1999; Schulman, 1949). They positioned over 50 towers atop and around Mesa Verde (Lancaster et al., 1954), and nearly 60 more along the drainages north of the San Juan River within the modern boundaries of Canyons of the Ancients (CANM) and Hovenweep National Monuments (Glowacki, 2006: 61, Table 3.5). Like early twelfth-century Chacoan great houses, and like Aztec East, masons constructed the towers of blocky McElmo-style masonry. Towers are typically two to three storeys in height, and can be circular, square, or D-shaped (Fewkes, 1916; Winter, 1981: 29). Builders situated towers atop boulders or along canyon rims, as at Painted Hand (Figure 6), or they incorporated towers into the fabric of unit pueblos, as at Sun Point Pueblo on Mesa Verde (Lancaster and Van Cleave, 1954). Despite their dramatic appearances, these towers represent a much smaller labor investment than the monumental architecture of Chaco and Aztec. McElmo towers are found at both small residential sites and large community centers (Glowacki, 2006: 66–7); they could have been built with local labor over the course of a few days or weeks.

Protruding into the sky, McElmo towers tend to be highly visible structures and to afford excellent visibility across surrounding areas near and far. These characteristics have formed the basis for most of the functional explanations for towers developed by several generations of scholars. The functional arguments for towers include defense (LeBlanc, 1999: 226; Lightfoot and Kuckelman, 2001; Riley, 1950; Schulman, 1949), protection of agricultural resources (Johnson, 2003; Winter, 1981), line-of-sight communication (Haas and Creamer, 1993; Wilcox and Haas, 1994: 217), ceremonialism (Fewkes, 1916: 219; Rohn, 1971: 86; Winter, 1981: 33), and astronomical observation (Williamson, 1978; Williamson et al., 1977). McElmo towers may well have had multiple, overlapping purposes, but architecture always also carries with it multiple layers of symbolism. Although McElmo towers do not directly replicate Chacoan architectural forms, they reference key ideas found in Chacoan spaces.

Figure 6 Painted Hand, an isolated, boulder-top McElmo-style tower on Canyons of the Ancients National Monument, southwest Colorado. Photo by Ruth Van Dyke

Two centuries earlier, the Chacoan world was bounded and defined by intervisibility with such high places as Huerfano Mountain, Mount Taylor, Hosta Butte, and Shiprock. Similarly, the siting of McElmo towers suggests

that tower builders were concerned with the visibility of specific iconic peaks. As they situated towers along canyon rims in the McElmo drainages, builders may have been attempting to create intervisible connections from the Four Corners back to Chaco Canyon. Most McElmo towers are situated to provide spectacular views of Sleeping Ute Mountain, an easily recognizable, highly visible landform and topographic reference point for the Four Corners region (Figure 7). Sleeping Ute Mountain provides a line-of-sight connection from the Four Corners to the Chacoan world. Although the mountain is not visible from Chaco Canyon, it can be seen from Chacoan outliers along the western flanks of the Chuska Mountains (Van Dyke, 2008). Shiprock – one of the major landforms on the Chacoan horizon – is clearly visible from the Sleeping Ute. Thus, McElmo towers at sites such as Painted Hand set up a line-of-sight connection from Pueblo III period Four Corners settlements directly back to Chaco Canyon. Rather than defining the directional boundaries of a Chacoan world, these thirteenth-century line-of-sight connections could have been intended as a link to the more stable, storied social and ritual world of the Chacoan past. During socially turbulent times, as disparate clans and families aggregated into large pueblos, a real or imagined shared Chacoan past could have been a point of social intersection or commonality. Bradley (1996) has recognized

Figure 7 Sleeping Ute Mountain from Painted Hand. Photo by Ruth Van Dyke

this, arguing that Pueblo III period D-shaped pueblos around canyon heads in the Four Corners region might be deliberate references to Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon.

Chacoan monumental architecture embodies dualistic balance with a strong up/down, or vertical, component, and McElmo towers similarly juxtapose subterranean and celestial elements. All McElmo towers, whether isolated atop boulders, constructed within pueblos, or standing sentinel in canyon bottoms, are attached to underground spaces in the form of natural concavities, kivas, or water. Kivas are circular, subterranean or semi-subterranean spaces found in the pueblos of the northern Southwest from approximately AD 900 onwards (Lekson, 1988; Smith, 1952). In Pueblo traditions, kivas and water sources – particularly springs – are associated with openings to the world below (e.g. Parsons, 1929: 236–53; Stirling, 1942: 18–19). The sipapu is a small hole in a kiva floor that represents the place of emergence from earlier worlds into this one, connecting the present world to past mythic events (Smith, 1972). According to mythic accounts, when times grew difficult during a succession of earlier worlds, human ancestors escaped by climbing upwards into a new, higher realm. All but six Mesa Verde towers investigated by Lancaster et al. (1954) are 'adjacent to or very near kivas' (Hayes and Lancaster, 1975: 96), and 15 have tunnels connecting them to kivas (Hayes and Lancaster, 1975: 94). Towers at the heads of canyons, such as Holly, Horseshoe, Hackberry, and Cutthroat Castle in Hovenweep National Monument, are associated with springs (Winter, 1976). Towers in canyon bottoms, such as Lightning Tree, are also associated with water (Van Dyke and Throgmorton, 2006). Isolated towers, such as Painted Hand, are often built atop hollowed-out boulders (Van Dyke et al., 2004). All of these cases link highly visible, skyward towers with an implied opening to a dark underworld. King and Van Dyke (in press) suggest that McElmo towers are positioned atop these openings to symbolically provide access through space and time, reaching back into the lower world of the past, through the world of the present, into a future world above. According to Hopi oral traditions, when the inhabitants of the third world became violent and corrupt, the virtuous sought to escape upwards. First the women built towers to reach the sky, but the towers fell down. Then the men planted reeds that grew through the sky, and the Hopi eventually emerged through the hole into this, the fourth world (Parsons, 1929: 236–8). Similarly, McElmo towers may represent ancient Puebloans' attempts to symbolically or literally construct a pathway up out of the social and environmental turmoil of the late thirteenth century into a better realm.

The McElmo tower builders referenced ideas that figured prominently at Chaco – particularly visibility and balanced dualism. The tower builders did not attempt to cite, or directly replicate, Chaco, however. Rather, the McElmo towers are a good example of translation – they evoke the ideals

of the Chacoan past, but their meanings are not synonymous with those of Chacoan buildings. At Chaco, intervisibility with prominent peaks would have emphasized the role of the canyon as a center place. For inhabitants of the Four Corners, intervisibility with Sleeping Ute Mountain would have echoed the importance of line-of-sight connections at Chaco, reminding people of a connection with Chaco as a shared, storied, ancestral place. Towers juxtapose the celestial and the subterranean in a manner that seems at first glance to resemble the ideas embodied by Chacoan tower kivas, but, again, the meanings are not synonymous. Rather, the notion of a balancing point or center place as represented in Chacoan architecture is transformed, in the McElmo towers, into the concept of an opening between worlds. It is the conduit across space and time that is important, rather than the balance between up and down.

DISCUSSION

At Aztec, and in the McElmo tower communities, builders were referencing ideas, events, and architecture that belonged to Chaco Canyon – a different place and time. Both cases involved the construction of new buildings in new places, but neither situation would be well characterized as the 'invention of tradition'. Builders were not attempting to reinvent or resurrect a mythological past. There is compelling evidence that the Aztec architects were directly familiar with Chacoan ritual and architecture. McElmo tower builders were culturally related, and perhaps even biologically related, to people who had participated in ceremonial gatherings at Chaco to some extent during the eleventh century. I have characterized the Aztec case as citation, and the McElmo case as translation. A closer examination of the similarities and differences between the two cases should help to illustrate why this distinction is a useful one.

As we examine architectural similarities that extend across time and space, it is important to separate discursive memory from continuities in traditional build practices. Domestic architecture looks much the same at Aztec, in McElmo tower communities, in Chaco Canyon, and across the northern Southwest between AD 900 and 1300. One might point out that similarities among the Chaco, Aztec, and McElmo cases must be to some degree due to shared architectural traditions. Houses are oriented and organized in repetitive ways across time and space because this is the way things are done (Bourdieu, 1977). Although practical consciousness undoubtedly plays some role in any architectural endeavor, I would argue that (by contrast with domestic structures) monumental architecture always falls at the more discursive end of the spectrum. The monumental buildings at Aztec and in McElmo tower communities stand out because they are unusual. Builders were intentionally creating architectural focal points for

non-domestic practices – this is one of the reasons archaeologists have had such difficulty assigning functions to great houses and towers. The edifices were not intended for use as habitations, and they do not represent commonplace traditional patterns of construction, layout, or orientation. They do, however, contain similarities with the unusual, monumental architecture of Chaco Canyon – similarities that must have been conscious and intentional.

Aztec citation and McElmo translation are not merely the result of greater or lesser spatial and temporal distance from Chaco. Builders in both cases sought to wield memory in the service of specific social ends, but their social contexts, intentions, and scales of action were quite different. This is evident when we think about the labor represented by monumental architecture in the two cases. At Aztec, architects put considerable time into siting and planning great houses, great kivas, road segments, and tri-wall structures. Builders invested decades of effort into executing these plans. Masons stacked coursed sandstone in core-and-veneer walls that reached three storeys in height. Roofs and kiva interiors indicate a painstaking attention to detail. Assembling the construction materials – hauling pine beams from the mountains, and quarrying sandstone blocks from several kilometers up the river – probably entailed as much or more labor than erecting the buildings. The construction of the Aztec complex represents the long-term coordination of, minimally, hundreds of people. This is not the case for the McElmo towers. Despite their dramatic appearances, McElmo towers represent much less labor investment. Stone and wood could have been expediently procured in the immediate vicinity. Builders used the same shaped sandstone blocks for the towers as they used in associated domestic architecture. Puebloans constructed the towers in small residential sites as well as in large community centers. Local groups of 10 or 20 people could have erected the towers in a matter of weeks. These dissimilar construction scales remind us that although the builders in both cases made knowledgeable references to Chaco, they did so for very different reasons.

The purpose of citation is to engage in a discursive act that fosters continuity and legitimacy by replicating the original. The builders of Aztec intended to create a second Chaco Canyon, complete with attendant Chacoan meanings and ceremonies. They wished to replicate not just the assemblage of buildings, but the larger social, ritual, and political configurations that had been centered on Chaco Canyon during the previous century. People who came to Aztec would participate in the same kinds of activities (including monumental construction) that characterized gatherings at Chaco. They would see and move through a landscape that bore a material resemblance to central Chaco Canyon. The new buildings were meant to carry the same symbolic ideas and to create the same bodily perceptions. The Aztec landscape may have also been meant to invoke individual memories and emotional connections with past ritual gatherings in the canyon. The old Chacoan regime would continue, but it would be transformed, with power shared with or perhaps seized by a new group of

priestly leaders. Aztec elite power would be legitimated because it was grounded in spatially constituted, embodied, remembered practices.

In the Four Corners, a century later, McElmo tower builders translated rather than cited Chacoan architecture and ideas. McElmo builders employed concepts grounded in Chacoan notions of verticality and visibility, but they referenced rather than replicated Chacoan spatial forms. There was no longer a center place at which to gather, build, and celebrate; there was no longer the means or the motivation for the massive labor organization that characterized monumental construction at Chaco and Aztec. Nonetheless, Puebloans erected imposing, albeit relatively small-scale, round and square towers in their communities. Builders may have intended to restore a sense of order to their chaotic world by reminding everyone of a shared Chacoan past. Lines of sight to topographic landmarks would have emphasized the importance of visible high places and may have been perceived as connecting the Four Corners back to the old Chacoan center. The towers' celestial/subterranean juxtapositions could have evoked the balanced dualism so important at Chaco. But rather than emphasizing a center place as the balancing point, however, the towers' connection between sky and underground may have been seen as an opening between worlds. Rather than maintaining balance or social continuity in this world, the tower builders' goal may have been transformation – real or imagined social movement to a more secure, more virtuous social world.

Ultimately, most Pueblo people did undertake a version of this journey. By the end of the thirteenth century, nearly everyone had moved away from the San Juan Basin and the Four Corners region to build new communities along the banks of the Rio Grande, the Little Colorado, and other adjacent areas. Fourteenth-century Pueblo society reconstituted itself into very large, aggregated pueblos and adopted the kachina cult. But Chacoan architecture and ideas remained powerful points of reference for subsequent generations of indigenous Southwest peoples. Aspects of Chacoan ideology continue to resonate in various ways in Pueblo social, ritual, and spatial organization until the present day.

CONCLUSION

Archaeological studies of social memory have progressed well beyond the basic recognition that past peoples referenced more distant pasts. The study of memory can inform us about larger issues such as the negotiation of social power, identities, and ideologies. Who promoted specific views about the past, who participated in these conceptions, and why? How was social memory employed by diverse factions, and to what ends? What does memory tell us about change as well as continuity? Memory can be construed to encompass practical as well as discursive consciousness, but if

memory is meant as something other than a synonym for culture, we cannot escape engagement with intentionality. Monumental architecture is self-avowedly discursive, and so provides unambiguous engagement with past peoples' intentional temporal conceptions.

All understandings of the past are partial. Discursive social memory can draw upon a range of ideas, from lived, shared experiences situated in the immediate past, through invented mythologies situated in remote antiquity. I have attempted here to delve more extensively into two possible moments along a continuum of practices. Both the Aztec great houses and the McElmo towers reference Chaco, yet they are situated in very different spatial, temporal, and social contexts. Citation – as in the case of Aztec – entails knowledgeable attempts to replicate a known past, complete with associated meanings. Translation – as in the case of the McElmo towers – involves slightly less knowledgeable references that shift, distort, or alter the past meanings. Builders not only had different kinds of experiences and perceptions of the Chacoan past, they also had different reasons for constructing architectural references. Citation and translation are not meant to be categorically exclusive ideas, nor are they meant to exhaust the possibilities among the wide range of memory practices. Rather, these concepts are meant to elucidate some of the myriad ways that peoples might differently invoke the same past, in the service of both continuity and transformation.

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