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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE AZTEC NORTH GREAT HOUSE

Michelle I. Turner

7:30 pm Tuesday, **December 14**, 2021

At Your Computer, Tablet, or Smart Phone

In 2016, my team from Binghamton University conducted archaeological testing at the previously unexcavated Aztec North Great House at Aztec Ruins National Monument. The fieldwork revealed architectural surprises, including unexpected construction methods and remodeling over time, as well as fascinating artifact patterns. I will discuss what we have learned about the site's chronology, about the architecture, and about people's daily lives at this site. I will also discuss my ongoing research into the great house's place in the larger cultural landscape of Aztec Ruins and its relationship to Chaco Canyon and other regions.

Michelle Turner is a Southwestern archaeologist who works on the relation of Chaco Canyon to its outliers. She is currently a museum professional at Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut, but she recently completed a term as postdoctoral scholar at Crow Canyon Archaeological Center, working on the Northern Chacoan Outliers Project. She received her PhD in 2019 from the Department of Anthropology at Binghamton University (SUNY). This talk grows out of her dissertation research on the Aztec North great house. Prior to becoming an archaeologist, Michelle practiced law for nearly a decade, and she continues to draw on that background, researching the legal and ethical issues surrounding NAGPRA, cultural heritage, decolonization of museums, and the repatriation of material culture and art. She also serves on the Society for American Archaeology Committee on Repatriation.

*A day or so prior to the meeting, an email message will be sent to members with the link for the Zoom meeting, which will open around 7 to allow for greetings among friends. Please keep your microphone muted during the presentation until the question-and-answer session. **Note that the meeting is on December 14, a week earlier than usual.***

AAS DUES FOR 2022 ARE NOW PAYABLE

If you have not already done so, please fill out the attached membership renewal form and mail it with your check to Treasurer, Albuquerque Archaeological Society, PO Box 4029, Albuquerque NM 87196. Don't be shy about showing interest in working with a committee or serving on the Board. In 2022, the current president, a vice president, and a director at large will be term-limited. It's time for new people to step up to keep AAS the great organization it has become!

MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 16 VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE ALBUQUERQUE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The meeting was called to order by President Evan Kay at 7:35 pm.

MINUTES: As there were no corrections or additions to the October minutes, they stand approved as published in the Newsletter.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Tom Obenauf: There was no income this past month. A zoom license fee of \$16.17 was paid. There were no operating expenses. The checking account balance is \$5,378.18.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Archiving Lab – Karen Armstrong: The work may begin again in mid-January.

Field Trips – Pat Harris: A field trip to the Sandia Foothills is scheduled for this coming Saturday. The trip is full and there is a waiting list, so a second trip may be scheduled in 2022.

Rock Art – Carol Chamberland: The crew continues to take advantage of good weather to work at a non-BLM site.

AAS BOARD ELECTIONS

Evan announced that all the current Board members were willing to serve again, but that Cindy Carson had already served four terms and is term-limited and a vacancy therefore exists for Director at Large.

Helen Crotty nominated Mary Raje for the position, and Mary nominated Jo Lynne Fenger. Mary later withdrew her name, and Helen Crotty moved that the nominations be closed.

As the slate is now uncontested, it will not be necessary to have a mail-in vote. Evan requested a show of hands in favor of the slate as now constituted: President, Evan Kay; Vice Presidents, Gretchen Obenauf and Ann Braswell; Secretary, Susan King; Treasurer, Tom Obenauf; Directors at Large, John Guth and Jo Lynne Fenger. A majority of the members on Zoom raised their hands.

Evan noted that the current offices of president, second vice president, and one director at large will be term limited by the end of 2022 and new nominees will be needed. He urged the membership to start thinking about possible candidates or to volunteer themselves.

Respectfully submitted by Susan King, Secretary.

SPEAKER

Ann Braswell introduced the speaker, Scott Nicolay of University of California, Merced, whose presentation was entitled "Exploring the Sixth Dimension: Caves and Cosmvision in the US Southwest/Northwest Mexico". No synopsis of the talk is available, but much of the information can be found in two previously published papers, that were attached to an email sent to the membership on November 16. Links can be requested from Ann Braswell (abraswel@unm.edu). The papers are "The Inner Sanctum of Feather Cave: A Mogollon Sun and Earth Shrine Linking Mexico and the Southwest" by Florence Hawley Ellis and Laurens Hammack in *American Antiquity* 33 (January 1968):25-44, and "Footsteps in the Dark" by Scott Nicolay in *Sacred Darkness: A Global Perspective on the Ritual Use of Caves*, edited by Holley Moyes, pp 171-183, University Press of Colorado, 2012.

NOTE FROM MAXWELL MUSEUM ARCHIVING LAB CHAIR KAREN ARMSTRONG

We tentatively plan to resume work at the Hibben Center on Wednesday, January 26, depending on what the new Covid variant does to us. We will still observe social distance, masks, and all the protocols. Because of the social distance requirements, we will be unable to bring in the entire crew (currently around 15 people) at once, so we may have to work in separate groups on alternate weeks.

Other news from Karen Price, Archaeology Collections Manager, is that a new computer database is nearly complete. The new database will enable easy access to records and therefore provide a step toward completion of a long-delayed detailed report on the 50-plus archaeological sites that the crew has processed over the years.

BOOK REVIEW

Decolonizing “Prehistory”: Deep Time and Indigenous Knowledges in North America, edited by Gesa Mackenthun and Christen Mucher. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. 2021. Xiv + 251 pp., 29 figures, 3 tables, contributor’s biographies, index. \$60.00 hardcover (ISBN 9780816542291), Open Access eBook (ISBN 9780816542871).

Reviewed by Thatcher A. Seltzer-Rogers

The invention of an American “prehistory,” that is, anything predating European colonization and record keeping, is an overt action that seeks to impose order on over twelve thousand years of constant Indigenous habitation of the continent. This action can be relatively innocuous when archaeologists identify patterns in the material record. However, it can also be readily undertaken to further agendas that dispossess contemporary Native American individuals and groups of their ancestry, their histories, and their identity. In this edited volume, Gesa Mackenthun (Professor of American Studies, Rostock University, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany) and Christen Mucher (Associate Professor of American Studies, Smith College, Massachusetts) have gathered a diverse multidisciplinary group of scholars who situate their arguments for the deep time of Indigenous knowledge and histories in North America in postcolonial, Indigenous, and decolonial scholarship, notably the ground-breaking, controversial 1993 work *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* by Vine Deloria, Jr.

The first chapter, by Annette Kolodny, situates the volume and historical debates regarding Indigenous history and sovereignty within the major political and cultural shifts in the United States during the presidency of Donald Trump. The second, by Christen Mucher, ties developments in genetic studies and rejection of Indigenous oral traditions, particularly with respect to the peopling of the Americas, to continued dispossession. Following this, Melissa Gniadek draws in themes from contemporary and nineteenth century literature and relates them to historical pamphlets distributed at Mammoth Cave National Park and to the broader construction of the “past.” Rick Budwa, in the fourth chapter, finds strong similarities in his comparison of the oral histories of Pacific Northwest Coast groups with geological interpretations and data for three major catastrophic events—the eruption of Mount Mazama over 7,000 years ago, the Bonneville/Cascade landslide estimated to have occurred between 350 and 900 years ago, and a massive tsunami caused by an earthquake off the Pacific Northwest Coast 300 years ago.

Gesa Mackenthun, in the fifth chapter, assesses the contemporary use of the extinction and termination tropes found in historical and archaeological narratives as a performative feature in the colonialism of the past and suggests that a longer, dynamic view that focuses on the potentially positive warning or future values from such narratives would yield a more productive understanding. Keith Thor Carlson and Naxaxalhts’i provide a poignant view of sacred sites by contrasting normative settler-colonial and Indigenous perspectives on how the formers' sacred sites are valued and their ancestral sites in Europe are often strongly protected, while Indigenous sacred sites are often dismissed outright by courts and officials and the sites subsequently destroyed. Jeff Oliver, in the seventh chapter, provides a striking assessment of contemporary archaeology and a shift toward the need to decolonize archaeology, and a critical discussion of what that actually means and how it can look—beyond the common politically-charged parlance found in conference sessions. Coll Thrush takes a multidisciplinary approach to decolonize understandings of the historical record for landscapes along the southern Salish Sea in the Pacific Northwest.

Jessica Christie evaluates the historical construction of “Maya” as an identity, based on her ethnographic research in Quintana Roo, Mexico with respect to the archaeological Maya. Christie provides an insightful exploration of how Indigenous groups act as agents within processes of cultural hybridity, even where changes are forced upon them by powerful federal governments. Mathieu Picas's research also occurs within Quintana Roo, but focuses on

the way in which local Maya communities relate to the increasing tourism of sites such as Tulum. In this chapter, I identified many parallels to Chaco Canyon and other key archaeological sites, as well as their connections to descendant communities. Philip Deloria follows in his father's footsteps by presenting a moving commentary on the intellectual hold on the public that works such as *Gun, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond (1997) and *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari (2014) exert, and the overall politics of who is afforded the privilege of conveying knowledge of the past and how such works are accepted and impact marginalized groups, especially Indigenous peoples. This is discussed particularly in regard to how the public and scholars reacted to his father's *Red Earth, White Lies*. In the brief epilogue, Kirsten Matoy Carlson provides a commentary from a legalistic perspective on the implications of the papers taken together. In this way, Carlson brings the other chapters, which could otherwise be dismissed as theoretical or temporally/ spatially restricted, into contemporary significance.

Decolonizing "Prehistory" is a pointed critique of attitudes regarding Indigenous North America espoused by the public as well as by some anthropologists. By prodding assumptions about the veracity and time depth of oral histories, the individual components of the volume draw attention to the need to directly engage with descendant communities and their oral histories in archaeological research. Central to all of the contributions is the questioning of what "deep history" is, who is afforded the privilege of creating such historical narratives and how they go about it, and what the implications of this process are. This work is inherently political and activist, and these qualities, coupled with the varied foci and training of the authors, can often result in the significance of the individual pieces being lost in confusing shifts in tone, message, and focus. This is also the point. Although I found several chapters confusing upon first read and several less impactful than others, later rereads led to a more thorough understanding of their message and the nonlinear, complex way in which the pieces resonate with one another. Most of the chapters draw upon data from British Columbia and the Northwest Coast of the United States, an area that many Southwestern archaeologists, including myself, may not be familiar with. This was intriguing and a delightful surprise. Although *Decolonizing "Prehistory"* may not be easily accessible for all, it has many important contributions that should be read and carefully considered by anthropologists and archaeologists, given the "deep history" and the pasts we create through our research.

This book is available as Open Access eBook via <https://uapress.arizona.edu/book/decolonizing-prehistory>.

NEWS AND NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE

Secretary Haaland Announces Task Force, Advisory Committee to Help Expunge Derogatory Place Names.

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced that the agency is establishing a task force to identify and remove derogatory terms used in the names of public land features such as valleys and lakes, beginning with the word "squaw." Haaland signed an order that identifies the word – an ethnic slur to describe Indigenous women – as derogatory and establishes a Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force to rename the 650 places on federal land that contain it.

In 2018, before President Joe Biden tapped Haaland to lead Interior, she was one of the first two Native American women elected to Congress. When Haaland was sworn in to represent New Mexico's 1st Congressional District, she said that "Congress has never heard a voice like mine." In both roles, the Democrat has been outspoken about addressing human-caused climate change and what she has called an "epidemic" of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

The word "squaw" is believed to be a derivation of the Algonquian word for "woman," but "the term has historically been used as an offensive ethnic, racial, and sexist slur, particularly for Indigenous women," the Interior Department said.

A separate order creates an Advisory Committee on Reconciliation in Place Names, made up of history experts, members of the general public and representatives from Indigenous communities, that will review and recommend changes to other derogatory words used as names on federal land.

"Our nation's public lands and waters should be places to celebrate the outdoors and our shared cultural heritage, not to perpetuate the legacies of oppression. Indigenous people, and in particular women, know how offensive

this word is, and I'm proud to be in a position to rid federal places of it," Haaland stated over a late November weekend in a visit to Alcatraz Island to mark the fifty-second anniversary of its occupation by Indigenous activists.

Haaland is an enrolled member of the Laguna Pueblo and the first Native American to be a Cabinet secretary of an Executive Branch agency. The Interior Department employs about 70,000 people who oversee more than 500 million acres of public land, including hundreds of national parks. It contains the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which administers most programs related to more than 550 federally recognized tribes.

The Interior Department has in the past identified other derogatory terms related to Black people and Japanese Americans that it no longer uses in naming places on public land. Several states had already passed legislation prohibiting the use of the word "squaw" in names of public places, and federal legislation is pending in Congress that would prohibit the use of derogatory terms in public land names. [Adapted from an article by Amanda Becker, in *The Denver Post* and *The 19th* via *Southwest Archaeology Today*, a service of Archaeology Southwest.]

ALBUQUERQUE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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www.abqarchaeology.org and www.facebook.com/abqarchsoc

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