



THE  
Albuquerque Archaeological Society  
*Newsletter*

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**EXPLORING THE SIXTH DIMENSION: CAVES AND COSMOVISION IN  
THE US SOUTHWEST/NORTHWEST MEXICO**

**Scott Nicolay**

**7:30 pm Tuesday, November 16, 2021**

*At Your Computer, Tablet, or Smart Phone*

The Underworld plays a central role in the cosmovision of the Indigenous peoples of the US Southwest/Northwest Mexico. Most groups trace their origins back to a primal emergence from the Earth, and many also consider the Underworld as the abode of ancestors, both in the sense of the spirits of those who have died in this world, and of those who remained behind for various reasons. Archaeologists working in the region have recognized the role of caves as shrines since the late nineteenth century, but few have made this a focus of their research. Systematic study of these sites readily shows an early belief in caves as the source of game animals, with related offerings dating back to the Archaic and perhaps even into the Pleistocene. Cave ritual intensifies significantly with the development of sedentary agriculture, with dozens, if not hundreds, of sites utilized as shrines, especially in the southern Mogollon area, where the Mesoamerican storm god known ethnographically as Tlaloc appears to have become an important figure in these activities. Caves may also have served as women's places, for the storage of dangerously powerful objects, and for the legitimation of social authority at complex sites such as Pueblo Bonito and Paquimé.

Scott Nicolay is an archaeology graduate student at the University of California, Merced working with Dr. Holley Moyes, and like her, he examines the ritual use of caves in prehistory. His research investigates the use of ceremonial caves from the prehistoric US Southwest and Northwest Mexico in order to interpret major social, political, and religious reorganizations that repeatedly swept the region prior to European contact, and how these shifts mesh both with prehistoric climactic change and contemporaneous events in the Mesoamerican core and periphery. Some of his earlier work suggests that the more important cave shrines in the Southwest served as the foci of ceremonial "catchment basins," accumulating offerings from large geographical areas. Scott is also currently working with other UC Merced students on a project called "Baskets 2 Bytes," conducting 3D photogrammetry of Indigenous California baskets in museum collections in order to make them digitally available to weavers.

*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.*

## MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 19 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 September minutes, they stand approved as published in the Newsletter.

### AAS BOARD ELECTIONS

Evan reported that all of the current Board members are willing to serve again, but nominations from the floor will be entertained at the November meeting.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

**Tom Obenauf:** There was no new income for the month as there were no new memberships or membership renewals. Operating expenses were the Zoom license fee of \$16.17, Lobo Internet Services DNS Hosting fee of \$30, postage costs of \$41.30, office supplies costs of \$10.99, and newsletter photocopying cost of \$25.91. There were no program expenses. The checking account balance is \$5,394.35.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Newsletter – Helen Crotty** thanked Ann Braswell for taking on the print copy mailings, Carol Toffaleti for proofreading, and Evan Kay for emailing the bulk of the Newsletters.

**Archiving Lab – Karen Armstrong:** There had been plans to commence the lab work beginning this Wednesday, but due to the pandemic still raging, the Maxwell Museum leadership decided to not allow volunteer work to continue at present. The collections can wait until January 2022, when the next project will be to repackage some 35 boxes of artifacts from the Mimbres Treasure Hill Site.

**Field Trips – Pat Harris:** There will be a field trip this coming Saturday, October 30, to the Ojito area, led by Earlene Shroyer. Proof of vaccination is required.

**Rock Art – Carol Chamberland:** The crew went out today to a non-BLM site. It was a small group and all are vaccinated.

**Pottery Southwest – Hayward Franklin:** The Fall-Winter edition will include an article on pottery kilns in the Dolores, Colorado area.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jo Lynne Fenger reported that she had received her Master's degree.

### SPEAKER

Gretchen Obenauf introduced Ruth Van Dyke, Professor of Anthropology at Binghamton University – SUNY, whose research employs landscape archaeology to investigate the Chaco phenomenon. The Zoom presentation is based on *The Greater Chaco Landscape*, a book published by the University of Colorado Press that she coauthored with Carrie Heitman and that received the 2021 American Anthropological Association's Engaged Anthropology Award. The talk was professionally produced for Durham University in the UK last February, but Dr Van Dyke was with us online to update the audience on new developments and to take questions at the end. There is no synopsis, as the entire recorded talk is available for free online at <http://read.upcolorado.com/projects/the-greater-chaco-landscape>.

Respectfully submitted by Susan King, Secretary.

### NOTE FROM MEMBERSHIP CHAIR MARY RAJE

AAS is now in the membership renewal period for 2022. Memberships expire December 31 and are delinquent at the end of March. Please use the attached 2022 Membership form, fill it out, and send it with your check to

Treasurer, Albuquerque Archaeological Society, P.O. Box 4029, Albuquerque, N.M. 87196. Students, please submit the same form for your 2022 membership. Student memberships are free when accompanied by a copy of your student ID or class schedule. We surely hope that the Covid-19 pandemic will ease to allow us to resume the in-person meetings and other activities that make AAS such a vital group. Thanks for renewing early.

## **AAS FIELD TRIP IN THE SANDIA FOOTHILLS SCHEDULED NOVEMBER 20**

Join us for a morning walk in the Sandia Foothills led by Hayward Franklin from 9 to 12 on Saturday, November 20. We will visit two sites: Jaral Pueblo, a small prehistoric pueblo, and the Jaral Ranger Station, a Forest Service ranger station from 1930s, now abandoned. Hayward describes this as an easy walk for about 2 miles round trip. The foothill area is not steep like hiking up the mountain, but walking a trail over uneven ground. Gretchen Obenauf warns that the trail is not for bad knees, hiking poles required!

Proof of Covid immunizations is requested at the meeting place, along with the usual AAS \$10 fee per person to be collected there. Details of the meet place and time will be sent to AAS members who sign up. To sign up, email Pat Harris, Coordinator, at [Trips@Abqarchaeology.org](mailto:Trips@Abqarchaeology.org).

## **NEWS AND NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE**

**New Study Examines Chaco Residents' Impacts on Their Environment.** Researchers at the University of Cincinnati say they have more evidence that Chaco Canyon in northwestern New Mexico was more than just an ancient gathering spot for Indigenous ceremonies and rituals. The researchers analyzed pollen content and the chemical composition of soils to help document environmental impacts of the early residents who called the area home. Their findings, published this week in the journal PLOS ONE, focus on changes resulting from tree harvesting that sustained daily life at Chaco.

The researchers reported a gradual degradation of the surrounding woodlands beginning around 600 BC, much earlier than previously thought. David Lentz, a biology professor and lead author of the study, said that many researchers have the idea that Chaco was too arid to sustain day-to-day living and that the infrastructure built over many centuries at Chaco was used only as a periodic ceremonial center and storage facility. Lentz believes that explanation to be too simplistic and says that his team turned up evidence to support human management of the area's environment to support daily life. "This is a very arid area," he observed, "In arid woodlands, the trees are essential for holding the soil in place. When the Puebloan inhabitants removed those woodlands, the result was eventually severe erosion and the deterioration of croplands."

Paul Reed, a preservation archaeologist with Archaeology Southwest, who was not involved in the study, said the new research confirms what he has believed for years – that Chaco and some of its surrounding sites were residential as well as ritual centers. He estimates that Chaco had thousands of full-time residents. Another Chaco scholar, Gwinn Vivian, came to the same conclusion while studying Chaco's agricultural capacity decades ago. Reed noted that the latest study provides helpful data on the nature and extent of Chaco's agricultural processes and other uses of the natural environment by the people who lived there. "It is a strong counterpoint to the mistaken idea that corn and other crops could not be grown in the quantities necessary to sustain a large residential population in Chaco Canyon."

The study by the University of Cincinnati team noted that the landscape modifications by Chaco residents triggered serious environmental ramifications. "At the cost of major reduction of tree density in the local woodlands, their activities ultimately contributed to a destabilizing environmental impact prior to their final exodus," Lentz said. [Adapted from an AP article by Susan Montoya Bryan via *Southwest Archaeology Today*, a service of Archaeology Southwest.]

## CALENDAR CHECK

### ***Free Lectures***

**An Indigenous Borderland? The Dynamic Late Prehispanic San Carlos Safford Area of Southeastern Arizona** by Thatcher Rogers on Tuesday, November 9 at 6:30 pm via Zoom. Presented jointly by Friends of Tijeras Pueblo and Torrance County Archaeological Society. Information for links will be sent to their members on November 8; others should sign up at [www.friendsoftijeraspueblo.org](http://www.friendsoftijeraspueblo.org) by that date for link information.

**Sixty Years at Sapawe: An Update on Ongoing Archaeological Investigations at an Ancestral Tewa Village in the Rio Chama Valley of Northern New Mexico** by Thomas C. Windes, Peter J. McKenna, Nancy J. Akins, and Regge N. Wiseman on Friday, November 12 at 7:30 to 9:00 pm, Hibben Center, University of New Mexico campus. Livestream address to be announced. Free parking in the lot just north of the Maxwell Museum.

**Worlds Forever Changed: The Vázquez de Coronado Expedition to the Rio Grande Valley, 1540-1542** by Matthew Schmader on Friday, November 19 at 2 pm as part of the 2021 Fall Anthropology Colloquia Speaker Series. For zoom link, go to the UNM Anthropology Colloquia webpage. For passcode, email Dr. Ian Wallace at [iwallace@unm.edu](mailto:iwallace@unm.edu).

**Chaco and Me** by Steve Lekson on Sunday, November 21 at 2 pm via Zoom. Presented by Friends of Coronado Historic Site. Contact [www.kuaua.org](http://www.kuaua.org) for link.

### ***Conference***

**New Mexico Archaeological Council Fall Conference Legacy Projects: Old Data/New Research** on November 13, 9 am to 4 pm at Hibben Center, University of New Mexico campus. Online registration at [nmarchcouncil.org](http://nmarchcouncil.org). Advance registration and NMAC membership required. Livestream address TBD. Park in non-reserved spaces on campus.

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## ALBUQUERQUE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

PO Box 4029, Albuquerque, NM 87196

[www.abqarchaeology.org](http://www.abqarchaeology.org) and [www.facebook.com/abqarchsoc](http://www.facebook.com/abqarchsoc)

**Annual Dues:** For emailed newsletter: Student, no charge (provide copy of current ID); Basic Individual \$25; Basic Family \$30. Print newsletter by First Class mail: Basic Individual \$30; Basic Family \$35; Institutions/Libraries: \$10 for print newsletter by First Class Mail, emailed newsletter at no charge.

### 2021 OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

To contact officers or committee chairs, or to change mailing or email address, email [info@abqarchaeology.org](mailto:info@abqarchaeology.org) or consult Membership Directory. Current members can sign up for field trips at meetings or by emailing [trips@abqarchaeology.org](mailto:trips@abqarchaeology.org).

#### **Officers**

**President:**

Evan Kay

**Vice Presidents:**

Gretchen Obenauf

Ann Braswell

**Secretary:**

Susan King

**Treasurer:**

Tom Obenauf

**Directors-at-Large:**

Cindy Carson

John Guth

#### **Standing Committee Chairs**

**Membership:**

Mary Raje

**Newsletter:**

Helen Crotty

Mailer: Ann Braswell

**Museum Archiving:**

Karen Armstrong

**Rock Art Recording:**

Dick Harris

Carol Chamberland

**Greeter:**

Sally McLaughlin

#### **Committee Chairs (continued)**

**Field Trips:**

Pat Harris

Steve Rospopo

**Refreshments:**

Ann Carson

**Publicity:**

Evan Kay

**Pottery Southwest**

Editors: Hayward Franklin, Peter

McKenna, Gretchen Obenauf

**Webmaster:**

Evan Kay

Asst: Thatcher Rogers

2022

ALBUQUERQUE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

New \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address(es): \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please print email in capital letters to avoid confusing lower case letters, "r" and "v" for example)*

Please check this box if you do **not** wish your information to be printed in our annual directory. (Federal law prohibits disclosing members' contact information to anyone outside of the organization.)

Please select a **Newsletter** category (e-mail or first class mail) AND a **Membership** category (Student, Individual or Family):

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**Newsletter by first class mail (see COVID-19 notice below):**

Individual: Basic: \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining: \$40.00+ \_\_\_\_\_

Family: Basic: \$35.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining: \$45.00+ \_\_\_\_\_

**Institutions/Libraries:**

\$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_ (newsletter sent by first class mail)

Free \_\_\_\_\_ (newsletter sent by e-mail)

**I/We would be interested in working with the following committees:**

- Greeters (name tags & guest signup at meetings);
- Membership (keep track of membership lists and send renewal notices);
- Assist Membership chair with display and signups at archaeological events;
- Field Trips (arrange for trip or assist chair with signups and follow up);
- Laboratory (assist with Hibben Center archival work);
- AAS *Newsletter* editorial assistant/trainee;
- AAS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Volume Editor, assistant, researcher;
- Board of Directors (and position desired);
- Other (describe on back).

Mail the completed form and your membership dues check (payable to Albuquerque Archaeological Society or AAS) to:  
**Treasurer, Albuquerque Archaeological Society, P.O. Box 4029 Albuquerque, NM 87196-4029**

Questions about Membership? (address or email changes, current dues verification, etc.): Email info@abqarchaeology.org.

AAS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and your Sustaining contributions are tax deductible