

An Exploration of Navajo-Anasazi Relationships

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Abstract. Through a rich body of traditional Navajo narrative, poetry, and song we examine the relationship of Navajo people to the Anasazi. This corpus includes descriptions of initial interactions and of intermarriage between ancestral Navajos and Anasazis and illustrations of complex economic, social, and ceremonial relationships between Navajos and Anasazis. We discuss standard methods of archaeological inference, historical documents, traditional Navajo history as told by contemporary *bataalii*, and traditional Navajo history recorded by anthropologists and others in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We present an example of how information from a Navajo ceremonial narrative, the Wind Chant, enhances interpretations of a protohistoric Navajo site, LA55979. Finally, we argue for the inclusion of pertinent traditional history in reconstructing a more ethnically complex and intricate past.

In short, the historian must justify his interpretation. Why should it be better than the local one? . . . This by no means is to say that the historian's interpretations should be literal, but only that they should at least be more believable than the already existing oral hypothesis. . . . The argument that as sources from the inside oral traditions are invaluable in contributing evidence and correcting basic biases in foreign historical interpretation holds here as it does elsewhere. . . . Wherever oral traditions are extant they remain an indispensable source for reconstruction. They correct other perspectives just as much as other perspectives correct them.

—Vansina 1985: 196–99

The relationship of Navajo people to the Anasazi—the archaeological name commonly used for the prehistoric Formative Stage occupants of the greater Four Corners region (see Willey and Phillips 1958: 144–47) of the American Southwest—is increasingly commanding attention, partially due to the

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Navajo claim of affiliation with Anasazi archaeological sites. This claim has been disputed by many Southwest archaeologists and a few Southwestern tribes, who assert that Navajos were not in the Southwest until the mid-1500s or later and have no relationship to the former occupants of Anasazi sites.

In this article we discuss why the Navajo-Anasazi relationship is a concern now, and we present some of the inherent difficulties in pursuing a dialogue on the subject. We show that a rich body of narrative, poetry, and song in Navajo traditional history, integral to clan origin stories and specific ceremonies, has been overlooked. In this oral literature are descriptions of initial interactions between ancestral Navajos and Anasazis, intermarriage between ancestral Navajos and Anasazis, and illustrations of complex economic, social, and ceremonial relationships between Navajos and Anasazis.

We argue that currently the archaeological literature of the Four Corners region presents a simplified view of the complexity of ethnic interactions from approximately AD 1100 on. We believe that this incomplete vision of the past would be greatly enhanced by the incorporation of aspects of Navajo traditional history.

For the Navajo, their relationship with the Anasazi is complex, and not all ceremonialists agree on its history or nature. It nonetheless is a critical component of Navajo ceremonialism and thus, according to Navajo tradition, is not to be openly discussed. Although this stricture obtains among Navajo people, it is much more stringent with respect to conversation on the matter between Navajos and non-Navajos: non-Navajos are simply not privy to this information (in anything other than general summaries) in any context. To relate the history carelessly in an essay such as this, or indeed in any context, diminishes the power of the narrative, and thereby diminishes the core of Navajo belief and culture.

Although Navajo traditional history was included as testimony in twentieth-century land disputes and in recent land-claims court decisions, specificity about Navajo and Anasazi relationships that are detailed in clan origin stories and ceremonial narratives were not the main focus of those dialogues. The currently more public and visible dialogue surrounding this particular aspect of Navajo traditional history is prompted by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA, U.S. Code, vol. 25, sec. 3001) and the public controversy surrounding issues of affiliation.

NAGPRA was passed by Congress in 1990 to balance the legitimate interests of tribes in human remains and "cultural items" with those of science and the public. Although the Navajo Nation has been involved

in the repatriation of ceremonial items from museums, the mechanisms of repatriation are not the focus of this article. Rather, we address the need to incorporate traditional Navajo history as a locus of knowledge and guidance when discussing Navajo claims of affiliation to the Anasazi. The remains of literally thousands of individuals are stored in facilities throughout the country, but very few of them are identified as Navajo. The vast majority of the remains and associated (and unassociated) funerary items taken from Navajo lands, or from federal lands in which Navajos have an interest, are referred to as Anasazi—an appellation that, in the minds of most Southwestern anthropologists, excludes the Navajo.

NAGPRA requires that museums and federal agencies carefully consider traditional history to assess tribal affiliation with the objects under consideration. The Navajo Nation (and other tribes) also need to assess the multifaceted aspects of cultural affiliation to make the most considered decisions about whether to claim remains or objects curated by an institution, or to dispute an affiliation arrived at by one of these institutions. To this end, the Navajo Nation is working closely with the Navajo public, especially traditional *hataali*¹—chanters or singers of traditional ceremonies. The Navajo Nation Hataali Advisory Council (HAC) includes individuals from various locations across the Navajo Nation authorized to perform traditional Navajo ceremonies. The HAC, in consultation with other knowledgeable persons, now advises the Navajo Nation Historic Preservation Department on all matters of cultural preservation. In public discussions the HAC expressed concern that because of the passage of NAGPRA and the possibility of repatriation, three principles should be followed with respect to Navajo-Anasazi relations: (1) traditionally, these matters are not to be discussed in any language other than Navajo; (2) they are not to be discussed outside of ceremonial contexts; and (3) they are not to be discussed with non-Navajos. As individuals who have some knowledge of Navajo traditional history and can meaningfully contribute to the discussion, we offer, to the degree allowed by Navajo ceremonial beliefs, a further exploration of Navajo-Anasazi relationships using previously published information to present some aspects of the topic that may be less well known to non-Navajos.

The relationship between Navajos and Anasazis (or in Navajo, *Ánaasázi*) that is delineated in traditional history through ceremonies and clan origin histories obligates Navajos, as guardians, to protect Anasazi sites. The origin stories of some Navajo clans place these clans, and thus their living descendants, at well-known Anasazi sites in the American Southwest, such as White House in Canyon de Chelly, Cliff Palace in Mesa Verde, Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon, and many other lesser-known areas that

are sacred and ancestral sites for certain Navajo ceremonies and clans. Because these clan histories have generated heated discussion in some quarters, we believe it is timely to explore some aspects of this relationship publicly.

The views presented here are solely those of the authors and do not intend or pretend to represent any official Navajo Nation position; nor is it our intention to settle the issue of cultural affiliation in this article. It is our goal to present our understanding of the relationship of the Navajo and Anasazi based on our personal experiences in Southwestern ethnography, traditional Navajo history, and archaeology, basing our presentation primarily on discussions with hataali, Navajo elders, Navajo cultural resource professionals, and other individuals consulted as part of our cultural resource work.

In terms of traditional Navajo history, we understand that there is no single unified version of Navajo oral history. Nor are we investigating Navajo origins in the Southwest, but we mention some Navajo clan origins in order to identify and clarify some aspects of Navajo-Anasazi relations. We discuss the various perspectives from which the subject has been and continues to be addressed: standard methods of archaeological inference based on archaeological data, historical documents, traditional Navajo history as told by contemporary hataali, and traditional Navajo history as recorded by anthropologists, military personnel, and religious scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We present an example of how information from a Navajo ceremonial narrative, the Wind Chant, provides a framework and enhances interpretations of an archaeological site, LA55979, designated as a protohistoric Navajo site. Finally, we argue for the inclusion of pertinent traditional history in reconstructing the past.

Who Are the Anasazi?

Linda Cordell (1994: 77–78) has noted that *Anasazi* was first used as an archaeological term at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair by Richard Wetherill, who displayed archaeological collections of ceramics, stone tools, and perishable items from Mesa Verde, Colorado, and Grand Gulch, Utah. In 1936 A. V. Kidder suggested *Anasazi* as an alternative to the *Basketmaker-Pueblo* appellation then in use (78). Wetherill and other early explorers and archaeologists of the late nineteenth century who worked in the Four Corners area took the term *ánaasází* from the Navajo and transliterated it as *Anasazi* (see Walters and Rogers 2000 for more in-depth discussion). For non-Navajos, this term is a label for an archaeological culture whose material remains, in the form of archaeological sites and all they contain, are found in the gen-

eral Four Corners region. Preceramic Anasazi sites represented by Basket-maker II remains date as early as 1000 BC (depending on the locale) and are followed by ceramic period sites dating until approximately AD 1450. Archaeologically, these sites are distinguished from other Southwest cultures such as Mogollon, Sinagua, or Hohokam; however, the Navajo term *ánaasázi* does not make this distinction.

For Navajos, *ánaasázi* is an encompassing term; there are different types of *ánaasázi* with different customs, lifestyles, and languages who may be the ancestors of modern Southwest people, including Puebloan, Navajo, and others (Walters and Rogers 2000: 322–25). We are not saying that all Navajo came from all Anasazi, but we are saying that some Navajos are the descendents of some Anasazis. It is understood that with the passage of time relations have changed with all of these people. Sometimes the relations are friendly and at other times hostile; sometimes people have intermarried and exchanged ceremonial knowledge, and at other times these interactions have been frowned on. Culture and interethnic or interclan relations are understood to be mutable.

It is ironic that this Navajo word, which encompasses all ancient peoples, including enemies, friends, and relatives, has been redefined by archaeologists in such a way that its present usage in most current Southwest archaeology textbooks denies any relationship between Anasazi and Navajo people (e.g., Cordell 1984, 1994; Plog 1997; and Reid and Whittlesey 1997).

The Evolution of Archaeological Thought on Navajo–Anasazi Relations

Are some Navajos related to the Anasazi? This question, which lies at the root of our discussion, is posed and mostly answered in the scientific realm. It is not a question for the Navajo, because the answer inheres in various traditional ceremonies and clan origin stories. Until the passage of NAGPRA there was no reason to explain the details and intricacies of Navajo and Anasazi issues to outsiders, and the cultural restrictions mentioned above in discussing this relationship could be strictly observed. To show how the contemporary archaeological perspective on Navajo–Anasazi relations, or lack thereof, has evolved, we provide an overview of the history of Navajo origins from an academic perspective.

Due to the historical development of the archaeological discipline in this region, most Southwestern archaeologists (e.g., Schaafsma 1979, 1981, 1996; and Wilcox 1981) argue against Navajo affiliation with Anasazi remains and against a Navajo presence in the Southwest prior to about

AD 1500. The majority of scholars assert that there is a lack of physical evidence for early Navajo sites—a position taken as early as the 1890s, when the first archaeological investigators began researching Navajo sites (Hewett 1906; Hodge 1895; Mindeleff 1898; Stephen 1893).

Linguistically (e.g., Hoijer 1938; Young 1983), Navajo and Apache are closely related and are considered to be Apachean languages (Young 1983: 393) in the Southern Athabaskan branch of the Athabaskan language family, which today has the greatest number of language groups represented in western Canada. Harry Hoijer's (1938, 1956b: 325) research on Athabaskan language and kin groups allowed him to conclude that "the kinship data confirm the already established hypothesis that the Pacific Coast and Southwest groups migrated to their present locations from the north. It suggests as well that both the Pacific Coast and Southwest Athabaskans came in two waves." Hoijer also conducted glottochronological studies on the Athabaskan languages and estimated the probable time at which the proto-Apachean separated from the Northern language complex at AD 950–1000 (Hoijer 1956a, cited in Young 1983: 393).

From the beginning of the twentieth century until the 1970s, the emphasis in Navajo site archaeology was on Navajo origins using the direct historical approach, or "working back into prehistoric time from the documented historical horizon" (Willey and Sabloff 1974: 114). Considerable attention was paid to the arrival of Athabaskan speakers in the Southwest and their probable route of entry—east of the Rocky Mountains, through the Rocky Mountains, or west of the Rocky Mountains (Farmer 1942; Gunnerson 1956; Hodge 1895; Huscher and Huscher 1942; Mera 1937; Steward 1936).

Some archaeologists (Farmer 1942; Gunnerson 1956; Kidder 1920; Malcolm 1939) who studied Navajo origins and arrival in the Southwest believed that the Diné'tah pueblitos of northwestern New Mexico were the earliest Navajo sites in the Southwest. These early scholars believed that most pueblitos dated to the late 1600s and early 1700s, and if they were the earliest Navajo sites in the Southwest, it then followed that the Athabaskan speakers not only were latecomers to the Southwest but could not be related to people who had lived at sites dating to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries AD. Despite the fact that research from the 1950s on (e.g., Towner 1996; Vivian 1960) has shown that pueblitos were a later stage in Navajo settlement patterns, the early work continues to influence mainstream archaeological interpretation of Navajo origins.

The period of the 1930s until about 1960 was a time of tremendous research on Navajos in most of the subfields of anthropology. Navajo arrival in the Southwest continued to be a focal point of research (Gunner-

son 1956; Hill 1936, 1938, 1940; Hoijer 1938, 1945, 1951, 1956a; Hurt 1942; Keur 1941, 1944; Mera 1937; Sapir 1936; Vivian 1960).

From 1960 into the 1970s, although the emphasis in archaeology had shifted to cultural ecology and to the problem-oriented approach of processual archaeology, David Brugge (1964, 1967, 1968, 1977a, 1977b), one of the most significant and influential researchers of Navajo archaeology and history, was becoming known for his recognition of the possibility of a pre-Columbian Navajo Apache presence in the Southwest. He also presented evidence that a large number of Pueblo Indians became Navajos in Spanish colonial times, thereby making the Navajo demographically and culturally linked to the Anasazi, at least indirectly (Brugge 1968: 16–17; 1983: 189). One of the most comprehensive efforts to record and understand Navajo occupation of the Southwest was undertaken during this period. This work, conducted for the Navajo Land Claim survey before the Indian Claims Commission, was “to support Navajo claims to areas not included in the Navajo reservation” (Towner 1996: 8). Due to legal considerations, a large part of the Navajo Land Claim data is not available, but a number of important works on Navajo site archaeology related to this project continue to be relevant, including Brugge 1972 and 1981 and Kemrer 1974.

This period also marked the beginning of salvage work in the Southwest, including the large Navajo Reservoir Project, which resulted in a great deal of archaeological work at Navajo sites (Dittert 1958; Dittert, Hester, and Eddy 1961; Eddy 1961, 1966; Hester 1962a, 1971; Hester and Shiner 1963). The Navajo Reservoir Project refined and standardized mainstream archaeological interpretations of Navajo history. Indeed, the Navajo Reservoir survey and reports formalized the view of most Southwest archaeologists concerning Navajo origins. James Hester (1962a) and Hester and Joel Shiner (1963: 3) found three cultural phases represented in the sites they recorded: the Dinétah phase (1550–1696), which they felt was the period of initial Navajo-Pueblo contact; the Gobernador phase (1696–1775), which was the refugee Pueblo period—the time, purportedly, when some Puebloan peoples sought shelter with their northern friends, fearing Spanish reprisals for the Puebloan uprising; and the Indeterminate Navajo category, for sites without diagnostic phase determinants. Hester (1962b) also presented an ethnohistoric reconstruction of Navajo origins based on Spanish documents that was widely disseminated and accepted.

From the mid-1970s to about 1995, most ethnographic work was related to economic development, with a few exceptions (Benedek 1992; Brugge 1994; Kelley and Francis 1994; Levy 1983; Levy, Neutra, and Parker 1987); however, these same development projects brought about a florescence in Navajo site archaeology. Many large archaeological contract proj-

ects began to document Navajo sites as a standard part of their recording procedures—the Black Mesa Archaeology Project, the Coal Gasification Project, the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project, and the Chaco Center’s recording of historic sites are just a few of these projects. Reports (e.g., York and Winter 1988) also began to include ethnohistories based on ethnographic interviews and historical documents. Klara Kelley’s (1986) detailed and provocative ethnoarchaeological study of Navajo land use was an outgrowth of the work she conducted through the Office of Contract Archaeology in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the Pittsburgh and Midway Coal Mining Company’s South McKinley Mine lease, which was slated for strip mining.

For the most part, however, the interpretive paradigm of the Navajo Reservoir Project guided the research and conclusions of archaeologists interested in Navajo sites. Klara Kelley and Harris Francis (1998: 144–46) have provided examples of the power of this interpretive paradigm and how it has colored archaeological interpretation. They show that, archaeological evidence notwithstanding, this mainstream paradigm influences interpretation of chronological samples from potentially early Navajo sites.

Conflicting Views and Recent Archaeological Data

Although early studies of Navajo history were concerned with documenting Navajo origins, there was at that time less emphasis on the concept of Athabaskans as “latecomers.” During this time, Washington Matthews (1884, 1886, 1887, 1889, 1894, 1900, 1994 [1897], 1995 [1902]), an army surgeon stationed at Fort Wingate, New Mexico, wrote prolifically on Navajo material culture and ceremonialism, but perhaps because his work was more ethnographically oriented, it failed to capture the attention of archaeologists. Matthews (1994 [1897]: 10) noted that Navajos were ethnically mixed, and in the section “Racial Affinity and Appearance,” he stated that “their Origin Legend represents them as a very mixed race, containing elements of Zunian and other Pueblo stocks, of Shoshonian and Yuman, and the appearance of the people seems to corroborate the legend.”

Although Hoijer’s (1956b: 324) research contributed to building the foundation of the archaeological majority view concerning Navajo origins and arrival in the Southwest, he did add a caveat: “This conclusion must of course be regarded as highly tentative; the evidence on which it is based is admittedly both slender and incomplete.” As mainstream archaeological opinion began emphasizing the lateness of Athabaskan speakers in the Southwest, a few researchers took the minority position. Among them was Donald Worcester (1947, 1951), who, citing Ales Hrdlicka (1900, as quoted in Worcester 1947: 12) on Navajo origins, states:

They pretend to have entered this world from an underworld. . . . The early history of the tribe is intimately associated with the Kisani or ancient Pueblos. They claim to have occupied regions adjacent to and north of the area of the Pueblos, with whom they sometimes were at war; but, my informant added, the two were originally the same people.

From physical examination it would appear that the tribe, notwithstanding some evident mixture, is closely allied to the ancient Pueblos and to the short headed people of today in other parts of New Mexico and Arizona, and possibly in Old Mexico.

Worcester's research (1947: 7-8, 16; 1951: 102), referencing extant archaeological publications such as Huscher and Huscher 1942 and Farmer 1942, and Spanish documents, led him to postulate that Navajos were in the American Southwest by the eleventh or twelfth century. Worcester (1947: 17-75) also emphasized that many Pueblo Indians were adopted into the Navajo "tribe" in Spanish colonial times. The views of scholars like Hrdlicka and Worcester appear to have been generally ignored by the greater body of Southwestern anthropologists.

Contemporary Anthropology and Navajo-Anasazi Relations

There has been a recent sea change in the approach and methods of archaeologists who focus on Navajo origins and Navajo sites (Kelley and Francis 1994, 1998; Reed and Reed 1992; Towner 1996, 1997). In particular, these researchers have begun to examine some of the Navajo traditional history and to analyze the archaeological data in relation to traditional history. For example, in support of Hester's (1962a) and R. Gwinn Vivian's (1960) interpretations of Diné'tah pueblitos, Ronald Towner's (1997) archaeological data clearly demonstrate that these sites were not refuges for Puebloans who feared Spanish reprisals. He reviewed the extant models of Navajo origins and then, based on his data and referencing some clan origin histories, he proposed a new scenario to account for the Navajo presence in the Diné'tah, which implies a more substantial population and an earlier date for Navajos in the Southwest (410). Although only a handful of scholars are currently researching Navajo clan origins and the Navajo-Anasazi relationship, they are publishing widely (Begay and Roberts 1996; Brown 1991; Brugge 1994; Copeland and Rogers 1996; Fetterman 1996; Kelley and Francis 1994, 1998; McPherson 1988, 1992; Towner 1996, 1997).

As a response to the discussion sparked by Navajo claims of affiliation with Anasazi sites, historical linguists and physical anthropologists

have rejoined the debate on the origins of Athabaskan speakers in the American Southwest. Indeed, linguists no longer consider glottochronological dates reliable (e.g., Campbell 1997, 1999), nor do they agree on the geographical pattern or timing of Athabaskan language spread. Johanna Nichols (1997), using historic linguistic, archaeological, and human genetic data, included the Athabaskan language family as a coastal language and noted that it is a relatively young language family, possibly between 3500 and 4500 years old; she also stated that its latitude of origin is unknown (379). David Smith has added his opinion from the genetic perspective (Smith et al. 1999, 2000; Lorenz and Smith 1996). In a presentation to the NAGPRA Review Committee (Smith 1999), he focused on evidence for admixture between Navajo and Tanoan speakers and concluded, assuming that Tanoan speakers are descendants of Anasazi, that many Navajos have Anasazi ancestry.

It is our opinion that until the present decade, the conventional view of Navajo-Anasazi relationships by non-Navajos has been based on a partial understanding of incomplete data. By this we mean that the vast body of published and unpublished Navajo traditional history has not been integrated into scholarly debates on this subject. Indeed, it is only in this decade that the inclusion of the Navajo voice via ethnohistories has begun to influence the relatively small group of researchers seriously studying Navajo history. The majority of contemporary and influential Southwestern archaeologists, however, cling to a conservative view of Navajo-Anasazi relations and present this view to their students. To understand how the relationship of Anasazi and Navajo is presented to undergraduate and graduate students in our universities, we need only consider a few of the comprehensive texts on Southwest archaeology that are widely used in academia.

Jefferson Reid and Stephanie Whittlesey's (1997) omission of any mention of Navajos in their text, *The Archaeology of Ancient Arizona*, epitomizes the position that there is no relationship between the Anasazi and the Navajo. Their omission gives the further impression that Anasazi sites have no historic or ceremonial significance to Navajos. Stephen Plog's (1997: 16) introductory text, *Ancient People of the American Southwest*, does mention Navajos, but he dismisses them by asserting that "relative new-comers to the region include the Navajo and Apache, who only entered the Southwest in the late fifteenth century or early sixteenth century. Important though they have been to the life of the region in historic times, they played no part in the story of the ancient Southwest to be told in the following pages." In the same text, Plog includes a small section expanding on the statement quoted above, again asserting a late Navajo entry into the Southwest and limiting the Pueblo-Navajo relationship to one based on trading alone

(188–89). Cordell's (1997) revised edition of her popular text *Archaeology of the Southwest* does include a couple of sections on the Navajo and notes some of the recent work in Navajo site archaeology, allowing for the conceptual possibility of Navajo-Puebloan interaction.

Can Traditional History Provide Information about Anasazi-Navajo Relations?

We are using the term *traditional history* in this article as a conflation of Jan Vansina's (1985: xii) distinction between history and oral tradition. We thus mean to imply our belief that Navajo history, including people, facts, and events, has been passed orally from one generation to the next as part of ceremonial narrative, song, poetry, and clan origin stories—what Vansina might refer to as “Memorized Speech” (14–16).

Traditional history has received scant attention from archaeologists primarily because they consider themselves interpreters of material culture remains. What is ignored by this approach, however, is that such a superficial understanding of the descendants of the cultures being studied results in a weak interpretive structure and thus weak conclusions. Many archaeologists avoid this problem by asserting that because there has been so much cultural change over the years, they are better off trying to interpret the material record without preconceptions derived from contemporary culture. Implicit in this stance is a devaluation of traditional history and orality as an effective mode of transmitting history and maintaining cultural connection with the past. This results in the tendency, as Elizabeth Tonkin (1992: 83) has pointed out, to think of recorded history as objective and oral history as subjective because “it is provided by fallible human subjects.”

Vansina (1985: 54–56) and Tonkin (1992: 38) raise the issue of authors and authorizations. Authors are the tellers of traditional history, and they shape the history for their audience in a given context. For Tonkin (1992: 38), however, the audience is the authorization of the history. An apprentice learning Navajo ceremonies, and thus Navajo traditional history, may study for ten or more years before he is considered by his teacher and the larger community to be authorized to conduct ceremonies and relate traditional history. Should he take unauthorized license in transmitting traditional history, the community at large censures or deauthorizes him by not calling on his services to conduct ceremonies. In this way there is an intergenerational social check that structures the transmission of traditional history.

Here we take the position that traditional history with its shorthand

of symbolism, metaphor, and allegory is a viable mode of knowing the past and that, although traditional history may be superficially affected by the context in which it is told and by the audience present, it nonetheless retains essential elements. We contend that this is particularly true for traditional history of clan and ceremonial origins, which is often communicated in traditional religious ceremonies. This mode of historical transmission is similar to that described by Tonkin (1992: 28) in which the delivery is self-contained; in other words, the speaker is not conducting a conversation or answering questions. As Tonkin noted, “The stages of the story, then, are likewise an itinerary, which may act as a checklist for its recall that also provides a spatial framework for duration and change, in contrast to the chronology which structures Western historical accounts” (30).

Today, of the sixty-five clans that comprise the population known as Navajo or Diné, approximately 20–25 percent originated at well-known Anasazi archaeological sites before those sites were abandoned (Kelley, personal communication, telephone conversation, 2001; Kelley and Stein 1995; Reichard 1928: 13, 16, 18–19). Each Navajo clan has its own oral tradition that explains how that clan became Navajo; some clans, such as Kin yaa’ánii, Tł’izíłání, Ánaasázi Táchii’nii, and Tséńjikiní, are descended from the Ánaasázi. Their origin stories name specific places (“prehistoric” archaeological sites) as past residential sites and further detail their migrations and final incorporation into the Navajo Nation. Navajo clans range in size; among the largest are Táchii’nii and Kin yaa’ánii (Reichard 1928: xx; Kelley, personal communication, telephone conversation, 2001). Each group that became Navajo brought its own knowledge of the land, ceremonialism, and social and economic life. This became part of the Navajo way of life, which is personified in the Blessingway ceremony and is referred to by terms such as *beauty*, *harmony*, or *balance*. The origins of the Navajos are complex. Navajos all come from various peoples (some of whom no longer exist): some small groups of individuals joined existing clans and do not know their own history beyond what they learned from the clan they joined, and other groups were localized ethnic or clan groups who joined the coalition of what became identified as the Navajo.

The assertion that approximately 20–25 percent of Navajo clans (and an even larger percentage of the population) are descended from Anasazi populations directly or indirectly through post-Columbian Puebloans diverges from the conventional academic view of Navajo history. We understand that this information appears to contradict long-held Southwestern anthropological beliefs and that the possibility of such a relationship complicates our views of the past, making understanding the past more elusive than previously believed. Additionally, it raises the possibility that interpretations of Anasazi lifeways in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

are overly simplistic, especially with regard to ethnicity as derived from material cultural remains.

In support of our position, we turn to ethnographic and historic documents that present accounts of specific origin stories as related in ceremonies and clan origin stories that are usually told among family and community members. Versions of origin stories have been recorded since the 1880s, and allusions to Navajo-Ánaasázi interactions are present in many of these (Goddard 1933; Haile 1938a, 1938b; Luckert 1977, 1981 [1975]; Matthews 1994 [1897], 1995 [1902]; Mitchell 1978; O'Bryan 1956; Preston 1954; Wyman 1970).

There are many examples from various recorded ceremonies of interactions between Ánaasázi and Navajo people. We acknowledge that ceremonial songs and narratives compress time and use metaphor and allegory; documentary evidence, however, suggests that the ceremonial songs and narratives of today have changed very little over the centuries. The evidence, in the form of recorded ceremonial narratives and origin stories, shows negligible change in the content of this kind of traditional history since the 1880s. For example, Leland Wyman (1975: 58) points out in his comparison of Mountaintopway sand paintings with those that Matthews observed in 1884 that they are "remarkably alike, in fact practically identical." Thus, we have a record of extraordinary stability in this art for almost a century. A comparison of Nightway chants recorded in the late 1800s with those of today shows the same resistance to change, despite extraordinary pressure from the dominant culture to abandon traditional language, housing, religion, and economy. This is arguably the period of greatest cultural turmoil for Navajos, when one would expect the greatest amount of content change in traditional history. As James Faris (1990: 106) has noted:

Even though no Nightway medicine man will ever exactly repeat a previous Nightway, each will insist that the ceremony he presents is canonical. That it is, in fact, ever different, does not disturb this apodictic claim . . . different contexts and circumstances dictate differences, although each manifestation is unchanging and exact in every respect to every other since handed down to earth people from the Dreamer, given the specific situational context. The never-changing/ever-changing dialectic also merges synchrony and diachrony, and the situational and ever-different determinants of any specific Nightway provide the very guarantee of its unaltering character through time.

As noted above, many of the narratives, poems, and songs of existing Navajo ceremonies, which arguably fall into Vansina's (1985: 14) memorized speech category, make some reference to the Ánaasázi includ-

ing Béshee (Flintway), Hozhónee (Beautyway), and Yoo’ee (Beadway) as well as the aforementioned Nightway, Mountaintopway, and Blessingway. Many elements and venues that led to the creation of these ceremonies refer to Ánaasáí places, such as Sun Temple and Cliff Palace on Mesa Verde, White House in Canyon de Chelly, Kinyaa’ı near Chaco Canyon, Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon, and Aztec Ruins near the San Juan River. In all cases, these sites were not ruins at that time; rather, they were active settlements occupied by Ánaasáí who had social relations with Navajos. The absence of non-Indians or Europeans, domesticated animals, and European-derived technology, such as the wheel and metal tools, also shows clearly that these stories are about pre-Columbian times.

As early as the 1880s, anthropologists and historians were recording Navajo traditional history that referred to Navajo-Puebloan interaction at such places as Canyon de Chelly, Mesa Verde, and Chaco Canyon. The history is clear on what kind of interaction existed between Navajo and Puebloan peoples—exchange of ceremonial knowledge, conflict and competition, and intermarriage—indeed a situation not unlike that of today.

Ethnic identification and boundary maintenance are central components of cultural affiliation. Matthews remarked in the 1890s (1994 [1897]: 31–32) that he was

impressed with the different degrees of willingness, on both sides, with which new gentes [clans] are adopted into the nation. . . . The clans from the Pacific coast—the Western immigrants, as they are here called—learn of the existence of kindred tribes far to the east, take a long and dangerous journey to join them, and when their march is done, they are received by the Navahoes at once as brethren. On the other hand, the legend tells us of bands that camp long in the neighborhood of the Navahoes before they become incorporated with the latter; of other clans descended from captives; and of others that seek refuge among the Navahoes only to escape starvation or persecution at home.

This passage encapsulates some of the complexity of prehistoric and proto-historic cultural interactions and leads to the question of where these interactions took place and what was their nature.

An Example Using Navajo Traditional History and Archaeology

Traditional history differs from the widely accepted archaeological or anthropological version of Navajo-Anasazi relations. For traditional Nava-

jos, this is generally not a topic of conversation nor a subject of intellectual debate. The origins of the clans that comprise what is known today as the Navajo Nation are conveyed to individuals by hataalii during ceremonies and through individual traditional clan histories told by knowledgeable persons during the winter months or on ceremonial occasions; these histories include discussions of Navajo-Anasazi social, economic, and ceremonial interactions at locations that are named Anasazi sites. Such presentation of traditional history gives people knowledge about their past that is used in their present way of life and structures their future existence. So, for example, the question of origins is only a small part of a traditional history. What matters is that it is the collective memory of generations that, in part, maintains the group as a cultural unit. Traditional Navajo teachings restrict the discussion of certain historical matters to specific seasons (mostly winter months), specific surroundings (such as a hogan), specific genders, and specific persons.

It should be noted that what we present below is only one version and is simplified; it is just an example. Also, Navajo traditional history does not distinguish between prehistory and history, as is common in anthropological analyses. The past is not bifurcated or compartmentalized; rather, it is conveyed as a continuing process of existence. Furthermore, elements of Navajo traditional history, especially symbolism and metaphor, the mechanisms through which the essential history becomes meaningful and relevant to a contemporary audience, are constantly expanded and modified through the passage of time and activities of different generations.

Within the Navajo universe, the natural environment of mountains, streams, rock outcrops, and other environmental features, as well as larger landscapes, are an integral part of life. They are used for ceremonial purposes that are a part of the traditional history. These landscapes and many more that are not formally recorded (but are known to local residents) are still part of ceremonies today, such as *Tł'ée'jí* (the Nightway), *Dziłk'íjí* (the Mountaintopway), and *Hózhóójí* (the Blessingway). Navajo traditional history, whether religious or secular, contains accounts of natural features, locations, general landmarks, and archaeological sites. Traditional history is thus intricately linked to stories relating to larger land areas and environmental features, some of which include archaeological sites that archaeologists conventionally assign to other present-day ethnic groups.

We can better understand Navajo life and Navajo-Ánaasázi relations by drawing from both archaeology and traditional history. In order to do this, we briefly examine the archaeological remains at site LA55979 and then relate this to a ceremonial narrative from the Navajo Wind Chant (*Níłch'íjí*) (McAllester 1988); we also discuss how preconceptions

of “early Navajo sites” influence what may be present in the archaeological record.

Archaeological site LA55979, located in the Dinétah, has five tree-ring cutting dates, all 1540 or 1541, and is one of the earliest sites with the material culture that today symbolizes Navajo ethnicity for both Navajos and archaeologists. This site was excavated in 1996 by Cultural Resource Management Consultants of Farmington, New Mexico (Hancock 1997). The site has six loci, each of which has a Navajo component. The Navajo components comprise at least seven hogans, two possible hogans, three cists, and numerous extramural features. Cutting dates were recovered from two features, one of which is believed to be a Navajo forked stick hogan and the other a bell-shaped storage pit located some eighty-five meters from the forked stick hogan. The cist is associated with a number of hogans and other extramural features. From the same stratum within the cist from which one of the cutting dates was obtained were a reconstructable Jemez black-on-white olla and an unidentified polished micaceous pottery vessel.

With this archaeological site in mind we turn again to traditional history. Portions of Navajo ceremonial narratives can be viewed as the essence or distilled descriptions of the development of Navajo people and culture as we see it today. First, ceremonial narratives usually focus on a particular person and his family. The “hero” and his family are usually hunters or are constantly on the move, and at some point they find a source of power that engages them in protoceremonial activities leading to an improved way of life through an accumulation of material wealth, knowledge, and social networks. If we look at the corpus of ceremonial narrative as a whole, we can begin to see how Navajos themselves understand how they became who they are today. Using the narratives as examples, we can begin to see what factors led to Navajos’ becoming more settled.

The narratives describe how people who were in essence proto-Navajo initially moved around the Southwest in small nuclear family groups living far apart, not knowing other people who lived in the area; but through various circumstances, such as observation, trade, and intermarriage, they begin to gain knowledge of their new neighbors. They also learn other ways of making a living in the new landscape, including hunting, trading, pottery, farming, and weaving. At some point a type of ceremony develops in that group. Ultimately, to continue with their improved way of life, they must be relatively settled, leading them to a more complex lifestyle and a greater knowledge of place. This general narrative tale is not unlike how many anthropologists characterize the development of Navajo culture as we see it today. Some aspects of traditional history may be used to derive

an image of early Navajo-Ánaasázi interactions, including ceremony, subsistence, economy, and social organization.

The Windway narrative (McAllester 1988 [recorded in 1929 by Mary Wheelwright]) begins in southwest Colorado in the area of Hesperus Peak (Dibé Ntsaa), where some of the earliest Navajo sites have been recorded, and concludes in the San Juan Basin, thus encompassing the location of LA55979. The Windway Ceremony, Níłch'íjí, is a common rite performed today. The ceremony contains minor rituals that can be performed outside the context of a full ceremony. The ceremonial versions may last one to five nights. Historically, the Windway could have been a nine-night ceremony. Níłch'íjí can be categorized into three main divisions: Níłch'íjí (the version we concentrate on in this article), *Diné Binilch'íjí* (Navajo Windway), and *Chíshí Binilch'íjí* (Chiricahua Windway). Each of these three categories can be divided into several more subcategories. This class of ceremony is intended to eradicate sicknesses related to the wind that result in effects on the respiratory system; overwhelming fear, dread, or apprehension; and skin lesions or ulcers. The ceremonies may be combined with other Holyway ceremonies such as *Hóchxǫ'íjí* (Evilway). The story of the development of the Windway details the travels, trials, and tribulations of the hero and ultimately leads to the assembly of the ceremonies to cure the illness described above.

The story primarily relates the origin of the Windway Ceremony and the origin and lifeways of the Táchii'nii clan in the Hesperus area. The narrative begins:

In the northeastern part of the Dibé Nitsaa mountains, at Tsé'ááto, lived a family of the Táchii'nii clan: the father, mother, daughter and two sons. The father belonged to the Tsi'najinii clan. They were so poor they had to use their own hair to make traps to catch birds for their food. They set the traps near water and roasted the birds on spits before the fire. To keep themselves warm at night they moistened their bodies and rolled themselves in feathers. The women wore nothing but kilts of woven yucca fiber, and the men wore only Gee strings. (McAllester 1988: 9)

The story goes on to describe how lack of food led this nuclear family to move south to the San Juan River, then to cross the river and travel two more days to the Choosgai (Chuska) Mountains, probably somewhere near present-day Toadlena, New Mexico. Four days later they meet a stranger who says he lives nearby and who later brings them a deer. He befriends them, builds a brush hogan nearby, and tells them of a place where they can find plant seeds to eat.

The narrative continues:

Then he returned, this time bringing a leg of deer as a present, but again left without making himself known. On the fourth day he came again bringing half a deer. The father of the family said that, as the stranger had been so good to them, they had all agreed that the daughter should become his wife. The stranger said that he would be glad to take her and he made himself a brush hooghan near where the family was living. (Ibid.)

Before finalizing these arrangements the stranger goes home to ask his parents' assent for the proposed marriage. He returns that evening with their approval. "The girl's father said to him that it was the custom that when a family offers a girl to be wife to a man, the man should give presents to the girl's family, and in return that the parents of the girl should be willing to help the couple if they were in trouble or need" (ibid.).

The narrative goes on to briefly describe their lives and economic arrangements, mentioning some of the material culture that the new family member uses, including lithic artifacts such as flakes (*béesh*), and "a double-headed stone knife" (*tsénil*) to butcher the deer. He also shows the family how to prepare buckskin using bone tools, how to tan hide, and how to prepare clothing using a bone awl.

The story notes that the family had always roasted everything on sticks. One day the son-in-law asks, "Why don't you boil your food?" "Where do we get a pot?" is the answer. They look in the distance and see the smoke rising from the settlement of *Kin Doot'izh*—the Navajo name for the archaeological site of Aztec, New Mexico, occupied primarily between approximately AD 1100 and 1300. It is referred to as a place where the Ancient Ones lived.

When the two brothers arrived there, the people wanted to know where they got their buckskin clothing. They longed to get some for themselves and asked if the brothers could bring clothing to trade for their pottery. So the brothers left *Kin Doot'izh* and went back to the family. They told them what they had seen and heard, and that the people there needed deer meat and buckskins, so the two brothers took meat and buckskins and went back to *Kin Doot'izh*. They traded meat for pottery, cups, dippers and bowls, and they exchanged buckskins for turquoise, white shell and jade and stone beads. They also brought back to the family bows and arrows and quivers. This trade which took place in the fall, brought a great change of living to the family: They were warmer and better fed than ever before, and so they spent the winter there. (McAllester 1988: 10–11)

How does this narrative inform us about LA55979? First, we note that the large Chacoan Great House of Aztec, which dates the narrative, was abandoned sometime in the latter decades of the thirteenth century. There is thus a difference of some three hundred years between the time of this narrative and the occupation of our example site. Nonetheless, the narrative provides us information beyond the archaeological data. In regard to settlement patterns, the narrative takes place over a period of almost a year, indicating substantial mobility; it likely also contains some compression of time. Indeed, it is only after the family acquires buckskin clothing and meat and pottery that for the first time they are able to winter in one place.

In terms of social organization, the stranger befriends the family that has moved into the area. He then asks his parents if he may marry the daughter, and after receiving their permission he moves close to the family; thus we see the matrilineal-matrilocal descent and residence pattern extending into the past. As a quick aside, the narrative mentions mother-in-law avoidance appearing at this point, as the son-in-law builds his hogan some distance away from the family. This reminds us that although there is a “site nucleus” around which archaeologists draw boundaries, these parameters should not restrict our information gathering. There may be related structures outside the periphery or boundary. Today, commonly, in-law structures are just a yell away (about 100 meters). This is generally outside the “boundary” drawn by most archaeologists when mapping an Anasazi site.

In terms of economy, subsistence, and material culture, we see early Navajos setting traps made of their own hair for birds and then roasting the birds over the fire. They also use stone tool flakes (possibly points) and axes to process game and use bone tools to tan hide and prepare clothing. The stranger, who is more knowledgeable about the Chuska area, introduces the newcomers to local large game animals and local tools, and points out good gathering areas.

In terms of trade and material culture, this narrative indicates that ancestral Navajos were received without animosity at Aztec Pueblo and indeed had objects for trade—meat and hides—that were sufficiently prized by the residents that the latter were willing to trade for them various kinds of pottery, as well as other objects such as turquoise and shell. It is apparent from this exchange that there were no major barriers to marriage between “strangers”—indeed, the husband joins the family of newcomers. There were no barriers to the establishment of a trading relationship, nor was there fear of the people who lived at Aztec.

Comparing LA55979 with the Windway narrative shows that inhabitants of the site had more of the material culture now considered (by Navajo

and Anglo archaeologists) markers of Navajo ethnicity than did the family in the Windway. The inhabitants of LA55979 have numerous substantial structures, sufficient food to require storage pits or cists, and trade ware pottery. The ephemeral and mobile quality of life of the small family in the Windway indicates recent arrival in the area and a lack of familiarity with the natural resources. We conclude that LA55979 therefore is characteristic of Navajos who have been in the locale for some time and have an established ethnic identity as well as a more settled way of life.

It is reasonable to speculate that there are many sites from the more ephemeral and mobile period of Navajo life in the Southwest that go unrecognized as early Navajo sites. Most Southwest archaeologists in the Four Corners area doing survey work are conditioned to think of archaeological remains as Anasazi or Puebloan. Sites that are aceramic are quickly classified as Archaic or Basketmaker II.

In addition to the archaeological predisposition to call sites in this area Anasazi, an archaeological frame of reference defines what a protohistoric Navajo site looks like—this includes hogan-like structures and Navajo pottery such as Dinétah Gray. We want to stress that “Navajo culture and identity,” like all culture and identity, is an evolutionary process; that is, Navajo did not always equate to Gobernador Polychrome, hogans, or any other traits used by archaeologists today to define Navajo. The Windway narrative above and other ceremonial narratives such as Blessingway or Nightway clearly show the ephemeral nature and diverse origins of early Navajo cultural traits. At the broadest level, Navajo traditional history teaches that Navajos were present in the Southwest and they interacted and intermarried with Puebloan peoples. Many archaeologists are tied to a trait list that they believe defines “Navajo” sites, and even the most open-minded archaeologists and ethnographers have thus far been unwilling to recognize or accept “non-Navajo” Navajo traits.

The Windway and other ceremonial narratives teach that there was a time when Navajo families were highly mobile and were not making pottery. We believe that there may be numerous sites in the Four Corners area that have been misidentified at the survey level as Basketmaker or Archaic, and that if they were radiocarbon dated might prove to actually date anywhere between AD 1100 and 1400 and be proto-Navajo sites. If there is good preservation at some of these sites, we might be able to look at certain aspects of material culture, such as basketry styles and their techniques of production, that might be evidence of occupation by ancestral Navajos.

Furthermore, during the transitional period when, according to traditional history, Navajos were dependent on Puebloan trade wares, we suggest that there are Navajo sites characterized by these ceramics, but they

also have been called Anasazi sherd scatters. The use of grinding stones and axes, items commonly found on Anasazi sites, is also mentioned in these narratives.

With respect to architecture, if Navajos were highly mobile during this time, we should not expect to find hogans. Ephemeral brush structures would have been their shelter, and these would not be preserved in the archaeological record. There may be hearths associated with them, and hearth remains and flotation samples may indicate ethnicity.

Many narratives show a connection to and knowledge of place. Each narrative is clearly placed geographically, and references are made to the natural features of the landscape. Ancestral Navajos learned the location of springs and seeps; they learned where to hunt; they learned locales of rare and sacred plants; they learned the habits and habitats of birds and animals; they learned where to gather and to process the full complement of food-stuffs. Indeed, most narratives mention plant and animal species by name. Both plants and animals serve various functions for Navajos and all other Southwest tribes; obviously they are the most significant source of nutrition, but, beyond that, specific flora and fauna are used in craft manufacture, or for medicinal and sacred purposes. For example, in the Windway narrative the use of rose berries is mentioned. This information could be useful in assessing plants recovered in flotation samples. If we explore this line of evidence more fully, we may recover plants from certain contexts that are useful ethnic markers.

Discussion

Returning to the title of this article, we believe the relationship between the Navajo and Anasazi is more complicated than archaeologists generally think. No longer does it suffice to say that Athabaskan speakers were late-comers to the Southwest and have no relationship to the Anasazi and leave it at that. The complexity of late prehistoric, protohistoric, and early historic interethnic relations in the Southwest as reflected by traditional history is, no doubt, confounding to archaeologists who are used to thinking of this period in a particular kind of structure or pattern.

As Vansina (1985: 160) stated:

This means that oral tradition is to be used in conjunction with writings, archaeology, linguistic or even ethnographic evidence, etc. It can confirm the other sources and be confirmed by it. . . . As long as traditions are not independently confirmed the evidence they present can best be described as "on probation." Such evidence is not worthless. It has a certain plausibility and forms a hypothesis that should be tested

first, before any other hypothesis is considered. A body of tradition thus becomes an agenda for research.

As noted in this article's epigraph, traditional history or oral traditions "correct other perspectives just as much as other perspectives correct them," but for most of the twentieth century, traditional histories of native peoples have rarely been used by archaeologists. The detailed information contained in traditional history can be overwhelming and confusing, and it is not necessarily comparable with Western scientific interpretations of the past. It is, however, the embodiment of the past by the very people who lived the past; it is their shared remembrance and history of what went before. Major themes such as the interrelationship of Navajo and Anasazi peoples, told in a variety of ways in numerous stories, cannot simply be overlooked. This history should compel Southwest archaeologists, historians, and ethnographers to reevaluate their interpretive paradigm.

Kelley and Francis (1994: 209–20) discussed the fluidity of ethnic boundaries and how groups coalesce or bud off. This concept needs further research and attention from those who dismiss Navajo claims of Anasazi affiliation without understanding or examining transethnic relationships. We assert that the ethnic divisions and boundaries drawn theoretically by archaeologists do not hold up in the same way in practice. The practical reality in the Southwest for centuries has been an intermingling of peoples, through competition, religious ceremonies, intermarriage, and economic necessity.

Kelley and Francis (1998: 143–45) also have shown effectively how archaeological preconceptions have prohibited us from testing hypotheses that included Navajo presence at certain sites, and how data have actually been discarded in some cases because the interpretations of Navajo presence simply could not be true. We believe that the archaeological record and known culture changes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Anasazi area are better understood and better explained by including at least a possibility for Navajo-Anasazi interactions on a social, ceremonial, and economic level.

Currently, for the majority of Southwestern anthropologists, Navajo traditional history and the interpretations of Navajo origins do not correspond. We believe that Navajo traditional history can inform archaeological interpretation of the late prehistoric Anasazi world. At the heart of the affiliation question lies an interpretive and methodological issue, which is the emphasis on archaeological interpretation over insights that could be drawn from traditional history. In this article we have juxtaposed the public, scientific archaeological interpretation and the personal, private traditional history. Both means of knowing the past are true for their respective

audiences. The separation of these alternative approaches begs the question of whether each can contribute to the other, emerging with a historical past that is true for both camps. Our research on the subject suggests that a balanced and complementary blend of both lines of evidence is the most useful and informative means of exploring cultural affiliation.

Let us broaden our understanding of the past by including the voices and histories of all the people involved in the evident culture change of this time. Let us look at this information as an opportunity to view the past within a structure that allows us to better understand and more comprehensively explain the processes we see writ large in the archaeological record. Accepting a Navajo presence in the late prehistoric Southwest does not in any way detract from other groups' traditional histories, nor does it detract from other groups' affiliation claims. Accepting a Navajo presence during this time acknowledges a body of traditional history that has been denied, enhances our appreciation of the complexity of cultural interaction, allows Navajos a say in the disposition of ancestral remains, and may better explain the archaeological data concerning demographics and abandonment.

Note

1 Navajo orthography follows Young and Morgan 1991 [1987].

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