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Saving the Past for Whom? Considerations for a New Conservation Ethic in Archaeology

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Saving the Past for Whom? Considerations for a New Conservation Ethic in Archaeology

This paper addresses ethical and professional issues in archaeology that simultaneously conjoin and segregate archaeologists and indigenous groups when concepts of ancestry, cultural affiliation, and ethnicity are at stake. These issues of past and present cultural identity derive much of their power from both tangible evidence and intangible concepts that we subsume under the rubrics of “heritage,” “cultural property,” and “cultural resources.” I propose that today’s archaeology must consider the benefits of an expanded “conservation ethic” to better guide future considerations of what we consider to be “cultural resources.” Our current archaeological conservation ethic, articulated primarily in the context of cultural resource legislation and archaeological research during the latter half of the 20th century,¹ has served as an effective guide for an archaeology concerned primarily with the preservation, integrity, and interpretation of culturally significant places and things. While we continue to benefit from this model of conservation, recent critics have identified limitations of the model, including archaeology’s narrow focus on the significance of material culture,² the discipline’s bias toward scientific explanations over indigenous understandings of the past,³ and the use of archaeology as a technology of government to control indigenous group identities.⁴

The primary point made in this paper is that considerations of cultural heritage would benefit from flexible and wide-ranging considerations of both tangible and intangible cultural resources. I focus in particular on the roles of cultural resources in the interpretation and delineation of “cultural affiliation.” Paraphrasing from the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, cultural affiliation exists when there is a “relationship of shared group identity which can be reasonably traced historically or prehistorically between a present day Indian tribe . . . and an identifiable earlier group.”⁵ A case study of cultural affiliation research from the American Southwest highlights the benefits of an expanded preservation ethic in archaeology. This approach will engender a

richer, more nuanced understanding of how archaeologists and indigenous people constitute what is, and is not, significant in the interpretation of cultural affiliation. Ethnic group identity is, at least in the public arena, a negotiated reality that draws upon the past as one component of constituting the integrity of the culture group. The success of our future understandings of the past depends on collaborative investigations of these negotiated intersections where archaeological and indigenous systems of heritage-based knowledge meet, meld, contrast, and often conflict.

**Amassing the Past:
The Ethics of Collecting Archaeological Evidence**

Before launching into a consideration of archaeology, preservation, and heritage issues, I provide a thumbnail “history” of American archaeology’s focus on the material evidence of past human endeavors. Though not a unique trajectory compared to the overall development of archaeology elsewhere in the world, American archaeology built heavily on a close partnership between museums, federal agencies, academia, and a firm ethic emphasizing the preservation of culturally significant materials. As with most colonially-based nations, the study and preservation focus rested heavily on the “other,” the indigenous Native Americans.

The museum-government-academy axis was an important social influence in the 19th century public domain. For example, James Snead has documented the particularly important role of museums in developing and reproducing national and local understandings of the American Southwest in the latter 19th century.⁶ Following closely on the heels of American acquisition of the southwestern region in 1848, Army exploration and expanded American settlement rapidly spread word of significant numbers of ruins peppering this newly acquired landscape. Snead makes a solid case that the relatively newly-minted United States looked in large part to the Southwest to find some sense of national identity in the sprawling, material-rich ancestral settlements of the region. Preservation-minded promoters such as Edgar Lee Hewitt capitalized on the search for a national identity, likening the ancient ruins to those of the fallen monuments to Old World civilization, including the Parthenon in Greece and Rome’s Coliseum.

Saving the Past for Whom?

With the westward expansion of the railroad system, wealthy supporters of the American museum culture funded significant “expeditions” to bring evidence of past indigenous cultures to the Eastern museums and universities. Central to nearly every museum was the display of Native American material culture, both historic and prehistoric, often accompanied by texts mythologizing the “vanishing primitive peoples.” These indigenous cultures, while certainly depopulated, were by no means gone. At the same time, the distribution of their ancestral sites and artifacts was geographically much more widespread than the extant indigenous cultures, and so public displays of the “past cultures” earned a central billing in the 19th century museum world.

The federal government was also an active agent in the early amassing of archaeological and ethnographic collections from Native American groups and ancestral sites. Preservationists within and outside the federal government pushed for both study and conservation of what most understood to be a dwindling native population. As a case in point, much of the early work of the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) was driven by a national sentiment that the vanishing indigenous peoples would be assimilated, removed or extinct by the early 20th century.⁷ The BAE, overseen by the Smithsonian Institution, was charged in 1879 with the responsibility of collecting material culture, linguistic data, and other information before the seemingly imminent demise of the first Americans. This “salvage” archeology and ethnology was published in annual reports detailing field research of BAE associates, volumes that still comprise some of the most important extant primary information on 19th century indigenous groups.

American archaeology grew as a profession to supply and service the acquisition of cultural materials for museum display and exchange. The earliest American archaeologists were commonly employed by museums, and their responsibilities ranged from leading collection-generating excavations and expeditions to the development of classification and typological systems for identifying, inventorying, and organizing the often overwhelming collections of historical and prehistoric material culture acquired by their institutions.⁸ Ethical concerns arising from these contexts often

focused on property-rights issues—who owned the lands from which material evidence of the past was being extracted? As James Snead details in his history of museums and archaeology in the Southwest, rival institutions from East Coast universities and metropolitan areas competed for access to rich archaeological sites across the Southwest.⁹

It was this rivalry, enmeshed with a significant cottage industry of local-level looting of archaeological sites, that set the stage for the first federal legislation to protect archaeological sites and collections, those things we refer to today as “cultural resources.” The Antiquities Act of 1906¹⁰ served as the first federal attempt to regulate the destruction of archaeological sites and artifacts by requiring that all excavation and collecting on federal lands had to be done under permit issued by the Secretary of the Interior.¹¹ Laurajane Smith traces the roots of federal control over significant materials, places, and contexts, as well as disciplinary control over cultural resources by archaeologists, to early laws such as the Antiquity Act.¹² The opportunity to amass and interpret the remains of the past was relegated to archaeologists through this early 20th century legislation, simply because it allowed only those who met the professional standards required to procure a federal excavation permit. Archaeology began to emerge as both a recognized profession, as well as a practiced science

In addition to defining who granted access to archaeological materials (at least on federal lands), the Antiquities Act also enunciated *why* archaeology should be done. Specifically, permits were granted on the basis of whether the work would benefit the public and its education.¹³ In sum, archaeology was imbued with a stewardship responsibility toward both its objects of study and the knowledge products created for public educational benefit.

This responsibility to preserve the material record of past human activity and interpret findings for public consumption is manifest in the massive public works projects of the Depression Era. The federal government invested significant amounts of public resources to institutionally imbue buildings, battlefields, archaeological sites, and other meaningful aspects of national heritage with the mantle of “cultural significance.” For example, the Historic Sites Act of 1935

granted the National Park Service (NPS) authority to hire archaeological expertise to preserve existing park resources and also to acquire additional places of national historical significance.¹⁴ As with the Antiquities Act, significant historic resources were conserved and held in trust as federal properties for the benefit of the American public.¹⁵ The Act bolstered the role of the NPS, already the governmental arm in charge of the majority of our nation's historic and prehistoric sites. Similar to the Antiquities Act, the Historic Sites Act also recapitulated the conceptual integration of historical significance, the public good, and resource preservation as central themes in the treatment of the nation's past.

Just as much of the BAE's early work was driven by a sense of obligation to salvage remaining cultural insights on the "vanishing" Indian peoples, post-World War II archaeology included significant efforts to salvage archaeological resources threatened by water and land development programs. This is best exemplified in the River Basin Surveys conducted between 1954-1969, when post-war expansion of the nation's reservoir system to better harness our water resources directly impacted significant numbers of cultural resources, namely the archaeological sites and artifacts located along major waterways. The River Basin Surveys were supported by a national consortium of federal agencies, including the Bureau of Reclamation, the Army Corps of Engineers, the BAE, and the NPS. A strong working relationship was forged with academic institutions through professional organizations including the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) and the American Anthropological Association.¹⁶

The two pieces of legislation that cemented the relationship between archaeological practice and the profession's stewardship responsibilities toward historic and archaeological resources were the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 1966¹⁷ and the Archaeological and Historical Preservation Act (AHPA), 1974.¹⁸ The NHPA created the National Register of Historic Places and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, both designed to keep track of cultural resources with historical significance. The AHPA, lobbied for by the SAA and other interest groups who felt that the NHPA underemphasized archaeological resources, mandated that all federal agencies consider any adverse impacts their projects might

have on “significant, prehistorical, historical, or archaeological data.” Most importantly to the disciplinary expansion of archaeology, the AHPA provided that up to 1% of projects exceeding \$10,000 could be used to fund any recovery or avoidance measures that would preserve these significant resources and their associated informational content.¹⁹ This massive infusion of capital into archaeology meant that “salvage archaeology” was dead.²⁰ Federal funding made archaeology answerable to federal land and project managers and responsible to the public. Funding and responsibility for delivering palpable results to federal agencies finalized the transition of archaeologists from salvage specialists to cultural resource managers.

Archaeological codes of ethics, not surprisingly, were discussed and developed during the significant expansion of cultural resource management archaeology during the 1960s and 1970s. “Four Statements for Archaeology,” drafted by the SAA Committee on Ethics and Standards, became the first major statement on ethics and professional standards in American archaeology.²¹ In addition to defining archaeology as a science “concerned with the reconstruction of past human life and culture,” the report emphasized that in all realms of professional activity, archaeologists were to “aim at preserving all recoverable information.”²² As Alison Wylie points out, the primary message was that the archaeological profession was ethically charged with scientific understanding of the human past, and that all professional activities had to strive to preserve and conserve places, items, and information that comprise the publicly-shared cultural resources, the foundation for understanding and appreciating our common national heritage.²³

By the 1980s the SAA had also fused scientific understanding and a firm conservation ethic into its own bylaws. The SAA staunchly advocated the inclusion of both professional and avocational practitioners of archaeology into its membership, but the SAA membership was compelled to practice archaeology that contributed to the scientific understanding of past cultures. Specifically, the Society operated “for exclusively scientific and educational purposes,” and promoted all legislation, regulations, and volunteer activities that would discourage the “loss of scientific knowledge” and preserve archaeology’s “access to sites and artifacts.”²⁴

Archaeology's Conservation Ethic

All disciplines seek their identity in a set of key concepts. The preceding discussion illustrates that in the case of modern archaeology, conservation of cultural resources provided and continues to provide one such keystone for archaeology. These resources provide the primary means for gaining a scientific knowledge of the past. Archaeological insights into ancestral human social contexts rely in large part on material evidence of what individuals and groups did at various times in the past, and as such these material remains have inherent and long term significance to archaeology and the public. As with any evidentiary argument, physical remains of past activities need to be present and accessible so that all interested parties can assess, and reassess if necessary, the observations on which the validity of the argument was originally based.

The most important early enunciation of the current conservation ethic in archaeology is William Lipe's article entitled "A Conservation Model American Archaeology."²⁵ The conservation ethic has been a constant tenet of archaeology since it was recognized as a scholarly discipline. The very subject matter of archaeology, the interpretation of material remains in order to explain past human behavior, rests on having sufficient materials available that can be studied, compared, and documented. Some of that sufficiency is outside human control, such as natural decomposition, erosion, submersion, and other conditions. But those remaining residues of past human activity that can be preserved, should be preserved. The basic argument is that our concerted attempts to conserve material avenues into past human dynamics will translate directly into our abilities to better understand the past.

Lipe argues for an increased disciplinary concern with the non-consumption of cultural resources in the burgeoning realm of cultural resource management. As described above, these were heady days in archaeology. Fast arriving were the days when there would be as many archaeologists working outside of traditional academic realms as within the academy. As legislated by AHPA, archaeologists worked in the planned reservoir pools of dam projects, in the right-of-ways of major highway projects, and in front of bulldozers putting in

pipelines. But as Lipe points out, archaeology faced the problem that cultural resources are non-renewable, and so the discipline should focus on making “maximum longevity” the key to all decisions regarding the dwindling cultural resource base.²⁶

The questions of why we should be concerned with cultural resource base longevity, and for what purposes we need the resource base, serve as important foundations for Lipe’s argument. The cultural resource base is the primary means for scientific archaeological research to understand past human behavior. Science, the predominant paradigm of understanding the past, dictates that material evidence of past behaviors should be preserved for future analysts to assess and restudy if necessary. Scientific knowledge rests not only in reference to observable patterns and predictable processes, but on the perpetuity of the evidence as well. The conservation ethic in archaeology, and scientific research in general, protects those materials and sites that serve as research “receipts,” those hard goods that everyone can check to insure that our explanations are based on palpable evidence. As it stands, the preservation ethic continues to apply to that wide class of places, structures, and objects that we define as “cultural resources.”

Lipe provides a detailed consideration of how societies perceive and value “cultural resources.” In his 1984 essay “Value and Meaning in Cultural Resources,” Lipe’s discussion of cultural resources explicitly focuses on hard goods, sites, and information. In other words, both materials *and* associated contexts surviving from the past are valued for their contribution to a society’s understanding of its historical identity. He details four primary types of value that contribute to the transformation of past material culture into a cultural resource. These include economic, aesthetic, associative/symbolic, and informational values, and any one or a combination of these can translate into whether a residue of the past gains or loses its role in the society as a cultural resource. This model of cultural resource production, preservation, and meaning relegates such things as traditional knowledge, oral historical traditions, folklore, and mythology to what Lipe calls “value contexts.” These value contexts exist as distinct from the resources themselves. The resources have a palpable reality, serving as tangible links to the past from which they

derive. Value contexts lack that physical reality, they are intangible and susceptible to changing perspectives, politics, and negotiations within their specific historical context.

This conservation ethic is understandable in its historic and disciplinary context. Fashioned to raise the consciousness of archaeologists, cultural resource managers, preservationists, and grounded in the inextricable foundation of scientific understanding, the conservation ethic was a plea to foster the long-term integrity of material evidence in scientific archaeological explanation. Enunciated at the height of the scientific, hypothesis-based archaeology of the 1970s, science was the given and preservation was the goal.

Critiques of Archaeology's Conservation Ethic

The centrality of the scientific approach has been critiqued, and in some archaeologists' perspectives, largely discredited over the past two decades. Often subsumed under the umbrella of "postprocessual archaeology," these assessments of archaeology's limitations are far too broad to give full review here.²⁷ Germane to this discussion are critiques that archaeological materials have inherent meaning and value,²⁸ the discipline is strongly biased toward scientific explanations over indigenous understandings of the past,²⁹ and archaeology's role as a "technology of government" extends federal control over indigenous group identities.³⁰

A major tenet of the postprocessual critique of archaeology is the rejection of scientific positivism, the stance that knowledge must be grounded in understandings of the natural, physical world. Positivism searches for universal laws to explain specific, historic instances, basing explanations on propositions derived from logical inference. Given the inextricable ties between scientific knowledge, observation, and palpable evidence, postprocessual critiques have focused on the diverse meanings and values that archaeological materials can have beyond the traditional inferential realms of temporal control, function, and adaptation.

A key aspect to the critique of "one science, one archaeology" has come from indigenous individuals and groups. Central to the indigenous critique are questions about the relevance and significance of the "outside" archaeological perspective to traditional concepts of identity, origins, and past culture change.³¹ Archaeology's focus on

material remains has necessarily privileged the durable aspects of the past over indigenous oral historical accounts, leading to charges of inherent racism in the discipline's practice. By far the most sensitive issue, however, has been the debate over the disposition of human remains.³² The issue of relevance is cast in stark contrast when scientific rationales for excavation and study of human remains are juxtaposed with indigenous indignation over the disturbance and desecration of ancestral human remains and associated burial materials.³³ It takes little explanation to highlight the long period of differential treatment of non-indigenous and indigenous human remains, not only in America but other places with colonial histories, such as Australia.³⁴

The institutionalization of scientific archaeology, referred to in abbreviated form in the short history of the conservation ethic above, is also targeted in postprocessual critiques. One of the most expansive is Smith's recent treatise on archaeology as a "technology of government."³⁵ Drawing on sociological theoreticians such as Rose and Miller, archaeology has become a pawn of government through the legal and procedural regulation of the means by which the past is recovered, conceptualized, studied, and published by the archaeological discipline.³⁶ Smith traces the history of cultural resource management laws, practice and theory in both Australia and America, concluding that our highly regulated practice of archaeology has empowered government control of indigenous communities. In particular, Smith argues that the transition from "archaeology as salvage," which focused on the recovery and preservation of cultural resources, to "archaeology as information" disempowered indigenous groups because of the bifurcation of object from idea. Each time archaeologists assert their expertise as professionals, they legitimate governmental power and disempower indigenous communities.³⁷

These thoughtful and often stinging critiques of modern archaeology have made significant points for consideration. Knowledge is contingent. That resounding rallying cry is brought to bear on most aspects of scientific understanding by postmodern critics. But this critique on the scientific focus in archaeology did not initiate with the recent postprocessual debate. In fact, the

contingency of our knowledge of the past finds allies inside the “science” camp as well. As a prime example, the scholar most central to the conservation ethic, William Lipe, argued that cultural resource value depends on the “particular cultural, intellectual, historical and psychological frames of reference held by the particular individuals or groups involved.”³⁸

Our present practice of archaeology must continue in this tradition to reconsider not whether, but how, we best consider traditional knowledge as a cultural resource. As a case in point, I turn to a consideration of the question of cultural identity as it is currently approached as part of the worldwide concern with heritage politics. As I hope to show, our understanding of what constitutes a “cultural resource” within the classic conservation ethic in archaeology is unnecessarily narrow. A widening of our field of disciplinary vision to include traditional, “non-scientific” understandings of the past will provide a needed common ground for appreciating the negotiated nature of cultural identity. I believe that we can do so without having to diminish the continuing benefits of a science-informed archaeology. In short, knowledge of the past need not be dichotomized as “archaeological scientism” or “traditional esoterica” if we engage in an honest and simultaneous considerations of a wide range of perspectives on the past. I turn now to the present and future roles of cultural resources, traditional knowledge, and archaeology in the negotiation of cultural identity in the American Southwest.

The Past and Present of Cultural Identity Research in the American Southwest

The American Southwest is a multicultural landscape of Native American, Hispanic, and Anglo cultures, a home to human ancestries spanning tens of centuries. Here modern Native American communities live with their ancestral landscape of archaeological sites, sacred shrines, stone-lined agricultural fields, and ancient foot trails. The conceptual landscapes of the Native American Southwest are situated within the traditional oral histories linking the living peoples to ancestral homes, migration routes, and places of origin, all of which provide avenues to the continued formation and reformation of cultural identity for modern indigenous Native American groups.

At the same time, these cultural and conceptual landscapes serve as the archaeologist's primary means for investigating the well-preserved record of human cultural variability in this arid corner of the United States. Many interpretive paths converge and collide in our collective attempts to understand the ancestral Southwest.

Central to all of these understandings of the past is the concept of cultural affiliation, the historically traceable shared identity between modern tribes and ancient peoples.³⁹ At its most basic level, cultural affiliation is a social understanding created in the present by people engaged in the interpretation of a range of information and understandings about past human identity. With the enactment of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 in America, and the ongoing concern with indigenous patrimony on the international level, the number of stakeholders involved in the interpretation of the past continues to expand significantly. Archaeologists, long the arbitrageurs of the rich record of human variation, are faced with many and varied requests to share control of the realms within which the links between past and present are interpreted.

In the American Southwest, these realms include cultural resource management archaeology, court cases in which indigenous groups claim cultural affiliation to ancestral remains, and political contexts where tribes assert rights to the disposition of natural resources, cultural patrimony, and intellectual property. The concepts of ethnicity, identity, and cultural affiliation are implicated in most anthropological research in the Southwest.⁴⁰ Anthropologists are ethically, professionally, and morally responsible for helping enunciate the multiplicity of ways in which ethnic group identity is constituted and applied.

A claim of cultural affiliation asserts a social identity that is shared over time between ancient peoples and modern groups. As such, cultural affiliation is both an ongoing social negotiation and a knowledge product, a complex of intertwining paths (interpretations) leading to a destination (ethnic group identity) that changes through time and space. Individual and group identity is recursively created in the present day through the use of myriad historical precedents and cultural forms. Present day ethnic diversity

commonly references various forms of evidence that tie present groups to earlier peoples long since past. Ethnicity and cultural affiliation exist in a conceptual landscape that is defined by its ambiguities, not surprising given the latitude inherent in terms such as identity, history, ancestry, and evidence.

Within this context, then, we have encapsulated many of the same conflicts and contradictions found in the postprocessual critique of scientific archaeology, as well as opportunities for melding some of the false dichotomies that pit science against traditional knowledge, archaeologist against indigene. Over a year and a half, experts from both archaeology and traditional Pueblo communities have collaborated to help find not only some “meeting grounds” for investigating the question of identity in the past, but to also identify those realms where we will better understand our differences. The place we’ve chosen as our point of departure is Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo, an ancestral Pueblo archaeological site located in central New Mexico.

Why Study Identity at Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo?

The site’s location and occupation history make it a very appropriate place to investigate concepts of cultural affiliation. The site sits astride the boundary between two archaeological culture areas (Figure 1). To the west is the Acoma archaeological culture province, a regional constellation of archaeological settlements that Dittert and Ruppé identified based on similarities in ceramic assemblages and settlement layout.⁴¹ To the east are the ancestral pueblo settlements of the Central Rio Grande archaeological culture area, a string of large villages located next to the floodplain of the Rio Grande. Several modern Pueblos with potential ancestral ties to Chaves-Hummingbird are located in the region, including Acoma, Laguna, Zuni, Isleta, and Sandia Pueblo.

It is also significant that Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo is located on private land. The archaeological site is not part of any ongoing land, water, or aboriginal use area claim; it is essentially a settlement that presently exists without an externally negotiated cultural affiliation identity. Our research is not associated with any extant legal proceedings, repatriation claims, or other potentially contentious contexts.

Central to our interests in cultural identity and affiliation, it is significant that the main occupation of the site coincides with major regional abandonments and migrations documented in the archaeological record of the 13th through the 15th centuries. This was a time during which ancestral Native American groups undertook “significant and far-reaching transformations in land and resource use.”⁴² Large-scale changes in village size, layout, and the overall extent of ancestral Pueblo occupation of the Southwest target this period as a likely context for ethnogenesis and regional ethnic group differentiation.⁴³

Archaeological investigations at the site over the past several years indicate extensive deep archaeological deposits at the site, containing a wide range of artifact classes, some of which are clearly from outside of the locality, indicating interaction with non-local groups. From an archaeological standpoint, there is great potential for a polyethnic mix of occupants at the settlement. Surface and subsurface remains of architecture show two distinct styles in different parts of the site, possibly due to the integration of non-local groups into the settlement during the site occupation. From the perspective of the indigenous communities in the area, the site is significant given the likelihood that it figures into traditional accounts related to ancestral population migrations, esoteric knowledge (songs, symbols, etc.) describing the area and its meanings, and the presence of probable indigenous shrine locations.

Archaeological Indications of Identity At Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo

Beginning with the archaeological perspective, we have identified lines of archaeological evidence that may provide material evidence that multiple ethnic groups may have co-resided at Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo.⁴⁴ The first is the diversity in contemporaneous architectural units at the site (Figure 2). Surface clearance work in 1998 and 1999 uncovered and mapped the northern room block, comprising approximately 70 surface rooms on the north side of the site, most of which stood a single story tall (Figure 3). These structures define a large plaza area, with a probable opening on the northeast corner of the room complex.

The surface clearance program recently expanded to a new set of adobe rooms on the eastern side of Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo (Figure 4). This complex, the eastern room block, shares some similarities to the northern room block, but is also distinctive in its own right. Like the northern room block, all of the original surface structure walls in the eastern complex are of coursed adobe construction. Unlike the northern room block, the eastern complex of rooms is significantly “deeper” in terms of the number of rooms that separate the plaza from the exterior of the room block. Both room blocks surround a well-defined plaza, but the plaza of the northern room block covers roughly 1500 m², while the eastern room block plaza covers only about 170 m², only about 12% the size of the northern plaza.

A significant number of local and non-local ceramic wares have been identified in the archaeological assemblage at Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo. Though we are still tabulating data from the 2003 and 2004 field seasons, initial patterns indicate that several of the nonlocal wares come primarily from the south and west, with one such type, Jeddito Yellow Ware, coming from the Hopi Mesas over two hundred miles to the west. As Duff points out in his recent consideration of ceramic evidence for social group differences in Western Pueblo region, we should not be misled into equating ceramic ware traditions with “ethnicity” or “cultural identity,” given the transmission of ceramic technological knowledge within and between regional populations.⁴⁵ At the same time, exchange of ceramic wares is a robust means for assessing the “connectivity” of various local and regional populations. If this settlement was home to one or more migrant groups, the newcomers may well have brought with them technologies and long lasting ties to exchange partners in other areas beyond the Rio Puerco drainage. Bernardini has recently asserted similar dynamics were at play in the ancestral Hopi villages to the west.⁴⁶

In sum, archaeological evidence at Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo indicates that the site occupation history did involve the integration of local and non-local ancestral Pueblo peoples, all of whom left the site some time before the end of the 15th century. But this is only half the story, the other half requiring perspectives from contemporary Native

American individuals and communities regarding the relevance of archaeological and ethnographic data to their own understandings of the past.

Collaborative Research at Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo

As mentioned above, this site is an appropriate place to better understand cultural affiliation given the anonymity of its present affiliation. Toward these ends, we have spent the past year in an intensive collaboration with four Native American communities to better understand where our respective concepts of cultural affiliation coincide, and where they differ. The guiding concept of this National Science Foundation-supported project is to use the settlement and its surrounding cultural landscape to start and sustain the discussion of the intersection of ethnic identity, cultural affiliation, and archaeology over the next two years.

In 2004, individuals from Acoma, Laguna, Hopi, and Zuni, chosen by their respective communities for their traditional knowledge, collaborated with a team of archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, and historians. We chose these four communities to start with largely because each has potential ties of affiliation within the region. We certainly realize that tribes and communities also may share cultural affiliation with the site. We had to start somewhere, and each of these four pueblos also has a strong cultural resource advisory program that was prepared to participate in the research.⁴⁷

Each Pueblo Cultural Resource Advisory Team spent two days visiting the archaeological site, nearby shrines and rock art locations, and looking at artifacts from the site. Each team visit was conducted separately to discuss the criteria that were, and were not, pertinent in discerning evidence of cultural affiliation. We presented archaeological patterning and interpretation throughout the visit. It was made clear at the outset that the purpose of the collaboration was not to come to some sort of final agreement about who was affiliated and who was not. The research collaboration focused on the process of assessing affiliation claims—what questions were useful, what evidence was irrelevant, and to what extent individuals and groups involved concurred on the utility of various lines of affiliation evidence.

Our discussions were purposefully open-ended, spanning different social, temporal, and spatial scales. At the local level we visited the site, discussed the motifs found in the rock art panels located near the site, and hiked to several possible shrine features surrounding the settlement. On the regional level we discussed migration histories and traditional oral historical accounts of relationships between the site and sacred locations in and around the Rio Puerco and Rio Grande drainages. Participating teams also spent a full day at the Maxwell Museum at the University of New Mexico, viewing and discussing archaeological materials recently excavated from Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo. At the end of each field and museum collaboration, each group of experts was asked whether there were cultural affiliation ties that linked their tribe to the ancestral occupants of Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo. If the answer was “yes,” each was asked to identify the “past identifiable group” to which they were affiliated. A significant amount of time was spent talking about the various lines of evidence that each individual brought to bear on the question of identity and affiliation.

Affiliation Findings: Shared Histories and Landscapes

Each group did believe that there were cultural affiliation ties linking the occupants of Chaves-Hummingbird to their respective tribe. Most significant to this discussion, however, were the real and varied differences in the criteria brought to bear on the question of cultural affiliation, as well as varying levels of specificity that modern groups employ recognizing links of cultural affiliation to the occupants of ancestral sites

There is not sufficient space to detail the various types and levels of significance that the various experts brought to the discussion of cultural affiliation. For the sake of space, I contrast Acoma and Zuni given the significant differences in distance from the site. Acoma is located a mere 35 miles from Chaves-Hummingbird, while Zuni Pueblo is separated from Chaves by well over double that distance.

During the two days of research and discussion with each group, a comparable range of artifactual, architectural, ritual, botanical, and other lines of possible evidence were reviewed. According to the Acoma experts, the most conclusive evidence of ancestral Acoma ties

of affiliation with the site and its locale resided in the form and location of the nearby shrines, traditional songs that described the site locale, traditional land use practices, and rock art motifs. Specifically, the site's location on the eastern boundary of the Acoma archaeological culture province, a landscape perspective derived from long term collaboration between Acoma and archaeologists such as A.E. Dittert, figured heavily into the assessment of cultural affiliation ties between Acoma and Chaves-Hummingbird.

Some of the supporting lines of evidence fall squarely into the traditional categories of archaeological cultural resources. But it is safe to say that ceramics, stone tools, and other archaeologically-important resources play a diminished role in indigenous recognition of cultural affiliation. For example, the large corpus of glaze-painted pottery, mostly in fragments, assumed only a very general role in the Acoma understanding of the links between the site and their community. Acoma experts recognized general parallels between the Chaves-Hummingbird pottery sherds and those found on many of the named ancestral Acoma settlements located within the immediate vicinity of modern Acoma.

In the end, a single reconstructed bowl excavated recently from a surface room at the site was all that was necessary for the experts to align Acoma with the ancestral occupants of Chaves-Hummingbird (Figure 5). This bowl, likely broken and deposited as part of a termination ritual prior to the site's depopulation, is decorated with an anthropomorphic figure commonly known as "knifewing." Though the figure on the bowl elicited discussion among the Acoma experts in their native Keresan language, they chose not to divulge the specific name or description of the knifewing figure. The Acoma collaborators put the issue very simply: "The Acoma elders could give more specifics, but they won't because of the sacred nature of the information. In fact, it is not justifiable to ask for specific information. A shrine is enough proof, if you need proof. This painted bowl is enough proof for us to know we were there."⁴⁸ We will return to the apparent contradiction of secrecy in the meaning and use of cultural resources at the conclusion of this paper.

Experts from the more distant community of Zuni found more relevance in the abundance of fragmentary artifactual remains they

were able to review on site and at the Maxwell Museum. The glaze-painted redware ceramic tradition followed by the ancestral potters at Chaves-Hummingbird has its origins in the Zuni region of western New Mexico and eastern Arizona, an archaeologically-based observation of which the Zuni experts were well aware. The massed architectural style observed on site and through site maps was also significant to the Zuni collaborators. This architectural style, definitive of ancestral and modern Pueblo communities, along with the open plaza spaces, was a strong line of evidence of an ancestral Zuni connection to the site.

The Zuni found additional affiliation evidence in a suite of materials viewed at the Maxwell Museum that a few members of the expert team identified as ritual paraphernalia. These include quartz crystals, yellow and red ochre, large projectile points, altar stones, and stone concretions. These items figure into the medicine society rituals that two of the experts participated in. Symbols of this same society, the Galaxy Society, were found in the petroglyphs carved into the sandstone cliffs near Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo.

Significant links between the ancestral occupants of the site and Zuni ancestry derive from migration histories of clans and medicine societies still recounted in Zuni songs and traditional accounts as well as the linguistic origins of the places mentioned in the traditions. Based on place names associated with their migration history, one particular medicine society is identified as having migrated through the Chaves-Hummingbird vicinity.⁴⁹ This group, the Sword-Swallower Society, is still an active medicine society at modern day Zuni, and according to the Zuni experts, the presence of society members was indicated by rock art motifs and shrine locations near Chaves-Hummingbird. The place names are relevant to migration. As explained by one Zuni expert, the place names in the Chaves-Hummingbird vicinity, are not from the Zuni language, but instead are Keresan, the language spoken at several of the nearby Pueblo communities, including Acoma and Laguna Pueblo. The Zuni interpretation is that as the clans and societies migrated through areas occupied by linguistically diverse populations, the Zuni migrants integrated these indigenous place names into their traditional histories.

In the final discussion of cultural affiliation within and between Pueblo groups, none of the groups or individuals had any problem with the fact that the other pueblos had also asserted affiliation ties to the site. In fact, each group fully expected that to be the case given the rich traditional history of migration, integration, and disintegration that exists at all four pueblos involved in this research. The interconnected histories of these and other pueblos is a reality of the southwestern cultural landscape.

In summary, a comparison of the relevance accorded to archaeological and traditional knowledge by only two of the Pueblo communities illustrates the diverse range of information, perspectives, and evidence that each group of experts brought to bear on the issue of cultural affiliation. As with the conceptualization of identity itself, there are multiple avenues for constituting a group's past, so we need not waste ink or debate over whether there is a formula or standard approach for ascertaining the relevant links that allow stakeholders in "identity politics" to go from cultural resource to cultural affiliation in any regularized fashion. As with the specific culture history constituted from within and from without for modern culture groups, relevance of cultural resources to the question of past cultural identity and origins is necessarily an open-ended inquiry that must remain so in order to give the sufficient latitude for understanding the links between past and present.

Traditional Knowledge, Cultural Resources, and Secrecy

I have focused on a central concept in modern archaeology, the conservation ethic, to make a case for expanding our present conceptualization of what should constitute a "cultural resource." Recent federal legislation, particularly the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGRPA), provides new opportunities to remedy limitations in archaeology's conceptualization of what constitutes a cultural resource. The legislation allows the consideration of a wide range of criteria that can be used as evidence in repatriation claims and heritage management issues. Legislation, however, is simply a set of guidelines. True changes in the methodological and theoretical ways that archaeologists conceptualize the past will require a continuing, discipline-wide

consideration of the roles of cultural resources in the interpretation of the past.

Archaeologists are not the only arbiters of what should be considered as a cultural resource. Our present state of flux can benefit all indigenous groups in their consideration of what constitutes a cultural resource within their own communities, or other nations for that matter. NAGPRA explicitly identifies a number of sources of information that can inform on ties of cultural affiliation that link a present-day group to an identifiable past group. As such, NAGPRA requires the consideration of a wide range of information, an expanded realm of potential “cultural resources.”

I would submit that given the present state of legal and methodological approaches to cultural affiliation, cultural resources should not refer simply to physical resources. Instead we should consider in the same realm of “cultural resources” those sometimes intangible resources such as oral history, traditional knowledge, and understandings of landscapes and histories.

Do oral traditions and traditional knowledge constitute “cultural resources?” Based on Lipe’s value criteria, oral traditions and traditional histories are the value contexts rather than the valued cultural resources; they are the understandings that allow value to be accorded to the hard goods and landscapes surviving from the past.⁵⁰ This, I feel, is where we need to break down the dichotomy between concepts and concreteness, thoughts versus things. The very practice of the NAGPRA process exemplifies why this dichotomy is really just shades of gray. I do agree that inherent in these traditions is information that provides avenues of cultural understanding, explanation of the past, symbolic value, and so on. But at the same time, we need to be explicit in establishing *who* is valuating the information/resource.

Within indigenous communities, traditional knowledge and oral traditions are valued as cultural resources. Here the activities of the traditional societies must be conjoined with action, thought, and ceremony in certain important architectural spaces, landscape locations, using certain hard goods from the ritual assemblage controlled by various social groups. One does not function without the other in these contexts. Time, thought, and space must necessarily coexist for the success of this world renewal ceremony.

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As discussed by Peter Whiteley, traditional knowledge has been suspect as a source of archaeologically relevant information.⁵¹ As orally transmitted information, oral history has not been embraced by largely perceptual archaeology for several reasons. First, written documentation is always privileged over orally transmitted information. The rationale for this is that written documentation leaves tangible evidence that can be traced back through drafts and early editions, presumably, to original authors and contexts. In contrast, orally transmitted information is deemed to be less accurate, simply because the transmission through spoken word is perceived to be more prone to errors. Second, oral tradition is often typified as agenda-driven interpretation rather than actual accounts of past events and processes.

Whiteley points out that traditional knowledge is shared and transmitted within religious and civic contexts that are generally typified by a kind of “peer-review” wherein traditional experts check each other’s knowledge and knowledge claims.⁵² This infuses the traditions, songs, and rituals with an integrity of content and interpretation, particularly when knowledge is kept within the ranks of relatively few traditional specialists who are members of bounded societies and groups.

At the same time that traditional knowledge has served as a cornerstone cultural resource for sociocultural anthropologists and some archaeologists, a different cultural resource value is sometimes attached to the use and role of traditional knowledge within an indigenous community. Specifically, oral tradition or esoteric knowledge may often need to stay secret, available only to those individuals in the community that have the training and knowledge to effectively utilize the knowledge. We have cultural resources that arguably fall into a similar category in our own society (sealed court files, federal documents, etc.). In some cases, knowledge of conflicts, political decisions, and other important information, is made available to those who “need to know.”

Here we run into a time-worn conflict of interests. The conservation ethic in archaeology rests on stewardship of resources that are being saved, protected, or otherwise preserved so that their informational, symbolic, aesthetic, and historic qualities can be

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enjoyed and appreciated by later generations. The important quality here is that this is a “shared” responsibility, and at the same time, it is the archaeologist’s responsibility to share these resources with the society at large. The justification for conservation is that the costs of preserving and conserving borne by our present society is an investment that will be realized by future generations.

Some of these traditional cultural resources are not meant to be publicly accessible or knowable. There is a segmentation and differentiation of knowledge, access, and action that is part of much Pueblo religious life. Lipe characterizes cultural resources in the archaeological realm as those that necessarily exist within the public sphere, enabling all to encounter the cultural resources that provide “the tangible and direct links with the past.”⁵³ Indigenous communities commonly practice a less publicly accessible form of cultural resource stewardship.

Given the reality of secrecy and limitations on the distribution of traditional knowledge in some contexts, our conservation ethic must be flexible with respect to the specificity of the information we seek to preserve as part of the cultural resource record. Specific esoteric knowledge inherent in traditional accounts often needs to be revealed to only a small portion of a community, generally those who have been through ritual initiation. This may lead to a limited preservation, but we are bound by mutual respect to support such a limited preservation ethic in the interest of the community holding the traditional knowledge.

For example, the Acoma experts’ responses to our request for specific information were clear. Traditional knowledge remained traditional and effective by not sharing it with non-Acoma individuals. Identity with ancestral places, peoples, and events was and is essential to the internal integrity of the Acoma people. In that regard, their identity does not hinge on the agreement or disagreement of external groups on the matter. This is internally negotiated identity, and the secrecy surrounding the details of this negotiated identity preserves Acoma identity. As explained by Fidel Lorenzo, the secrecy is not out of defiance of what other groups or individuals may think about Acoma identity and ancestry, it is simply out of respect for those people in Acoma, past and present, who serve as the stewards of this important legacy.

This is stewardship of cultural resources that differs from that espoused in our professional ethics in archaeology. The SAA code of ethics charges us with responsible stewardship of cultural resources, including full public disclosure of our research findings, interpretations, and associated data.⁵⁴ Our scientific inquiry requires that we share any and all pertinent information, not only so that others can assess the strength of our ideas but also because much of our support, funding, and archaeological resources derive from public (federal and state) contexts. This stewardship can and should co-exist with the existence of both agreement and disagreement on significance and explanatory approaches.

This brings the general discussion of the conservation ethic and cultural resources back to the topic of cultural identity. I want to urge our diverse and sometime contentious discipline to reconsider some of the essential tensions between science and cultural understanding, particularly with respect to the conceptualization of cultural patrimony and identity. Cultural identity is not a static label. Identity is one possible result of social negotiations between individuals and groups, negotiations that situate rights, responsibilities, and resources in a social context. At points during the negotiations, those groups and individuals involved can agree on an identity as a valid classification relative to other culturally identifiable groups. There is no end point to the definition of cultural identity, even when dealing with ancestral groups, since identity is always relational. Identity can be a classification, but as such is a “snapshot” of the social context within which social negotiations are taking place.

Conclusions

We are at an historical juncture in archaeology, when dominant archaeological perspectives on the past are questioned by a wide array of critics, and responses are emanating not just from within the field, but from indigenous communities, federal agencies, and an involved public. Disciplinary criticism is not necessarily unique, since all disciplines undergo scrutiny from within and outside. The importance of the current context is that many of the avenues for understanding, inclusion, and collaboration are not only present, but are included in legislative guidelines for considering issues of repatriation, group

identity, and cultural affiliation. Never before has there been a better opportunity to share the past in order to better understand the present.

We need to expand the conservation ethic, which presently refers primarily to material heritage, to include a wider frame of reference for establishing the significance of intangible cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. This should not be accomplished, however, by decreasing the contribution that archaeology can continue to make in understanding the past. This expansion of the conservation ethic depends in large part on a shared respect for different interpretive approaches to the past. The shared respect does not necessarily mean common agreement on how to interpret the links between past and present, but it does require stakeholders to encourage wider ranges of perspectives than the past.

As discussed, an expansion of the conservation ethic must include a more nuanced conceptualization of what constitutes a “cultural resource.” Within the conservation ethic developed during the latter decades of the twentieth century, cultural resources are those materials and places that are valued due to the meaning they provide to a group’s heritage and identity. A cultural resource is accorded its significance based on what it represents, communicates, and glorifies, all which is contingent on what is valued by the society. Significance is not universally shared from culture to culture; what is significant for one group may not be such for another. Throughout all of this, however, there must be mutual respect for systems of significance as the foundation for growth in knowledge.

As a final salvo, I turn to one of the most vocal critics of the role of scientific archaeology. In taking cultural resource archaeology to task for its role as a tool of government control of indigenous groups, Smith concludes that “very little work has actually dealt with the problematics of how to incorporate non-scientific systems into research.”⁵⁵ Though seemingly anathema to her call for a less scientifically-oriented archaeology, I agree wholeheartedly with Smith—we do need to do research on how to better incorporate those realms of understanding that have traditionally remained outside of science. At the same time, our research efforts should not attempt to “incorporate” these systems of knowledge into our own, but we need to truly “collaborate.” To turn Smith’s own critique of archaeology

back to her own suggestion, incorporation assumes that there is an infrastructure of knowledge that is seeking to integrate additional knowledge into an already established worldview.

Collaboration fosters questions that can be approached from a variety of perspectives, and allows each perspective to bring its own worldview and infrastructure of explanation to those questions. With collaboration, agreement on conclusions is not a precondition, and often not even an end product. But even with disagreement, collaboration allows the latitude for those who disagree to understand why they have not come to a common solution. To quote one of our experts from Laguna Pueblo on our first day of collaborative research, "In the end, we don't have to agree on everything everyone says over the next two days, do we?"⁵⁶ As Michael Brown eloquently summarizes in his book, *Who Owns Native Culture?*, intellectual property and esoteric traditional knowledge are always relational in nature.⁵⁷ Those interpersonal and intercultural relationships that are the most workable exist in a context of mutual respect for the dignity of other individuals, interest groups, and communities.

Afterword

Our research into the significance of various perspectives on cultural identity and affiliation is ongoing. As of mid-2005, the primary research contacts (Adler, Ferguson, Whiteley, Dittert) are presently in the process of writing syntheses of the discussions and findings. Each Pueblo collaborative group and tribal advisors will soon be given a copy of the report dealing with their affiliation research collaboration, with the understanding that they can exclude information shared during the visit that should not be publicly divulged in the final published reports. We will bring all of the research participants together for a three-day meeting in October 2005 at Southern Methodist University's research campus in Taos, New Mexico. This will allow a group consideration of the overall findings of the research. We expect that these discussions will lead to revisions of our cultural affiliation findings and recommendations for continued collaboration on the methods and concepts involved in affiliation research. Finally, we will collaborate on a book-length volume detailing each pueblo's perspectives on both specific and general

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aspects of cultural good. A complete archive of research data will be provided for each participating pueblo community, including field notes, GIS data, photographs, report drafts, and summary statements relating to that community's involvement in the project.

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Figures

Figure 1: Location of Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo

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Figure 2: Aerial photo of Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo with relative position of adobe room blocks indicated.

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Figure 3: Northern Roomblock

Figure 4: Eastern Roomblock

Figure 5: Glaze-painted bowl from Chaves-Hummingbird Pueblo
with Knifewing Figure

Endnotes

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