
Ancestral Pueblo Villages and the Panoptic Gaze of the Commune

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Aggregated villages with large, central plazas appeared across the Western Pueblo region of the US Southwest by the fourteenth century AD. We view the adoption of this settlement form not strictly as an adaptive response to economic and social circumstances, but rather as a reflection of changes in the social relations of power and conceptualizations of community in the Pueblo world. Enclosed plazas became a form of panoptic architecture, structuring what were intrinsically unequal social relations between individuals or groups and the entire communities of which they were a part. This process has implications for the emergence of new power relations in pre-state societies.

The Ancestral Pueblo world of the northern US Southwest (Fig. 1) underwent an unprecedented settlement change by the fourteenth century AD. Population abandonment and migration throughout the southern Colorado Plateau resulted in the establishment of aggregated and sometimes massive plaza-oriented towns. The typical village consisted of multistoried contiguous room blocks enclosing large open spaces or plazas (Fig. 2 illustrates major room-block outlines). In some areas, these were preplanned and constructed within a generation. The plazas hint at new communal ritual practices, at a time when elaborate religious iconographies also appear on decorated pottery, rock art and murals in subterranean ritual rooms (or *kivas*). In some sense, these widespread changes at the beginning of the late pre-Hispanic period (or Pueblo IV period, AD 1275/1300–1500s) mark the emergence of the modern Pueblo world.

Southwestern archaeologists commonly explain the appearance of large plaza-oriented pueblos in terms of their functional dimensions. For instance, the plaza-oriented village form is often linked to the appearance of new religious ideologies across the Southwest that emphasized social harmony and community well-being (Adams 1991; Crown 1998). Central plazas presumably became the nexus of participatory ceremonialism in these large settlements. At the same time, the inward orientation of the villages offered heightened security during unsettled times

(Adams 1989; Cordell 1996; Graves *et al.* 1982; Kintigh 1985; LeBlanc 1999; Longacre 1966; Wilcox & Haas 1994). The motivation to establish or join these large settlements is thus seen as an adaptive response to a combination of stressful social, climatic and environmental circumstances. This explanatory model fits conventional notions of historic Pueblo social organization (Eggan 1950) as well as ethnographic narratives about plaza construction and use. However, viewing architecture in terms of its functional parameters does not make clear the complex social histories of these settlement layouts or why the form was so pervasive in the entire Pueblo World. In recent years, scholars working across the northern Southwest have begun to shift away from such models, examining the ways that plazas and other architectural spaces embodied a range of social practices through which meanings were constructed, memories were engaged, and identities were reshaped and at times contested (Chamberlin *in press*; Ruscavage-Barz & Bagwell 2006; Van Dyke 2003; 2008). These studies examine not only what structures did for the people who built them, but also how built environments in turn complexly constructed past social lives. This new scholarship represents a shift away from explanatory models that stress human adaption, and it opens up new interpretive possibilities for examining how architecture both dynamically reflects and shapes dimensions of past human experiences.

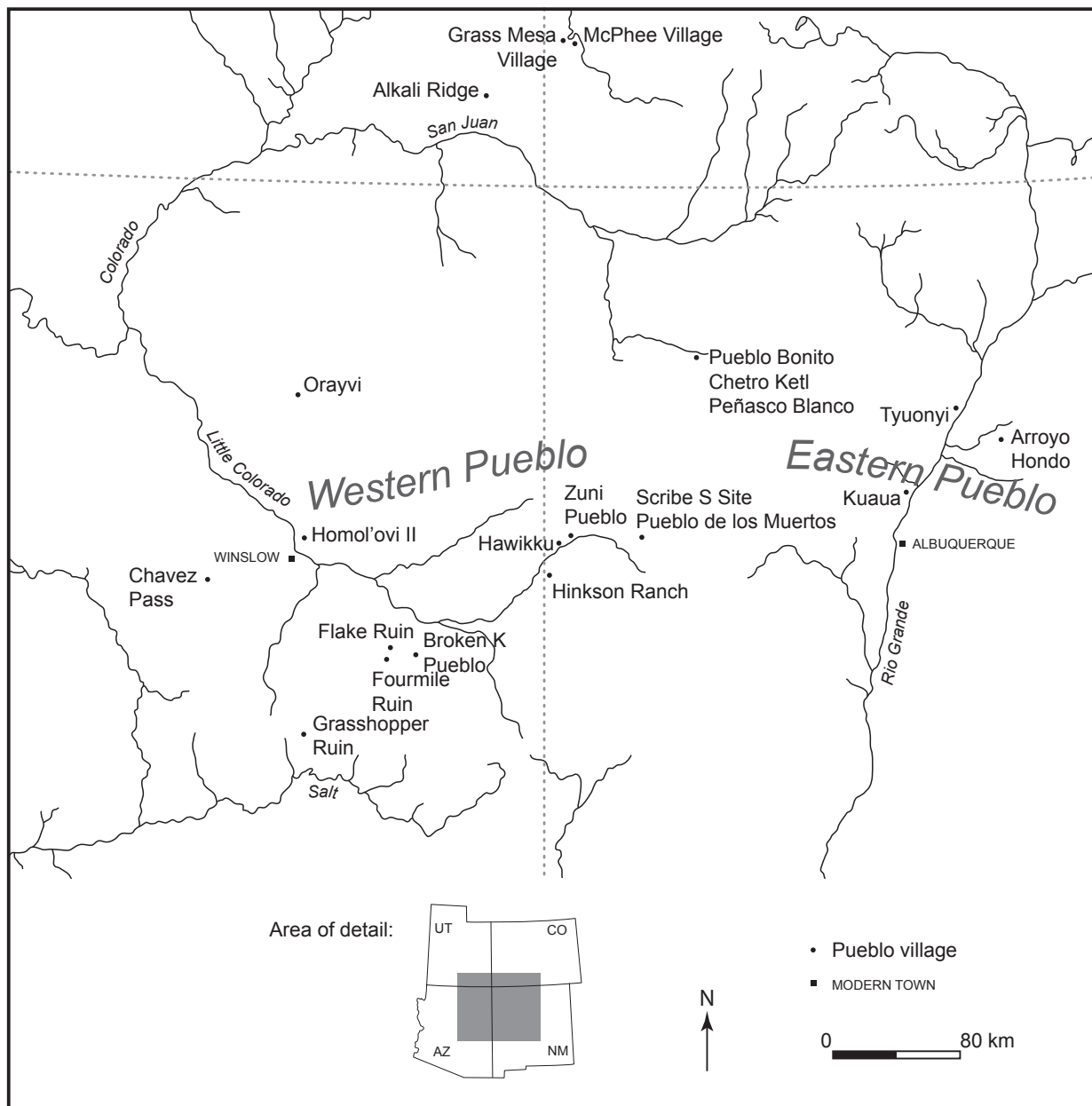


Figure 1. Western and Eastern Pueblo areas in the northern US Southwest with archaeological sites discussed in text.

Our focus in this article is on two questions: what are the historical origins of the plaza-oriented form and how did it reshape the power relations of Pueblo society in the centuries before European contact. We argue that the proliferation of the plaza-oriented village reflects fundamental and pervasive changes in the social order of Pueblo society. This major settlement change was complexly intertwined in the historical transformation of social relations in the centuries before contact. This new village form was not simply a new way to house larger populations with needs for

public ceremonialism or security. Rather, it was both a complex recreation of its Pueblo past and a trigger for deep-seated changes in structural power relations. We propose that the plaza-oriented village layout was panoptic in its design. As an architectural characteristic, panopticism is an expression of disciplinary power through which the practices of individuals and groups that constitute whole communities are constantly monitored (Foucault 1995, 200–201). The consequence of such surveillance is a moulding or curtailment of behaviour. We believe that the emergent panoptic

nature of Pueblo villages during the late pre-Hispanic period both reflected and shaped the rise and perpetuation of a new social order across the Ancestral Pueblo world. Our model underscores the connections between changes in the nature of Pueblo communalism, village layouts and power relations, and, in doing so, reframes how archaeologists account for settlement histories across the northern Southwest. Before proceeding further, we offer an important disclaimer: this article does not present detailed data on specific settlements or localities. Rather, our aim is to examine the development of the plaza-oriented village design at a very broad scale without any effort to interpret or account for all local patterns. We also narrow our focus on the Western Pueblo region, a broad area that spans Pueblo landscapes in northeast Arizona southward to central and eastern Arizona (including areas south of the Mogollon Rim) as well as portions of far western New Mexico (Fig. 1). However, we think the model also accounts for changes across the wider Southwest, and periodically include references to the areas of the Eastern Pueblo world (e.g. portions of the northern Rio Grande area).

The origins of plaza-oriented pueblos in the Western Pueblo region

The end of the thirteenth century AD was marked by important changes in the site structure and settlement layout of communities throughout the northern Southwest. In some areas, these changes are an extension of earlier settlement trends; in others, they represent a radical departure from previous village layouts. During the preceding Pueblo III period (AD 1150–1275/1300), village layouts varied across the Western Pueblo region (see chapters in Adler 1996), but most Pueblo peoples lived in communities of dispersed and loosely aggregated room blocks (Fig. 3a–d). Some of these communities appear to have had fairly sizeable populations. The Scribe S Site (Fig. 3d) is one such example, with nearly 400 rooms loosely organized into clusters of small hamlets (Kintigh 1985; Watson *et al.* 1980). Elsewhere in the Western Pueblo region, Pueblo III period settlements (Fig. 3c) consisted of diffuse clusters of room blocks sometimes centred around spaces used for community ritual (Kintigh 1996). At this time, early aggregated pueblos built around small plazas also appear in some areas – a village form that foreshadows the later Pueblo IV period villages (Lightfoot & Most 1989; Martin *et al.* 1964; Mills 1999). The Flake Ruin in the Silver Creek drainage and Broken K Pueblo in the nearby Hay Hollow Valley are two examples of early small plaza layouts (Fig. 3a–b). There is of course a great deal of

variability in community layout, and the diversity of Pueblo III period settlement layouts at this time echoes the unique local histories of settlement aggregation.

The close of the thirteenth century marks an episode of major demographic upheaval in the southern Colorado Plateau and major migrations (Dean 1996). At about this time, residential occupation ended at most of these dispersed communities, with a few expanding into large towns. Although nucleated settlements were by no means a new village form in the upland Southwest, they came to dominate the adjacent, ‘post-migration’ areas (borrowing Schwartz’s 1970 terminology). Thereafter, large villages become the primary settlement form of Ancestral Pueblo peoples across the northern Southwest. Both the scale and location of villages were shaped by many factors, including the distribution of arable land, demographic factors, cosmological beliefs, adjacency to trails and the arrival of migrants from adjacent areas (Adams & Duff 2004; Kintigh 2007; Snead 2008).

This new settlement design consisted of contiguous rooms surrounding one or more large plazas. Many of these new pueblos are rectangular or circular in shape, constructed of multistoried room blocks that focus inward upon central spaces (Fig. 2). These plazas are partially or fully enclosed by rooms. In the Western Pueblo region, large towns appeared in the middle and upper portions of the Little Colorado River drainage (Adams 1996; Kintigh 1996), ranging from the 400-room Fourmile Ruin in the Silver Creek drainage (Mills 1999) to the 1400-room Kluckholn Ruin in the Zuni region to the east (Kintigh 1985). Similar villages were built in portions of central and east-central Arizona, including the 850-room Chavez Pass Pueblo on Anderson Mesa and the 500-room Grasshopper Pueblo south of the Mogollon Rim. Dozens of large plaza-oriented villages were constructed elsewhere (Adams & Duff 2004). Although we focus on the Western Pueblo region in this article, it is worth noting that similar settlements appeared in portions of the Eastern Pueblo region following the abandonment of the Mesa Verde area (Fig. 2d–f illustrate examples). For instance, in the Chama and Jemez archaeological districts of the northern Rio Grande, numerous large plaza-oriented pueblos were built by the early 1300s (Crown *et al.* 1996, 192–5). Throughout the northern Southwest, aggregation at these sites also created a population vacuum, effectively emptying the surrounding landscapes of smaller occupation sites (Cordell 1996). Large towns also appear in areas that were not densely occupied in previous periods (Kintigh 2007).

Why did nearly the entire Western Pueblo world (and other portions of the northern Southwest) aggregate

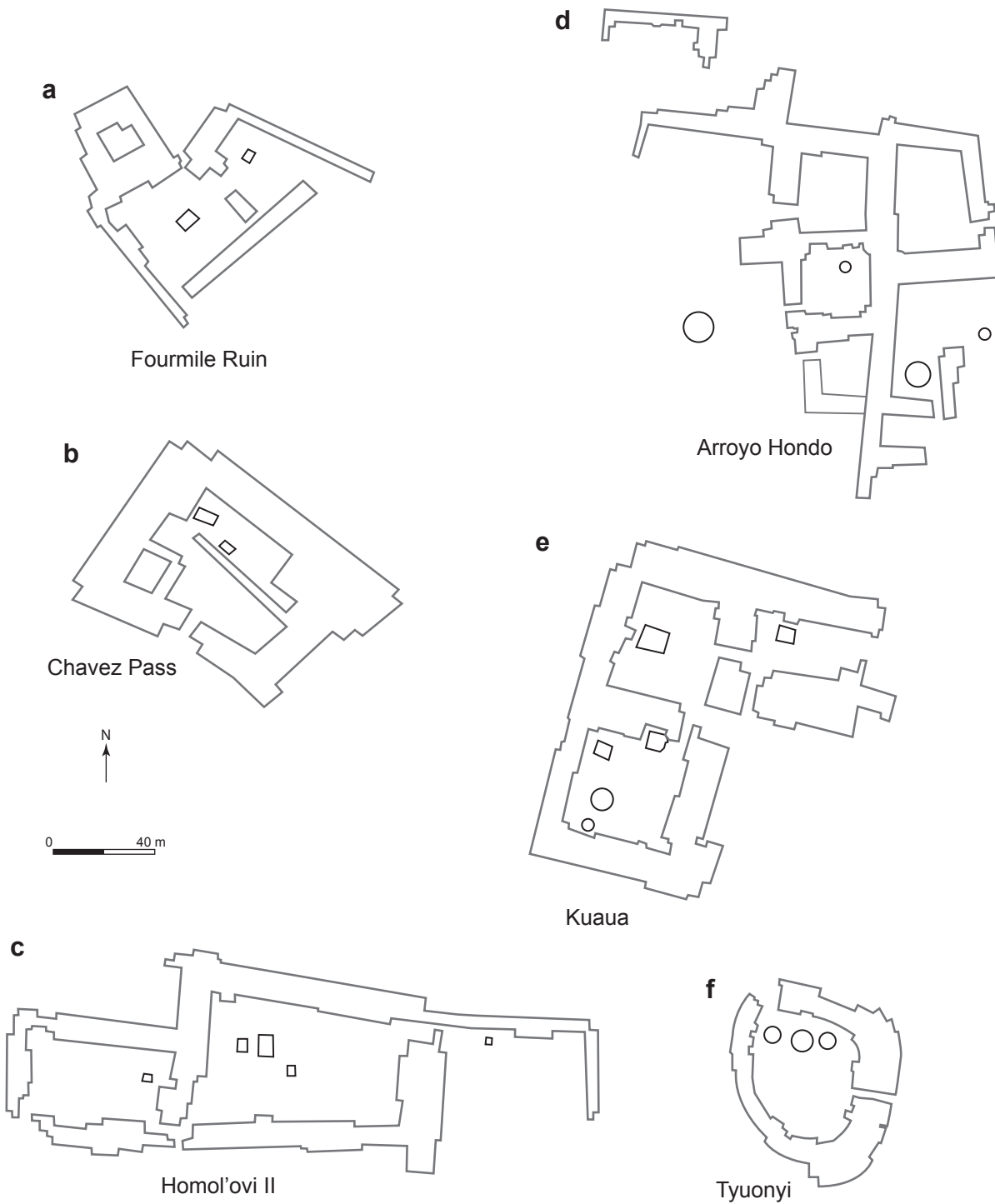


Figure 2. Simple site plans for major Pueblo IV period villages (a–c are villages in the Western Pueblo area; d–f are villages in the Eastern Pueblo area).

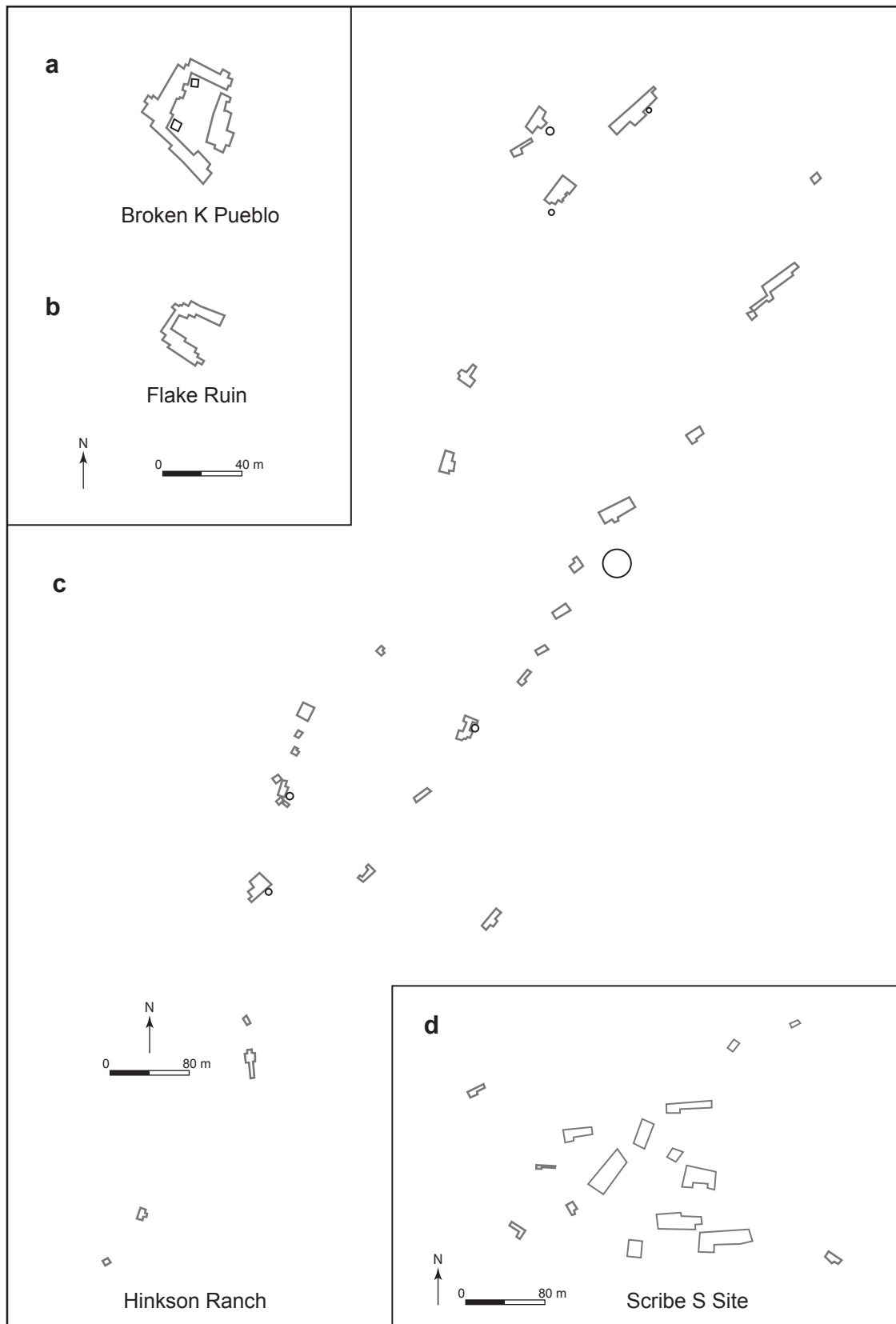


Figure 3. Simple site plans for Pueblo III period villages.

into similarly-configured village types by the late pre-Hispanic period? This dramatic settlement shift is often explained in terms of the perceived adaptive benefit of the new village form. Functionalistic models (as we refer to them) interpret this large-scale aggregation as an adaptation to changing environmental and social circumstances. This explanatory approach is, in part, rooted in deeper perspectives on Pueblo social organization (Eggan 1950), a broader tradition of ethnological literature that emphasizes the integrative role of religion in human societies (e.g. Radcliffe-Brown 1952), and the interpretive mind-set of Americanist archaeology since the 1960s.

To exemplify how this reasoning has shaped archaeological interpretation, we briefly evaluate two common and by no means mutually exclusive models that account for the appearance and spread of the plaza-oriented site layout. The first ties the appearance of these towns to the need for protection from external aggressors (Bernardini 1998; Farmer 1957; Kidder 1924; Plog & Solometo 1997; Watson *et al.* 1980, 216–17). This idea is deeply rooted in Southwest archaeology. Kidder (1924, 340) presented the model in an early summary of late pre-Hispanic settlement patterns, and the explanation has gained momentum in more recent essays about ancient warfare in the Southwest. These large villages, or ‘big defensive sites’ as LeBlanc (1999, 216) labels them, presumably offered protection for groups who now lived in a landscape characterized by increasing social tension and violence (Wilcox & Haas 1994). Watson, LeBlanc and Redman (1980) highlight external factors and defence as a motivation in the planned construction of early Pueblo IV period villages in west-central New Mexico (see LeBlanc 1978). The architectural design of Pueblo de los Muertos, located near the dispersed Scribe S Site (noted earlier), is a radical departure from earlier dispersed communities. Of course, the defensive posture of these sites need not entail actual warfare. Watson and others conclude that large plaza-oriented villages may have been built ‘to discourage attack and in most cases they probably did’ (Watson *et al.* 1980, 216).

In a variation on the theme of conflict, Bernardini (1998) suggests that the settlement shift resulted from both external and internal tensions in Pueblo communities. Following a line of reasoning that mirrors some of the points we make in this essay, he argues that these towns were structured to ‘facilitate behavioral monitoring of residents’ while guarding against any threats (Bernardini 1998, 104). Here, the radical reorganization of village social space deters attack and serves as a coping mechanism for intra-community stress. Likewise, Rautman (2000, 281) suggests that these large Pueblo towns were purposefully con-

structed to enhance group solidarity. Both of these interpretations imply another major function of the new village form, that of social integration through plaza performances and other public ceremonies.

In this second line of reasoning, changes in site structure are linked to new modes of community integration (Adams 1989; 1991; Graves *et al.* 1982; Lipe & Hegmon 1989; Longacre 1966; Potter 1998; Stone 2000). Here, the plaza-oriented village form is seen as one of many pan-Southwestern forms of large-scale integrative architecture that functioned through ceremonial activities to mitigate social instability (Adler 1989; Adler & Wilshusen 1990). Citing Haury’s (1950) discussion of ritual architecture in eastern Arizona, Longacre (1966) expressly links social integration with changes in Pueblo settlement patterns in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (see also Hill 1970; Longacre 1964). Drawing on Pueblo ethnography (e.g. Eggan 1950; Kroeber 1917), he associates the ‘enlargement of the basic social unit for cooperation in the face of environmental stress’ as the fundamental process to account for early forms of communal architecture, as well as later plazas (Longacre 1966, 97; see also Lipe 1989, 64–5). Adams (1991, 108) expands Longacre’s model, suggesting that the large central plaza becomes the ‘pan-village ceremonial structure’ where public ritual facilitated social cooperation during periods of uncertainty. He specifically links the appearance of the large plaza-oriented village form with the appearance of an Ancestral Pueblo Katsina religion (Adams 1991; 1994). The spread of these religious ideas was perhaps the trigger for the expansion of large public ceremonial spaces. As the argument goes, activities in these public spaces functioned in part to correct the social ‘disequilibrium’ of this period (Adams 1991, 151–8).

Kintigh (1994) offers a twist on the integrative models mentioned above. Citing peer-polity interaction models (Renfrew 1986), he argues that competitive emulation may explain the widespread and sudden appearance of similar village layouts in west-central New Mexico at the end of the thirteenth century (Kintigh 1994, 138). He also considers the possibility that integration is imposed by specific groups, or as Renfrew (1986, 3–4) calls them, ‘highest-order units’. As Kintigh (1994, 135) suggests, one group emulates another to sustain prestige and status. In some respects, this idea anticipates Bernardini’s (1998) more recent discussion of external and internal pushes to aggregate into large plaza-oriented villages. Bernardini’s model not only emphasizes the ‘behavioural monitoring’ that occurred within plaza-oriented villages, a point we return to later, but also that the new village form was part and parcel of the increasingly inward focus of Pueblo communities at this time.

The explanatory models that we have highlighted view the origin of plaza-oriented villages as a question of how these new spaces were designed and constructed to enhance solidarity, security or other perceived social needs. None of the authors of these ideas would view them as mutually exclusive, or even applicable to the entire northern Southwest. There is, however, a clear and consistent perspective here in which archaeological changes are conceptualized as adaptive cultural responses (e.g. reacting to the threat of violence or making spaces for bigger public rituals that evoke the well-being of all). In fact, some archaeologists still refer to these architectural changes as calculated 'social experiments' that attempted to 'solve' problems (e.g. Lekson 2008, 195–8). We do not dispute any of these explanations. Human actions are consistently shaped by perceived benefits and adaptive outcomes. Ritual activities also serve integrative purposes (Rappaport 1979) and we know that public ceremonies within historic Pueblo plazas were intended — at least in part — to solidify social ties that crosscut kinship-based corporate groups (Eggan 1950). Further, there is no question that the layouts of some historic-era pueblos reflected conscious decisions to enhance protection (Mindeleff 1891), and some late pre-Hispanic Pueblo villages in the Southwest were without doubt built in defensive postures (Bernardini 1998; LeBlanc 1999). However, these explanations do not sufficiently account for either the origins of the new layout or its remarkable ubiquity across the northern Southwest.

Although we strongly believe that a functional mindset still dominates our understanding of Pueblo architecture, to be fair, more than a decade of recent scholarship has widened historical inquiry by shifting focus to the experiential qualities, social meanings and inherent power relations of Pueblo built environments. Van Dyke's (2003; 2008) phenomenological approach to rethinking Chaco landscapes in the San Juan Basin is the most notable. She explores how Chaco built environments (and the landscapes that surround them) embody memories as well as broader conceptualizations of 'sacred geography' and 'cosmography' (Van Dyke 2008, 241–2). This focus on the complex meanings of Pueblo places has influenced the interpretation of plaza-oriented pueblos in the late pre-Hispanic period. In a study that examines settlement reorganization in the Eastern Pueblo region, Ruscavage-Barz and Bagwell (2006, 96) suggest that the origin of 'plaza pueblos' was not simply a question of population growth or the need for corporate pursuits. Rather, the plaza-oriented village was constructed as a 'spiritual anchor' that evoked key cosmological concepts. They draw in part

on Swentzell's (1990) description of plazas as symbolic of broader sacred landscapes in the Pueblo world.

The ways in which plaza-oriented villages evoked power relations in Pueblo society has also been highlighted (Bernardini 1998; Chamberlin in press; Ortman in press; Potter & Perry 2000; Snead 2008). Where earlier generations of researchers searched for overt architectural markers of emergent inequality (e.g. Plog 1983; Upham 1982), recent essays examine the multidimensional ways the power relations are embodied in the ways that Pueblo groups constructed and experienced architectural spaces. As just one notable example, Chamberlin's (in press) recent work in the Eastern Pueblo area envisions plazas as 'social fields' where power relations were always in play, in part through the performance dynamics in public ceremonies.

We take a similar tack in this article and argue that the development of the plaza-oriented village form both complexly structured and was structured by new forms of communal power and that it must be understood as a 'product' of its historical precursors. Many of the new large towns established at the beginning of the Pueblo IV period were aggregates of both existing local populations and new migrants. The social, economic and religious dimensions of community life were significantly altered in this new 'post-migration' world. Such new social and economic relations and new religious practices and rituals were emerging at the same time that communalism and a more communal social order was becoming more prevalent in the Pueblo Southwest (McGuire & Saitta 1996; Ortman 1998). As we argue below, in spite of the latter, the social groups and individuals that constituted these communities paradoxically lost an autonomy and independence they may have enjoyed previously.

Plaza-oriented villages as panoptic settlements

In our view, the plaza-oriented village was a form of panoptic settlement layout that (1) reflected the development of a new communal social order (or primacy of the commune), and (2) subsequently strengthened and perpetuated the acceptance of new communal forms of power and the unequal relations between individuals and their own communities. We use the term 'commune' not only to refer to the occupants of these villages, but as a general characterization of Pueblo society. These were relatively small, agrarian communities whose members shared common interests and social relations, and where the means of production were held collectively (Saitta & Keene 1990). McGuire and Saitta (1996, 201; Saitta 1994) characterize southwestern Pueblos as 'complex communal' societies where inequalities existed based on intermit-

tent, differential access to information or goods. They highlight the inherent 'tensions and contradictions' in social contexts where an 'ideology of community' (borrowing the phrase from Handsman 1991, 343) obscured expressions of power and unequal access to both material and non-material resources (McGuire & Saitta 1996, 199). We draw on these ideas later in this article, and outline a scenario that conceptualizes the emergence of plaza-oriented villages as a historical outcome of fundamental contradictions between an emerging 'communal ethos' in the 'post-migration' Southwest on the one hand, and new forms of constraining power in these villages on the other.

The panopticon

Our discussion of the panoptic architectural form draws on Foucault's (1995) description of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, a model prison layout consisting of a central observing tower surrounded on all sides by a ring of open cells. The cells of the panopticon open to the central tower, but they also have windows facing the outside of the structure. The inhabitants of the cells are illuminated and under the constant gaze and surveillance of the overseers. This panoptic architectural form is articulated in many examples of nineteenth-century and later forms of Western architecture, including churches, domed capitol buildings, schools, insane asylums and prisons, all examples that reflect and impose the power and will of dominant institutions in state-level societies.

Within the panopticon, the crowd, the commune, is transformed from a collective to groups of disparate 'individualities' (Foucault 1995, 201). Each person is separated from the masses through the individualized monitoring and surveillance of the central tower. Each inmate becomes aware of perpetual surveillance that permits, as Foucault (1995, 201) described it, an 'automatic functioning of power'. Thus, by singling out each individual, the panopticon creates a relationship, a link or a bond, between every person and the central institution or authority. This constant scrutiny or the potential of constantly being observed also creates within each individual a state of self-awareness and self-observation (Foucault 1995; Leone 1995). Each person thus becomes his or her own overseer, constantly monitoring his or her own behaviour and evaluating its fit with the disciplinary order. The panopticon simultaneously 'disindividualizes' power (Foucault 1995). Power is not found within individual persons or roles, but rather within the social order itself. Power comes to reside, as Foucault (1995, 202) puts it, in the 'distributions of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in the arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relations in which individuals are caught up'. In this important

respect, power can be said to exist in and emanate from the built environment, which structures human action irrespective of those who exercise authority.

In addition to buildings or institutions of a society, entire community layouts can be seen as panoptic. In a study of power relations and settlement structures in the late colonial period and the early U.S. republic, Leone (1995) discusses the panoptic nature of eastern seaboard cities such as Annapolis and Baltimore. In Annapolis, a large dome built on the Maryland Statehouse in the late 1780s towered over the entire settlement. The dome contains rows of windows which look down and out along eight radiating streets that lead to the statehouse (Leone 1995, 256). In Baltimore, numerous buildings were constructed with large, domed structures, each acting as a form of panoptic architecture. Mt Vernon Square and the Washington column were situated in the city centre (Leone 1995, 257–9). Like the Annapolis Statehouse, the column was visible from most vantage points in the city. Here, at the centre of these settlements, panoptic architecture gazed in all directions, inviting members of the community into a special relationship with the central state institution. Panopticism then can be seen as a strategy of the powerful to discipline and exact compliance from its subjects (e.g. Paynter & McGuire 1991). It acts to train or mould the behaviour of people in ways beneficial to centralized authority or the commune (Foucault 1995, 203). And it does so by functioning as a disciplinary technology, a way of exacting right or correct behaviour. For Foucault (1995, 215), discipline is a type of power as well as the means, techniques or physical manifestations of its exercise. Disciplinary technologies such as panoptic space may be taken over by those in power and used as a means to create and sustain domination — and are thus seen as active strategies of domination. They create and sustain a disciplinary order on society, essentializing the unequal relationship that all individuals have with the dominant power or class.

Plaza-oriented villages as panoptic spaces

Both Leone (1995) and Foucault (1995) cite examples of panoptic architecture and settlement layouts in contexts that are dominated by strong sociopolitical hierarchy. That is, they refer to unequal relations between individuals and groups of a society and the highest ranks of the hierarchy (e.g. state bureaucracies or strong, centralized leaders). These models seem, at first glance, ill-suited to understanding the political organization of relatively small-scale, pre-state societies in the Southwest (but cf. McGuire 2002, 208). However, in Pueblo villages with large enclosed plazas, what was being reflected were the social rela-



Figure 4. Plaza at Orayvi, Arizona, 1898. (Photograph: Adam Clark Vroman, used with the permission of the Braun Research Library Collection, Autry National Center; P.38149.1.)

tions between the groups that constituted individual communities and those communities themselves. We argue that the plaza-oriented form of late pre-Hispanic villages in the Southwest acted in the same way as the panopticon, and specifically, as a sort of *reverse* panopticon. The gaze and monitoring of correct behaviour did not emanate from elites situated within or on centralized structures, but rather from the commune itself. Households and other groups that constituted these communities were under the constant scrutiny of the whole. All focus was inward. The commune watched and monitored and exerted discipline over itself. Unlike other panoptic settings where the gaze emanates from the architectural materialization of some central institution, at late pre-Hispanic Pueblo villages the gaze was cast from everywhere inside the community. Conversely, the whole village and most activities people might have engaged in outside the confines of pueblo rooms — essentially the whole of community life — could have been seen from any location within. Each household, family, or even individual was under the constant scrutiny of the entire community (Bernardini 1998, 95). Rooftop activity areas and plaza spaces were the contexts of household

activities and the practices that constituted everyday life (Fig. 4). They were also the social contexts of periodic ceremonies that were integral to the social life of the community. Potter and Perry (2000) note that the adoption of enclosed plazas and the relocation of previously private, domestic activities such as corn grinding to open spaces promoted the visibility of these activities and public practices of community members (see Ortman 1998). Such visibility would have allowed for the surveillance of individuals by 'leaders and *other community members*' (Potter & Perry 2000, 77, emphasis added). These spaces — essentially the entire social arena of human action and practice — were under constant monitoring and evaluation by all. The subtext of any individual activity was a sense of self-reflection and self-observation, or a constant evaluation of one's own behaviour. In villages with multiple plaza-oriented spaces (Fig. 2), this characterization would, of course, be limited to the activities occurring in any one particular plaza and on the rooftops of room blocks bordering that plaza space. In these cases, the panoptic gaze and scrutiny would emanate not from the entire community but from a large segment or proportion of the town.

In the remainder of this article we show how the panoptic character of the plaza-oriented village generated historical changes in the nature of power in Pueblo society, and then account for the origins of the village form. The model emphasizes historical contingencies and seeks to understand how Pueblo peoples acted upon and negotiated their social memories and relations during this key episode of the past. On the issue of origins, it is clear that the plaza-oriented villages came to be a central stage for the performance of new religious ceremonialism, and in doing so, evoked a new 'communal ethos'. This ethos, we think, embraced resources and architectural forms from the past; that is, the plaza-oriented village remade and evoked Pueblo village forms and structures from previous centuries. Ultimately, however, this enclosed-plaza village layout came to embody and strengthen what we term new *communal power* relations that were not part of the original social logic of its conception and widespread adoption.

Communal power in Pueblo society

The appearance of the plaza-oriented pueblo layout was not a conscious decision by a few to exert power over others. Rather, we associate this appearance with the development of stronger communal power relations than had existed previously. This form of power arose in the context of what others have identified as increased communalism within the broader field of social relations by the early Pueblo IV period (McGuire & Saitta 1996; Ortman 1998; Spielmann 1998a). This rise of communalism in the early Pueblo IV period is associated with two changes in social organization, (1) the diminishing importance of the extended family household as the central organizational unit (Ware & Blinman 2000) and as a cultural metaphor for how communities were conceptualized (Ortman 1998; 2000), and (2) the increasing importance of a community ethos as a structuring agent in conceptualizing social relations within these late settlements (Kolb & Snead 1997; McGuire & Saitta 1996). Both of these broad changes reflect a new or refashioned array of cognitive frameworks with which Pueblo peoples acted upon and within the world. From an archaeological perspective, the strengthened communalism of the late pre-Hispanic Pueblo world was evidenced by the adoption of more inclusive or community-based modes of ritual and ceremony such as feasting (e.g. Spielmann 1998b) and the performance of new communal rituals and dances in expansive plazas (Adams 1989; 1991). Communalism has also been linked to the relocation of more mundane, daily activities such as corn grinding (Ortman 1998)

and pottery decorating (Kohler *et al.* 2004) to public areas. It is worth reiterating that all of these changes occurred against a backdrop of major population reorganization in the northern Southwest that began in the late AD 1200s, ushering in the 'post-migration' period we noted earlier.

Following McGuire and Saitta (1996), we suggest that power and inequality may have played important and complicated roles in determining social relations among groups and individuals within this new communalism. It is within this social order that we envision a form of power and inequality developing that we term *communal*. Our ideas are informed by a number of theoretical treatments (Foucault 1995; Lukes 1974; Wolf 1999). We specifically highlight Wolf's (1990; 1999; 2001) suggestion that power is not an independent factor but 'an aspect of *all* relations among people' (Wolf 1999, 4, emphasis added). Power is often seen to exist in either one of two forms. It is defined as either (1) a dispositional form, a capability for action that is situated within discrete individuals, or (2) the capacity to alter the behaviour of other persons or to impose one's will on others (Wolf 1990, 586; 1999, 5). In the second form, power becomes a characteristic of, or exists within, relations between like social units, be they individuals or groups.

It is Wolf's (1990, 586–7; 1999, 5) notion of structural power, however, that helps us to envision other scales of social relations in which power may exist and shape human practices. Structural power 'organizes and orchestrates' the social settings that form the contexts of human agency and everyday social life (Wolf 1990, 586). As Wolf (1990, 587) suggests, it 'shapes the social field of action so as to render some kinds of behaviour possible, while making others less possible or impossible'. Accordingly, structural power does not exist at the scale of social relations between individuals or between groups, but does exist within the broader field of social relations that govern the consciousness of and potentialities for action (Wolf 1990). Thus, structural power both determines and becomes a part of the broad social contexts (i.e. culture or social structure) in which, and through which, all human action occurs.

We define communal power as a particular variety of the structural power that Wolf and others have discussed, one that does not expressly pertain to interactions between like groups or individuals, but does characterize the constituent groups of a community or society as they relate to the commune as a whole. Communal power relations may be characterized as relatively egalitarian or non-egalitarian based on the particular relationships the constituent groups of a community or society have with the entire commune

and the relative degree of autonomy or independence of action those groups or individuals enjoy. We associate the adoption of the panoptic settlement during the late pre-Hispanic period with the expansion of communal power. The layout of new pueblo settlements, and the constant social monitoring and surveillance it implies, reinforce the idea that individual and group autonomy was subsumed by a new 'ideology of community'. In this scenario, individuals and households would have experienced a relative loss of autonomy and independence compared to the social order of earlier time periods. Once more, it appears that this loss of autonomy occurred simultaneously with the decreasing importance of extended family households as organizational units within Pueblo communities. In these settings, social tensions may have stemmed from the largely 'faceless' yet persistent effects of the communal power relations that we associate with the panoptic village form.

McGuire and Saitta's (1996) characterization of Pueblo IV period villages as 'complex communal' societies elucidates how power may have been structured in the social context of increasing communalism. Complex communal societies are those in which the means of production are held in common by the social groups that make up the society as a whole. As they put it, 'surplus appropriation is *collective* in form; i.e. where the extractors of surplus labour are simultaneously the producers' (McGuire & Saitta 1996, 201, emphasis in original). However, within such communal societal forms in the Southwest, access to resources, labour or knowledge was not necessarily equal, and strong inequalities did sometimes exist among groups and individuals. There is compelling evidence of this in the historic period Southwest (Levy 1992; McGuire & Saitta 1996; Whiteley 1998). For McGuire and Saitta, leaders and those with political power within Pueblo communities found themselves in a contradictory relationship with the commune and comprised a 'subsumed' class within the communal social order (McGuire & Saitta 1996, 202). Communalism and communal power relations structured the everyday lives of constituent groups in these societies and, we believe, would have effectively restricted aggrandizing behaviours that households and individuals may have been able to exercise. In fact, we can imagine that individuals and groups within Pueblo communities may have entered into unequal social relations, not with specific individuals or groups, but with the commune itself (via the real or even perceived gaze of the collective). In this respect, the panoptic structure of Pueblo villages both evoked and reinforced the power of the commune. The ubiquity of the village form was not simply a widespread behavioural response

to the directives of a few, but rather an outcome of a changing worldview in the late pre-Hispanic Pueblo world. Linking the widespread adoption of the plaza-oriented type to the development of such power relations begs the question of how the settlement layout came into being.

Origins of the plaza-oriented village form

The physical design of plaza-oriented villages unquestionably served new types of ceremonialism as well as a need for protection against would-be attackers in some areas of the Southwest. However, to characterize the appearance of this village form as simply a response to the need for larger ritual spaces, protection or other needs overlooks their historical origins. The built environment both reflects and determines shared cultural meanings, values and social structures (Low 1995; 2000). The plaza-oriented village was not simply a cultural reaction to internal and external factors, but rather a complex outcome of long-term social processes and actions. Late pre-Hispanic villages were borne out of not only new notions of communalism but also much older elements of Pueblo experiences and worldview. Pueblo peoples actively engaged their rich past through the landscapes of unoccupied settlements as well as the expression of collective memories and cultural metaphors in ceremonies and other ritual activities. It is only within a historical framework that social change occurs and it is history in large part that determines the available and conceivable options for human practice and action. In the following discussion we chart a historical framework that begins to account for the origins and development of the plaza-oriented settlement.

Origins of the panoptic settlement layout

The historical antecedents of the late pre-Hispanic plaza-oriented village can in part be found (1) in the layouts of some settlements dating from the Pueblo I through Pueblo III periods (c. AD 700–1300), and (2) in great *kivas*, the dominant form of communal ritual architecture in the pre-Pueblo IV period. The use of room blocks to enclose or delineate open space was by no means a Pueblo IV period practice. By the Pueblo I period (c. AD 700–900), small communities consisting of clusters of room blocks appear in portions of the northern Southwest (Brew 1946; Prudden 1903; Roberts 1939). In the Mesa Verde region, large 'U'-shaped or curvilinear room blocks appear at a few of the early aggregated villages. For example, the site of McPhee Village included a large horseshoe-shaped room block partially enclosing a plaza space and several pit-structures (Kane 1989) (Fig. 5). The subsequent Pueblo II period (c. AD 900–1100) witnessed the continuation

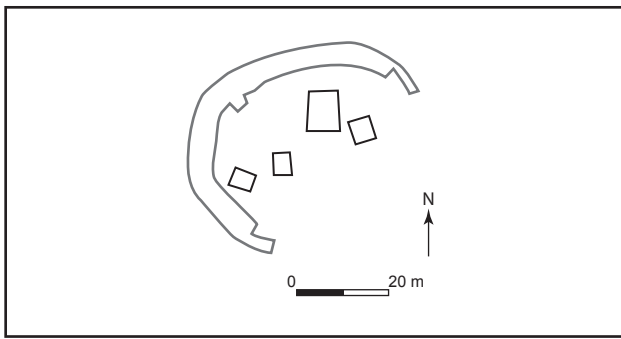


Figure 5. Pueblo I period room block with four kivas, McPhee Village, Colorado.

and elaboration of the construction of pueblos with relatively enclosed, unroofed spaces. Much of this period was dominated by what archaeologists call the Chaco phenomenon, centred on a cluster of sites in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. The system was defined by a complex ritual and economic exchange network, within a landscape that included great houses, great *kivas*, roads and other formal architectural features (Van Dyke 2008). Pueblo Bonito and other great houses within Chaco Canyon (and outliers outside the canyon) are well-known for their massive, multistoried pueblos and large circular ceremonial great *kivas* (Fig. 6a–c). Some great houses within the canyon also embody a plaza-oriented layout. Pueblo Bonito is an obvious example of a site with a plaza-oriented layout (Fig. 6c). The central plaza space was defined by the large ‘U’-shaped room block mass of the pueblo (itself recalling the previous form of Pueblo I period villages in the Mesa Verde region; see above) and a row of rooms extending across both ends of the room block mass. Similar configurations exist at Peñasco Blanco and Chetro Kettle (Fig. 6b–c), and at many of the great house sites within and beyond the canyon.

The dominant forms of large ceremonial or ritual architecture in the pre-AD 1300 Ancestral Pueblo world, circular and rectangular great *kivas*, were also precursors of the Pueblo IV period panoptic settlement layout (e.g. Adams 1989; Herr 2001). Great *kivas* were large (generally greater than 10 metres in diameter), subterranean, roofed or unroofed structures that were the locus of much communal ritual in the past (Adams 1989; Reed 1948; Reid & Montgomery 1999). They often contain a number of distinctive architectural traits that differentiate them from the smaller *kivas* associated with individual households or household groups. These include foot drums, benches, wall niches and elaborate masonry. There are some rather obvious similarities in form between great *kivas* and the subsequent plaza-oriented village layout. Each

contains large, enclosed communally-used or communally-viewed space surrounded by elevated areas for spectators. In the great *kiva* this was a bench on which people would have sat and stood to view the activities occurring in the central open area. In the panoptic village, this would have been the rooftops of the pueblo itself. From each of these vantage points, all could have gazed upon and monitored all other participants, including other spectators and the persons performing in the open central spaces. Adams (1989; 1991, 45, 109, 125) directly links the plaza-oriented settlement layout and the great *kiva* of preceding eras, building on earlier ideas about the evolution of the *kiva* form outlined for the Western Pueblo area by Haury (1950) and Longacre (1964). He suggests that the plaza-oriented layout in some sense replaced the great *kiva* as the locus of communal religious ceremonies. In portions of the upper Little Colorado River Valley and the Mogollon Region, for instance, large rectangular great *kivas* were characteristic of late thirteenth-century villages, at the beginning of an important period of aggregation.¹ According to Adams (1991), as these villages grew in size in part through the arrival of migrant groups from recently abandoned areas, the great *kiva* was no longer able to effectively integrate these larger communities and enclosed plazas appeared as a means to fulfill this need for larger and larger settlements. The suggestion is that whole villages came to carry out the same integrative function as earlier great *kivas*.

Communalism and the remaking of enclosed architectural space

We view all of the antecedents of the panoptic settlement layout described above and the spread of this new settlement form during the late pre-Hispanic period as the active use of peoples’ own past and memories. As the greater Pueblo Southwest is today filled with the ruins of ancestral communities and structures, so too was it in the past. Through this landscape, dotted with the remains of the past, people constructed what Gosden (1994, 17–18) refers to as ‘long-term systems of reference’ which they relied upon to make sense of their contemporary world. Architecture and the remains of structures and settlements create connections to past events, places and practices (Meskell 2003; Thomas 1996, 89–90; Van Dyke 2003). Through such material references to the past, people create a collective social memory with which they interpret the contemporary social world and possible future outcomes of human history (Bradley 2002, 12–13; Mills & Walker 2008). Such memories would have provided the foundations from which originated newly created or modified meanings of what was essentially an old architectural form or device — bounded, communal

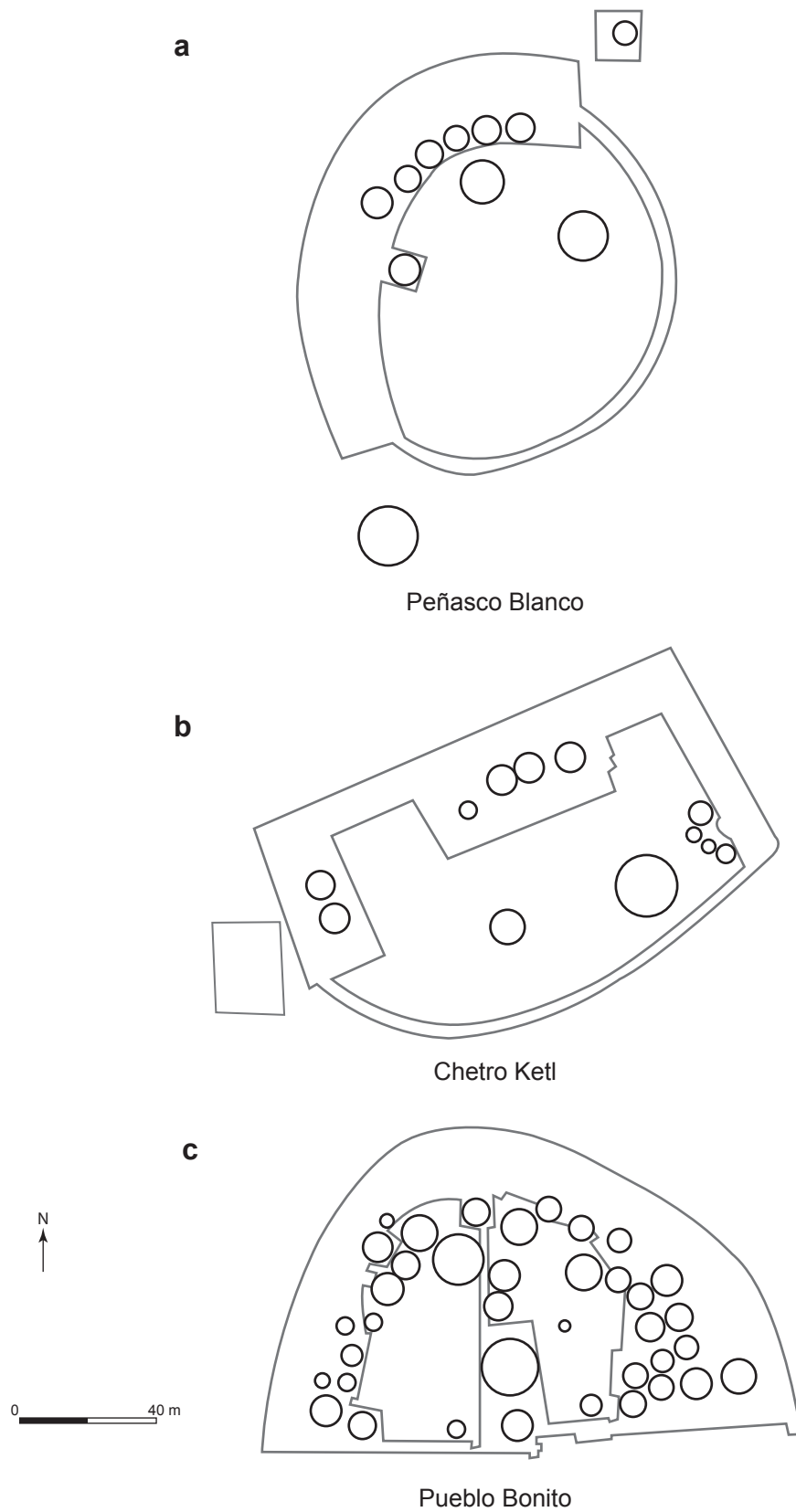


Figure 6. Simple site plans of Chaco Canyon great houses with circular kivas.

space within a settlement. Deep-seated cosmological views would have also shaped these meanings (Swentzell 1990).

With the plaza-oriented village form, we envision Pueblo groups (re)using and (re)interpreting existing architectural ideas and themes through their lived experiences in a broader social landscape that was infused with the history of their ancestors. It was, in part, through this reimagining of older architectural precepts that Pueblo peoples interpreted and experienced new ideological constructs concerning communalism, the nature of community, and the proper relationships among households, kin groups and individuals. Thus, Pueblo ways of thinking that were at the heart of late pre-Hispanic period communalism were given expression and meaning, and experienced, through the enclosed communal space of plaza-oriented villages. This new settlement form simultaneously reflected and strengthened cultural concepts or themes of community that existed in (then) contemporary consciousness, in their history, and in the ruins spread across the landscape of the Pueblo world.²

Social or ideological constructs and their material manifestations that shape how such constructs are experienced can be utterly transformed as they are shaped and reshaped through social practice, sometimes taking on entirely novel meanings (Sewell 1992, 27). Such ideological and material transformations are historical processes that result, in part, from the unintended consequences of social action. We believe that such is the case for late pre-Hispanic period communalism and the enclosed plaza village layout. Originally an architectural manifestation of the increasing communalism of the early Pueblo IV period, the enclosed plaza layout came to take on different and unintended meanings once this village form was constructed and began shaping people's everyday lives. The panoptic nature of this new settlement layout heightened the potential for social monitoring, and ultimately contributed to the creation and strengthening of a new disciplinary order whereby the power of the commune increased and the new communal ethos was reinforced. In the plaza-oriented town, the constant surveillance of households and community members by the entire community itself — real or perceived — acted to subsume households and individuals to the commune. The result of this process was a loss of individual or household autonomy, and the rise of the new power relationships described earlier.

The construction of new panoptic village layouts cannot be linked to deliberate actions by a few individuals to specifically craft unequal power relations to their benefit. The decisions to design and build villages

around enclosed plazas were not made to increase the power of a select few in a community through establishing a specific disciplinary technology (the panoptic village layout). Rather, the decisions to design and build this village form were related to its broadly accepted definition as a material manifestation of the new communal ethos we argue to have arisen during the late pre-Hispanic period. Because great *kivas* and plaza-oriented spaces already existed in Pueblo traditions and past landscapes, these were the likely and perhaps obvious 'resources' or 'raw materials' to use as frameworks with which to interpret and enact new ideological constructs of communal social relations. In other words, the adoption of the panoptic village layout was only made in reference to the past social structures (both non-material visions of the world as well as the concrete layouts of villages and communities) that existed in the collective memories of Pueblo people, and within the larger social landscapes they inhabited. The adoption of the new plaza-oriented village layout was, in essence, a negotiation between past and present practices (Pauketat 2001, 80; Thomas 1996) through which new meanings, both intended and unintended, were brought into social life.

End of the panoptic settlement layout

The panoptic settlement layout was short-lived in the Western Pueblo region. By the fifteenth century AD, permanent residential occupation ended at many of these plaza-oriented pueblos, and populations migrated to new or existing but restructured villages with significantly different layout patterns. Orayvi on the Hopi Mesas is an example of a radically different village form, where the panoptic elements of large plazas are diffused by presence of long linear room blocks (Fig. 7a). In other settlements that did retain the plaza-oriented layout, architectural growth either occurred around the original plaza space, or it took the form of linear room blocks forming non-enclosed plazas (for example, Hawikku, Fig. 7b). With some notable exceptions (e.g. Zuni Pueblo), late Pueblo IV period villages most often consisted of multiple room blocks, often arranged in a roughly linear fashion to form multiple, non-enclosed, yet still spatially-defined plaza areas. The new layout style was much less structured, and plaza areas, though still retaining their importance in Pueblo social and ceremonial life, were not as formally delineated as in previous settlements. In addition, many of these later Pueblo IV villages were larger in size and population than their earlier counterparts, and some were occupied well into the historic period.

What led to the demise of the panoptic, plaza-oriented village layout and its replacement with the less-structured late Pueblo IV period village pattern?

This question is not easily resolved. Perhaps this change in community layout should be viewed as a change in the particular architectural concept through which notions of communalism were realized. The particular schemas that were associated with communalism, village identity and power relations were possibly transposed to different architectural forms or expressed materially in radically different ways. In any case, the plaza-oriented form was rapidly transformed. We are tempted to attribute this change to the inherent instability of these 'complex communal societies' (McGuire & Saitta 1996) in the Southwest, where social tensions may have precipitated conflict and factionalism. In the post-contact Southwest, such processes sometimes resulted in the fissioning of entire villages (Levy 1992; Whiteley 1998). Bernardini (1998, 105) also concludes that the 'relaxed' settlement forms a rejection of the 'behavioural constraints' that characterized the plaza-oriented village form.

Discussion

Southwest scholars associate the movement of peoples into plaza-oriented villages beginning in the late AD 1200s with the emergence of a new sense of communalism in Pueblo society. This coincides with the displacement of populations from the Four-Corners region and other areas and the establishment of plaza-oriented villages. It makes perfect sense to conceive the formation of these large aggregated towns in this 'post-migration' world as behavioural responses among co-residing groups to increase security, promote social well-being through public ceremonies in expansive plazas, or perhaps promote village autonomy (e.g. Bernardini's (1998, 104) notion of 'us versus them ideologies'). However, from our vantage point, such explanations overlook the historical origins and outcomes of this important transition. The plaza-oriented form was not simply shaped by social decisions to build dwellings around inclusive spaces that were visible to the entire settlement. More than this, the plaza-oriented village form came about through changes in social practices and ideologies that infused new meanings into old forms of Pueblo dwellings. The communal power relations imposed by the panoptic village, in our view, were inadvertent outcomes of the widespread late pre-Hispanic period adoption of the plaza-oriented layout. These new villages effectively created and recreated unequal social relations as an *unintended* but inevitable consequence of the adoption of the plaza-oriented layout. These villages were not designed, in other words, by individuals or groups to enact power strategies that sanctioned increased social surveillance and loss of privacy. Nonetheless, it is pos-

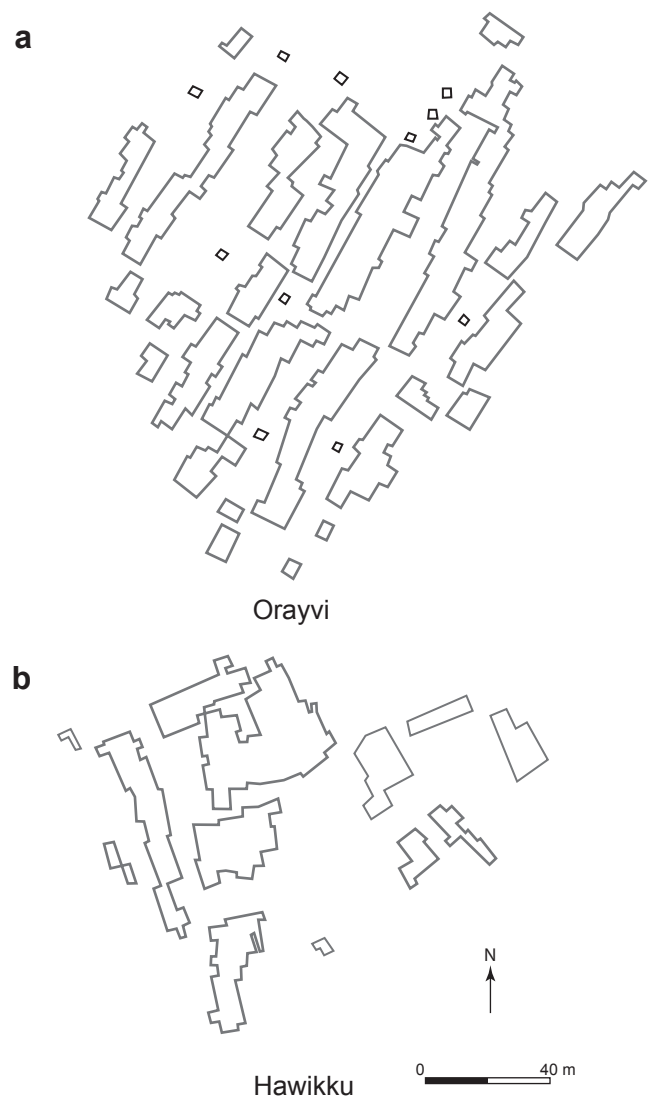


Figure 7. Simple site plans of late Proto-historic and Historic period Pueblo villages (lighter shaded outlines designate unmapped room blocks).

sible that the enclosed plaza village form came to be politicized in a way that created changes in how power was conceptualized and how it played out in a changing Pueblo social order. The crux of our argument is that these processes may not have been the result of active manipulation of the prevailing social order by a few, but that it may have come about through the naturalization of a lack of independence and autonomy on the part of households and individuals as compared to earlier periods. When such community subgroups were subsumed by the commune and their everyday lives were lived under such a communal social order, the creation of other kinds of unequal social relations, those actually between groups or individuals, may

have been relatively uncontested. The potential for increasing inequality between groups and individuals thus arose within the framework of communal social relations and the resulting loss of autonomy of the constituent parts of communities.³ In fact, we can envision more permanent forms of inequality arising out of social landscapes that are characterized by a strong communal ethos.

It is important to note that the form of communal power that we associate with the plaza-oriented form was not the only determinant of Pueblo social order. We have not discussed, for instance, an important dimension of ritual space that was beyond the gaze of the communal field, that of the plaza *kiva*. These subterranean (roofed) rooms were a nexus of ritual activity in Pueblo society and are a prominent feature in many though not all late pre-Hispanic period plazas. *Kivas* were still primarily located within room blocks by the AD 1300s, but the location of some in these expansive plazas placed important religious structures (and the ritual theatre of certain clans) within the wider grasp of entire villages. In theory the plaza-oriented form offered public access to several scales of religious activity, from dances to *kiva*-based rituals. At the same time, the actions that occurred in these subterranean rooms escaped the communal gaze, and their juxtaposition in central public plazas speaks to the unsteady and sometimes contradictory dynamic between collective and controlled resources (e.g. the use and display of ritual paraphernalia during ceremonies). The audiences who observed individuals entering and exiting these subterranean chambers likely had various notions about their own awareness of, or even participation in, what transpired in these structures.⁴ It is worth noting that in the post-contact period settings, the ritual activities and materials in these rooms were associated with prominent clans. The juxtaposition of open plazas to these *kiva* interiors — the only hidden space in plazas — is intriguing and may have been a source of tensions associated with the separation and secrecy of ritual. Ritual exclusivity is often cited as a central pathway to inequality in the Pueblo Southwest (Brandt 1980; Schachner 2001).

Our argument suggests an intriguing possibility: that the power and inequality that characterize many ranked and state-level societies, including our own, may have been originally born out of the development of communal structural power and the loss of autonomy of groups such as clans, lineages and households. How might power and social inequality develop out of a communal social order? We believe it could be from the particular relationships between different social groups and the commune itself that notions of inequality and social differentiation may

stem. Social groups become subsumed by the commune and experience a loss of autonomy and power, not to other social groups or classes or to individual leaders or persons, but to the entire community itself. Power and autonomy would then be given up to a community ethos, which is a form of social discipline (Foucault 1995). It is precisely through this imposition and subsequent acceptance of such disciplining order that individuals and the disparate social groups that constitute a community may come to accept, resist and otherwise engage in systems of inequality, domination and political centralization. From our vantage point, the initial subsuming of community subgroups to the commune lays the foundation for more easily understandable and potentially more pernicious forms of inequality (e.g. Berreman 1981).

To conclude, in this article we have sought a fuller understanding of the emergence of the plaza-oriented village form in the Southwest and its implications for structuring power relations in Pueblo society. Persons living in late pre-Hispanic Pueblo Southwest were surrounded by a landscape composed of social memories, traditions, and the ruins of their past, the meanings of which were renegotiated as new or refashioned ideological constructs emerged. Large, plaza-oriented villages were not a new development — in a real sense they always existed. However, these forms were given significantly new meanings and social values by the fourteenth century. Through recurrent social practice (construction), the village form continually (re)shaped and (re)determined the ideological schemas of communalism and communal social relations through which it ascribed meaning. This historical process must not be cast simply as the uncritical or unchanging use of the physical features of a past landscape. Rather, to understand these ancient built environments we must acknowledge that they were, to borrow from Hodder (2000, 24), the products of vibrant and ‘long cycle[s] of reordering and renegotiating’ by the people who inhabited them. Although we have interpreted the reorganization of late pre-Hispanic settlements in the Western Pueblo region with a fairly broad brush, we acknowledge the possibility that social relations and peoples’ histories may have been imagined very differently at local scales. In other words, we do not assume that the panoptic form operated in exactly the same way in all places, or that these communities and their power relations were imagined similarly across the Western Pueblo region or the entire northern Southwest. The model nonetheless demonstrates the usefulness of large-scale, pan-Southwestern perspectives in understanding the ways that built environments not only embody but come to shape social relations.

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Notes

1. Plazas occasionally became great *kivas* in the Mogollon area south of the Colorado Plateau; the most notable example was the remodelling of the largest enclosed-plaza at Grasshopper Pueblo (Riggs 2002).
2. In some areas plaza-oriented pueblos were founded by groups in localities that were previously unoccupied or had little or no pre-fourteenth-century architectural 'ruins' that could have served as historical antecedents for the plaza-oriented settlement form. In such cases there would have been no ruins in the immediate area with which people could have constructed 'systems of reference' to draw upon when constructing plaza-oriented pueblos. However, we believe that these cases are examples of the transference of the past and social memories of the past to *new* regions. In these areas ideas about settlement layouts would have been drawn from the collectively-held social memory of the histories and landscapes of the areas from which immigrating groups originated.
3. This process is similar to Hegmon *et al.*'s (1998) notion of social control within aggregated Classic period Mimbres villages in southwest New Mexico (AD 1000–1150). Homogeneity in pottery styles and architectural features among Mimbres Classic villages, along with increased subsistence intensification and stress, suggest that a fair degree of social control may have characterized social relations within these villages. Hegmon *et al.* (1998, 149) suggest that such control was the result of 'strong horizontal pressure for conformity'. Interestingly, it appears that such expectations of conformity were not manifest in material differences among groups within these communities, nor was it manifest in village layout schemes, as was the case for the early Pueblo IV plaza-oriented villages.
4. The same could be said of the bodies of knowledge evoked and imagined through plaza ceremonies (Chamberlin in press).

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