

Chimney Rock and the Ontology of Skyscapes: How Astronomy, Trade, and Pilgrimage Transformed Chimney Rock

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Abstract

Because of its architectural style and excellent masonry, the Great House of Chimney Rock in southwestern Colorado has been identified as one of some 225 outliers of the Chaco Regional System. Located just below the spectacular double rock towers, the Great House is set in a dramatic and unique skyscape containing a number of sight-lines to extremes of the Sun and Moon. Once considered important as a calendrical station, which communicated astronomical information southward to Chaco Canyon, the Great House may have been primarily important as a place for viewing the juxtaposition of the gods of earth and sky, a theophany similar to that of darśan of India. This paper proposes that the initial identification of a number of skyscapes as horizon calendars and calendrical stations should be reconsidered in the perspective of animism and alternate ontologies. Construction of the Great House may have been initiated by the local community and accomplished with the help of masons from its closest neighbour the Great House of Salm. The area appears to have become a pilgrimage centre in its own right, not under hegemonic control of the powerful elites of Chaco Canyon. Rejection of the Chacoan influence is indicated by the construction by the local community of a structure that restricted entry to the area of the Great House. The decline of Chimney Rock as a pilgrimage centre sometime after 1093 AD was accompanied by the abandonment of the Salmon Great House, the breakup of a trade network, and out-migration to the Taos Pueblo.

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Refbacs

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The skyscape of Chimney Rock, some 150 km north of Chaco Canyon, contains gods of both sky and earth (Malville 2015b). During 3-4 years around major lunar standstill the moon rises between the double rock towers of Chimney Rock, are recognized as a shrine to the Twin War Gods by the Day People of the Taos Pueblo. Natural stone pillars are often shrines to these gods, or perhaps were the gods themselves. Malville, J.M. (2015b) The Ontology of Puebloan Skyscapes: How Astronomy, Trade, And Pilgrimage Transformed Chimney Rock. *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology* 1.1:39-64. Malville, J. M. (2015c) Astronomy at Nabta Playa, Southern Egypt. Chimney Rock and the Ontology of Skyscapes: How Astronomy, Trade, and Pilgrimage Transformed Chimney Rock. Article. Mar 2015. John McKim Malville. Because of its architectural style and excellent masonry, the Great House of Chimney Rock in southwestern Colorado has been identified as one of some 225 outliers of the Chaco Regional System. Located just below the spectacular double rock towers, the Great House is set in a dramatic and unique skyscape containing a number of sight-lines to extremes of the Sun and Moon.

27 J. M. Malville, "Chimney Rock and the Ontology of Skyscapes: How Astronomy, Trade, and Pilgrimage Transformed Chimney Rock, Southwestern Colorado," *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology* 1, no. 1 (2016): pp. 39-64. Culture and Cosmos. J. McKim Malville and John L. Ninnemann 183. Fig. 2. Major lunar standstills as viewed from the Chimney Rock Great House. Inserts: left, discovery photograph, 8 September 1988 by Malville; right, 7 January 2007 by Ninnemann. Across the Piedra River and upward to the top of Peterson Ridge one finds the unexcavated C-shaped unit-type pueblo, 5AA8.28 Twice a year, near Title: *Journal of Skyscape Archaeology*. Abbreviated Title: JSA. Publisher: Equinox Publishing. ISSN Print 2055-348X. ISSN Electronic 2055-3498. Publication date Created July 10 2015. Publication date (Print): March 9 2015.