

Architecture without Categories On Divine Economy and Sympathetic Magic

Brendon Carlin & Maria Paez Gonzalez

¹ See Ruth Underhill's discussion of how for the Papago (Tohono O'odham) peoples, songs are learned and sung back to the desert and its many beings. Ruth Murray Underhill, *Singing for Power: The Song Magic of the Papago Indians of Southern Arizona* (1938; reis., Berkeley: University of California Press, 2021), 43–47, 56–58.

² See more on this idea about the need and ability to lose and renew the world in Federico Campagna, *Technic and Magic: The Reconstruction of Reality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 16–17, 52–55.

The desert sings a song to the desert Tohono O'odham people, and they sing back.¹ We too, all participate in divination, whether knowingly or not. Divinatory practices involve a magic binding of the future—a formal and incantatory choreography to recover *presence* or a world, from the edge of chaos. The term “presence” is composed of *prea* and *sum*. *Prea* means “before, in front, in charge,” and *sum* means “I am, I exist.” *Praesum* means “I am before something, I preside over or take the lead, I command.” Therefore, presence relates directly to having a sense of presiding over the fact that one is, and what one is and does. Our presence is always at stake because we are, on one hand, defined by a paradoxical being inseparable and whole within a sticky web of interrelated things, places, and beings. On the other hand, we are defined by a singularity or distinctiveness made possible by our ability to *suspend our capture* in our genetic coding, in any specific habits, environment, identity, destiny, or in any given web of relationality. But this *lack* of any fixed nature or way of being also leaves us disoriented, feeling adrift in the world, or even at risk of losing any world completely. Because of this paradoxical totality of divine unity, yet simultaneous distinctiveness, isolation and lack, we continually construct and reconstruct architectures of order (cosmos, beauty) to make a world that is inhabitable. This ability to lose the world, to renew it, or give it new form, is what makes us cosmic gardeners.²

³ Giorgio Agamben, “Being and Acting,” in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 56.

⁴ “Man is the living being that can corrupt its nature but not heal it, thus consigning himself to a history and to an economy of salvation, in which the divine grace dispensed by the Church through its sacraments becomes essential.” Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Garden*, trans. Adam Kotsko (London: Seagull Books, 2020), 31.

⁵ For more on this notion of the appropriation and monopolization of the divine in Egypt see Brendon Carlin, “Architecture, Behaviour, and Magic: On the Architect's Design of Forms of Life,” in *Future Cities—City Futures: Emerging Urban Perspectives*, ed. Christian Veddele, Joran Kuijper, Michal Gath-Morad, and Iris van der Wal (Delft: TU Delft OPEN, 2023), 192–94.

⁶ Walter Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings: 1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 288.

Divine Economy refers to the ‘mystery’ that is God’s ongoing governance of his household (*oikonomia*) for the redemption and salvation of humankind from sin and eternal damnation (chaos). During the institutionalization of the Gospel and the creation of the Church as an institution of the Roman Imperial State from the fourth to sixth centuries, a split between God’s being and action (doing) was rationalized in order to resolve a conundrum:³ if God’s divine creation was perfect, and if his son’s sacrifice redeemed and absolved humankind from sin and history, why do humans remain sinners who must choose to do good or bad, and why must they seek redemption and salvation through the guidance of the Church, its sacraments and the law?⁴ Why must God manage and govern *ad hoc* and *an-archos*, without any foundation in his creation, being, or essence? Put bluntly, Divine Economy is entangled with an apologetic interpretation and rationalization of the Gospel to align with the goals of imperial governance of behaviors and forms of life—both via the establishing of divine law, and by rationalizing the right of the despot (literally lord or owners) to make necessary exceptions to it. In other words, a class or institution and its laws appropriated and monopolized the exclusive right of divine communication and interpretation, thus subverting the possibility of politics.

In this sense the roots of Divine Economy as a monopoly on ongoing divine communication and guidance, is elsewhere visible in the consolidation of the ‘big household’ (literally pharaoh) type at the center of Egyptian Imperial governance during the Old Kingdom. A new class of priest-bureaucrats, artisans, architects, and administrators began to appropriate, separate, and centralize forms and knowledge of ritual reproduction of architecture, order and the world and therefore techniques for the recovery of presence.⁵ Thus, the space of divine communication and creation was increasingly removed from small households and settlements. The reproduction of the world was then monopolized and centrally controlled in order to govern the forms of life that may generate surplus production for imperial expansion. Walter Benjamin argued that modern state capitalism parasitically secularized theological concepts, serving “essentially to allay the same anxieties, torments, and disturbances to which [...] religions offered answers.”⁶ Yet, rather than tending towards hope, it tends towards desperation. Rather than offering the redemption of the economy of salvation, capitalism only exacerbates

7 Benjamin, "Capitalism as Religion," 288.

8 Giorgio Agamben, *Creation and Anarchy: The Work of Art and the Religion of Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019), 59.

the production of guilt. It is a " . . . cult *sans rêve et sans merci* [without dreams or mercy]. There are no 'weekdays'. There is no day that is not a feast day, in the terrible sense that all its sacred pomp is unfolded before us; each day commands the utter fealty of each worshiper."⁷ "[C]apitalism as a religion does not aim at the transformation of the world but at its destruction."⁸

We would argue that the basic operation underpinning Divine Economy is not exclusive to the West, and can proffer a framework to query several 'Imperial' architectures in the history of what is present-day New Mexico—from ninth-century pre-Colombian colonial ceremonial complexes to seventeenth-century Spanish missions, to current architectures at the forefront of a despotic and an-archic shaping of forms of life, like Meta's Los Lunas Data Center. At the most fundamental level, the 'witchcraft' of the Divine Economy's architecture consists in the distancing of access to, knowledge of, and participation in practices of divination (and autonomous, common, situated and participatory means of recovering presence and a world). In place of direct experience and relationalities, abstract forms of mediation and planes of unreality are constructed to "challenge forth" and "enframe" life as mere "standing-reserve."⁹ In other words, life and reality are treated and constructed in a reductive and instrumentalizing way, as mere means for endless and expanding extraction and production. A cascading de- and re-weaving of ontological, epistemological, and categorical structures is *typological* in that it underpins a system, science, and practice for the production of a series of formal, compositional acts that organize forms of architecture, work, life, and experience.

But many have rejected or simply fled these priestly machines and monopolies on divine communication and mediation. For example, for the Northern Tewa-speaking Puebloans and tribes of the Pacific Northwest, divinatory practices have taken forms of 'doing' referred to by modern anthropologists as "sympathetic magic."¹⁰ After a reading of Chaco and Los Lunas, we will explore some of the ways that the Tewa's, many of whom explicitly rejected and fled Chaco, staged a highly situated yet unbounded construction of their architecture, form of life, and social relationships that involved the participation of not only of their human kin, but other animals, plants, and beings.

9 Heidegger's concept of "standing reserve" refers to viewing the natural world and resources as mere stockpiles available for human exploitation and consumption, treating them as a reserve of raw material for human purposes. Thus, they are ontologically produced as instruments in the reality form he calls *Technik*. Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1977), 17.

10 The term "sympathetic magic" was first used by James George Frazer in his 1889 book, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion*. Frazer subcategorized sympathetic magic into two varieties: that relying on similarity, and that relying on contact or "contagion" to bring about desirable outcomes. For more on this topic, see James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, ed. Robert Frazer (1889; reis., New York: Cosimo Classics, 2009).



Figure 1 ↗
The collapsed rubble of the Threatening Rock can be seen directly above Pueblo Bonito. Courtesy of USGS Earth Explorer.

11 Brian Fagan, *Chaco Canyon: Archaeologists Explore the Lives of an Ancient Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

12 Severin M. Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings: Secularism and the Study of Pueblo Religion* (Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research Press, 2013), chap. 3, Kindle.

13 Jill E. Neitzel, *Pueblo Bonito: Center of the Chacoan World* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 2003), Introduction, Kindle.

14 Neil Merton Judd and Glover M. Allen, "The Material Culture of Pueblo Bonito," *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 124 (1954).

15 Neitzel, *Pueblo Bonito*, Kindle.

Meta Chaco

Giant ninth- to twelfth-century Chaco Canyon complexes were at the center of a colonial system—with a network of over four hundred kilometers of 20- to 30-foot-wide roads and infrastructure and subsidiary 'great house' ritual centers. Composed of vast storage for the accumulation of surplus foodstuffs and prestige goods, not to mention an architecture of empty space, they were replicated across an area of 65,000 square kilometers.¹¹ One of fourteen great houses in Chaco Canyon, the 1.2-hectare Pueblo Bonito complex (occupied 828 to 1126 CE), was the largest building in the Americas until modern, late nineteenth-century New York City apartment buildings.¹² Comprising over eight hundred rooms, the complex was organized in a semi-circle, symmetrically aligned and divided north-south around a giant ceremonial courtyard with over 31 round *kiva* ceremonial buildings.¹³ Inevitably, like all Puebloan structures with *kivas*, they reproduced a Chacoan cosmology and mode of agricultural production, ordering their political-cultural-religious-etc. world around cosmic movements and seasons.¹⁴ The complex was built atop much earlier ruins, and it has been argued that it could have been understood as the great *sipapu*, or origin place of the world.¹⁵

16 Douglas J. Kennett et al., "Archaeogenomic Evidence Reveals Prehistoric Matrilineal Dynasty," *Nature Communications* 8, no. 1 (2017): 14115.

17 Adam S. Watson, "Long-Distance Wood Procurement and the Chaco Florescence," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 113, no. 5 (2016): 1118–20.

18 Adam S. Watson et al., "Early Procurement of Scarlet Macaws and the Emergence of Social Complexity in Chaco Canyon, NM," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 27 (2015): 8238–43.

19 Neitzel, *Pueblo Bonito*, Kindle.

20 S. A. Schumm and R. J. Chorley, "The Fall of Threatening Rock," *American Journal of Science* 262, no. 9 (1964): 1041–54.

21 Anna Sofaer, "The Primary Architecture of the Chacoan Culture: A Cosmological Expression," in *Anasazi Architecture and American Design*, ed. Baker H. Morrow and V. B. Price (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 88–132.

Figure 2 →
Threatening Rock looming over Pueblo Bonito prior to its 1941 collapse.
Courtesy of National Park Service.

Chacoan society was marked by vast material inequality and control over its social organization. A tiny proportion of the population living in the palaces was physically healthier and taller than others, and richly materially endowed as evidenced by elite burials with vast stores of prestige goods.¹⁶ It has been argued that Pueblo Bonito was laid out on the ground in a full-scale one-off plan design, which future generations of its builders were bound to follow faithfully, building outwards and upwards with laborious stone masonry. Pueblo Bonito's rooms, cascading vertically and radially from the center from one level up to five at the periphery and composed of one-meter-thick walls, were almost entirely unoccupied by people. The walls and roofs at Chaco were often greatly over-structured, with materials like excessive wood beams from over 240,000 trees brought in by foot from mountains as far as 60 miles away.¹⁷ Some of the rooms were storage for surplus corn and imported luxury goods like cacao, macaws, and turquoise from Central American Empires thousands of kilometers away.¹⁸ But there were also hundreds of empty rooms without access, perhaps for the storage of unforeseen future wealth accumulation, or to produce grandeur and scale, or even to organize Chacoans who might, if left without a task, find another use of their time and lives. These empty rooms were often infilled with dirt and midden debris to structurally support the weight of continued construction above.¹⁹

Structurally, the complex was built to be incredibly robust, to protect the ceremonial center—the sipapu and reproduction of the inhabitable world from the impending collapse of a large rock face just at the edge of the complex. The rock face, known as *tse biyaa aniiáhi* (threatening rock) finally did collapse and destroy portions of the complex in 1941, but the grand kiva remained untouched.²⁰ The entire complex seems to have been premised on an evident threat of collapse, and on protecting the means of the reconstruction of the world. Thus, it established an apparently exclusive 'ritual' machinery for the restoration of presence from the threat of collapse, braiding it to the accumulation of wealth. Pueblo Bonito neighbored a dozen other complexes in the valley, whose mass construction was continuous throughout their use, lasting decades and even centuries.²¹

Thus, a 'divine economy' set out an endless provision of orientations, tasks, and endless construction of spectacle,

22 Carlin, "Architecture, Behaviour, and Magic," 192–94.

23 Watson, "Long-Distance Wood Procurement," 1119.

24 Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed: Revised Edition* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2011), 150–51.

25 Bruce Babbitt, "Bruce Babbitt: Chaco Culture National Park Is under Siege," *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 27, 2021, <https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2021/09/27/bruce-babbitt-chaco/>.



buildings and roads, of mining and trading, and excessive labor in the fields and 'kitchens' to feed those who could no longer farm. As can be understood from historical empires like Egypt, the mass construction of projects and their divisions of labor are one of the most important means of controlling and unifying a population for surplus production, under the auspices of reproducing order against chaos.²² At Chaco, "... the ability to orchestrate labor and the maintenance of these long-distance networks was a means by which political elites consolidated and signaled their power."²³ An ongoing accumulation of architecture and infrastructure led to a total deforestation of the region's large trees, a consequent drop of water table levels, and disruption of flora and fauna, and then drought, and famine.²⁴ At Chaco, we witness a phenomenon that has only reached an astonishing sophistication today: the construction of an abstract plane of reality whose design seeks to increasingly distance beings from, and deafen them to, the rhythms of other situated beings and becomings.

The architecture of unreality has reached its most extreme today, as is visible only several hundred kilometers away from Chaco at the Meta Data Center at Los Lunas. The data center is on the ancestral land of the Tiwa-speaking Isleta Puebloans, whose people partly trace their descent to Chaco.²⁵ The Data Center's military-corporate architecture is of course but a node in a vast global network that modulates rhythms of life and draws energy, data, and profits to locations thousands or tens of thousands of kilometers away. Though Meta's logo is an infinite loop, they have adorned some walls with the Zuni Pueblo's Sunface symbol—a basic axiom of divine creation and rhythmic order-giver to the Zuni's world. In the symbol, as is reflected in the plan of a kiva, the sunrise and sunset allow them to give the most substantial and primary of orders on which to base the construction and reproduction of their houses, pueblo, and 'doings'. Though we should not rehearse what might be obvious if one peers behind the curtain of magic devices like cell phones, one only needs to go as far as to analyze the data center in its construction, maintenance, and telos as the end-without-end of expanding and deepening accumulation and production of data. Like Meta in Chaco, other social media, tech, and artificial intelligence companies seek to fabricate an entirely new plane of reality: a mediated interface, completely separated and distanced from any material participation in the construction of forms of life and world.

²⁶ Gordon Ulmer, "The Earth Is Hungry: Amerindian Worlds and the Perils of Gold Mining in the Peruvian Amazon," *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 25, no. 2 (2020): 324–39.

²⁷ Lei Guo et al., "A Case Study of the Foxconn Suicides: An International Perspective to Framing the Sweatshop Issue," *International Communication Gazette* 74, no. 5 (2012): 484–503.

²⁸ Filipe Calvão, Catherine Erica Alexina McDonald, and Matthieu Bolay, "Cobalt Mining and the Corporate Outsourcing of Responsibility in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Extractive Industries and Society* 8, no. 4 (2021): 100, 884.

²⁹ Diana Olick, "Microsoft, Meta and Others Face Rising Drought Risk to Their Data Centers," CNBC, November 16, 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/11/15/microsoft-meta-others-face-rising-drought-risk-to-their-data-centers.html>.

³⁰ Carlin, "Architecture, Behaviour, and Magic," 192.

The construction machines and materials for the data center—excavators, cranes, chips, wires, computers, servers and data storage equipment or solar panels, water pumps, and so on—dictate at a distance the form of architectures and lives on every continent today. One only needs to think of: a silicon or gold mine in the Brazilian Amazon eradicating indigenous peoples;²⁶ a server manufacturer in India or China or its worker dormitories and suicide nets;²⁷ a cobalt mine, child labor, and toxin exposure in the Congo;²⁸ a microprocessor maker in Taiwan, or a giant port in Rotterdam next to the Dutch property it supports; not to mention a teenager in Australia spending nine hours a day on apps in a chair at a desk, or in a bed, and so on, to infinity. The Los Lunas desert data center, like those of other tech companies, extracts around 300,000 gallons of water per day—equivalent to the water consumption of 100,000 households in America or 6,000,000 households in Africa.²⁹ At issue here is not to provoke outrage at 'unsustainability' to be remedied by superficial regulatory projects like reducing water use, but the fact of a monopoly over decision, and its alienation from the design of forms of life—the rhythms of not only humans, but the other beings we depend on for life, happiness, and any reality whatsoever, are excluded.

Alan Turing figured out how to produce software so that eventually the physical parts of the computer and infrastructure would not require immediate material reconstruction to change the program and respond to new demands of use. His discovery paralleled a much more profound one: that while the 'option space'³⁰ (and a sense of personal power or command arising from for instance, a social media platform) was being dramatically increased, in an equal and opposite way, wider participation in 'real' material relations and in the construction of a form of world was being distanced beyond reach. *Actual* form-making was shifting scales beyond the self-evident or accessible to the micro and macro, simultaneously. The cascade of separations—more rudimentary and visible in the monopoly on the sacred at Chaco—is therefore perpetuated by categories, abstractions, technologies, and infrastructure.

The term "category" comes from *katēgoréō* which means "I accuse, speak against," to raise an accusation against one, or to call one out, or to *predicate*. To predicate is to proclaim and categorize and thus to shape. Predication should be understood as wrapped up in a kind of attempt, on the part of an apparatus

³¹ Maurizio Lazzarato, "The Concepts of Life and the Living in the Societies of Control," in *Deleuze and the Social*, ed. Martin Fuglsang (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 171–90.

³² Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings*, chap. 3, Kindle.

³³ Barbara Alice Mann, *Native Americans, Archaeologists & the Mounds*, vol. 14 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003), 167–68. Cited in Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings*, chap. 3, Kindle.

³⁴ David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (London: Penguin UK, 2021), 6.

³⁵ Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings*, chap. 3, Kindle.

of power to produce desired effects, beliefs, and modes of life and the social in the other, for its own preservation. In order to do so, the apparatus must first separate and destroy direct, situated coming-into-being of relationships, which can never be categorized.³¹ It then inserts itself in-between, distancing and then mediating those things and relationships and therefore putting the subject who depends on that relationship to work in order to gain access to resources. What is distinct about contemporary imperialism, is that it has migrated predication and the shaping or binding of the future from the ideological and formal, where it can be contested or proven objectively false, to the micro and macro material and mechanical, where it cannot be seen or tampered with—therefore paradoxically, it escapes the realm of objectivity. What has failed then, is precisely the visibility of a total interrelatedness between the sacred and the profane, and the ability to work on a form of relationality.

Tewa Doings

The archaeologist Severin Fowles has argued that many Chacoans fled its world system, and what they called its 'witchcraft'.³² Some of them migrated to the region of present-day Taos, New Mexico. In a kind of schismogenesis, they consciously constructed other forms of life, architecture, and reality. The exodus, according to the Seneca historian Barbara Mann, reflected a wider shunning of "spiritual terrorism, throwing off [of] class-based hierarchy, turning away from war, organizing gift-based economies, and developing [democracy] throughout North America during the 12th century."³³ Stunningly, it has recently been extensively argued that these American Indigenous democratization movements greatly influenced Enlightenment thought and revolutions in Europe and throughout the world.³⁴ Settlements contemporaneous to Chaco in what is now the area of Taos, New Mexico were inhabited by what Fowles calls the "Winter People." They lacked any ceremonial centers, and in fact, their own domestic spaces resembled ceremonial kiva's—complete with many sacred features like the sipapu and elements to communicate with non-human forces. Moreover, religious life was "muted and highly democratic."³⁵ The implements of ritual 'doings' and sympathetic magic were not elaborate, requiring endless hours of specialized labor on prestige materials imported from afar like those of Chaco, but could be easily obtained locally. Some households even chose not to use them at all. Opposite to Chaco, "[e]very nuclear or extended family appears to have had direct control over its symbolic place

36 Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings*, chap. 3, Kindle.

of emergence and direct access to the world of its ancestors with little or no mediation by ritual leaders beyond the immediate household.³⁶ Every dwelling was unique, but often shared certain cosmological compositional features in addition to the sipapu as well as an opening for communing with the sky or heavens.

37 Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings*, chap. 3, Kindle.

Air ventilators were most frequently oriented towards the southeast, in sympathy with the sun, which during the winter solstice needed the “greatest human ritual assistance” in rising.³⁷ The layout of the house was thus underpinned by an ethics and foundational axiom that stressed respect and interrelatedness with the movements and rhythms of other beings. We should be careful here to stress that the Winter Peoples did not use sympathetic magic believing naively in cause-and-effect outcomes. Instead, they sought to construct their architecture, village (and for modern translation, religion, politics, economy, profane and sacred), and world grounded in a philosophy, heightened awareness of, and respect for the rhythms of other beings, whether organic, geological, or cosmic. In their world, knowledge of the movements of deer and the season for medicinal herb harvesting or corn planting was embedded directly in the rituals and architecture of the sacred house and settlement.

38 Judi Diab's project, “The Standing Reserve,” at the Architectural Association Diploma 19 (led by Brendon Carlin and James Kwang Ho Chung in 2023) extensively studied these rituals. Her research informed the use of these examples in this essay.

39 See for example Pamela T. Amoss, “The Fish God Gave Us: The First Salmon Ceremony Revived,” *Arctic Anthropology* 24, no. 1 (1987): 56–58.

In another example from North America, every year upon the first sign of the salmon migration, Lhaq’temish and other indigenous peoples of the Pacific Coast hold a First Salmon Ceremony.³⁸ Ritual doings include an elder that takes only one fish and brings it to a communal long house where it is ceremoniously sliced, and small pieces are eaten. The carcass is then returned to the river. In specific choreographies of instruments, space, people, and fish, songs are sung, prayers are held, and the salmon is thanked for its sacrifice and gift.³⁹ Through the ceremony’s doings, ecological and practical knowledge is conveyed, and compulsion to overfish is delayed, allowing ample time for many salmon to climb the river and spawn. This ensures the renewal of the ecosystem and world. Most importantly, however, the doing establishes an architectural and objective forum in which participants might understand, contest, and modify the current form of doing through actions, which are both all and neither economic, political, or religious. Only in this heightened awareness of interdependence, so distanced, mediated, and obfuscated today, can one build and act ‘politically’ in any form that does not tend towards the non-existence, and death, of the web of beings upon which we depend.

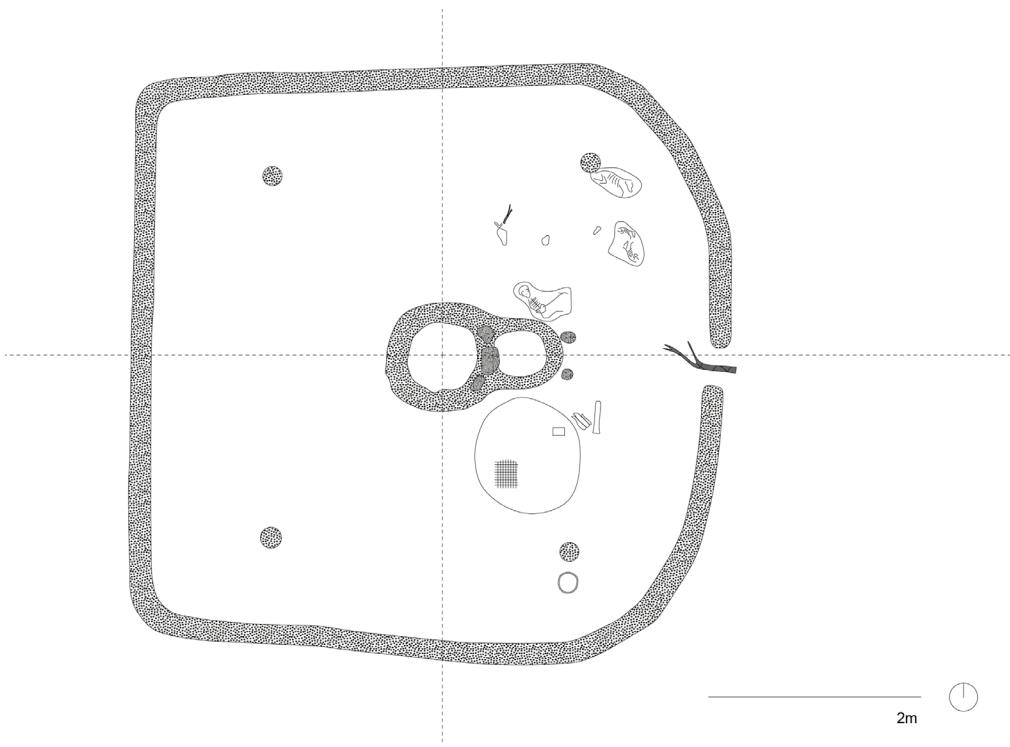


Figure 3 ↗
Plan view of Kiva Burial Site. Drawing by Brendon Carlin and Maria Paez Gonzalez.

40 Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings*, chap. 5, Kindle.

41 Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings*, chap. 5, Kindle.

Fowles later excavated a Tewa kiva at a pueblo in the same region as the pit houses of the Winter People. In it, he discovered the burial of a small infant, placed in an elaborate constellation of objects, including animal and plant remains. The kiva had been purposefully collapsed into a tomb over the arrangement. In twentieth-century pueblo culture, a child or infant is the most significant becoming of the world’s renewal. “The young infant is new to the world as the world was new after the flood and the mother’s nourishment helps the child as the new world helps vegetation, and our wish is to keep the world new.”⁴⁰ Fowles meditated on the sense of loss, absence, disorientation, and unbalance of the world that must have come with the loss of a young child for both parents and community: the untimely and unexpected “death of the child provoked, in some general way, a need to reassert the cosmic order of things. For those suffering such a loss, solace is to be found—to the extent it can be found at all—in the confirmation that death has not ruptured the world beyond repair, that it has not succeeded in ripping the cosmic order asunder.” This is what it meant to be “composed in the face of death.”⁴¹

42 Fowles, *An Archaeology of Doings*, chap. 5, Kindle.

The burial was carefully choreographed. In its most basic divisions it mirrored interrelatedness in the wider village and territory. The western half of the kiva was empty, the eastern half full of objects. The north side was elaborately organized with animals, hunting implements, and the infant, in seemingly reflective patterns. On the south side, plant remains and tools of agriculture and food preparation again mirrored the northern arrangement but were entirely unique. The arrangements also traced social relationships between the earlier inhabitants of the site and later immigrants. Each object, Fowles observed, “bears its own life history, its own movement through the social world [...] What our excavation stumbled upon is less the tesserae of a mosaic than a weaving together of these histories or movements like the knots in a meshwork.”⁴² In a moment of crisis, the Winter People performed a divine act of sympathetic magic, weaving together a womb for the rebirth of their world, yet, in an entirely new form.

In the construction of architecture and reality, the most formative moment is that of the binary opposition: inside opposed to outside, or for example, north opposed to south. These are fictions because their absolute reality is relative, impermanent, and can be refuted in a million and one ways. But they are nonetheless substantive fictions in that they rely on form and behavior which is self-evident to everyone. The pit house dwelling itself was a kind of world engine that wove in the participation of other-than-human beings to construct a singular and autonomous architecture. This kind of sympathetic magic extended to the wider landscape, where monoliths, pillars, and platforms gave order to the territory and to a cyclical, participatory series of doings without establishing any fixed boundaries, impositions, or extraction that might disrupt the rhythm of other beings and life on which the people depended.

The anthropologist Peter J. Wilson has discussed how hunter-gatherer and semi-sedentary societies excluded the possibility of clearly defined categories, whether in relationships, kinship identity, or of property. “Without boundaries and without the concept of permanent boundary, people are not conceptually locked into their relationships or surroundings. [They] organize their social lives through focusing attention rather than referring to a rigid structure. Kinship, for example, which leans towards invariance and prescription in sedentary society, is assumed or dismissed by nomads and forgotten according to

43 Peter J. Wilson, *The Domestication of the Human Species* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 50.

44 Vine Deloria Jr., like many of his Native American activist contemporaries, used the term ‘Indian’ frankly and confrontationally as did others who organized with justice movements like the American Indian Movement (AIM), in the late 1960s and 70s.

45 Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion: 30th Anniversary Edition* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 65–71.

how people feel for each other or to their proximity. Where a person’s identity might be defined primarily by kinship in tribal society, nomads tend to identify as kin those who behave like kin, regardless of genealogical status.”⁴³ Thus relationships, identities, and forms remain open and visible to participatory de- and reconstruction.

Doing

We cannot in any way borrow specific, situated techniques or relationalities from peoples like the Tewa, whose practices cannot be disseminated to another milieu of becomings. To do so would be to misinterpret their most important lesson. As soon as doings change locations, or durations and circumstances, they must become something else entirely. As the Standing Rock Sioux anthropologist Vine Deloria Jr. has suggested, when “Indians”⁴⁴ move from one place to another, they become different people.⁴⁵ Most importantly, as we learned from the Chacoan diaspora, two neighboring pueblos or cultures may have entirely different languages, modes, and means of constructing their world.

But an ability to break the spell of the Chacoan (un)reality engine by testing its premises for destruction, or via simple exodus, points us to that precise resource which we can draw on to begin recovering our own presence. The epidemics of isolation, anxiety, depression, and a mass extinction of other forms of life that we witness today, inevitably stem from categorical and machinic abstractions that have produced a dangerous, unrecognized, and unacknowledged assumption since at least modernization: we take our *presence* for granted or assume that it is guaranteed, when in fact it is more vulnerable than ever and is throttled as the very engine of economy. At issue here is not the moralization of any practice as the correct or proper way to live in *relation*, but to simply illustrate a set of principles for making relationality visible so that its construction can be participatory, or at least, so one can know that they *are* participating, and in which ways. Only through staging a journey to the very limits of our world and presence—to the chaos of inseparability, wholeness, and every-thingness, or inversely, total separation, isolation, and nothingness—might we perceive that we can lose ourselves as our predicates or infrastructural entanglements, and yet still *have presence*. For those of us who are not mystics: only from the limits of presence might we begin to build a world grounded in anything evident and substantial, and become world builders.

Even in the 1970s and 80s Vine Deloria recognized that many people, both indigenous and non, were slowly and painfully learning to live differently with respect to their specific place and were seeking more “meaningful” ways of living together—lessons that had taken indigenous peoples millennia to learn.⁴⁶ Indeed, there are many examples of emerging forms of living in relation which are shaping a completely different kind of relationship to landscape, plants, animals, other people, resources, money and the law, from regenerative farming, to community land trusts; re-wilding which does not exclude humans but encourages a different form of relationship. Re-evaluations at the deepest structural levels often come amidst existential crises. For example, faced with environmental, and therefore economic, political, and spiritual catastrophes, California and Australia have sought to learn from the doings of indigenous cultural, ritual burners like the Yurok, who, like gardeners, were cultivating the ‘wild’ long before Europeans arrived. Wildlife and ecosystem management institutions globally have begun programs to reintroduce plant and animal species and their patterns and migrations, to bring to life the larger ecosystems they support, in much of the American West and the United Kingdom. In Montana, agencies work with indigenous peoples and ranchers to restore Bison herds and remove or replace fences that once divided the landscape along the abstract lines of the Jeffersonian grid.⁴⁷ The abstract grid imposition has decimated the lives and health of so many species, a crisis that has increasingly threatened everyone. Ongoing resource extraction has led to several crises, including most visibly, the one at Standing Rock’s Dakota Access pipeline. The oil pipeline was being built across the sacred Mni Sosa (the Missouri River) violating original treaty land, threatening the tribe’s sacred sites, water, resources, and political and economic autonomy.⁴⁸ In retaliation, indigenous and non-indigenous people built a prayer camp, organized campaigns, and constructed obstructions together. But perhaps most importantly, they organized forms of ceremonial settlement to house, feed, and care for over a thousand regular inhabitants.

It is amidst these clear instances of the wider threats, that we witness a loss of faith in the ‘divine economy’, and hence the emergence of new forms of ‘divine’ architecture and doings—as autonomous constructions of presence in common. Doings and sympathetic magic (which we may go so far as to propose as a different ‘typology’ of architecture) provide indications of how we might include not only the human, but

47 Pier Vittorio Aureli, “Appropriation, Subdivision, Abstraction: A Political History of the Urban Grid,” *Log* 44 (2018): 139–67.

48 Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (London: Verso Books, 2019), 2.

other species and beings in ‘sticky webs’ of relationality to participate in the configuration of the architecture, pueblo, city, and world. Unlike religious or political procedures, Tewa doings do not refer to signs and representations of an abstract universal creative power. Nor, like Chaco or the contemporary imperial infrastructure of *oikonomia technos*, do they seek to destroy situated worlds, distance, and subsume other beings in universal assemblies and abstractions that challenge their being forth as production and extraction.⁴⁹ Instead, Tewa doings suggest that we can *do*, or *make with immediacy*. They make emphatic material connections. Theirs is a self-evident, sensed, experienced bringing into being of situated and ever-changing networks of people, tools, practices, landscapes, plants, animals, rivers, deserts and ancestors. Ignoring the song of the other, or otherwise responding with silence or a cacophony of disconnected noise, will only destroy the world for those other beings, and will only destroy the possibility for the other ways that we can be. Though the form of relation is disfigured and obfuscated, we remain entirely dependent on the rhythm of those other beings, not simply for our material existence, but for our happiness.



Figure 4 ▶
Los Lunas Data Center satellite imagery.
Courtesy of USGS Earth Explorer.