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From enchantment to *agencement*: Archaeological engagements with pilgrimage

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Abstract
This commentary springs from insights gleaned from two sources. The first involves my archaeological research into the ancient pilgrimage center of Chaco Canyon, New Mexico; the second includes lessons learned by walking the medieval Camino de Santiago. The four papers in this volume describe enchanting destinations reached by archaeological pilgrims engaged in ambulatory knowing. I frame my discussion of these papers using DeLeuzean concepts of assemblage/*agencement*, emphasizing the emergent properties of pilgrimage, and underscoring how archaeologists can study pilgrims in motion.

Keywords
Pilgrimage, assemblage, *agencement*, enchantment, relationality, Chaco Canyon

> When that Aprille with his showers sweet,
> The drought of March hath pierced to the root…
> Then longe folk to go on pilgrimages.
> —Geoffrey Chaucer, prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, 1387.

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On this rainy April morning, as I prepare to embark on my third Camino de Santiago, it is a timely moment to comment on a group of papers brought together here in a special *Journal of Social Archaeology* issue dedicated to pilgrimage. I come to this task as a Chaco scholar who considers Chaco Canyon, in northwest New Mexico, to have been an ancient Pueblo pilgrimage center (Van Dyke, 2007, forthcoming). I also come to this task as a *peregrina*—someone who has spent many months walking across Spain on the medieval Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route. These Spanish peregrinations have been helpful for my Chaco scholarship, but not because of parallels in purpose or meaning with the Chacoan case. Rather, my experiences walking on the Camino have provided me with useful insights into archaeologically visible materialities. As a result, my Chaco studies have turned outward, toward the routes people took in walking to Chaco, the places they stopped, and the things they carried. Pilgrimages are about the journey as much as they are about the destination.

Pilgrimages and assemblages

Pilgrimage is a special kind of travel. In cross-cultural perspective, people undertake pilgrimages for reasons that range from the obligatory and punitive, through the instrumental and economic, to the exploratory and transcendent. Pilgrimage involves a break in daily routine, and a journey involving some hardship. Pilgrims go to places that carry emotional or spiritual valence, and they do so in the hope of achieving some kind of transformation. Pilgrimages often happen seasonally or in accordance with a celestial or religious calendar. Pilgrimage involves treading, together with others, paths that many have already walked.

Pilgrimage has been an enduring topic in anthropology since the publication of Edith and Victor Turner's (1978 [1981]) seminal investigations into Marian pilgrimage in Europe and Latin America. When the Turners' emphases on liminality and communitas were shouted down by Eade and Sallnow (1991), the controversy spawned a resurgence of sociocultural anthropological studies (e.g., Coleman and Eade, 2004; Dubisch, 1995; Morinis, 1992) that continues apace, spilling over into related studies on migration and tourism (e.g., Badone and Roseman, 2004; Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Graburn, 1983; Sandell, 2013). Over the past decades, archaeologists have periodically leapt into the fray, arguing over the identification of pilgrimage centers (Renfrew, 2001; Silverman, 1994), and offering interpretations of pilgrimage that range from economic activity (McCorriston, 2011) and costly signaling (Kantner and Vaughn, 2012) to ritual engagement with landscape (Palka, 2014). As this special issue attests, archaeological interest in pilgrimage as a topic is once again on the rise.

Most archaeological research focuses on places, and thus, it is not surprising that most archaeological studies of pilgrimage have focused on destinations. How does a particular place become a pilgrimage center? What draws people to gather in one place as opposed to another? Places attract by offering something wonderful and out of the ordinary—the oddly shaped mountain peak of Croagh Patrick,

the dark, wet caves of the Maya uplands, the promise of spectacle at Paquimé, the movement of the moon at the Emerald site. Eliade (1987 [1959]) would say these are places where there is the potential for hierophany—a connection between the worldly and the divine. Preston (1992) described the "spiritual magnetism" created by miraculous cures, supernatural apparitions, sacred geography, or difficulty of access. In this collection of papers, following Gell (1992, 1998) and Bennett (2001, 2010), Jacob Skousen describes pilgrimage destinations as places with the potential for "enchantment." Skousen asks the authors here (Todd and Christine VanPool, Ryan Lash, and Eleanor Harrison-Buck and colleagues) to think about enchanting places in terms of movement, vitality, and sensory experience.

What happens to people in the throes of a vibrant or enchanting experience? Edith and Victor Turner (1978 [1981]) argued for communitas, and a suspension of hierarchies and norms. This was, indeed, the experience of the Canturbury travelers, and it fits well with many pilgrimages around the world (e.g., Ambros, 1997; Coleman and Elsner 1995). As Harrison-Buck suggests for the Maya, the performance and engagement of many people together in a collective, embodied experience can contribute to something resembling Turnerian communitas, or "pluripresence of being" (Bird-David, 2017). But Eade and Sallnow (1991) countered the Turners' claims of pilgrimage as anti-structure, arguing that pilgrimage can reinforce existing hierarchies and inequalities. Salas Carreño's (2014) research at the pilgrimage site of Quyllurit'i (Shining Snow), at the foot of a glacier in the Peruvian Andes, further complicates the picture. Salas Carreño describes how New Agers, Catholics, Quechua, tourists, and journalists gather at Quyllurit'i and communally experience what they describe as transcendent events, but sharing in this collective experience reifies rather than elides these groups' many differences. We cannot assume that "enchantment" always suspends difference, legitimizes authority, or indeed, is experienced similarly by everyone present—we must consider each situation in context.

Taking his inspiration from Bennett and other new materialist authors, Skousen advocates for a "relational" or non-essentialist approach to pilgrimage to "recognize and prioritize the interconnections among persons, places, things, and substances." If Bennett's material vibrancy applies to earthworms and power grids, surely it fits even better with celestial orbs and holy relics. Thus, it is not surprising that pilgrimage studies seem destined to take an "ontological turn" (see summary discussions of this literature in Harris and Cipolla, 2017; Van Dyke, 2015). Relationalism—as opposed to essentialism—is a good general concept that encourages us to think about embodied encounters with living and nonliving materials. But relationalism—as variously adopted by the authors here—can run the risk of being both too vague (everything is related to everything) and too static.

In my own work centered on Chaco Canyon, in the ancient North American Southwest, I have found the DeLeuzean concept of assemblage to be useful (Van Dyke, forthcoming). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari developed the concept of the assemblage as an anti-essentialist, realist ontology that focuses on contingent, continually shifting relations (DeLeuze and Guattari,

1987 [1980]; DeLanda, 2006, 2016). Assemblages involve an infinite assortment of entities: humans, objects, places, animals, plants, houses, monuments, ideas, and social bonds. Assemblages are relational and emergent, continually reconfigured along different dimensions, existing simultaneously at multiple spatial and temporal scales. These emergent properties are foregrounded as territorializing and deterritorializing processes. Territorializing forces gather assemblages together, and deterritorializing forces pull them apart, only to become reterritorialized in new configurations.

The territorializing and deterritorialing scalar and temporal tensions help explain how pilgrims' experiences can elide, challenge, and reify power relations within sociopolitical assemblages. There is no universal experience. Pilgrim practices shift over time. An institutionalized pilgrimage center with clear ties to elite legitimacy—the sort of thing the VanPools imagine here for Paquimé, or Skousen describes for Emerald—does not happen overnight. Edith and Victor Turner (1978 [1981]) described the life cycle of pilgrimage destination, as it progresses from idiosyncratic valent place visited by a few, to an institutionalized, legitimated center visited by thousands or millions. Along the way, practices and movements become codified, and the destination is surrounded with ever more-elaborate monuments and signposts. Enchanting places have a power that can be harnessed for political purposes, but that power, as Lash rightly recognizes, is unwieldy.

Assemblages are always relative, always connected, always in motion; thus, every idea, material, and relationship is an emergent part of another. In the original French, the word used by DeLeuze and Guattari is not *assemblage*, with its rather static implications, but *agencement*, with its connotations of continual emergence and becoming. Thus, the concept of assemblage involves a deep commitment to the study of movement in both time and space—and movement is at the very core of pilgrimage.

Notably, the Canterbury Tales have not become one of the pillars of English literature because of what they tell us about the pilgrims' destination—Canterbury. No, the Canterbury Tales endure as a collection of stories told along the *journey*. Today, a Muslim pilgrim on *hajj* might well jet into and out of Mecca, but before the 20th century, most of the time spent in pilgrimage involved the travel, not the destination. The traveling itself is important because, as the Turners famously characterized it—travel is liminal. It is time spent outside of the quotidian experiences of life, when the traveler is in neither the place of departure nor the place of arrival, but someplace between, where the habits and expectations of daily life do not apply, and anything might happen.

How can archaeologists study the movement of travelers in the past? The most obvious method—the examination of roads and trails—is not the primary focus of the papers here (although Skousen's study does involve a processional route). But we still see people moving in all of these papers, because they are traveling as human/nonhuman assemblages. The items pilgrims carried, if they traveled on foot, are likely to have been small, light, multifunctional, and multivalent. Pilgrims on the Camino carry scallop shells—today a badge of pilgrimage, and in medieval times an object that could only be obtained by visiting the Atlantic Ocean.

The shell is light enough to carry, latent with sensory, oceanic associations, and carries both the announcement of pilgrim status and the memory of a visit to Santiago. Similarly, the pilgrims described in many of the papers in this volume carry and deposit small, multivalent objects such as stones, shells, and stingray spines. These portable, sometimes fragmentary objects can travel long distances as they move into and out of different kinds of assemblages, carrying with them valences, affordances, past associations, and future possibilities. Following Bradley (2000) and Chapman (2000), archaeologists interested in tracing pilgrimage can and should be attentive to these "pieces of places."

By keeping our attention on movement, temporality, and scale, *assemblage* steers us away from rather unproductive categorical arguments about whether a place was, or was not, a pilgrimage center (e.g., Plog and Watson, 2012) or whether enchanting experiences challenged, or reinforced power relations. In the discussion that follows, I move from assemblage to *agencement*, from the papers that focus more on the places that gather (VanPool and VanPool, Skousen), to those more concerned with bodies that travel (Harrison-Buck et al., Lash).

From assemblage to *agencement*

VanPool and VanPool describe the assemblage of Paquimé, in northern México, as a place of "spiritual magnetism" (Preston, 1992). They marshal evidence for Paquimé as a pilgrimage center, and they assert that ritual events at Paquimé legitimated elite authority. Clearly, Paquimé was a settlement on the scale of a city, with an estimated population in the multiple thousands (Minnis and Whalen, 2015), and, like all cities, Paquimé must have had a density of affect that lent it powerful attraction (Pauketat and Alt, forthcoming). The VanPools evoke the multivalent, enchanting experiences travelers and visitors would have had at Paquimé: games in ball courts, squawking macaws, elites in colorful dress, monumental architecture in the shape of a giant serpent, and maybe even human sacrifice, alcohol consumption, and water-based ritual activities. However, large numbers of people, feasting, public architecture, and colorful ritual practices can be found in every city; these points do not necessarily support an interpretation of Paquimé as a pilgrimage destination. I am more convinced by the signal fires atop an unusually high nearby mountain (Cerro de Moctezuma), as they suggest the gathering together of people from surrounding areas. The VanPools further argue that the movements of small objects represent the pilgrims into and out of this enchanting place. Ramos polychrome, with its distinctive serpent iconography, was carried away and distributed over a wide region. Unusual items, including copper, turquoise, and 3.7 million marine shells were carried into Paquimé and deposited there. However, although pilgrims do frequently carry and deposit small items such as these, I note that Paquimé scholars continue to debate possible reasons for the presence of the shell and other materials (c.f. authors in Minnis and Whalen, 2015). I encourage the VanPools to think more explicitly about how they might strengthen their case for shell, copper, and turquoise as explicitly votive offerings (c.f. Renfrew, 2001).

Laudably, the VanPools want to complicate their portrayal of this evocative place by thinking about how religious experiences there may have contributed to relationships among elites, commoners, and the dead. However, the Van Pools can and should try to move beyond basic statements about communitas, legitimation of elite power, and creation of regional identity. These things may have happened . . . but how do we know visitors did not arrive and leave having validated diverse, conflicting worldviews, as Salas Carreño found at Quyllurrit'i? The VanPools might be able to support the argument for pilgrimage as a legitimating strategy by demonstrating increasing formalization and control of pilgrimage-related events over time, as elites perhaps became a group driving the territorialization of the Paquiméan assemblage.

We begin to move toward *agencement* with Skousen's case study at the Emerald site in the American Bottom. Skousen grounds his work in the insights and research of Tim Pauketat and Susan Alt. Over the past decades, Pauketat and Alt have developed sophisticated and powerful interpretations of Cahokian as a city steeped in cosmography and affordances, with deep historical roots and far-reaching influences (e.g., Pauketat, 2013; Pauketat et al., 2017). Alt, in particular, has argued for the importance of the moon in Cahokian religion and worldview. The Emerald Site—the focus of their research since 1993—sits atop a high ridge 24 km east of Cahokia. The ridge is serendipitously aligned to the maximum lunar standstill—a celestial event that occurs every 18.6 years. Lunar observances originally were local phenomena, but Cahokians co-opted the site, formalizing it with the construction of at least 12 mounds and a wide processional avenue, which connected Emerald to Cahokia. Skousen contends that hundreds or thousands of people likely walked from Cahokia to Emerald for lunar events; they may have then continued to the Pfeffer site, another lunar shrine 5 km southwest of Emerald, in a pilgrimage round (reminiscent of Buddhist circuit pilgrimages [Hoshino, 1997]) that may have mimicked the movements of the moon.

We can see increasing formalization here as a lunar pilgrimage to Emerald came under Cahokian purview, territorialized into the Cahokian assemblage. A pair of conical mounds with burials marks a threshold; mound construction formally incorporates materials with symbolic as well as sensory affordances. Skousen's description of the construction of Mound 12 emphasizes the richness of sensory experience, as the construction process gathered people, materials, and cosmic understandings. The performance and engagement of many people together in a collective, embodied experience like mound-building may have contributed to Turnerian communitas, or perhaps, as at Quyrrulit'i, everyone thought they were doing something different. I would be interested to see Skousen address and think about these various possibilities.

Paquimé and Emerald were emergent assemblages, perpetually becoming, continually gathering human and material travelers. The travelers did not stop permanently at their enchanted destinations, but touched them and continued, carrying perhaps Ramos polychrome jars, or memories of water and silt. Continual movement—*agencement*—is the focus for the contributions of Lash

and Harrison-Buck et al. Perhaps unsurprisingly, both authors find inspiration in the work of Tim Ingold (1993, 2017), who writes so evocatively about dwelling, movement, landscape, activities, and time. In *Lines*, Ingold (2007) beautifully describes the contrast between point-to-point, destination-oriented travel, or "transport," and mindful journeys, or "wayfaring." Like De Certeau's (1984) walkers who create the city as they move through it, Ingold's wayfarers are in an attentive, co-creative relationship with the world around them. They must mindfully and responsively decide not only where and how to walk, but where and with whom to stop, eat, rest, pray, love.

Following suit, Harrison-Buck et al. ground their rich discussion in historic data, ethnographic information, and participant observation. The five-day Wayeb' or Mayan New Year happens around the spring equinox and today coincides with Catholic Semana Santa, or Holy Week. This period comes at the end of the dry season and the beginning of spring rains. But in traditional Maya beliefs, the deities will not send rains or allow the maize to grow without an exchange. Thus, during this period, people need to sacrifice something—to endure a whipping, or shed blood on the earth, or undertake an arduous journey. During Wayeb', young Tz'utujil Maya men undertake a three-day walk from the mountains to the coast and back. They carry large, heavy backpacks (*kakaxtles*) laden with flowers, and they return with ripe cacao fruits to give to the deity Mam. In historic times, the journey was part of the marriage ritual—only after giving the fruits to Mam could the young men have sex with their new wives, and only if the fruit was ripened would the wives conceive. Young men who have completed the journey also were ready to take on leadership responsibilities within the community.

Harrison-Buck et al. carefully unpack the multilayered, sensory dimensions here, connecting sexual potency, sacrifice, and transformation. *Kakaxtles* resemble wombs filled with regenerative gifts of flowers and ripe cacao fruit. Vital materials that move from sea to mountain also include marine turtle shells, conch shells, and cave formations or speleothems. Following Ingold (2010: S134), Harrison-Buck et al. describe pilgrimage as a form of "ambulatory knowing" involving relational interdependence between the pilgrim and the world. For the Tz'utujil Maya, the point is not any particular destination—rather, the point is to make the journey, which parallels the liminal time of transition between youth and adulthood.

Harrison-Buck and her coauthors marshal an array of material evidence—sculptural representations, figures, depictions in codeces—to make a convincing case for the antiquity of Maya pilgrimage. Particularly notable here are the assemblages of small, highly portable objects: turtle shells, conch shell trumpets, stingray spines, speleothems. These clusters of objects recovered from proveniences such as altars, doorways, and burials were undoubtedly multivalent for the Maya, but seem resonant as pieces of places.

Working in Irish historical contexts, Lash weaves together archaeological and textual sources with insights gleaned from contemporary sojourns up Croagh

Patrick—the oddly-shaped mountain on the western coast of Ireland. Lash takes up Skousen's call to think about enchantment as he describes Irish pilgrimage practices that date back for millennia and have involved visits to islands, mountains, holy wells, monasteries, ruins, and cairns. Lash effectively puts enchantment in motion, invoking Ingold's (1993) taskscape as a useful frame for discussing the relations among bodies, places, movements, activities, and time. Pilgrimage practices produce enchantments, he says, by engaging all of our senses, and by foregrounding the other-than-human. The Irish *turas* practice involves a special place, such as a well, a cairn, or a monastery, which can be visited to invoke other-worldly interventions. But a *turas* does not merely involve a visit—as the word implies (and as its Latin root *turris* confirms), a *turas* involves a turning or rotation. This turning could take the form of changing the position of speckled stones set atop a place, or it could involve walking in a circle around a place, or it might entail completing a circuit among multiple stations, in a particular direction: clockwise for positive results (such as healing from an illness), or counterclockwise for negative results (such as casting a curse). Since medieval times, Irish *turas* have been entangled with Catholicism, but the traditions, Lash hints, are likely older—the turnings may be related to following the movements of the sun. These cyclical movements entangle pilgrims with time in another way, as they reference and repeat other, past visits. Perhaps this is one reason Irish visitors frequently mark their visit by leaving a small material indicator of their passage—a coin, a stone, a hair tie, a photograph.

Objects—the cacao beans carried in the kakaxtle, the milagros pinned to the garment of a saint's statue, the 7996 quartize beach pebbles placed on Clochan Congleo—carry transformative emotional valences. Piles of pebbles on graves or monuments evoke the passage of others who came before, but they also represent other-than-human extension of the pilgrim—a piece of the traveler meant to place needs or desires in close and permanent proximity to the site of other-worldly power. Lash suggests a connection between the white quartize pebbles, smoothed and cleansed by the powerful sea, and the desire of Irish pilgrims on Inishark to surrender to divine power and be similarly smoothed, calmed, and healed. The stones collect and fragment, connecting visitors to place . . . and visitors might well also take stones or other small objects as powerful pieces of these enchanting places.

From the Camino to Chaco

Both Lash and Harrison-Buck have participated in contemporary versions of the practices that they investigate. This kind of personal and bodily engagement is, I think, indispensable for pilgrimage studies. As a result of their experiences, both authors emphasize that pilgrimage involves hardship and difficulty as necessary preconditions for transformation. Even for the contemporary *hajji* flying to Mecca on a jet, pilgrimage involves the sacrifice at the very least of substantial sums of money and time.

In my perambulations across Spain, I learned firsthand about the material difficulties of pilgrimage. Like many *peregrinos*, I developed two obsessions: reducing the weight of my backpack, and attending to the condition of my footgear. The ideal Camino pack weighs under 10 kg; every unnecessary gram translates into increased bodily fatigue. Essentials do not include food and water (they can be obtained en route) or extra outfits (clothing can be washed at night). When studying ancient pilgrimage, archaeologists need to ask, what items did pilgrims need or choose to carry with them, and why? How were materials carried—by porters? In kerchiefs tied to hobo sticks? In kakaxtles? For pilgrims in the past, was suffering, whether through physical hardship or other difficulties, part of the point?

Today's *peregrinos* generally wear sturdy boots to protect feet from hazards, and to help arches bear the weight of the pack. Archaeologists seldom think about ancient footgear, but we should, and we can. As Ingold has pointed out, "it is surely through our feet, in contact with the ground (albeit mediated by footwear), that we are most fundamentally and continually 'in touch' with our surroundings" (Ingold, 2011: 45). Lash has taken up Ingold's charge to think about how feet mediate our experience with place, as he describes climbing barefoot up Croagh Patrick, picking his way over the scree, minding sharp stones and pebbles loosened by earlier travelers. What did ancient pilgrims wear on their feet (if anything), and what does that tell us about the nature of their journey and their relationship to place? I would not have thought to ask my colleagues Laurie Webster and Ben Bellorado to share with me their knowledge about Chacoan sandals had I not blown out two pairs of hiking boots on the Camino de Santiago. And, had I not been thinking about Chacoan feet, I might not have realized the importance of rock art panels such as this one, recorded by my colleague Jane Kolber (Figure 1).

A Chacoan assemblage territorialized or gathered together people, ideas, animals, objects, languages, and experiences, drawing from a region that expanded and contracted, in processes that were formalized, then contested, over three centuries. Like all formalized pilgrimage destinations, Chaco contains ample evidence for enchantment, including monumental spaces, marvelous materials. But the best evidence that many people journeyed here a millennium ago is not found in the canyon—it is found along the way, in the form of roads, and signaling points, and waystations, and rock art.

At Chaco, major entrances to the canyon are marked with large and complex rock art panels that have been historically more or less ignored by many Chaco scholars. These panels often feature symbols—such as spirals and undulating lines—that Pueblo people tell us depict movements of people, or migrations. As you can see in Figure 1, they also depict many, many footprints.

Like the pilgrims in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, my Chacoan pilgrimage studies have yet to arrive at their destination. But the point, for me, must be the journey. I am delighted to have the companionship of the authors in this volume, and their fine scholarship, along the way.

Figure 1. Petroglyph footprints at a major point of access to Chaco Canyon. Photo courtesy of Cloudy Ridge Productions.

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