

Whose Values?

Outstanding Universal Value at Two Pre-Columbian Sites Straddling the US-Mexico Frontier

Os valores de quem? Valor Universal Excepcional a partir de dois sítios pré-colombianos na fronteira EUA-México

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ABSTRACT: How defining and explaining the signification of the « Outstanding Universal Value », fundamental criterion for the inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List? Starting with a reflection on the idea of a "universal value", this paper proposes to confront this concept to the reality of two similar sites, both inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage list but separated by a few hundred kilometers and an international border: Chaco Culture (USA) and Paquimé (Mexico). Through their comparison, the article brings out local particularities in management practices and interpretation attitudes. Despite their common cultural roots in pre-colombian civilization, the two sites offer very different experiences to visitors whose perception is indeed largely influenced by the local context of social and cultural values contrary to the universal intend of UNESCO World Heritage "brand".

Keywords: Outstanding Universal Value, World Heritage "brand", universalism, experience, local culture.

I ntrodução

The World Heritage Convention specified the development of a World Heritage List that would be comprised of cultural and natural heritage manifesting Outstanding Universal Value or OUV². In the forty subsequent years, UNESCO and its affiliates have expanded the qualifications for the List to include authenticity, such as are demonstrated by periodic revisions to the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention².

1 UNESCO, *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, Paris, November 16, 1972, 6.

2 UNESCO, *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Paris: World

The Operational Guidelines also provide an official definition of Outstanding Universal Value:

Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity³.

Other documents provide more specifics on the terminology. Most notably, the keynote speech by Christina Cameron at the twenty-ninth session of the World Heritage Committee in Durban, South Africa, observed that “outstanding” once referred to “the best of the best,” but with an ever-expanding List, the definition had evolved to mean “representative of the best.”⁴ Subsequently, that document defines “outstanding” as such:

Outstanding is applied to sites that are not only of universal value but can also be seen to be marked out by singularities that accentuate their value to a degree that they become of Outstanding Universal Value. In other words the site is so valuable that it ‘belongs’ to all humankind in that they believe it should be transmitted to future generations.⁵

Heritage Centre, 2012), 21.

3 Ibid., 14.

4 UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage World Heritage Committee, INF9B, Keynote speech by Ms. Christina Cameron and Presentations by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies. Twenty-ninth Session, Durban, South Africa, 10-17 July 2005, p. 2.

5 Ibid., 23.

6 Ibid., 23.

The same document also says: Universal value means that a monument, site or group of buildings has a value that rises above local or regional value to a value that may be considered universal⁶.

The apparent intent of UNESCO is noble, but with 190 signatories to the World Heritage Convention – from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe – is it reasonable to assume that there is such thing as a *universal value* and that it can be practically applied? Further, while sites may be selected on the basis of *universal value*, are these value recognized or celebrated equally? Is the visitor experience at places with universal value a universal experience or an experience of different values? In a practical sense, does inscription on the World Heritage further the opportunity to transcend borders?

Conveniently, we have examples of similar sites that are separated by a few hundred kilometers and an international border. Chaco Culture, in the US state of New Mexico, and Paquimé, in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, are two sites representative of cultures that prevailed in this arid part of the North American continent during the ninth to fourteenth centuries. The two

sites, which are separated by 875 highway kilometers (544 miles) and the heavily fortified US-Mexico frontier, arguably emerge from the same broader civilization from the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico.

It has been argued that the two sites are a part of a sequence of large ceremonial, commercial, and population centers from about 900 to 1450 CE, each of which was located along -108 degrees W. The connection between Chaco and Paquimé is articulated in a work by archaeologist Stephen H. Lekson which is devoted to the subject. He observes that Chaco, Paquimé, and two other intervening ceremonial cities, occupied from 900 to 1450, were linked by architectural similarity, by their importance as trading hubs linking communities to the north with communities to the south, and by their shared location along the same meridian.

The basic similarity of the two sites invites scrutiny which may offer us insights into the effect of inscription on the World Heritage list. The concept here is that, as with medical studies of twins reared apart, it may be possible to examine these two very similar sites and draw some conclusions about whether the two places reflect universal values or local values. The objective is not to challenge the concept of universal value. Rather, given the importance of universal value for World Heritage, how is it effectively put into practice at two sites that arguably are manifestations of a single culture or, at minimum, of a shared culture? To what extent is the interpretation, the use of the World Heritage “brand,” and the overall visitor experience universal rather than particular?

Background

Various authors have taken issue with the concept of universal value, noting that it can lead to Eurocentrism, oversimplification of complex cultures, and stereotyping⁷. This complaint echoes one made by Michael di Giovane: “The idea that there exists a universalism amongst disparate cultures seems to border dangerously close to the Modernization theories of the past century of so. Those theories implicitly draw on the Enlightenment-era conception of human progress as well as Darwinian evolutionary notions of ‘descent with modification’ – that complex creatures evolve from more simplistic organisms over time – and see all the people in various states of cultural transformation towards a more developed, universal and ‘modern’ culture.”⁸ The author subsequently notes that an often protracted negotiation process between various stakeholders on different levels ultimately leads to a “monument of universal value.”⁹ However; he also admits that an effort to analyze “disparate monuments UNESCO designates as World Heritage

7 Sophia Labadi, “Representations of the National and Cultural Diversity in Discourses on World Heritage,” *Journal of Social Anthropology* 7, no. 2 (2012): 152-153.

8 Michael A. Di Giovane, *The Heritage-Scape: UNESCO, World Heritage and Tourism* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2009), 134-135.

9 *Ibid.*, 402-403.

sites, in an attempt to ascertain what these ‘universal values’ or similarities could be, only explicit differences emerge.”¹⁰

Corollary to these complaints about the UNESCO concept are arguments for including local values in the presentation of cultural heritage resources. One article notes that the local values for a cultural resource are frequently cast aside in favor of those “ascribed to it by art historians, archaeologists, and government officials.”¹¹ The problem of reckoning a universal, shared heritage with the local context of social and cultural values can be handled with “great care in planning, development, management, and marketing ...”¹² The 2012 Guidelines integrate aspects of the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity which “provided a practical basis for examining the authenticity of properties proposed for World Heritage listing.”¹³ The result is eight paragraphs which provide a means of simultaneously creating a universal concept of authenticity, while recognizing cultural variation. This is characterized by paragraph eleven in the Nara Document, which reads:

All judgments about values attributed to cultural properties as well as the credibility of related information sources may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. It is thus not possible to base judgments of values and authenticity within fixed criteria. On the contrary, the respect due to all cultures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.

The Nara Document artfully puts into play Erik Cohen’s notions that authenticity is a socially constructed concept and therefore is negotiable.¹⁴ Within this context, it is hardly difficult to imagine two cultures as different as Mexico and the United States managing similar sites representing similar ancient cultures, but with entirely different interpretations of the relevance of the cultural artifacts and landscapes.

The problems related to having a technical organization, Mexico’s National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), charged with centrally managing that country’s cultural resources are highlighted in an essay by Nelly M. Robles García and Jack Corbett.¹⁵ The authors note that INAH adopted a basis for configuring management plans that was modeled by the United States National Park Service or NPS (which manages all but a few of the World Heritage Sites in the United States), but paid little regard to how such practices would fit with Mexico’s political structure. With both INAH and NPS, there is a conflict between the Universalist agenda of UNESCO and

10 Ibid., 138.

11 Heather Black and Geoffrey Wall, “Global-Local Inter-relationships in UNESCO World Heritage Sites,” in *Interconnected Worlds: Tourism in Southeast Asia*, Peggy Teo, T.C. Chang, and K.C. Ho, eds. (Kidlington, UK: Elsevier Science, 2001).

12 Wiendu Nuryanti, “Heritage and Postmodern Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 23, no. 2 (1996): 257.

13 Mechthild Rössler, “Applying Authenticity to Cultural Landscapes,” *APT Bulletin*, 39 (2008).

14 Erik Cohen, “Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 15 (1988), 371-386.

15 Nelly M. Robles García and Jack Corbett, Jack (2010), “Heritage Resource Management in Mexico,” in *Cultural Heritage Management: A Global Perspective*, P.M. Messenger and G.S. Smith, eds. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010.)

those of the agencies that manage them, which “appeal to and support abstract notions of a ‘cultural good,’ bolstering these with nationalist ideologies¹⁶.

The universal value concept is frequently at play in World Heritage discourse, however, like God and carbon monoxide, universal values are difficult to perceive. Further, their importance is undermined by the conflicting roles of site managers and political realities.

Chaco Culture and Paquimé

Chaco Culture and Paquimé (also known as Casas Grandes) are two sites from the Amerindian culture of the US southwestern states, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah, and Mexico’s northern states of Chihuahua and Sonora. Both sites are on UNESCO’s World Heritage list. Chaco Culture, in New Mexico, was inscribed in 1987 under Criterion III, “to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.”¹⁷ The original nomination was expanded to include neighboring sites, including Pueblo Aztec, which is 76 miles due north (122 km) of Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Paquimé, in Chihuahua, Mexico, was inscribed in 1995 under Criteria III and IV. Criterion IV signifies “an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.”¹⁸

A 1989 assessment by ICOMOS asserted that it was “uncomfortable judging the proposed Paquimé nomination without the benefit of a comparative study which could analyze similar sites in both the United States and Mexico.” A review of Internet resources failed to reveal if such a study was performed. Interestingly, ICOMOS expressed no need for an analysis of how Chaco fits into the big picture regarding ancient civilizations in the US Southwest and northern Mexico. Possibly the documents represent an evolving approach by the advisory body ICOMOS. That organization’s Chaco documents referred to the collection of sites as a subset of the broader Anasazi culture of the Southwest. Two years later, ICOMOS used a different and more obscure geographical definition, Attributing Paquimé to the “Oasis American Culture, which was also found in several states in the American south.”

Regardless of the nomenclature, Lekson’s arguments -- that Chaco and Paquimé are manifestations of a similar culture during different time periods, one that was seeking a more stable water supply and other characteristics conducive to developing a more advanced civilization – become more appealing. Figure 1 shows the general location of Paquimé and Chaco along -108° West, along with the intervening pueblo and ceremonial city at Aztec.

16 Lisa Breglia, *Monumental Ambivalence: The Politics of Heritage* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 51-52.

17 UNESCO, “The Criteria for Selection.” <http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>.

18 Ibid.

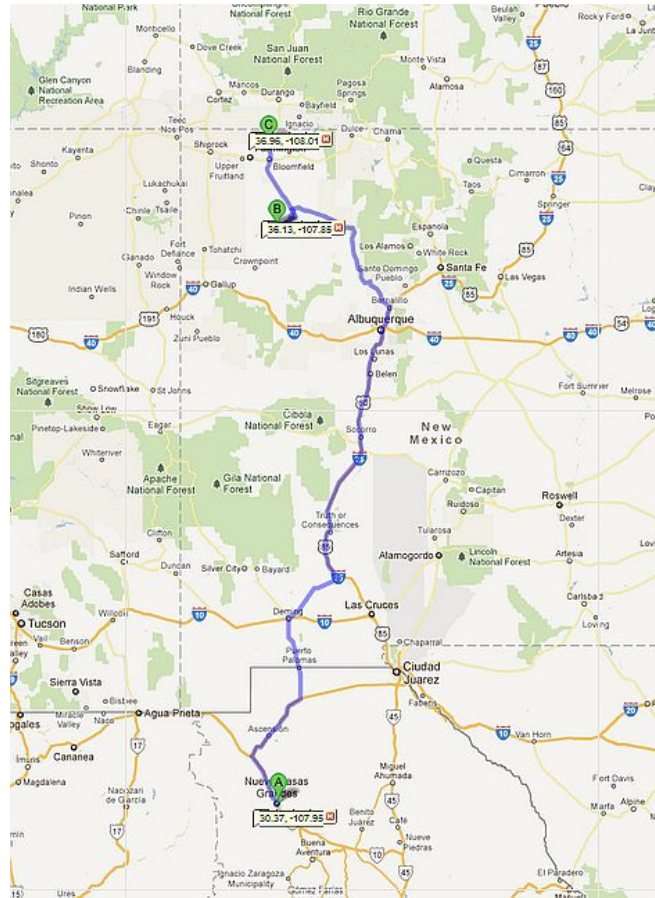


Figure 1 General location of Chaco and Paquimé.

Along with their location along -108° W and their geographical proximity, the sites bear numerous other similarities, including the use of astronomy to guide building orientations and T-shaped doorways.

During their periods of influence, the two sites were trading centers as well as ceremonial centers. Trade goods from the south, such as copper, shells, or psittacines, would find their way to northern settlements by pathways through these two cities, just as turquoise from the north would find its way south, ultimately to Mesoamerica.

The outward connectednesses of the two sites as well as UNESCO's celebration of connectedness by its notion of universal value, invite a comparison which could shed light on OUV in practice.

Modern political realities have led to a heavily fortified and carefully patrolled border between the United States and Mexico. The ancient routes for trade

and migration which mark a common and universal heritage for both sides of the present border have been blocked. Consequently, there is limited cross-border visitation of the two sites – a situation that has only become exacerbated in recent years as violence along the frontier led to 96% decrease in international visitors to Paquimé between 2007 and 2010. With less cross-border interaction, the commonality of experience – something celebrated by the World Heritage movement – is effectively suppressed.

UNESCO Influence on the Universal Experience

While foundation documents for World Heritage pay particular attention to Outstanding Universal Value, UNESCO has few resources to drive or ensure a universal experience at World Heritage sites. UNESCO's control over universality results from two sources: a) as a producer of norms and b) as an orchestrator of international cooperation¹⁹. With few funds available, UNESCO is in no position to be an enforcer of standards for interpretation, which would perhaps be the most important vehicle for conveying a consistent heritage message.

World Heritage is frequently referred to as a brand. One serviceable definition of a brand emerges from the American Marketing Association: 'name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition.'²⁰ Based on this definition, one could say that World Heritage is a brand. It has its own logo, which can help to differentiate it from other cultural or natural resources. However, if World Heritage is a brand, it is a weak brand. Coca-Cola and Apple (the electronic devices; not the fruit) may be considered strong brands, with logos and identities that are understood by consumers worldwide. In the United States, however, the World Heritage identity is in most cases notably absent from that country's twenty-one World Heritage Sites.

World Heritage indeed has a logo, which could be used to build a strong brand identity. UNESCO has standards for use of this which are detailed in seven of the one hundred seventy-six pages of the 2012 *Operational Guidelines*. Effectively, these are the closest thing UNESCO has toward brand management policies. It notes that "Properties inscribed on the World Heritage List should be marked with the emblem jointly with the UNESCO logo, which should, however, be placed in such a way that they do not visually impair the property in question."²¹

Evidence suggests UNESCO is hardly maximizing the benefit of the emblem or logo with respect to creating and enforcing a universal product. A recent

19 Jean Musitelli, "Opinion: World Heritage, between Universalism and Globalization," http://journals.cambridge.org.dax.lib.unf.edu/download.php?file=%2FJCP%2FJCP11_02%2F0940739102771464a.pdf&code=bd730b3f3c9f1d759f1f376d4cb1ef35.

20 American Marketing Association, Resource Library, Dictionary, http://www.marketingpower.com/_layouts/dictionary.aspx?dletter=b.

21 UNESCO, *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (Paris: World Heritage Centre, 2012), 71.

study from Israel supports an assertion that World Heritage has weak brand equity. Surveys of 146 tourists to one of Israel's most important attractions indicated only 10.2% of respondents were familiar with the logo and 6.5% knew its meaning²².

Visits to Chaco and Paquimé reveal inconsistent display of the World Heritage logo. The visitor entering Paquimé encounters a modest sign with the legend, "Patrimonio Cultural de Casas Grandes Chihuahua, de la Nación y de la Humanidad." (Cultural heritage of Casas Grandes Chihuahua, of the nation and of humanity.) Beneath those words – in a much reduced size -- are in series the UNESCO World Heritage logo, and the logos for two arms of the Mexican government: INAH and Consejo Nacional Para la Cultura y las Artes (CONACULTA). Visitors to Chaco are greeted by a more massive sign constructed of stone in a style reminiscent of the construction of ruins within the site. The legend reads "Chaco Culture National Historical Park – World Heritage Site." While there is prominent reference to the site's World Heritage inscription, the World Heritage emblem does not appear, and the National Park Service arrowhead logo appears prominently. Further, all text is in the Clarendon typeface, until recently the NPS official font. (It has been replaced by a sans-serif font, which requires less space.)

While the overall message of the entry sign is "This is a National Park Service property," the park provides far greater emphasis of its World Heritage status than most NPS facilities. This may be due to the site's remote location, which effectively inhibits visitors with a less passionate interest in ancient archaeology and with that lack of awareness, perhaps a bias against the United Nations and UNESCO – something that is not particularly rare in the United States. Chaco also prominently features a large brass plaque, mounted on stone, which, as prescribed by the *Operational Guidelines*, commemorates the inscription and helps to inform the general public about World Heritage. However, the Chaco plaque omits a description of the site's OUV, one of the *Guidelines'* recommendations. No such plaque was prominently displayed at Paquimé.

An inexpensive solution to the mixed message of irregular signage and display of the World Heritage emblem would be for UNESCO to provide each World Heritage Site with an official sign using consistent wording, design, and use of the emblem. This would strengthen the brand identity and visitor awareness of universal value.

Inconsistent treatment of the two sites can be traced back to their World Heritage nominations. Chaco's inscription under Criterion iii ("to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to

22 "World Heritage Site – Is It an Effective Brand Name: A Case Study of a Religious Heritage Site, *Journal of Travel Research* 50, no., 482. (2010): 487.

a civilization which is living or which has disappeared”) defines it as representing a specific group – the Chacoans – from the broader Pueblan culture. Eleven years later, Paquimé’s inscription under the same Criterion is justified under a rationale that is more inclusive, referring to a wide-ranging culture that spread over what are now two nations: “Paquimé Casas Grandes bears eloquent and abundant testimony to an important element in the cultural evolution of North America, and in particular to Pre-Hispanic commercial and cultural links.” The inscription also acknowledges the site’s importance as commercial and cultural hub – something that would apply equally if not more forcefully at Chaco, but which was not mentioned in that site’s nomination. This discrepancy could be attributable to the orientation of the two states Parties. Likewise, it could reflect an evolution of knowledge or perspective over a period of eleven years.

The different orientations of the States Parties certainly are evident in attitudes toward management plans. The United States National Park Service, which is responsible for eighteen of the twenty-one World Heritage Sites in the United States, includes a vast array of planning tools, including management, interpretation, commercial service, resource management, and transportation plans. Chaco Culture National Historical Park’s general management plan dates to 1984. In 2012 a 174-page document provides amendments that were designed to deal with threats from increased visitation.²³ Paquimé’s management plan was initiated in 2003²⁴. In contrast to plan-laden US NPS facilities, Paquimé’s managers point to their management plan as something that was ordered by the bureaucrats at UNESCO and is used simply to placate authorities with European and North American management philosophies²⁵.

While both the Mexican managers from INAH and the US managers from the National Park Service adhere to requirements for management plans, the more aggressive posture of Chaco’s managers has led to an array of carefully wrought alternatives to cope with a looming threat of increased visitors. The Mexican managers appear to have generated no formal plans to recover from the 46.1% decline in visitors from peak levels to 2010.

Such different management philosophies may have their roots in the fundamental nature of their management organizations, the culture of those organizations, and that of the respective nations. Mexico’s INAH, under the Secretary of Public Education, fundamentally has a pedagogical role. Interpretation at Paquimé is provided within the context of civilizations in greater North America; not just Mexico. The Paquimé site is seen as representative of a broad civilization of *Gran Chichimeca*, stretching north from the Tropic of Cancer north into what are now the United States of America.

23 Chaco Culture National Historical Park (2012), General Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment (Washington: National Park Service, 2012), iii.

24 Mario Jiménez Suárez, “La importancia del manejo sustentable de sitios arqueológicos para el desarrollo regional en México,” Prepared for delivery at the 2009 Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 11-14, 2009, 13.

25 Interview with Eduardo Gamboa Carrera, 27 March 2012.

Chaco, as with most US World Heritage Sites, is managed by the federal government's National Park Service, and agency of the Department of the Interior. The professed mission of the National Park Service extends beyond education to include conservation, recreation, and inspiration: "The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world."²⁶

INAH's values have its roots in Mexican history reaching to the 19th century. Mexico's indigenous roots are a major component of that nation's identity. INAH's portfolio of Pre-Columbian sites is an important vehicle for reinforcing and transmitting that identity. In contrast, with the United States, ruins of ancient civilizations have traditionally been appropriated as a mechanism for establishing an ancient history that is American. Notes an excerpt from a history of the National Park Service, which is included on the NPS website: "... Unlike established, European countries, which traced their origins far back into antiquity, the United States lacked a long artistic and literary heritage ... Americans now made the dwellings of prehistoric Indians suffice for the absence of Greek and Roman ruins in the New World."²⁷

For both Mexico and the United States, Amerindian roots and vestiges have value, but they are hardly universal values. In Mexico's case, the values trace directly back to antiquity. In the US they are commingled with the desires of a new civilization, having aggressively spanned the North American continent in the latter half of the nineteenth century and wanting to define itself as significant. US National Parks were among the first expressions of this spirit and remain a reliable exponent. In either case – Mexico or the US – local, regional, or national values are integral to the organizations that manage them. If there are universal values governing these sites, they are overridden by the narrower values of the respective nations. In short, World Heritage Sites may be selected because of some vague Outstanding Universal Value, but the values that govern these places are more local than universal.

26 National Park Service, "Mission," <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/mission.htm>.

27 Alfred Runte, *National Parks, the American Experience*, Third Edition. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/runte1/chap4.htm.

Although the management philosophies and interpretation approaches of Mexico's INAH and the United States' NPS undermine the expression of universal values at the two sites, other aspects unrelated to management and culture also shape the visitor experience.

While Chaco and Paquimé are both ruins of a Pueblan culture, their settings are radically different – a difference with profound influence on the visitor

experience. Chaco is remote, while Paquimé is within walking distance of a town with 6,000 inhabitants and ten minutes from a city of 60,000. Chaco Culture National Historical Park covers fifty-three square miles (137 square km) and contains 4,000 archaeological sites, thirty-seven of which are open to visitors. Chaco “is managed to provide independent and contemplative visitor experiences, along with opportunities to explore the prehistoric cultural sites.”²⁸ Chaco’s landscape is rich with artifacts which are frequently revealed by wind and rain, and the temptation to loot remains an ongoing challenge to the park’s law enforcement and emergency-services staff, which consists of only 2.5 full-time equivalent personnel out of twenty-seven in total. Chaco’s base budget in 2010 was \$2.1 million.²⁹ Continued Congressional pressure to limit spending should keep those levels relatively constant for the foreseeable future. The enormity of Chaco, combined with limited budgets site and a lightly supervised, hands-off attitude toward visitors, have forced management to consider various means of restricting visitation.

The principal access to the park is from the northeast via County Road 7950, that starts at New Mexico 44/US 550, the main highway from the Four Corners region (named for the intersection of the states of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah) to New Mexico’s largest city, Albuquerque. The distance from that highway to the park entrance is twenty-one miles, of which thirteen are unpaved and effectively impassable for large recreational vehicles and buses. Proposed improvements to County Road 7950 would render Chaco less remote and pose dire threats to a large site which is already burdened with inadequate protection.

While Chaco struggles to find ways to control visitors, Paquimé’s chief management problem is lack of visitors.³⁰ (A glimpse of Paquimé’s visitor log revealed only seventeen visitors on March 17, 2012.) The physical characteristics of the site, including El Museo de las Culturas del Norte, facilitate crowd management and minimization of vandalism and theft. The facility is equipped to handle far larger volumes of visitors than it currently handles.

The entire facility covers 146 hectares or .56 square miles – 1.1% of Chaco’s size. Visitors tread a well-defined path, rimmed with steel edges. In contrast to Chaco’s generally unsupervised roaming, visitors are always supervised by up to five security guards observing from an elevated guard station. Its spacious museum is capable of handling 150 visitors at any moment. In early 2012, daily average visitor counts were less than 100.

While the two sites may share roots in the same civilization, visitors to the sites would be influenced by the physical size and remoteness of Chaco as

28 Chaco Culture National Historical Park (2012), *General Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment*, <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=43&projectID=21575&documentID=46038>.

29 Ibid.

30 Interview with Eduardo Gamboa, Carrera, 27 March 2012.

31 Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 8-9.

well as the more intimate nature of Paquimé, which effectively differentiates, rather than universalizes, the experiences.

Interpretation

Another way UNESCO can help to assure more universal values are communicated at World Heritage Sites is by imposing at least modest standards for interpretation. While the word “universal” appears thirteen times in the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, interpretation appears nowhere. Likewise, the only real reference to interpretation in the 2012 *Operational Guidelines* is a comment that the interpretation of canals must consider both the physical facility and vehicles or other appurtenances that use it.

At Paquimé, in particular, exhibits emphasize the shared culture of Mexico’s Chichimeca and early civilizations of the Southwest United States. The name of the attractive INAH-managed facility that accompanies the site is El Museo de las Culturas del Norte. This contrasts with Chaco’s emphasis on links to contemporary native populations – the Navajo, Hopi, etc., in the United States. The Chaco Culture National Historical Park website makes no reference to the connectivity between Chaco, related pueblos in New Mexico, such as Aztec and Salmon, and similar cultures that thrived to the south in Mexico. Rather, the website and on-site interpretive displays frequently make reference to the importance of Chaco to the Navajo, an Athabascan people who presently live in the surrounding countryside and came to dominate it well after the Chacoans departed.

The seminal US work on interpretation, Freeman Tilden’s *Interpreting Our Heritage*³¹, provides six principles of interpretation. His first principle, which is echoed by NPS documents, is: “Any interpretation that does not somehow relate to what is being displayed or described to something within the personality of the visitor will be sterile.” An NPS primer on interpretation offers this observation on the role of interpretation:

The NPS Organic Act of 1916 sets out the agency’s overarching mission: ‘. . . to conserve the scenery, and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.’ Interpretation helps do this by introducing visitors to meanings and ideas, while allowing them to retain and express their

32 US National Park Service, “Foundations of Interpretation Curriculum Content Narrative,” <http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/foundationcurriculum.pdf>.

own values. As Tilden suggested, some of what the site has to say can be understood by the visitor, but there may be additional meanings that the visitor may not yet have discovered. Interpretation can build upon these opportunities to expand the visitor's experience and understanding of the resources³².

UNESCO's foundational documents and *Operational Guidelines* articulate the importance of Outstanding Universal Value without providing a meaningful path to identify it and put it into practice. Each of the 962 cultural and natural World Heritage Sites entered that list on the basis of Outstanding Universal Value. Tepid suggestions about displaying plaques highlighting the nature of each site's OUV appear to have had little effect on communicating the OUV message at Chaco and Paquimé. The fourth of Tilden's six principles of interpretation says, "The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation." Visitors to Chaco and Paquimé (and other World Heritage Sites) may emerge from these places provoked as well as connected. However, without specifically articulating and including the *universal values* of these important places as part of their interpretation, visitors may emerge with only a regionalized conceptualization that contradicts UNESCO's intent.

Conclusions

A look at the two Amerindian sites, Chaco and Paquimé, suggests local and regional values take precedence over what one would consider universal values. From World Heritage List inscription to management practices, the values of local, regional, or national agencies and managers predominate. While there has been much lip service to Outstanding Universal Value and the World Heritage "brand," the reality is there are few policies to create or enforce an effective World Heritage brand, which would communicate both a visual identity and a meaningful sense of the universal. This situation could be remedied by taking small steps to assure a consistent visual brand identity and communication of OUV. These could include policies and protocols for interpretation which would help to emphasize the universal aspects of places with Outstanding Universal Value.

RESUMO: Como definir e explicar a significação de «Valor Universal Excepcional», critério fundamental para a inscrição de sítios na lista do patrimônio mundial da UNESCO? A partir de uma reflexão sobre a noção de "valor universal", o presente artigo propõe uma confrontação entre este conceito e a realidade de dois sítios similares, ambos inscritos na Lista do Patrimônio Mundial da UNESCO, mas separados por algumas centenas de quilômetros e uma fronteira internacional: Chaco Culture (USA) e Paquimé (México). Por meio desta comparação, este coloca em evidência as particularidades locais nas

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Palavras-chave:
Valor Universal Excepcional, "rótulo" Patrimônio mundial, universalismo, experiência, cultura local.

práticas de gestão e nas atitudes de interpretação. Apesar de raízes culturais comuns na civilização pré-colombiana, os dois sítios oferecem experiências muito diferentes para visitantes cuja percepção é de fato muito influenciada pelo contexto local de valores sociais e culturais contrariamente à intenção universal do “rótulo” Patrimônio Mundial da UNESCO.