



KIN YA'A



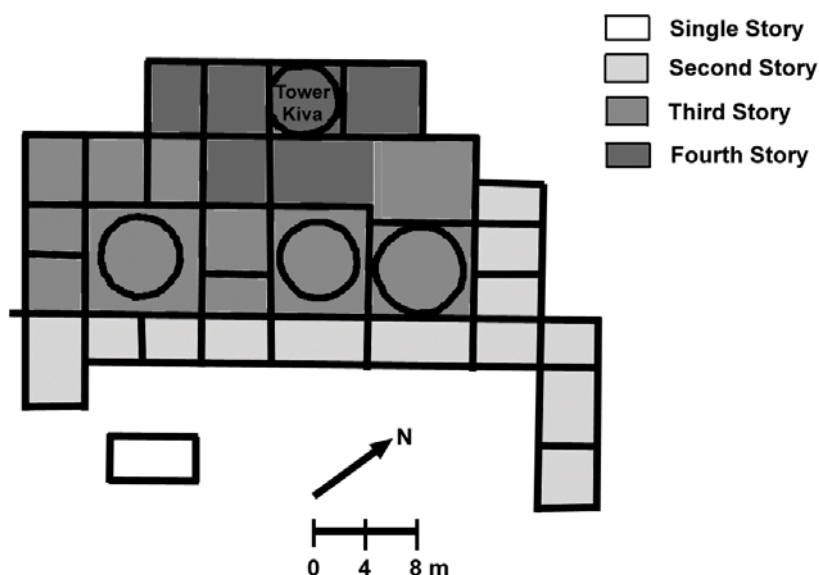
Illustration by Cory Ench of Kin Ya'a as it may have appeared in AD 1100, based upon a model by Ron Cox and Russ Bodnar.

THE NAME – "house rising up high" in Navajo. According to several Navajo stories, it is a place where a group of Navajos settled with Chacoan people. They later became known as *Kin yaa' aanii*, the "towering house clan."

THE LOCATION- Kin Ya'a is a small Chacoan great house (monumental public building) that lies about 25 miles south and west of the immediate Chaco Canyon area. Located at an elevation of 6,780 feet, Kin Ya'a was connected to Chaco's core area by a major Chacoan road.

DATES – The six tree-ring dates from Kin Ya'a range from A.D. 1101 to 1106 and cluster at A.D. 1106, late in Chacoan times.

THE GREAT HOUSE – Archaeologists call Kin Ya'a a "Chacoan great house," a civic and ceremonial center utilized by many surrounding communities. The placement of the terraced building orients it toward the winter sun. The building contains an estimated 26 ground floor rooms, 9 second-story rooms, an undetermined number of possible third-story rooms, 3 enclosed surface kivas (round, semi-subterranean ceremonial chambers), and a tower kiva extending four stories. In modern Puebloan cultures, kivas are multifunctional buildings used for religious worship, prayer, preparation, and ceremonies.



The lower single-story terrace consists of a row of 3 enclosed kivas flanked by narrow rectangular rooms. This lower terrace, which houses the surface kivas, served as a broad elevated platform to provide access to the second terrace and four-story tower. The second terrace encloses the tower kiva. The tower kiva is centered in the rear of the building, flanked on two sides by second and possibly third-story rooms.

CHACOAN OUTLIERS – The great houses and associated communities located some distance from Chaco Canyon are called "Chacoan outliers" or "outlier communities."

Outliers share many of the typical Chacoan traits, such as architecture, masonry, roads, great kivas, enclosed plazas, pottery, etc. Some researchers believe the outliers were established by the people of Chaco Canyon as they expanded their world and influence into surrounding areas. Others believe that local populations embraced the Chacoan world and culture and emulated the great houses and their impressive architecture. The relationship between the outliers and the people of Chaco Canyon is not well understood. Were the outliers independent or did they support and serve the people in the core?

TOWER KIVA – The Kin Ya’a tower originally stood a full four stories at an estimated height of 36.5 feet. The lower chamber and much of the second floor remain intact, while only a rectangular column of the northeast corner extends through the third and into the fourth story--presently 31 feet high.

The interior of the tower kiva may have contained 4 floors and had a very special ceremonial function. Four stacked kivas may have been symbolic of the 4 worlds central to Puebloan belief. Some researchers suggest that the towering structures may have been used for signaling to other communities. Less than a dozen tower kivas are known to exist in the Chacoan world--several of them located just south of the Chaco Canyon.

MASONRY –Kin Ya’a’s walls are massive Chacoan core and veneer masonry--a distinguishing feature of Chacoan great house construction. The core consists of roughly shaped pieces of sandstone laid in a mud mortar. The core is then faced on both sides with carefully selected and shaped stones to create the veneer. The veneer helped to distribute the weight of the massive walls, and allowed the people to build 4 and 5 stories high. Several types of veneers were used, and styles changed over time. Today, archaeologists use these pattern variations as a tool for dating site construction.

PREHISTORIC ROADS – There is a roadway which is evidenced by a pronounced swale (a low-lying or depressed piece of land) which approaches Kin Ya’a from the northeast. The roadway turns at an angle and leaves the site on a southwest orientation, heading toward Hosta Butte and Coyote Canyon. The road is defined by a linear swale 18 to 27 feet in width and 3 feet deep. Today, the prehistoric roadway which passes through Kin Ya’a is known as the “Great South Road.” There are several roadways which enter the building from the northeast. One leads NNE toward Bee Burrow, and then heads north to the South Gap of Chaco Canyon. Another leads northeast toward Pueblo Pintado. The roads may have been used to direct travelers to Chaco for ceremonies and trading, or to symbolize the importance of the people's connections to Chaco--at the center of their world.

HELP US PRESERVE THIS FOR THE FUTURE - The cultural sites of Chaco Culture National Historical Park are fragile and irreplaceable, and form a significant part of our cultural heritage. They are part of the history and traditions of the Hopi, the Pueblo peoples of New Mexico, and the Navajo, who continue to respect and honor them.

You can help protect and preserve this significant part of our global cultural heritage by following these basic rules:

- ***Do not collect pottery or other protected artifacts, plants, or rocks anywhere in the park.***
- ***Do not walk, climb, sit, or lean on fragile walls.***
- ***Stay on designated trails.***
- ***Pets are not permitted in sites.***
- ***This site closes at sunset. Camping is not permitted.***

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Chaco Culture National Historical Park
P.O. Box 220
Nageezi, NM 87037-0220.

Telephone (505) 786-7014, ext. 221
E-mail chcu_interpretation@nps.gov
Visit our website www.nps.gov/chcu