

Second American Dendrochronology Conference



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Sourcing the Plaza Tree of Pueblo Bonito Using New Documentary and Tree-Ring Evidence

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Content :

Since its discovery in the west courtyard of the Chacoan great house of Pueblo Bonito, the “rooted tree” labeled JPB-99 has captivated the imaginations of archaeologists and the public alike. It stands alone in the archaeological record of the Southwest as the only non-architectural timber unearthed within a ruin. Ideas abound regarding its relevance to the design, location, and ritual practices of Pueblo Bonito, but few have tried to determine if it did, in fact, grow within the walls of the great house, as inferred by the excavators. We examine the history of the plaza tree, and present new documentary and dendrochronological evidence that support an alternative explanation for the tree’s source. Our results suggest that the tree may have grown in Chaco Canyon, but not within Pueblo Bonito, and that the tree bole with some primary roots attached was likely carried to the great house from its original location.

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