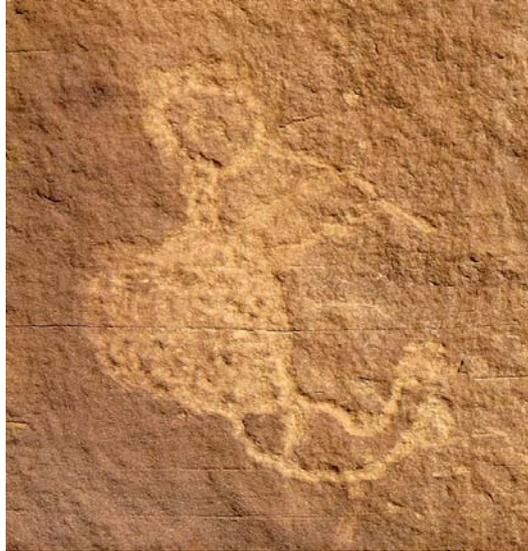


The Winter Solstice Pilgrimage of 2012 to Chaco Canyon: Combining stellar acoustics with acoustic archaeology



By
Willard Van De Bogart

This is a story about a pilgrimage to Chaco Canyon, New Mexico for the winter solstice of 2012. I flew to New Mexico from Bangkok, Thailand to be in a location on the earth that had a special significance for our ancient ancestors who made it a point to pay homage to the stars. After I left Chaco Canyon I went to Harbin Hot Springs in Middletown, California. It was at Harbin where I could sit down in the peaceful surroundings of nature, nurtured by the natural hot springs and write up the experiences I had when I was standing beneath the stars on top of a mesa 7000 feet above sea level at 4 degrees above zero. It was at Chaco Canyon where a timeless form of energy over took my mind and I became entranced in a world filled with a living spirit that felt as real and tangible as the life I live here on earth. How could such a place create such an overwhelming sense of otherness will be the subject of this story. The silence I encountered definitely had something to do with it.

My reasons for going to Chaco Canyon were based on wanting to be in a location where there was a clear view of the heavens and a place that was revered by our ancient ancestors who used stars and planetary alignments to form their own cosmology. Chaco Canyon satisfied both of these requirements. What I did not know when I made the decision to go to Chaco Canyon in August of 2012 was the extent to which the heavenly bodies played such an integral part of the ancient Chacoan lifestyle. Going to Chaco Canyon was also supported by the fact that I had a very close friend who lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It was in Albuquerque that I was able to prepare for the long drive north into the area known as Chaco Canyon. It was winter and there was a snow storm coming so I had doubts the sky would be clear. But I was determined to participate in the winter solstice in this area so I set out to make preparations to travel there.

But why fly from Bangkok all the way to New Mexico just to experience the winter solstice? Why in fact decide to make a pilgrimage to a sacred site half way around the world? The answer was predicated on the fact that this winter solstice was the last to occur on the 26,000 year cycle of the precession of the equinoxes. That this precession was verifiable or an astronomical fact was less important to me than knowing that this solstice was recognized as an important time marker by indigenous cultures worldwide and made popular with the knowledge of Mayan calendrics. The significance of this period of time was that it culminated at the end of a long precessional cycle recognized by all ancient cultures. The depth of understanding mentioned in ancient cosmologies, which revolved around the solstice sun, is still recognizable by the hundreds of stone markers, earthen mounds, and ancient observatories all of which align themselves to the movement of celestial bodies in the heavens and in particular the rising of the solstice sun. This period of time in 2012 was being hailed as a time of transition for all of humanity, a transformative time where we might find ourselves in a totally new world and would have an entirely different perspective on how we collectively as a species would perceive the universe. Many thought this winter solstice was an end time in which it was prophesized that the destruction of the earth by natural cataclysms, including a complete reversal of earth's magnetic poles or even an influx of solar radiation would forever change the face of the earth. Indeed there were so many offerings anticipating the arrival of the winter solstice of 2012 that it turned into a labyrinth of complex mythical proportions. But, for me the one salient feature which prompted my decision to travel to Chaco Canyon was that from an astronomical perspective the alignment of the heavenly bodies was going to take place and it was this alignment, which as a result of the celestial mechanics of our solar system, would not happen again for another 26,000 years. That fact coupled with the attention that all of our ancient ancestors attributed to the movement of the stars in the heavens, and most likely accompanied by elaborate rituals, cosmologies and beliefs that were a part of this solstice phenomenon gave me the inner conviction that I should be in a location on earth where I could experience the solstice directly and especially where ancient people had recognized the solstice sun. It was the winter solstice, which most likely was responsible for all the development of super natural belief systems eventually leading to the creation of the gods. The ancient Chacoans, Hopis and ancestral Puebloans definitely satisfied all of the above criteria as a place to experience the winter solstice...

The decision to go to Chaco Canyon, New Mexico was made in early August of 2012. Even though I intuitively knew that this would be a perfect place to experience the winter solstice sun I had little if no knowledge of the area or even the ancient Chacoans who I had thought were called the Anazazi. But, with research I soon began to learn it was more politically correct to refer to the people who inhabited Chaco Canyon from 800AD to 1300AD as ancestral Puebloans. But in fact, I soon discovered in my research, that scholars had differing points of view and opinions as to what exactly these ancient people did in Chaco Canyon. I soon became aware that astronomy and cosmology were an integral part of the ancient Chacoans; as I will refer to these ancient people.

I soon found myself immersed in the scholarly works of Dr. McKim Mallville, Anna Sofaer, Philip Coppens, Charles Bensinger, Chris Hardaker, Frank Waters, Richard Fisher, Stephen Lekson, and the list just seemed to go on and on. By late October of 2012 I began to see that Chaco Canyon was a natural location on earth that the early people of the Americas had chosen to build a very sophisticated observatory. Chaco Canyon was an archaeoastronomers' delight as they tried to decipher what it was these ancient people might have been doing in this canyon. It is not for me to review all this research in this story as it is readily available by doing some basic research.

However, several areas which I became attracted to were the migration routes discovered going south to Mesoamerica as well as the long roads going north that were eventually discovered by aerial reconnaissance. Within the actual construction of the kivas and great houses were discovered advanced mathematical building techniques as well as using the canyon wall named Tse Biinholts' a Yalti for the acoustical enhancement of ceremonies and rituals. The canyon walls themselves are covered with petroglyphs, including a flute player, depicting very unusual figures which almost look as if they might be from another world. Chaco Canyon I came to learn was a very mysterious place and I did not know any of these facts when I made my decision to go there in August of 2012.

It became obvious to me that I was not going to be able to master all the knowledge that had been generated over the past 100 years on what Chaco Canyon was used for. But it did reinforce my decision to go there. The story of this pilgrimage becomes more interesting when I had to consider what it was I would do in the middle of the winter 7000 feet above sea level once I got to Chaco Canyon. The answer to this question takes me all the way to Santiago, Chile where my research on ancient Khmer temples, which I had done in 2002 -2006 throughout Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, was mentioned to Munesh Purohit Kumar by a close friend of mine and editor of the South East Asian Review; Dr. Sachidanand Sahai. Dr. Sahai is a well known scholar on South East Asia and last year received two prestigious awards from the president of India for his work on the influence of the Indian culture on South East Asia. When Dr. Sahai was in Chile he learned that Munesh Kumar was interested in how Vedic mantras were originally created as a response to stars and that they affected human emotions. Dr. Sahai wrote to me and mentioned Munesh Kumar's interest in this area of stars and mantras and I immediately found the concept to be fascinating.

The sounds from stars was already being utilized in musical compositions by many composers, and a new field of study called stellar acoustics was developing as a result of using the sounds of stars recorded by radio telescopes. I had already been downloading many of these sounds which were recorded at radio telescope facilities in several countries. I was also aware of the Alma radio telescope in the Atacama Desert in Chile. At this point I began to make associations with stellar acoustics, Munesh Kumar, mantras and stars and my own synthesizer compositions all coalescing into a new idea which I immediately wrote down in my journal.

Kumar was of the opinion that the state of human affairs on the planet was in a desperate situation enabling him to promulgate the idea that the survival of the “human breed” needed to be saved. Combining his ideas with how stars may effect the creation of mantras I thought it might be possible to be more exacting by knowing which stars were responsible for which mantras and do a study with recordings from various stars to see how they may be related to mantras.

The coming of the Winter Solstice on Dec 21, 2012 was being heralded as one of the epochal turning points in human history. This particular solstice was also related to how the plane of the ecliptic of our own solar system would intersect the plane of the galaxy with the solar meridian aligning itself to the center of the galaxy. It was all these life and celestial events, which became synthesized in my mind in August of 2012. Consequently, I knew it was important to be some where on the planet where I would have an unobstructed view of the stars and also be in a location where the stars were recognized by our ancient ancestors and used in rituals and ceremonies.

The decision to do a performance in Chaco Canyon using stellar acoustics and other electronic sound making equipment took shape and a serious effort began to assemble portable sound making equipment including using tablet computers, smart phones and other electronic sound making equipment. Research revealed that the bones of the Macaw were found in grave sites leading many researchers to think they were used in ceremonies. The opinion of many researchers was that Chaco Canyon with its great houses and kivas was a major ceremonial location bringing thousands of pilgrims to the area on important celestial events such as the equinoxes, full moons and solstices. The amount of petroglyphs in Chaco Canyon is very impressive with unusual human like forms, animals and even the depiction of the supernova which lit up the heavens in 1054AD. Over the last 50 years serious archaeoastronomical research has been done all over Chaco Canyon leading one to clearly see that Chaco Canyon was host to a very developed social structure where attention to the heavens was a key component for all the architecture and speculation on ritual and ceremonies that may have mirrored the sacred ceremonies conducted by Mayan priests far to the south in Mesoamerica

Trying to consider what sort of cosmology was being developed in Chaco Canyon between 800AD and 1200 AD was something I began to think about a great deal. Philip Coppens, a well known author and researcher of ancient civilizations referred to the People of Chaco Canyon as wanderers of the fourth world, as a way of describing how the Hopi Indians thought about the time we were living in as well as stating that the ceremonies held in Chaco Canyon were performed for the Gods. The winter solstice was a time of the Soyal festival where the spirits of the dead would come from another world. Star people and spirits from another dimension was very much a part of the folk lore of Chaco Canyon. It was the Kachinas, spirit messengers, who come to Chaco Canyon, during the winter solstice. It was for this reason that I made it a point to locate a Kachina doll to bring to Chaco Canyon and the one I picked was the Star Chief Kachina.



Star Chief Kachina spirit figure with macaw feathers

The entire area spanning hundreds of miles in all directions was a sacred pilgrimage site over 1200 years ago and in fact much of the territory comprising the area called the four corners was a sacred meeting place which today is Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

So even though these ceremonies and pilgrimages were not being held today on a scale we can only imagine was performed in the past, I knew that I was at the very least going to be in a location that was renowned for being of the highest spiritual significance for the Native American people of that time as well as representing a portal into other worlds.

By late October of 2012 all of the electronic equipment had been secured and practice sessions were conducted using electronic synthesizers that were downloaded onto my tablet computers. A separate database of star recordings was prepared as well as the recording of the calls made by a live macaw. The flight to New Mexico from Bangkok took about 21 hours and once there the change in the landscape from Thailand to the desert of New Mexico could have not been more pronounced. After flying into Albuquerque it took a few days of more preparations before the pilgrimage finally began to venture north to Chaco Canyon. In Albuquerque myself, Michael "Lemon" DeGeorge and Tom McVeety tested all the audio equipment for Chaco Canyon. On the morning of Dec 19th both Michael DeGeorge and I left for Chaco Canyon in a snow storm wondering if we would have clear skies.

The actual time of the solstice in Chaco Canyon was going to take place at 4:03AM in the early morning hours of Dec. 21, 2012. But it was on Dec. 20, 2012, in the early afternoon, when we finally set up the portable performance equipment and a special “astro-ethnic” musical composition was offered to the spirits of Chaco Canyon to commemorate the Winter solstice.

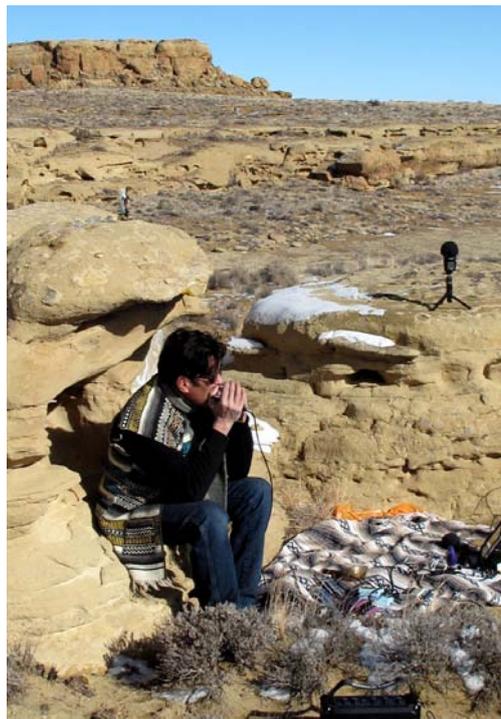


Willard Van De Bogart chanting in Chaco Canyon on Winter Solstice Dec 20, 2012

After carrying all the sound equipment to the top of the mesa a suitable place was located facing south into the sun so we could keep warm. The spot that was selected was shaped like a small amphitheatre where the rocks formed a semi circle with a flat space directly in front of it. As mentioned a larger amphitheatre was located between Pueblo Bonito and Chetro Ketl named Tsebiinaholts’s Yalti which translates as the “curved rock that sings”. The acoustic effects resulting from making sounds near this curved section of the canyon wall is carried very far and can easily be heard at a great distance since the canyon is so quiet. It is thought that great ceremonies were conducted at this natural amphitheatre and archaeologists have discovered flutes, small copper bells, trumpet shells and even graves containing the skeletons of macaws. What kind of ceremonies were conducted here is unknown but with the *Datura* plant growing in the vicinity it is thought to have been used to induce visions and by singing and chanting it would open a portal to the dimension of the deities. The Navajos referred to this ceremony as Chihwojoolyneer or the origin place of tones that gives power to the chants. To imagine what kinds of sounds were made in ancient times at this sacred site opens a whole new area of research known as archaeoacoustics. We were going to explore these unique archaeoacoustical effects in Chaco Canyon by playing sounds generated from indigenous instruments as well as 21st century synthesizers and stellar acoustic recordings. An attempt was going to be made to integrate archaeoacoustical effects in Chaco Canyon with the sounds made from stars.

Careful attention was paid to placing ceremonial objects near and around our performance area as a way to pay our respects to this sacred land. Again, the one outstanding feature of this location was how perfectly quiet it was. There was an occasional sound of a passing bird, but other than that not a sound could be heard anywhere. The sky was azure blue and the sun was shining brightly with the moon visible in the East. This was the moment I had prepared for so many months with the assembling of portable music making equipment which incorporated two tablet computers with downloaded audio synthesizers, digital Indian tanpuras, battery operated mixers, speakers and pre-recorded sounds from a live macaw as well as sounds from many stars collected from mp3 libraries at radio telescope web sites around the world. It was the intention to mix stellar acoustics with the sounds made from instruments most likely used in ceremonies at Chaco Canyon. What I had not anticipated were the acoustical effects of making sounds on top of the mesa.

When the first OM sound was made it filled up the entire space surrounding us as if the whole mesa was one large concert hall. It was an unusual aural experience because even though there were just two Roland Mobile Cube speakers it sounded as if the entire mesa was filled with sound. The calls of the macaw reverberated off the canyon walls and the entire landscape came to life. The subtle sounds of a rattle and the slight ringing of a bell announced our intention to offer our recognition of this being a sacred time in the heavens.



Michael "Lemon" DeGeorge

In the creation story of the Hopi Indians, when the world was being populated during the fourth world, it was the Blue Flute Clan that migrated into the Chaco Canyon area. The name associated with the flute player is Kokopilau. A petroglyph of this flute player is shown at the beginning of this story, which was found high up on the canyon wall near the great house of Casa Chiquita. At one time music must have filled this canyon. Now, on the winter solstice of 2012, the rhythmic sounds of the synthesizer

began to add another dimension to the canyon landscape accompanied by the distinct sound of a flute made by the late Bob McNulty from the hills of Western Pennsylvania and played by Michael "Lemon" DeGeorge. Our world on the top of that mesa dramatically changed and a new aural world came into existence and amplified by the natural setting we were performing in. The tonal variations that were being experienced filled the air and like some magic carpet, whereby the entire canyon came alive with resonating sounds floating over the landscape. We were catapulted into a new aural landscape completely unexpected. I began to make some chanting sounds using a creative use of syllables that I had developed and immediately realized it was more like a calling out into the vast unknown. The moon could be seen over my left shoulder and when I looked at it while I was chanting I felt as though I was in direct communication with the spirit world. I got the sensation that some form of dialogue was taking place between me and all the natural elements.



Moon in Chaco Canyon Dec 20, 2012 2PM

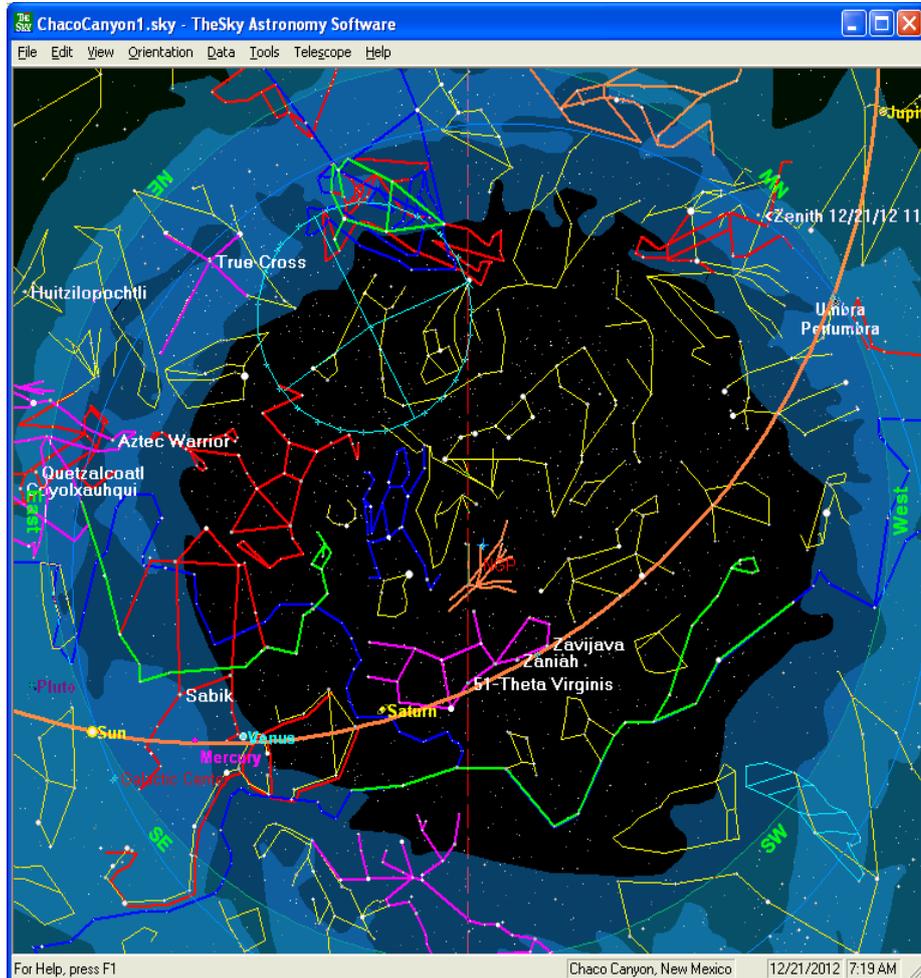
It was then I realized I was vocalizing my ideas and talking with modulations in my voice. Those modulations were the signal that I was sending and receiving impressions from the world around me. My emotions became triggered because I realized I was not in complete control of what I was vocalizing but instead it was as if something was inside of me, talking to me, guiding me, and changing the pitch of my chanting. This lasted for quite a few minutes and I found myself converting my emotions into different octaves, sometimes low and sometimes high but able to control the upwelling of my emotions. I had one hand on the synthesizer controls with the star sounds being controlled through the mixer and in the other hand I was holding the microphone. This was a definite turning point in my experience of performing sounds. My entire creative will was being guided by forces completely beyond my understanding. If ever there was truth to communicating with entities not of this world I have to say I came as close, if not in fact, in direct contact with those entities. My next experience was no less astounding when I would receive amazing knowledge standing under the stars.

The next morning at 4am, on Dec 21, 2012, I was standing on the top of a mesa to witness and experience a clear view of the majestic dome of the heavens. There were two things which stood out as I emerged into the early morning hours with millions of

stars above me. One was the absolute stillness and quiet all around me and the other was the 4 degrees above zero temperature. It was very cold and very quiet.

This was the moment I had planned for so long and it was a bit of a shock to realize I was standing under the vault of heaven on top of a mesa in New Mexico with the temperature almost at zero degrees. I was prepared with clothing so I could tolerate the cold, and the next adjustment was to stand and remain perfectly still and just become aware of where I was without trying to answer any questions as to why I was there. I stood in one spot for over an hour and a half allowing the cold, the stars and the environment to speak to me in a way that was the essence of the canyon. This became a very interesting experience and one which would set the tone for the remainder of my time in Chaco Canyon. But of course I had no ideas what to expect and what did take place went beyond all my expectations or realizations of what could be experienced in a sacred space.

The first thing I began to do was orient myself with the heavens and started identifying constellations so brilliantly displayed before me as I've never seen before. Hundreds of stories began pouring through my mind as I could recall so many of those ancient mythical tales related to the stars. Orion was seen with his out stretched arm rising above the ecliptic and Venus was shining ever so brightly. This was the time when the solstice sun would align itself with the galactic center. It was a symbolic time to honor the turning of the heavens as the ancient Chacoan culture did over 1000 years ago. But this time the rising sun was symbolic of more than just a solstice sunrise it was the time a new great year would begin again. Forces throughout the solar system and galaxy were interacting to form an alignment with all these heavenly bodies that would only take place once in 26,000 years. I could now understand why the ancient people of this canyon were such a mysterious culture. With petroglyphs of human figures all over the canyon walls, looking as if they came from out of this world, spoke a thousand stories and the interplay of starlight within the vastness of the universe beckoned the imagination to soar. Research even suggested that another worldly orientation was incorporated into the ceremonies which took place within the many kivas built in Chaco Canyon. From my vantage point on top of the mesa those stories did not seem at all far fetched as it felt as though knowledge of another world did exist during the time of the ancient Chacoan culture. So, to participate in this other worldly experience I just decided to stand under the stars, which did not seem to be such an unusual thing to do considering the history of Chaco Canyon even if it was 4 degrees above zero.



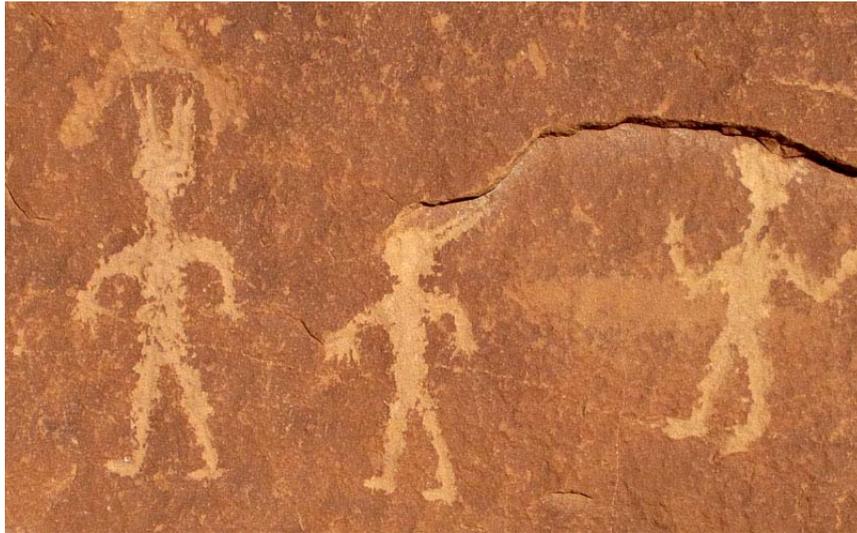
Star Chart showing the heavens in the early morning hours in Chaco Canyon

After about a half hour I began to realize that I had ventured into an activity which I had never done before. It seemed like the right thing to do considering everything I had read about this time with the movement of the heavens. I knew it was better than wondering what it would be like to be at some sacred site so experiencing the solstice in Chaco Canyon was an effort I accepted without question. At first I just stood in one spot on the top of the mesa but then I began to walk very carefully over the rocks on the mesa floor until I found a place which just seemed to feel right. Once I finally became adjusted to my surrounding with the all the stars surrounding me I started to turn myself very slowly in a 360 degree direction to see if it felt more natural looking in one direction than another. I took turns looking in all the cardinal directions just to familiarize myself with all the stars and their locations. It was as if a giant encyclopedia of star references was opening up and when one star started a story in my mind it led into another story. However, I tried not to let the stellar stories take over my thoughts. I just wanted to feel my way around the heavens to see if I felt any more natural looking in one direction over any other direction. But all that changed when I started to look North East. The North East direction seemed to exude a

different kind of presence or identity than any other direction. It was as if something was coming out of the Northeast like a wave or a subtle stream of light. I turned to face other directions to see if I would experience the same feeling and I didn't. It was only when I looked Northeast did I experience a different sensation. Because of this different sensation I decided to look North, Northeast and try and understand why I had a different feeling.

After standing for some time in the very cold early morning hours looking in a northerly direction is when I had the distinct feeling there was some presence behind me. Naturally I turned and all I could see were stars, but at that moment the same sensation was felt of something or someone standing behind me again. Turning again all I could see were stars. I did not want to jump to any hasty conclusions or project something into existence that in fact was not there but then I sensed this presence behind me as well in front of me yet all I could see were stars. Somehow I realized that my comprehension of the place I was standing in was all around me, surrounding me and enveloping me. Everything seemed to become one simultaneous direction and it was that experience which led to a very unusual transition from thinking from my own senses to the realization that my thinking was not localized within me but instead was a result of becoming aware of all the stars at once. Once the stars became one single body of thought rather than separate and distinct thoughts coming from me is when the heavens opened up and the night sky seemed to increase in size. This transition from me thinking to a sensation of the entire heavens thinking seemed at first to be a new and curious way of thinking. It was if as I was carrying a head full of stars. In a fantastical way I became a star being, a being that could think and talk as I was a part of all the stars. How different could that be standing in 4 degrees above zero? It was cold and I had a head full of stars and the stars became my mind. I should say now that I had taken no mental stimulants, had no alcoholic drink to warm me up, no pill to alter my mind just me and the stars.

When I began to realize I had a completely different frame of reference standing on top of the mesa is when the stars began to talk. When I looked in one direction I could hear subtle voices and unusual sounds which slowly formed words. Sometimes there would just be images and sometimes only sounds until eventually all these discontinuities of sensations appeared before me and I was transported back to my childhood days when I was 12 years old. I remembered having walked out onto the rocky ledges at Bass Point in Nahant, Massachusetts. It was in the evening and a place I was familiar with having grown up there, and it was one night while I was walking alone in the dark I could hear voices in the sky when I looked up at the stars. In a strange way I was reunited with my childhood and a place I had an experience well over 60 years ago. And while that childhood experience came into focus the stars were all of a sudden all around me. Everywhere I looked there were stars. Under my feet, over my head, everywhere I became in a sense what I was looking at. I was part of everything yet I had no physical appearance but felt connected to all the stars. So completely dumbfounded by this new reality I realized I had to do something to bring the world I was familiar with back into focus otherwise I think I would have found myself in some world where only thoughts and stars existed. But just before I tried to re-enter my own world another thought came into being and that thought posed the question of what kind of a world was I going to create and become a part of. At that instance I knew I had company but all I could see were stars and feel the cold reaching into my bones.



Star people petroglyph in Chaco Canyon

Before I went to Chaco Canyon I was aware of how the architecture was referred to as a living architecture. A prominent archaeologist, Anna Sofaer, was able to determine that the entire Chaco building complex was inextricably woven into all aspects of lunar and solar movements. It's as if the people of Chaco Canyon were fixated on all aspects of astronomical movements and were in fact witness to the great Supernova which took place in 1054AD as evident by a petroglyph depicting that great astronomical event that gave birth to the Crab Nebula. The petroglyphs which are all over the canyon wall tell a story by on their own provided you know how to see what they are representing.



Crab Nebula



Spiral petroglyph Chaco Canyon

But the most unmistakable image is the spiral. If one were to consider how the architecture of the kivas and great houses were aligned on a North South axis and how the solstice markers were built into the structures to cast shadows and light on key locations announcing the passage of the sun and moon it is obvious that the spiral is none other than a representation of the galaxy turning in the heavens. The Chacoans were living the celestial story and every aspect of their culture was devoted to the heavens. One petroglyph in particular caught my attention because it reminded me of a flying machine from out of this world and perhaps visited Chaco Canyon causing the people to draw their likeness all over the canyon walls.



Petroglyph showing an unusually shaped object

The petroglyph I have included above of three figures depicts strange antenna like protrusion coming out of their heads. The figure on the far left seems have a semi circular shape over his head. Perhaps this represents the dome of the heavens surrounding the people and in a way depicting an all encompassing experience similar to the one I am trying to describe. Long before I went to Chaco Canyon I thought it would be an experience if I could receive these so called star people. In fact I posted a paper saying as much on the South East Asian Review web site www.southeastasianreview.com.

But now that I found myself in Chaco Canyon on a very cold solstice morning what I did not expect wasn't that I would be receiving a star entity but in fact I would become one just like the figure in the petroglyph. But as far as I could tell I did not have the form of a star person as depicted by the petroglyphs but instead I had no form at all. I became completely formless but I could still hear my thoughts as well as share them. This unique experience lasted well over a half hour and even though it was 4 degrees above zero the experience completely eclipsed any inconvenience on how cold it was. It was during that time that some form of communication took place in an other worldly dimension but it would take a few hours more to fully realize what happened when I would find myself standing at Kin Kletso, the great sacred house, where it was possible to see the solstice sun rise in a notch at the bottom of a cliff very far away at the edge of the canyon. I was not fully aware of what happened to me on the mesa that early morning as I was slowly finding my way back to the canyon floor. I felt very stiff from standing in the cold for so long as well as feeling I was carrying something else with me. By the time I got to Kin Kletso to witness the solstice sunrise it was about 6am and there were many people waiting at that pre-dawn hour with clouds of mist filling the air with the breath of so many people standing in that cold canyon air. The sky was turning scarlet red from the rays of the rising sun and the anticipation to see the sun could be felt by everyone.



Just before sunrise in Chaco Canyon Dec 21, 2012

While I was standing there thinking of my star experience on top of the mesa is when the sun crept around the notch at the bottom of a mesa wall far in the distance

illuminating the walls of the great house and penetrating my mind. From millions of stars shining in the heavens to one star pouring forth its rays of light streaming into mind felt like all the stars of the universe were connected inside of me.



First rays of the sun on winter solstice Dec 21, 2012 in Chaco Canyon

That was the moment when I realized the kivas were placed on the canyon floor as star configurations that represented the worlds that were experienced when the ancient Chacoans lived in the canyon. The kivas acted like physical representations of how the star people actually exchanged ideas. The sun galloped up the canyon and immediately all the walls had shadows dancing in a million different ways with each way a reflection of the sun on each stone with a definite shadow defining every thought. Chaco seemed to me to be star consciousness made manifest by creating physical worlds that would help the ancient Chacoans to exchange their thoughts with those from the far reaches of time and space. The great houses were in a sense creating a star theatre and all the star people were sharing their world with this world. The star people were in fact present at that very moment during the solstice sunrise exchanging ideas and telling stories at the speed of light. This was the time when all the stars, the sun and the moon were being used in unison to create an alignment with the heavens. Once the solstice sun had reached high noon the sun light in the canyon illuminated all the stones into a bright sandy orange hue creating a warm cradle of enveloping light.

This was the time to explore the canyon and as I went deeper into the canyon it became quieter and quieter as if some other existence was substituted for the one I was from. Not one sound could be heard. It was a stillness I have never experienced before. I became struck by all the petroglyphs on the canyon walls with little human like figures prancing about as if in some fairy tale with little extrusions coming out of their heads seeming looking like lightning bolts or electricity. These people had encoded themselves into stone as symbols of how they eventually took the form they did and settled in the canyon. As I contemplated these figures is when I sensed that what I was experiencing on top of the mesa at 4am in the morning were these people; if in fact they were people. The messages they were given to me started to find voice and I was able to form thoughts gained during those frigid early morning hours. The

physical body is left behind and replaced with a star light body the voices said. And again, consciousness once thought to be in our physical form was in fact a part of an entire universe of stars. It seemed I became one of them for a short time and then went on a pilgrimage to see their likeness. It was their museum representing their culture located somewhere in the vastness of the heavens. The awareness or the sentience these entities possess is far vaster than our own minds, but in fact it is our minds that are one with the mind of these star people. It wasn't as if I hadn't read stories about ideas such as this, but to experience it in real time while watching a story of images unfold before my eyes reinforced everything I had read or thought about. It was a cosmic story book that had come to life and I was romping in a field of star people on orange colored rocks full of animals, galaxies, flute players, macaws and a host of entities dressed in all sorts of garments adorned with regalia that were simply out of this world. It was Fellin's 1969 film *Satyricon* all over again only this time the backdrop was the farthest reaches of the galaxy.

Coincidentally, the Hopi perform the Soyalangwu ceremony announcing the arrival of Kyaamuya or the winter solstice season. This is the time of the spirit beings where the devotion to deep spiritual practices is observed. According to Philip Coppens the Hopi saw the canyons as passageways from this world to the underworld. This is the time when the spirits or star people cross over the luminal threshold from their other worldly existence to this world. This same belief is held by all ancient cultures and holds more significance at this solstice as there is a direct alignment with our own galactic center. The two gates at the galactic center and anti center are wide open receiving the dead and joining the gods.

Before I would return to my own world the star people asked me how I wanted to configure my reality as they had done with their architecture in Chaco Canyon. They left this world leaving behind the barest of signs on how to use the knowledge of the star world. In her film, *The Mystery of Chaco Canyon*, Anna Sofaer has uncovered a living architecture where the Fibonacci number has been employed in the design of the kivas and Chris Alexander has shown how the Chacoans used a "pattern language" employing the hexagon and how it was related to the winter solstice and the construction of the kivas. Sacred geometry was a part of the architecture in Chaco Canyon so once you enter this world you become a part of the grand design of the universe. But to answer the question posed to me by the star people needed some thought. I knew we had, as a collective species, the knowledge to construct a world that incorporated the knowledge of the star people. I also knew we could re-configure our world because we were already a cohesive species comprised of all the forces of nature. In fact the human species had uncovered many of those forces giving us advances in how to understand nature, but at the same time the seeds for the eventual elimination of our species were incorporated into our advances. We had at our disposal access to many of the unifying principles of the universe, which our very existence depended upon for survival, but we were not harnessing those principles well enough to prevent our foreseen demise if we continued to ignore the need to mandate strategies for a sustainable future. And if in fact those natural forces were being violated by our own way of thinking what would be the best way to re-construct the world I was going to back into?

So, standing in Chaco Canyon in the late afternoon of Dec 21, is when I realized I was asked to solve a problem that would save the world. It was an incredulous request but the answer that came to me was our entire thought system had to be deconstructed and phased back into a harmonious collective field of energy. The question on how it could be done immediately forced me to look for any clues that I could use to form a more complete answer. Where was I, and what was I really standing on or even under? It was this under aspect of my question which proved to be very insightful. I was standing under the cross of the ages. I was standing under the heavens in a time that would only take place once in 26,000 years. Our sun, with its solar meridian would align itself with the center of our galaxy. It was a synchronous moment in the heavens and one that I had to use to help solve the riddle of finding answers to a very demanding request.



Navajo ritual with star rattles

When I was finally oriented to my world I found myself standing on that ancient Northerly directed stone road, built by a culture long ago, and leading me back into a new time. I was also standing on the threshold between dark and light just as the Navajo woman was doing when she was shaking her two sacred star rattles; one was white and the other was dark. Two worlds united under the heavens with arm uplifted in an Orion like gesture with prayers and offerings made to the star people.

Recognizing our place in the universe was the answer that came to me and it was that answer I could now use to develop further by combining both worlds with every thought and action that I took on this earth plane. The transition had been made, I came back to my own world from the world of the star people to once again travel

that eternal road to heaven and this time knowing we all have a responsibility to make sure that we walk on that road to keep us as responsible conscious beings in this universe and not lose our relationship with the stars. Imagining how to implement this awareness was what I thinking about when I left Chaco Canyon.

February 14, 2013
Bangkok, Thailand

This article is located at:

<http://www.southeastasianreview.com/TheStarPeopleofChacoCanyon.pdf>

Photo documentation of pilgrimage:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/109354349394289957073/ChacoCanyonWinterSolstice2012#>

Audio recordings of solstice performance: Recorded on a Zoom H2n (original sound tracks - no editing)

1. Solstice Overture: <https://soundcloud.com/willard-van-de-bogart/solstice-overture>
2. Chaco Star People: <https://soundcloud.com/willard-van-de-bogart/chaco-star-people>

Video recordings at Chaco Canyon:

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9rY62v4qIQw>
2. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItckEKIq_18
3. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JK-u7Os_QRk
4. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofbPPhheMz0>

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