

## Chaco Canyon Place Names

**CASA CHIQUITA** - "smallhouse" in Spanish, so named because this ruin is small in comparison with the major pueblos in Chaco Canyon. The Spanish could be a translation of one of the Navajo names for this pueblo, kin yazhi hooghan, "litle house home," though it is also possible that the Spanish name preceded the Navajo.

**CASA RINCONADA** - "canyon house" or "house where the canyons meet" in Spanish. Rinconada is from rincon, meaning "corner," including the corner formed by inter-secting streets, fences, canyons, etc. In the Spanish of New Mexico and southern Colorado rinconada came to mean "dead end," "secluded place," or "box canyon." Casa Rinconada is located where a side canyon joins Chaco Canyon, thus the name. Among several Navajo names for this giant kiva are kin nahazbas, "circular house" and kits'll t'oo'yaa naalk'id, "many sherds ruins."

**CHACO** - The precise history of chaco has not yet been traced; however, tsegai, "rock white or white rock," the Navajo name for Chacra mesa, is considered a likely source. The Navajo name was Hispanicized as Chaca, possibly passing through some Pueblo language to Spanish and was in turn Anglicized as Chaco or Chacra.

**CHETRO KETL** - The meaning and origin of this name have been lost. There are at least two Navajo names for this ruin, tsebida't'ini'ani, "covered hole," referring to sealed concavities in the cliff behind the pueblo, and nastl'a kin, "house in the corner."

**FAJADA BUTTE** - This place name presents no particular difficulties. Fajada means "belted" or "banded" in Spanish and probably describes the black seam of lignite coal exposed midway up the butte. The landmark occurs in several Navajo legends as tse dighin, "holy rock." With Una Vida it shares a Navajo story of a witch who entices young men to the top.

**HUNGO PAVI** - This name is surely related in some way to Shongopovi, "Reed Spring Village," the largest Hopi village on Second Mesa, some 165 miles west of Chaco Canyon. Generally con-sidered the oldest of the Hopi towns, Shongopovi was established in the 1200s and was thus in existence at the end of the Anasazi occupation. The best evidence linking the names Shongopovi and Hungo Pavi is on a map drawn in 1776 by Spanish cartographer Miera y Pacheco which shows the Hopi town as Jungo Bavi. The spelling similarities between the two words seem too close to be coincidental, and it would have been phonetically reasonable for a speaker of New Mexican Spanish to change the initial /sh/ of Shungopovi into the /h/ sound of Jungo (the /h/ sound is represented by the letter "j" in Spanish.) Still to be explained is how a Hopi place name found its way to Chaco Canyon, or, conceivably and more intriguingly, vice versa.

**KIN BINEOLA** - "whirlwind house" or "house in which the wind swirls," from the Navajo kin binaayoli. This is one of more than seventy Chacoan greathouses found in the San Juan Basin and beyond and linked by many miles of prehistoric roadways. The name occurs in the Navajo legend of Excess Way.

**KIN KLETSO** - "yellow house" in Navajo, describing the light-colored sandstone used to construct the pueblo.

**KIN KLIZHIN** - "black house" in Navajo, presumably in reference to the darker color of its masonry. Kin Klizhin is a greathouse south of Chaco Canyon.

**KIN YA'A** - "house rising up high" in Navajo. Kin Ya'a is a greathouse near Crownpoint. According to one Navajo story, it is a "house" where a group of Navajos settled with the Anasazi. They later became known as Kin yaa' aanii, the "towering house clan."

**PENASCO BLANCO** - "white cliff" or "white bluff" in Spanish, named for the light-colored sandstone bluff beneath the ruin. The name of this geographical feature -- but not the ruin itself -- appears in a Spanish military report written by Jose Antonio Vizcarra in 1823. The pueblo is referred to in the Navajo Flintway legend as taalakin, "plateau house."

**PUEBLO ALTO** - Spanish for "high village." Situated on top of the mesa due north of Pueblo Bonito, this pueblo was mapped and named by William H. Jackson in 1877. In choosing the name Jackson was obviously imitating the straightforward pattern of the Spanish place-names recorded by James Simpson some 28 years earlier, i.e., pueblo or casa followed by a simple adjective (compare Pueblo Bonito, Pueblo Pintado, Casa Chiquita, Casa Rinconada, etc.) The Navajo name for Pueblo Alto -- niyiilbiihi bighan, "earth winner" or "the one who always wins at gambling" -- refers to the Excess Way legend in which the pueblo figures prominently. Unlike the Spanish names in the Canyon, which simply describes an obvious feature of the site, the Navajo name often reveals how the pueblo had been incorporated into the lives of the people.

**PUEBLO BONITO** - "pretty village" in Spanish. Like most Spanish place-names in Chaco Canyon this one was recorded during the Washington Expedition of 1849 by Lt. James Simpson. Simpson's principal source was his Mexican guide, Carabajal. The Navajo name -- tse biyaa anii'ahi, "leaning rock gap" -- reveals a greater familiarity with the site in its reference to Threatening Rock, the large sandstone slab that fell and crushed the northeast portion of the pueblo in 1941. The Navajo name occurs in two legends.

**PUEBLO DEL ARROYO** - "village by the wash" in Spanish. As in the case of Casa Chiquita, the Spanish may be a translation of a Navajo name, tabaah kini, which has a similar meaning.

**PUEBLO PINTADO** - Spanish for "painted village." This Chacoan outlier was also known as Pueblo de los Ratones, village of the mice."

**UNA VIDA** - "a life" or "one life" in Spanish, a shortened form of Pueblo (de) una vida, the version which Simpson received from Carabajal. No convincing explanation of the Spanish name has yet been put forth. The Navajo names, based on a legend, are asdzaa halgoni bighan, "witchcraft woman's home" and astohalkoi bikin, "house of the woman who makes you thin by starving you."

**TSIN KLETSIN (or KIN KLETSIN)** - The name of this pueblo atop South Mesa has been translated as "black wood" or "charcoal place." The reference may be to charred timbers once found in the ruins.

**WIJIJI** - "greasewood," diwozhii, is one of several Navajo names, for this building. Another name kin dootl'izhii, blue or turquoise house, is referred to in Navajo legends.

#### REFERENCES

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