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MASONRY TYPES IN Bc53

by

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E.C.R.

MASONRY TYPES IN Bc53

Introduction

Bc53 is a small house ruin in the Chaco Canyon, near the sites of Bc50¹ and 51.² Excavation was begun during the 1940 Field Session by a group of advanced students, working under the direction of Dr. Frank H. H. Roberts, Jr. The excavation was completed in the 1941 Session by both beginning and advanced students, with Dr. Roberts and Paul Reiter in charge.

The ruin consists of eighteen secular rooms and four kivas. There are two distinct levels of occupation present, as evidenced by the superposition of walls in the northwest corner of the structure.

Bc53, together with Bc52, which was also excavated during the 1940 and 1941 sessions, is one of the few examples of a site in Chaco Canyon which does not present a picture of many superimposed occupancies of different culture periods. Unlike Bc50 and 51, no structures dating back to earlier Pueblo or Basket Maker periods were found underneath the superstructure. The two levels of occupation mentioned above may quite probably have been only a few decades apart in time of construction.

Thus, this ruin should be expected to present a fairly simple aspect as compared to most other Chaco Canyon pueblos.

In working out the masonry types for Bc53 I have had some little difficulty in attempting to correlate them with the previously established sequences for Chaco Canyon masonry types. For this reason I have used my own system of names for the types found in the ruin,

1 Brand, Hawley, Hibben, et al., 1937.

2 Kluckhohn, Reiter, editors, 1939.

rather than trying to apply to them the type names already in use. These names are intended to apply only to BC53 masonry types, and are merely used as a temporary convenience in discussing them.

My own opinion with regard to this site is that the occupation was of relatively short duration and that the two levels of building were probably not separated by a very great span of time. In all probability, all the masonry types represent individual variations or subtypes of one of the major types described by Hawley for Chetro Ketl.³ For this reason, I have designated these subtypes by letters rather than by numbers, in order to avoid as much as possible confusing the issue.

Where the masonry in the large Chaco ruins, such as Pueblo Bonito,⁴ and Chetro Ketl,³ shows a high degree of specialization by which definite sequences can be established, the work in BC53, as well as in other small house sites such as BC50-51 and BC52, is more varied. For example, room 9 in BC53 contains at least three distinct styles of masonry. In such a situation, the futility of trying to deduce a sequence from the typography of masonry is evident.

I shall proceed, therefore, to a discussion of the various masonry types which are found in BC53, and shall attempt to point out such parallels as occur between these and the known and established types.

3 Hawley, 1934

4 Pepper, 1920.

TYPE A

This is the least stylized of the masonry types in the site, and in fact is characterized by its extreme variability. The material, as is true of all Chaco masonry, is sandstone with adobe mortar. The stones are of varying shapes and sizes, some being quite large. While an occasional smaller piece of sandstone is used to fill in the spaces between the large rocks, the walls could hardly be said to have true spalling. There was no attempt to lay the stones in courses. While the large blocks have a relatively smooth outer face, they show no other evidences of having been shaped. The prevailing tendency seems to have been to utilize the rocks as they occurred naturally, roughly placing the irregularly shaped pieces to fit, and filling in any large gaps with smaller stones. The resulting construction was effectively solid, but not in any sense esthetic.

This type bears a certain superficial resemblance to the description and pictures of what Hawley calls Chetro Ketl type VI⁵ or Chaco type 10 (crude rubble without core).⁶ This is not intended to imply that type A in BC53 was contemporaneous to, or corresponded with, type VI in Chetro Ketl, for, as will be pointed out, the superposition of types in BC53 does not seem to correlate with the sequence at Chetro Ketl. However, type A is much cruder than any of the other Chetro Ketl types, with the exception of type I (type 4 in the general Chaco chronology).

Type VI was the latest type found at Chetro Ketl, and represents a regression from the fine workmanship of earlier periods, which had

5 Hawley, 1934.

6 Hawley, in Brand, Hawley, Hibben et al., 1937.

culminated in the beautiful banded masonry so characteristic of the great Chaco pueblos. It appears to have been actually somewhat cruder than the type A found at Bc53.

Type A, in contrast to type VI, was succeeded by finer types of masonry. This is borne out by kivas B and D in Bc53, where the walls are of type A and the kiva benches, which must have been put in after the walls were built, are of a finer type.

For this reason, I conclude that type A does not correlate with the Chetro Ketl type VI at all, but was merely a local variant of one of the earlier types, and was cruder in appearance than the examples at Chetro Ketl.

Type A is illustrated in figure 1, together with a sketch from a photograph of Type VI at Chetro Ketl.

TYPE B

This type is much more stylized than type A. The blocks of sandstone are thick and roughly rectangular. The outer faces of the rocks are smoothed and in some cases other shaping has apparently been done to achieve the desired dimensions. However, in other cases natural rocks were selected which conformed approximately to the required shape. These rather large slabs were laid with abundant mortar and chinked around with a single, or in some cases double, row of large spalls. The masonry was laid in courses, sometimes quite irregular and uneven ones, but nevertheless definitely coursed. It is not, however, banded. The spalls, rather than being of the small, thin variety found in banded masonry, are large and irregular in shape, and have not been fitted closely together. They seem rather to have been set in more or less at random intervals, with a

good deal of adobe filling in the spaces.

There is no type which strictly resembles type B in either Hawley's Chetro Ketl⁷ or her general Chaco Canyon sequence.⁸ Type B resembles Chetro Ketl type IV (general type 8) perhaps more than any of the others, but there are several differences. In Type IV, the sandstone blocks are generally smaller, they are fitted more tightly to one another, and they conform more closely to one another in shape. Adobe mortar is not used as abundantly in Type IV, and the spalls tend to be smaller and thinner. Like type B, however, it is coursed but unbanded, and has spalling. In general the workmanship in Type IV is better than in type B, and the former presents a more esthetic appearance. It may be that type B is an earlier, developmental subtype of IV, or that it is later than type IV at Chetro Ketl and represents a retrogression from the comparatively fine type there.

Or, again, the similarities between these types may be purely coincidental and no real correlation may exist.

Type B is found in some instances having been built later than type A. This is shown in kiva B where the walls are of type A, the bench of type B.

Type B is illustrated in figure 2, together with a reproduction of a sketch of Chaco type 8, and of a photograph of Chetro Ketl Type IV.

TYPE C

This type is similar in many respects to type B, but is different-

7 Hawley, 1934.

8 Hawley, in Brand, Hawley, Hibben, et al, 1937.

iated sufficiently to warrant its being considered a distinct type. The sandstone blocks in this type are long, thin rectangular slabs conforming quite closely to one another in size and shape. They were apparently shaped intentionally by the masons to achieve the desired effect. Like masonry B this type is also coursed but not banded. The courses of large slabs are separated by a single row of large but thin spalls. Generally the ends of the contiguous sandstone slabs fit quite closely, with no spalls between them. The stones are fitted more closely together than in type B, there being none of the large gaps between slab and spalls which are characteristic of B. Adobe mortar has been used more sparingly also. On the whole, this type of masonry is far better in construction and more pleasing in appearance than either of the two previously discussed types.

Rubble
coursed?

Type C, like type B, resembles Chetro Ketl type IV⁹ more closely than it corresponds to any of the other types in the established sequence. However, where type B may be an inferior or less highly developed subtype of number IV, type C seems to be a more advanced form. The spalling is more regular and even than in type IV, and the large blocks are coursed more regularly and are more uniform in shape and size. The spalls used in type C are larger than those of type IV. In general, type C more closely approximates a banded type of masonry than does type IV.

Type C is probably the earliest type in point of time which occurs in Bc53. It is found in the lower levels of rooms 16, 17, and 18 at the northwest corner of the ruin. The upper levels of these rooms

9 Hawley, 1934.

have walls of type A. This would seem to indicate that A is a regressive type, while showing such a marked regression as did type VI at Chetro Ketl, which succeeded the highly advanced banded types II and III.

This type is illustrated in figure 3.

TYPE D

Type D is characterized by thin, flat sandstone slabs laid in courses. The spalling is not regular. In some places there is a single row of spalls separating the two rows of slabs, but in other cases the slabs are fitted closely together with no spalls between. The spalls when used are extremely thin but rather long. The slabs are definitely shaped to a rectangular shape and are all of about the same size and width. The stones are fitted closely so that very little mortar is used.

This type is similar to type C, but varies in that the slabs are thinner and more uniform in size and shape, and that the spalling is more irregular.

Type D seems to be halfway between type 8¹⁰ (Chetro Ketl IV) and type 9¹¹ (Chetro Ketl V) in style. Type 8 which has already been described, has thicker and more irregular slabs than type D. It is similar, however, in the unevenness of the spalling and in the single rows of slabs. Type 9 has smaller, thin blocks of sandstone which fit very tightly together with no spalls.

Type D, therefore, can be considered a later subtype of type 8, tending toward type 9 in style.

10 Hawley, in Brand, Hawley, Hibben, et al., 1937.

11 Hawley, 1934.

Type D is represented as having been built later than type A in kiva D, where the walls are of type A, and the bench is of type D.

This type is illustrated in figure 4.

TYPE E

Type E is illustrated by only one example in the whole of Bc53. This type of masonry was used to fill in a doorway on the south side of room 9. It is made of very small regularly shaped slabs laid in even courses. There is no spalling. The blocks are obviously shaped artificially and are all almost exactly the same size and shape.

This type represents Chaco type 9¹² quite definitely, being almost identical with it.

Type E is illustrated in figure 5, as is Chaco type 9.

TYPE F

F is the most highly stylized of all the types in Bc53. Like type E, it is represented by only one example on this site, the west wall of room 9. The blocks of sandstone are rather thick and rectangular in shape. They are laid in courses and separated by very small thin spalls in rows of one or two. Between the ends of the large slabs all the spaces are carefully filled with these small spalls fitted closely together. The adobe mortar is used very sparingly, so that almost none shows on the face of the wall.

Type F is similar in workmanship to Chetro Kettle interior Type III,¹³ but is not banded. Since this type is found in only one wall of Bc53, it may be merely an individual variation which ^{does} not actually

12 Hawley, in Brand, Hawley, Hibben, et al., 1937.

13 Hawley, 1934.

correlate with any of the Chetro Ketl types.

Type F is illustrated in figure 6, contrasted with Chetro Ketl Inferior Type III.

SEQUENCE OF TYPES IN Bc53

Type C is definitely the oldest type found in Bc53. It is found in rooms 6, 7, and 8 which are in the central block of rooms which was the first part to be built. It is also found in the lower levels of rooms 16, 17, and 18 in the west wing of the pueblo. These rooms belong to the first occupation level and were later filled and walls of type A were built on top. Type C is also represented in Kiva C in the east wing.

Type B was probably contemporaneous with, or possibly slightly later than type C. It is also found in the original central block of rooms, in rooms 10 and 11, and in the west wing in rooms 1, 2, and 3.

Type A is somewhat later than type C also. It is found in the upper levels of rooms 16, 17, and 18, and in room 4, all in the west wing. It is also represented in rooms 13 and 14, which are a southern extension of the central block. Kivas A, B, and D are of this type.

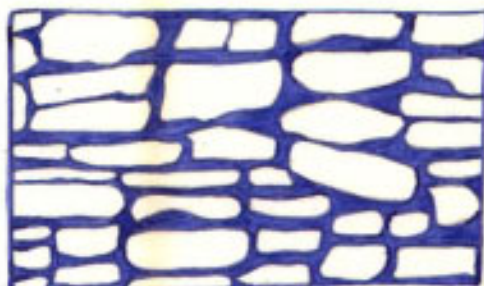
Type D is found in room 12, which is also south of the central portion, and in the north wall of rooms 9 and 15 in the east wing. The bench in kiva D is of type D masonry.

Type E is represented only by a filled-in doorway in the south wall of room 9. The wall itself is of type C.

Type F is represented by a portion of the west wall of room 9 only.

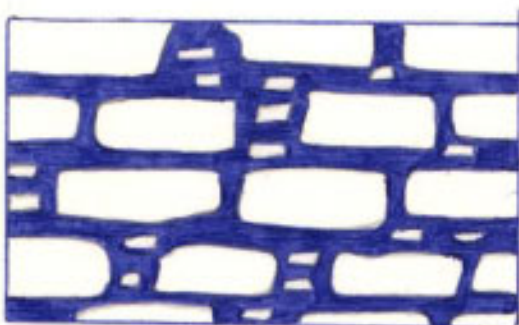


Type A

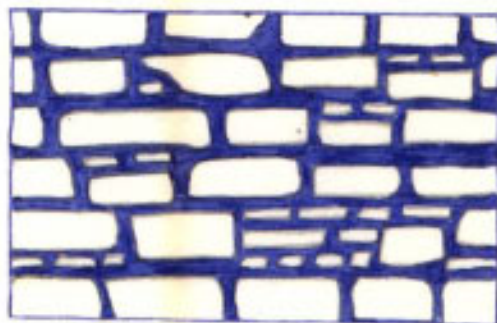


Chetro Kettl type VI
(from a photograph in
Hawley, 1934.)

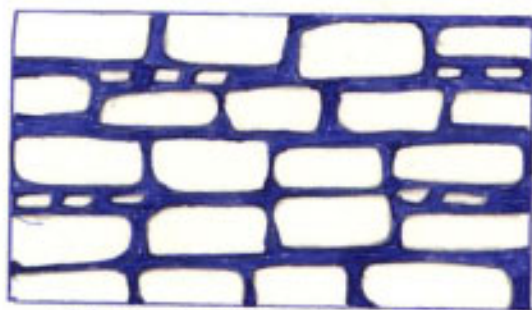
Figure 1



Type B

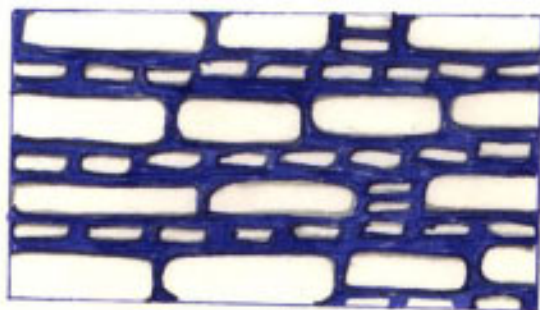


Chaco Type B
(from Brand, Hawley, Hibben,
et al., 1937)



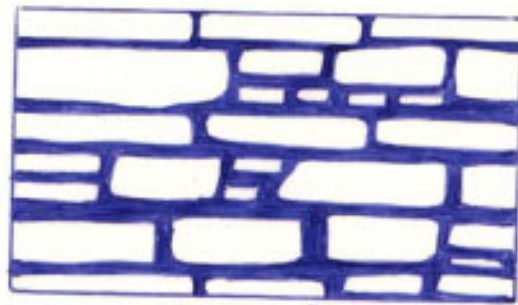
Chetro Kettl type IV
(from photograph in Hawley, 1934)

Figure 2



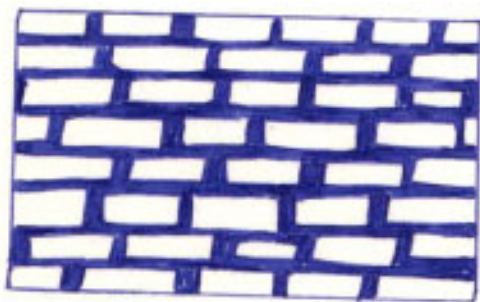
Type C

Figure 3

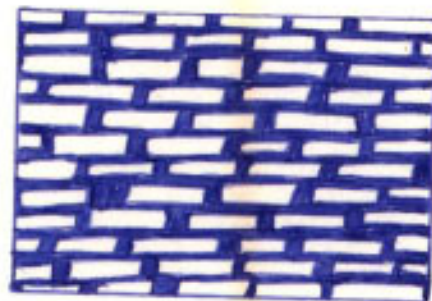


Type D

Figure 4

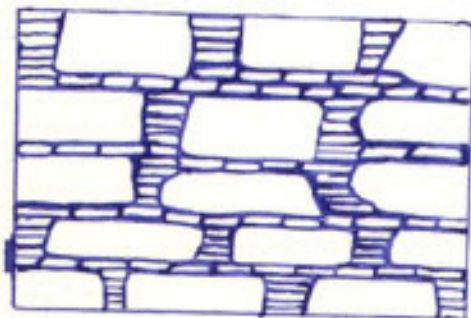


Type E

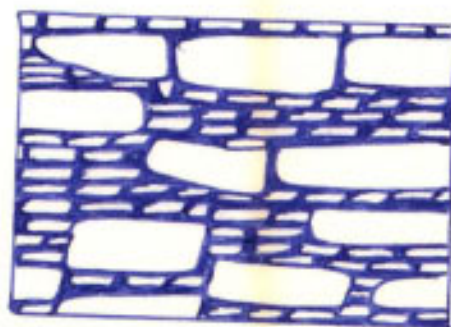


Chaco type 9
(from Brand, Hawley
Hibben, et.al., 1937)

Figure 5



Type F



Chetro Keti Inferior
type III

(from photograph in
Hawley, 1934)

Figure 6

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