West Ruin at Aztec Ruins National Monument has long been recognized as a late Chacoan great house dominated by McElmo style masonry. The pre-backfilling architectural program conducted over the past few years has further described the site in these terms, but headway has also been made in distinguishing additional masonry styles, including some that are classic Chacoan (late Bonito styles) and some that represent local variation in the various styles. The masonry styles generally recognized in great house architecture were first defined and are best exemplified at sites within Chaco Canyon. The AZRU architectural documentation program attempted to employ the typology of Chacoan masonry styles adapted by Lekson (1984) from Judd’s (1954) work at Pueblo Bonito and Vivian and Mathews’ (1965) work at Kin Kletso. Based on detailed examination of West Ruin masonry, the original descriptions are discussed below and photographs of local examples are provided to assist future classifications.

- **Type I.** Characterized by long tabular stone with scabbled edges, laid in thick mortar joints, sometimes chinked with horizontal spalls. Lekson describes this masonry as uncoursed, although Judd’s example is semi-coursed. This early masonry style has not been identified at Aztec.
- **Type II.** Tabular stones with flaked and/or snapped faces on the exposed sides (based on photographic examples, pecked faces also occur). Vertical and horizontal mortar joints are heavily chinked. This masonry style has also not been identified at Aztec.
- **Type III (Coursed-patterned masonry).** Alternating bands of thin tabular and thicker stones, both showing snapped, scabbled, and/or ground faces on the exposed side (at Aztec pecked faces are common on the thicker stones). Mortar joints are thin and chinking is uncommon at Chaco, but examples at Aztec frequently have bands of thin stones intermixed with smaller and thinner chinking. This masonry style is uncommon at West Ruin, but it can be found throughout parts of the North and East Wings and clearly has been obliterated unintentionally through repeated stabilization of walls where it appears to have been dominant originally.
- **Type IV.** Compact, tabular masonry laid with very thin mortar joints and strong coursing, the exposed faces of stone being snapped, scabbled, and/or ground. Chinking is uncommon. This masonry style is uncommon at West Ruin, but it occurs in the central core of the building within Kiva L and behind it.
- **McElmo.** Rectangular brick-like stones, ranging from blocky to relatively thick tabular pieces, with flush faces on the exposed side and chinking in both vertical and horizontal mortar joints. Coursing is strong. Lekson describes the exposed flush faces are ground, but pecked faces are more common at Aztec, even in walls where erosion has not erased striations and other indications of grinding. Classic
McElmo masonry style is common at Aztec, but much of the masonry does not fit this description well, due both to heavy stabilization and original masonry style.

- **Non-conforming McElmo.** Rectangular brick-like stones intermixed with less regular shapes, including tabular and flagged shapes of various sizes, generally heavily chinked (where not eliminated due to erosion and stabilization). Pecked and/or ground faces like those dominant on McElmo are less common, and scabbled, snapped, and patinated (natural) faces are common. This masonry style is common at West Ruin, although much might be attributable to stabilization. Examples provided in the accompanying photos are clearly original masonry.

- **Decorative banded masonry.** Walls that otherwise display McElmo masonry in the West Wing occasionally are interrupted by unique bands of tabular stones that differ from the surrounding fabric either in color (as in the famous “green band” along the west exterior wall) or sandstone type and thinness (also exemplified in the west exterior wall). Variations on this theme also occur elsewhere in the West Wing, but this masonry style is rare. Nevertheless, West Ruin offers the best examples known in the San Juan region.

The first five masonry styles have been discussed by Lekson and other authors, but the last two are an attempt to recognize both expedient and formal varieties that probably reflect local emulation of the classic McElmo style by the builders of West Ruin. It is recommended that future architectural documentation procedures be somewhat conservative in the identification of true McElmo style masonry and distinguish more expedient and less standardized variations that do not fit the criteria associated with this style as “non-conforming.” Eventually, it may be possible to define distinct varieties within this general category. Clearly, similarities between Chaco Canyon and Aztec Ruins are noteworthy, but so are the differences and local adaptations of regional styles to suit the resources and people at the site location.

**References Cited**

Judd, Neil M.

Lekson, Stephen H.

Vivian, Gordon R., and Tom W. Mathews
Type III coursed-pattern masonry in third-story north interior wall of Room 114.

Type III coursed-pattern masonry in first-story east interior wall of Room 93.
Type IV masonry in north interior wall of Kiva L.

Type IV masonry in second-story south interior wall of Room 115.
McElmo masonry in second-story west interior wall of Room 95.

McElmo masonry in first-story north interior wall of Room 100.
Non-conforming McElmo masonry in first-story south interior wall of Room 93.

Non-conforming McElmo masonry in first-story west interior wall of Room 93.
Decorative banded masonry in first-story exterior wall of Room 208.

Decorative banded masonry in second-story interior wall of Room 133^2.