Recognizing the cultural importance of metaphors helps archaeologists and art historians understand how shared ideas facilitate interaction among social groups, past and present. Metaphors describe one thing in terms of another. We usually think of metaphors as verbal expression, but visual metaphors are just as frequent and important and are sometimes amenable to archaeological analysis. Particular expressions and contexts of metaphors should help us trace migration, pilgrimage, and the spread of religious systems across time and space. Metaphors may also provide evidence for transformations and innovations in ritual practice, iconography, and graphic expression in particular times and places.

To study metaphors in the archaeological record, the first task is to recognize material expression of important metaphors and symbols. Ethnography provides the best evidence, but in the absence of texts, one can investigate “natural symbols” and proposed universal metaphors, at least as hypotheses. The second and more difficult task is to find distinctive contexts, combinations, and expressions of such concepts. Third, we must discover how these expressions are patterned in time and space. I would like to suggest two geographic metaphors that are differentially patterned in the Puebloan region: the Pueblo banding line, with a “line break” or
“breath gate” in pottery and baskets as a metaphor for women’s lives, and the concept of roads converging on center places as metaphors for social organization and community histories.

In addition, Scott Ortman (2003, Chapter 12, this volume) has described a Tewa-centered basket-bowl pair as a sky-earth cosmogram. I have not found this metaphor expressed at Hopi in general, but individual Hopi clan traditions and the traditional histories of other Pueblos should be explored to see if this concept is expressed and if it useful for tracing clan histories. For example, if sky and earth are described as a basket and bowl in some clan histories, songs, or rituals, this might suggest origins for those clans that are shared or derived from Tewa groups. Some metaphorical expressions may be differentially expressed in Pueblo languages and cultures because of the individual histories of different peoples who came together over the last few thousand years to become a heterodox composite of clans, sodalities, dual divisions, villages, and language groups. Some commonly recurring metaphors probably reflect an ancient substrate of belief still held in common throughout Greater Mesoamerica. Still others may indicate ancient, common origins in pan-American and Asian shamanistic traditions, ideas about landscape and cosmology that arise from shared experiences in the natural world (natural metaphors) and the neuropsychological structures and processes shared by all anatomically modern humans.

THE LINE BREAK

Kenneth Chapman and Bruce Ellis surveyed line break features in a 1951 article entitled “The Line-Break, Problem Child of Pueblo Pottery.” The line break appears earliest in seventh-century (possibly earlier) basketry in the Canyon de Chelly area (Figure 13.1). It next appears in Chaco Canyon on a small number of pottery vessels and is widespread in the Pueblo world by A.D. 1300 (Figure 13.2). This feature has a particular distribution in time, space, and media. It has different contexts in different Pueblo communities, past and present. Particular ethnographic meanings of the line break suggest it has something to do with emergence and migration, birth, women’s reproduction, and craft production. Chapman and Ellis recognized a pattern, posited that the pattern was meaningful, but drew few conclusions about what that meaning might be. More than fifty years later, the line break has been considered something of an unsolved mystery, to which I propose a partial solution: the Pueblo line break on basketry and pottery vessels connects two important metaphors into one context when expressed as \textit{BODIES ARE VESSELS} and \textit{LIFE IS A JOURNEY}.

\textit{BODIES ARE VESSELS} may be a universal metaphor, based on shared physical experience of bodies as containers for food, water, babies, and more abstract concepts such as soul, spirit, or life force. This metaphor is often expressed in the reverse as \textit{VESSELS ARE BODIES}. Effigy vessels and the application of features that represent breasts to pottery vessels can express this metaphor visually by making vessels into bodies (see David, Sterner, and Gavua 1988 for an African example). Naming vessel
Figure 13.1a and b. Four unfinished burden baskets with deliberate breaks in the banding line, Canyon del Muerto. American Museum of Natural History, Division of Anthropology, catalog numbers 29.1/8840–8843 (see also Morris and Burgh 1941:figs. 14, 28). Photos by Kelley Hays-Gilpin.
parts with terms such as lip, neck, shoulder, and belly expresses this metaphor verbally (for example, Bunzel 1929:13 for Zuni).

Linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) proposed that *Life is a journey* is a universal conceptual metaphor. Whether this is true is not of interest here. Rather, I am interested in culturally distinct ways of expressing this metaphor. The particular Puebloan expression of this metaphor might be phrased best as *life is a pathway*. The geographic component of this metaphor, life’s journey symbolized by a footpath or roadway, is an important concept to Pueblo people today and perhaps to Native Americans generally. Many examples of the deployment of the terms “road” or “path” as symbols for Indian lives can be found in popular culture as well as in the traditions of individual cultures, for example, the intertribally negotiated title for the Museum of the American Indian exhibit *All Roads Are Good* (Smithsonian Institution 1994). Life’s roads and paths are manifest in ritual lines of pollen and cornmeal, foot racing, and the depiction of footprints and animal tracks. For example, Hopi elders serving as “Katsina fathers” make roads for the katsinas to follow, and certain ritual practices are said to make roads for rain clouds to follow from their mountain homes to dry fields. Roads of cornmeal are particularly important in life-cycle events, such as baby naming (Bradfield 1995:29) and marriage (Parsons 1939:362). At death, a cotton thread with a feather serves as a “road” for the deceased’s “breath body” (Bradfield 1995:40). I suggest that the broad line painted around the rim of some pottery vessels may express the same conceptual metaphor at a personal or individual scale and evoke the body-as-vessel metaphor at the same time.

**Ethnographic Evidence**

Ruth Bunzel (1929:69) translated the Zuni word for the line break, *onane*, as “the road,” representing in particular the life of the potter: “When I finish it, I shall finish my road”—that is, “end my life.” Potters at Santa Ana told Kenneth Chapman that “the break formerly was an intimate and personal affair to the potter, which
had to do with the well-being of her family—its continuation and health.” Jemez potters said the line break “was a women’s matter” (Chapman and Ellis 1951:277–278). Elsie Clews Parsons (1939:91) reported that Hopi potters of childbearing age made a line break to avert difficult labor and the possibility of stillbirth. Alexander Stephen translated a Hopi term as “breath gate” (but did not provide the Hopi term; Stephen cited in Patterson 1994), in which the line represents the path and the break is a gate or opening for the breath. George Wharton James (1901:194) connected Hopi coiled basket finishing techniques to pregnancy as well: unmarried women left the foundation material exposed, called the “flowing gate.” Married women of childbearing age cut the foundation material but did not stitch over it, called the “open gate.” Widows and postmenopausal women cut and covered the end of the last coil, called the “closed gate.” Alexander Stephen’s 1890 manuscript likewise connects the line break on pottery to women and childbearing: “If the woman who decorates the vessel is old and past the child-bearing period, she paints a completely surrounding band; if she has had a child recently or expects to ever have a child, the band is not quite completed, she leaves a small space of a quarter or half an inch unpainted. Young unmarried girls are not permitted to use this surrounding band in their pottery decoration” (quoted in Patterson 1994:35).

The ethnographic pattern converges on the idea that life is a pathway. Additional aspects of life’s path can be represented visually by a circle, a spiral, a “gate” through a boundary of some kind, and a maze, as in Piman “man in the maze” baskets and Hopi petroglyphs that consultants identify with migration stories (Figure 13.3). At least some Pueblos associate the broken banding line with women’s reproductive status and capacities. By using this feature on pottery and basketry containers, they link life is a pathway to bodies are vessels. In turn, women’s bodies may be viewed as vessels that bring forth blood, water, and new lives the same way that containers crafted by women hold and bring forth food and water.

**Archaeological Evidence**

How does the archaeological record reflect the history and context of the line break? The earliest deliberate line break in Chapman and Ellis’s survey appears on a few coiled baskets from Canyon del Muerto that date to the Basketmaker III period, circa the A.D. 500s–700s (Morris and Burgh 1941:figs. 14, 28) (Figure 13.1). I have found no convincing earlier examples. A close look at other Basketmaker III coiled baskets with woven-in colored decoration reveals a plausible technological source for the line break. The weaver worked outward from the center in a spiral fashion. To make the framing line for a banded design, the weaver stitched colored splints until she reached the place where she began. She was now working on the coil above the previous one, leaving an unavoidable jog in what would otherwise be a perfect circle. In most baskets of this era, there is no deliberate opening. The colored splints meet corner to corner, suggesting, if not actually effecting, a break. These jogs appear on both the lower and upper framing lines. Weavers could have
Figure 13.3. Pathways in petroglyphs. (above) rectilinear spiral with attached figure from La Cienega, New Mexico. Photo by Kelley Hays-Gilpin; (left) labyrinth petroglyphs near Shipaulovi, Second Mesa, Arizona (adapted from Parsons 1936:fig. 516); (below) petroglyphs from Wupatki National Monument interpreted as migration story by Hopi consultants. The spiral refers to a pathway to or from a middle place. The animals on the right represent clans. Photo by Kelley Hays-Gilpin.
hidden this little jog by incorporating it into one of the three to five spokes of the design that radiate out from the inner framing line to join the outer framing line below the rim, but they rarely or never did. Usually, they left it visible. Rarely, they enhanced it.

All the examples of baskets with a deliberate and enhanced line break come from a single cache of unfinished burden baskets from a juvenile burial in Mummy Cave, Canyon del Muerto (Morris and Burgh 1941:figs. 14, 28). Morris and Burgh thought they might be the work of a single weaver. On three of the four baskets, when stitching the two colored coils of the lower framing line, the weaver switched back to undyed splints before completing each coil, deliberately creating a line break much wider than a natural jog occasioned by the coiling technique. This break appears on the part of each basket that would rest against the lower back of the person carrying it and would therefore have been hidden from view while the basket was in use.

It is easy to imagine how one would transfer this broken banding line to pottery: one simply does not paint a complete line in the borders of the pattern. But the earliest pottery painters did not do that. The earliest painted pottery in the Four Corners area dates from the Basketmaker III time period as well. Vessels were made by coiling the clay in a spiral fashion, then scraping and smoothing away the coil joins. The fact that a spiral motion for building a vessel was selected by potters already familiar with coiled basketry is interesting. Painted designs on early pottery appear to derive from coiled basketry as well, at least in terms of using a center-focused radial design with small repeated geometric units (Figure 13.4; see Morris and Burgh 1941 for basketry patterns). Bowl rims were often painted with a solid black line, as in tray baskets of the period, but no line break is necessary because in painting there are no technological constraints on making a complete circle.

The line break first appears on pottery in the Pueblo II–Pueblo III period in the San Juan Basin, including Chaco Canyon. Whether this use of a line break derives from basketry or not is debatable, but I suggest that we are seeing similar expressions of a shared metaphor, regardless of whether there is a historical, technological connection. A long temporal gap argues against such continuity, but the context and position of the banding line on pottery suggest there may be a connection. The line is always in the same position on pottery and on coiled baskets—as a broad banding line, a thin framing line, a rim coil, or some combination. This is an example of what Ortman (2000) calls the invariance principle: a feature mapped from one medium to another will appear in the same structural position. Because baskets and pottery vessels often have similar shapes and are used for containers, the banding line could have been transferred easily from basketry, as source domain, to painted pottery, the target domain. But it did not transfer in all times and places, and in the Basketmaker period and the later Pueblo II–III periods, its use was extremely rare.

The line break is rare but present on Red Mesa, Puerco, Escavada, Reserve, and later Cibola White Ware types that typically have banded designs. The line
break first became a common feature on Gallina Black-on-white pottery of the late 1100s and early 1200s in northern New Mexico (Chapman and Ellis 1951). It appears frequently in the late 1200s in the Hopi, Little Colorado, and Zuni areas. By the 1300s and 1400s, the line break was very widespread in almost all the pueblos—on Jeddito Yellow Ware from the Hopi Mesas, Winslow Orange Ware (Figure 13.2) from the Lower Puerco to the Middle Little Colorado, Gila and Tonto polychromes from central Arizona, Zuni glaze types such as Pinnawa Glaze-on-white and Kechipawan Polychrome, and Rio Grande glaze ware and biscuit types. It was apparently so important at Hopi that the Smithsonian collections contain a Jeddito Black-on-yellow bowl with a line break scratched into what was a complete banding line until after the bowl was fired (Figure 13.5). The maker or a user apparently had second thoughts about the closed line and added the feature later.

The line break appears on historic painted pottery with the greatest frequency in the Keresan-speaking pueblos, especially Cochiti; somewhat frequently at Hopi (including Arizona Tewa) and Zuni; and occasionally at Tewa-speaking San Ildefonso. An example from Santo Domingo appears in Figure 13.6. An appliquéd fillet with a line break was frequent on Taos and Picuris utility ware from 1500 on (Chapman and Ellis 1951). Navajo and eastern Apache utility pottery has a “necklace” with an indented texture reminiscent of a basket coil, as well as a line break. Many researchers draw a connection between the line break on pottery and features of Navajo baskets, sand paintings, and bordered loom-woven textiles. In all these media and language groups, across nearly 2,000 years, is meaning shared as well as form? Archaeologists typically avoid the question of symbolic meaning, and for good reason. We cannot know for certain what people were thinking. But we can make some more and less plausible interpretations. All I intend here is to present what I view as a plausible interpretation.

The parallels between signaling “three life stages” with a particular coil finish in Hopi coiled basketry and a banding line in pottery confirm a conceptual connection between the two kinds of containers. In light of the Hopi explanation for the line break, it is worth thinking about the context of the Mummy Cave baskets that seem to bear the earliest recorded line breaks: they wereunfinished when deposited
as offerings with the dead body of a child. The baskets are very similar to each other in layout, color, materials, and technique but are different sizes and have different designs. If we can speculate about metaphors here, what about unfinished baskets and the unfinished life of a child? Perhaps several family members each made an offering that encoded tribute to an unfinished life.

If the broken banding line began as a metaphor for “life’s path,” if baskets were metaphors for people, or both, then crossover from basketry into other media, such as pottery and textiles, should be no surprise. Nor should we be troubled by the notion that interaction at the level of the individual and family unit might have spanned centuries and language groups, spreading particular graphic expressions of metaphors to other times and places.

Perhaps the spiral at the heart of the coiled basket is the heart of the “life pathway” metaphor. This can be tested to some extent by looking at the contexts and meanings of spirals in still other media and discussing them with Native speakers of various southwestern languages. Hopi identification of spirals in petroglyphs as “migration symbols” (Figure 13.3) certainly fits the “life’s pathway” metaphor. This connection invites us to look for the LIFE IS A PATHWAY metaphor in other contexts.

Figure 13.5. Banding line on Jeddito Black-on-yellow bowl from Homol’ovi I with post-firing line break scratched in. The vessel appears to have been painted by a beginner. Control of lines, proportions, and spacing are comparatively poor. Department of Anthropology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, catalog number 156725. Photo by Peter Pilles.
Broken banding lines and ceramic vessels as symbols of women’s lives and bodies appear to refer to individual and family levels of social scale. A few other studies have worked at this scale, including Hannah Huse’s (1976) search for individual potters in fourteenth-century Hopi vessel assemblages from Earl Morris’s excavations at Kawayka’a on Antelope Mesa and work on Mesoamerican figurines by Ann Cyphers Guillén (1993), Rosemary Joyce (2000), and others. Archaeologists studying religion and ideology usually work at broader social scales, such as community, regional, or language group scales. Recently, archaeologists and Native American historians and cultural specialists have collaborated to bring archaeology and ethnohistory together to investigate clan migrations and the sources and transmission of ritual practices—processes important at larger social scales (Bernardini 2005; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2003; Ferguson and Loma’omvaya 1999; Ferguson, Colwell-Chanthaphonh, and Anyon 2004). Exploration of geographic metaphors such as roads, center places, and a world axis, which operate at the level of intercommunity and human-supernatural relationships, can contribute to these efforts as well.

**ROADS AND CENTER PLACES**

If roads and paths are important in one domain, as in the Pueblo line break, then metaphor theory would predict their appearance in other domains as well. As in Mesoamerica and northern Mexico, some Pueblo rituals emphasize the sun’s daily and seasonal journeys across the sky and its posited journeys through the underworld at night. The Milky Way is sometimes said to be a pathway. Stories and ritual performances trace pilgrimage and migration routes in detail and sometimes refer
to routes and sites along them as trails and “footprints of the ancestors” (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2003; Ferguson and Loma’omvaya 1999), recalling the Mesoamerican convention of depicting footprints when describing a journey in Aztec codex painting (e.g., Boone 2003:169), seen also in Teotihuacan mural painting (e.g., de la Fuente 2001:figs. 6.11, 14.4–5). Thinking about the social and spiritual meanings of roads and pathways invites archaeologists to think more broadly about depictions of footprints in Puebloan rock art, as well as actual sandals and sandal effigies (often called “lasts” [see, e.g., Wetherill 1897], but stone and wooden figures of sandals almost certainly did not function as lasts).

Archaeological evidence of roads and pathways sometimes appears “on the ground” and indicates that prehistoric roads were about more than moving people and cargo from one place to another. Some have suggested that because many Chacoan roads are discontinuous and do not always take the easiest route over difficult terrain, they might best be interpreted as metaphorical or symbolic expressions rather than actual trails followed by traders, builders, and pilgrims (Roney 1992). Whether roads referred to paths taken by heroes, supernaturals, the dead, or the Sun or other celestial personages may perhaps never be known, but detailed fieldwork tracing their actual physical layout is indispensable for understanding them, as is tribal consultation and ethnography. Because they are writ large on the landscape and their construction must have required participation by many individuals working together, Chacoan roads probably refer to larger-scale social groups, such as ritual sodalities, mobile family groups such as the lineage components of groups Hopi people now call “clans,” and residential communities. They may simultaneously symbolize connections among cosmological layers, natural forces, and the groups of people who built and used them.

The arrangement of Pueblo roads and pathways also implies the concept of a middle place, such as the emergence place, and the concept of a final migration destination. Oral traditions recall individuals, clans, or small groups of people who travel far away from their place of emergence or birth, have adventures, and return to their middle place. These are not only stories about the past but charters for future behavior. Physical representation of the middle place, whether plaza, shrine, kiva, or sipapu, always has an important ritual role (Swentzell 2001).

One kind of middle place is nearly universally understood as an axis mundi, or world tree, connecting upper and lower worlds of a tiered universe. Recognizing material expressions of the axis mundi concept has been covered in great detail by those exploring the archaeology of shamanism the world over (Pearson 2001:69–70). The Pueblo sipapu and kiva ladder broadly fit this theme. Again, what should interest archaeologists are the particular expressions and uses made of these concepts, not the near universality of a tiered universe and world tree concept or whether the shamanic worldview is common to all or most hunter-gatherers, to all or most Native Americans, and so on. In spite of a broadly shared worldview, some communities encourage individual shamanic movements between worlds and some, such as the Hopi, do not, at least not in historic times. The Hopi concept of an
underworld that reverses the conventions of this world in dynamic, complementary, interpenetrating dualities (summer/winter, left-handed/right-handed, dead/living, katsinas/humans, and so on), the emergence/migration/return-to-center theme, and the roles of ritual practitioners in the hydrological and solar cycles would be fruitful schemata to seek in material culture as well as in oral traditions.

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