Cultural Coalescence and the Archaeological Record as Seen Through the Salado Phenomenon

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**Project Background**

Coalescence manifests itself in many ways, but tends to occur during large migrations when groups from one culture move into a region inhabited by another. Cultural "mixing" is not only produced by the physical movement of people, but also from the flow of goods and ideas. In historic contexts, it is easier to determine the focus behind cultural coalescence from written contexts. In pre-writing contexts, however, it is much more complicated. Due to various possible explanations for how an artifact was produced and become deposited in the archaeological record, it is difficult to determine what cultural forces were responsible.

Our project focuses on the Salado Phenomenon, a spatial-temporal horizon defined largely by polychrome ceramics dating from A.D. 1275 to 1450 in southern Arizona and southern New Mexico. It has been hypothesized that an indigenous community in deserts from northern Arizona played an important role in this horizon. At locations recovered from the Dinwiddie Site, in the middle San Pedro River valley of southeastern Arizona, we attempted to re-examine the social identities of inhabitants, including local, migrants, or combinations of both. Certain artifacts can be used to identify the movement of people, others indicate exchange without migration, and still others suggest a mixture of all three. These material culture differences allow us to examine the character of the Salado "interaction sphere" in which the Dinwiddie site was situated, both in relation to local traditions and other large spheres such as Chacoan.

**Salado and the Dinwiddie Site**

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<tr>
<th>Southwest Area Cultures and the Enigmatic Salado</th>
<th>Background of Salado Phenomenon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Figure 3. Southwest Area Cultures and the Enigmatic Salado" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Figure 3. Southwest Area Cultures and the Enigmatic Salado" /></td>
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The region encompassed by the Salado Phenomenon exhibits a consid erable amount of artifactual and architectural diversity. The common thread is the presence of various Rosiean field wares (Salado polychrome) ceramics with high symbolic content. This diverse Salado phenomenon can be visualized as an ideology that involved the movement of ideas, and people and goods. Salado polychrome ceramics that appear around AD 1250 (Red Polychrome) continue until AD 1450. They are documented in central and western Arizona and southeastern New Mexico, as well as the Salt and Gila rivers and tributaries. Salado polychrome dominates the most dense concentrations in the northeastern Hohokam and western Mogollon Culture areas by AD 1350. Recent research suggests that the associated Paleoindian immigrants moved and used Salado polychrome vessels as a part of a new religion that appealed to many local groups in their new homes. Specifically, it is theorized that the phenomenon is associated with Kayenta immigrants from the Four Corners area. The presence of Kayenta Mountain Polychrome and perforated plates along with locally made Salado polychrome support this theory. Excavations across the Dinwiddie Site have also shown interaction with groups in northern O'odham. Artistic traditions indicate the Salado communities that developed in the AD 1350s included migrant, their ideas were shared with other local populations.

**Preservation Archaeology**

Our research on the Salado tradition took place as part of a preservation archaeology field school at the LA 10603 Site, commonly referred to as the Dinwiddie Site. The field school was jointly conducted by the University of Arizona and the non-profit Archaeology Southwest as part of the Upper Salt Preservation Archaeological Project.

The Dinwiddie Site was chosen because it represented an aggregated community practice that Salado ceramic traditions, and exhibited evidence of Kayenta presence. Moreover, social and human impacts threatened the site, making it ideal candidates for a preservation archaeological field school.

**Dinwiddie Site (LA 10603)**

Over the past three summers, Archaeology Southwest has conducted research at the Dinwiddie Site near Clififf, New Mexico. The site was an adobe village consisting of Free-room occupants from ca. AD 1300 to 1450. The site was originally excavated by archeological archaeologist Jack and Vera Mills in the 1960s and '70s who produced an incomplete, but tantalizing, report. Our investigation focused on areas the Mills did not excavate.

**Roomblock 1**

- Roma Polychrome sherds suggest interaction with northern Mexico.
- Porcelain sherds recovered from test excavations.
- Multiple episodes of floor mound suggesting temporary occupation.
- Sherds on walls and a large shell cluster provided evidence of looting.

**Roomblock 2**

- Perforated plates and possible mica suggests more than one social group lived in this building.
- Plugged T-shaped door similar to those common at Casa Grande.
- 2% groose alone removed in full groove rose recovered from room floor.
- Extensions remaining also indicates extended occupation.
- One room was abandoned and filled with trash, probably due to instability of walls.

**Roomblock 3**

- Perforated plates suggest Kayenta presence.
- Also considered remains of walls.
- Heavy impacted by road and mechanical testing.

**Ground Stone Artifacts**

- A groose intaglio fulled exchange traditions.
- 3¼ groose intaglio technology from West Mexico similar to those common at the Dinwiddie Site.
- Full groose in AD as early as AD 750.
- Full groose area outnumbered 1/3 groose area by 3/1 from the Mimbres excavations in Roomblock 2.
- Possible mica recovered great deal of detail from the liquids available in Roomblock 2.
- A bowl a flat griddle with Mexican origins used to cook tortillas and other foods.

**Ceramic assemblage**

- Turquoise beaded found in Roomblock 1.
- Originals from an O'odham tradition.
- Shell Pendant found in Roomblock 2.
- Shaped in the form reminiscent of a Hopi maiden in a Squash blossom style.

**Acknowledgements**

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