

The Upper Gila Region



The study area includes the Upper Gila River and its tributaries and the Mimbres Valley.

Since 2008, Archaeology Southwest has carried out test excavations in the Mule Creek area, as well as collections-based research at other Upper Gila sites.

> The 3-Up site in Mule Creek is a large, multi-component village with Kayenta immigrant and Salado occupations.



- Beginning around AD 1250, Kayenta groups moved to the southern southwest.
- Immigrant enclaves have "northern" architectural characteristics and material culture (Clark 2001; Neuzil 2008).
- In the Upper Gila region, immigrant enclaves were built on or near former Mimbres Classic sites.
- Kayenta immigrants and their descendants continued their cultural traditions and maintained social ties.



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Maverick Mountain Polychrome (Eastern AZ College collections)

Perforated plates, used by Kayenta potters and their descendents (Lyons and Lindsay 2006), are found at many Upper Gila sites.

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Ceramic Production and the Development of Salado Identity in the Upper Gila Region of the American Southwest



Kayenta and Salado



- Around AD 1300, another wave of population arrived in the Upper Gila.
- Salado, or Cliff Phase, components are found throughout SE Arizona and SW New Mexico (Lekson 2002; Wallace 1998).
- Cliff Phase sites have adobe architecture and Salado Polychrome pottery (also known as Roosevelt Red Ware).
- ""Salado" represents blending of diverse local and immigrant traditions.

Maverick Mountain Series and Salado Polychrome

- Maverick Mountain Series (MMS) pottery made in 1200s
- Kayenta style using local materials (Neuzil and Lyons 2006)
- Not common (if at all) in Mimbres Valley



Sharlot Hall Museum collections; Photo by Peter J. Pilles

- Salado polychromes made starting around 1300
- Widely distributed in southern Southwest (Crown 1994)
- Late variants (Lyons) 2004) differentially distributed by region





Dinwiddie Polychrome, a late, regional Salado Polychrome variant (Eastern AZ College collections)

This perforated plate fragment was found with late Salado Polychrome types on a room floor at the 3-Up site.

Ceramic Production and Distribution

• Previous studies show widespread local production of Salado polychromes throughout the southern southwest (Crown 1994). • In some areas, like the San Pedro Valley of southeastern Arizona, production was linked to descendents of Kayenta immigrants (Lyons 2012).

• We completed NAA and binocular temper identifications for nearly 500 sherds from Upper Gila region sites, including 3-Up in Mule Creek and other sites in the Cliff, Redrock and Mimbres valleys.

• We found that all sites used volcanic sand temper, with drainage-level and possibly site-level differences in the variety and size distributions of various sand constituents. • Petrographic analysis to refine our temper classifications is in progress.

• NAA indicates MMS and Salado polychromes were made using the same range of clays and tempers as local utility ware. A plot of principal components scores on three dimensions shows overlap among all wares, with less compositional variability in MMS and Salado polychromes (except for a few outliers).

• We argue that there were multiple production loci for MMS and Salado Polychrome vessels in the study area.



Salado Identity

- Patty Crown (1994) linked the popularity of Salado polychromes with the florescence of a Southwest regional cult.
- This religious movement associated with rain, fertility, and community well being had deep roots among Southwestern groups.
- Particular design motifs and icons that express this ideology are serpents (both with and without plumes or horns), clouds, lightning, feathers, flowers, and birds.
- We have yet to identify strong regional patterning in design motifs or iconography among Upper Gila sites.
- Potters from individual villages appear to have had no clear local preference for particular suites of icons.
- This supports Crown's interpretation of the integrative nature of Salado polychromes.



Cliff Polychrome (MIAC, Santa Fe).





Tonto Polychrome (Eastern AZ College collections)

• Our ceramic analyses provide evidence both of continuity and change during the 13th through 15th centuries AD. • In the Upper Gila and elsewhere in the southern Southwest, mixing of cultural traditions created an ideology that brought local and immigrant groups together and helped them think of themselves as one people.

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Exploring and protecting the places of our past



• A closer examination of plots by region shows less overlap between utility and decorated ware compositions for Mimbres Valley sites compared with the Cliff, Redrock, and Mule Creek valleys.

• As in the San Pedro, Salado Polychrome production may have been concentrated at sites with 13th century immigrant enclaves.

• MMS* and Salado polychromes found in the Mimbres Valley may be largely non-local imports.

• Continuing analysis of NAA and petrographic data should allow us to tie groups of samples to particular production areas and trace exchange within the study area.

Tonto Polychrome (Eastern AZ College collections)



Cliff White-on-red (Eastern AZ College collections)