

Renegotiating Identity in a Cultural Crossroads: Salado in the Safford Basin

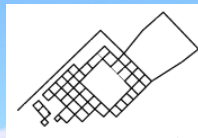
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What is Salado?

As is evident from the posters in this session, archaeologists have yet to come to much agreement on how to define the Salado phenomenon. Perhaps the most consistent marker of Salado is the presence of Roosevelt Red Ware vessels. Other characteristics typically used to define archaeological culture areas – consistency in architectural styles, site layout, etc. – are notably diverse at Salado sites, particularly when viewed across the Southwest. The Safford Basin, the subject of this poster, is no exception.

Salado in the Safford Basin

The Safford Basin is located in southeastern Arizona, spatially between the Point of Pines region to the north, and the Aravaipa and San Pedro valleys to the south and west. As in the rest of the Salado world, signatures of Salado become visible in the Safford Basin beginning in the early fourteenth century. Prior to the emergence of Salado, between AD 1200 and 1275 (Bylas phase), settlement in the Safford Basin is characterized by compound architecture similar to that seen in the Phoenix Basin to the west, and White Mountain Red Ware, Cibola White Ware, and Middle Gila Buff Ware ceramics. Between AD 1275 and 1325 (Goat Hill phase) there is a major shift – sites that date to this time period are more compact in their layouts and exhibit contiguous rooms, and Maverick Mountain Series, Zuni Glaze Ware, Roosevelt Red Ware, and San Carlos Red-on-brown appear and become common in the decorated ceramic assemblage. As Salado emerges after AD 1325 (Safford phase), site layouts become even more compact with contiguous roomblocks surrounding defined plaza areas. Decorated ceramic assemblages dating to this time are dominated by Roosevelt Red Wares, a marked shift from the diversity seen in decorated ceramic assemblages from the previous centuries.



The Case for Migration: The Supra-Household Site-unit Intrusion at the Goat Hill Site (AZ CC:1:28 [ASM])

The Goat Hill site, which was excavated by Woodson (1995, 1999), provides compelling evidence of migration south to the Safford Basin from the Kayenta/Tusayan region in northeastern Arizona during the Goat Hill phase, the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Woodson based his conclusion on six lines of evidence from the site:

1. The presence of Maverick Mountain Series ceramics in the decorated ceramic assemblage, nearly to the complete exclusion of any other decorated wares,
2. The presence of perforated plates in the ceramic assemblage (Lyons and Lindsay 2006),
3. The presence of a D-shaped kiva in the middle of the plaza area,
4. The presence of entry-box complexes in rooms in the western roomblock,
5. The use of masonry architecture to construct roomblocks, and
6. The arrangement of rooms into household room suites.

In addition, the layout of the site into two contiguous roomblocks departed radically from earlier (Bylas phase) architecture, which was arranged into compounds consisting of isolated rooms attached to walls enclosing a central space. The migrants who settled at the Goat Hill site were undoubtedly not the only migrants who moved into the Safford Basin. However, no other definitive site-unit intrusions or migrant enclaves, like the Goat Hill site, have been recorded in the area. Migration to the Goat Hill site was at the supra-household level.

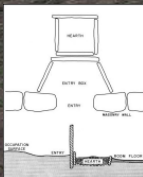
Household Level Migration during the Safford Phase

While the migrant enclaves of the previous Goat Hill phase are readily apparent on the landscape because they appear so divergent from previous habitation in the area, migrants are somewhat less obvious during the subsequent Safford phase. The presence of perforated plates, Maverick Mountain Series ceramics, and masonry architecture demonstrates their presence, but these markers are intermingled with equivalent markers suggesting the presence of local groups at sites as well. For example, Maverick Mountain series ceramics are found at sites alongside San Carlos Red-on-brown and Middle Gila Buff Wares, which were made by groups indigenous to the Safford Basin. In addition, sites were laid out in a more northern arrangement – roomblocks – but were constructed with local cobble reinforced adobe techniques. The presence of markers of migrant groups (Maverick Mountain Series ceramics and roomblock architecture) alongside markers of local groups (locally produced ceramics and cobble reinforced adobe construction) suggests migrant and indigenous household level groups were living alongside one another at sites occupied after about AD 1325.



The Renegotiation of Identity and Emergence of Salado in the Safford Basin

Although the local indigenous population of the Safford Basin likely had previous experience incorporating migrant groups into the social fabric of this region (Clark and Langley 2002), migrants from the Kayenta/Tusayan region were initially not incorporated into local Safford Basin social organization. Thereafter, however, both migrants and local groups chose to live side-by-side at newly established settlements, and as a result, renegotiated their identity to mitigate the effects of the social boundaries between these previously distinct groups. Outwardly, they expressed their identity cohesively through unified material culture, such as Roosevelt Red Ware ceramics. As such, the emergence of Salado in the Safford Basin appears to be a direct response to the arrival of migrants from the Kayenta/Tusayan region and an effort to provide social cohesion and a unified identity amongst members of these formerly disparate migrant and local groups.



References Cited

- Clark, Stephen J. and Langley, Jeffrey. 2002. "Migrant Incorporation into Local Social Organization: The Case of the Kayenta/Tusayan Region in the Safford Basin, Southeastern Arizona." *Journal of Archaeological Science* 29: 1-14.
- Lyons, D. and Lindsay, J. 2006. "Perforated Plates and the Safford Phenomenon." *Arizona Archaeologist and Naturalist* 34: 2-14.
- Woodson, R. 1995. "The Safford Basin: A Cultural Crossroads." *Arizona Archaeologist and Naturalist* 23: 1-14.
- Woodson, R. 1999. "The Safford Basin: A Cultural Crossroads." *Arizona Archaeologist and Naturalist* 27: 1-14.

Additional Resources

Arizona State University. 2010. "The Safford Basin: A Cultural Crossroads." <http://www.asu.edu/safford>