Salado Projectile Point Technology at the Gila River Farm Site, Southwestern New Mexico

Alesha S. Clevenger, University of Arizona
Allen Denoyer, Archaeology Southwest

Introduction
During Archaeology Southwest (ASW) and the University of Arizona’s 2016 through 2022 field school seasons, one hundred and twelve projectile points were recovered from the Gila River Farm site, a Cliff phase (A.D. 1300-1450) Salado site. The site is located in the Upper Gila region in southwestern New Mexico.

Research Questions
• What projectile point types are represented at Gila River Farm?
• What are the spatial patterns within the Gila River Farm site?
• How do point styles and materials compare to other Cliff phase sites within the Upper Gila region?

Raw Material
A variety of raw material types were used for the projectile points found at the Gila River Farm Site. The most common material was obsidian, followed by chalcedony and chert.

- Obsidian makes up approximately 79% of the projectile point assemblage. There are multiple potential source locations within the Mule Creek area including Mule Mountain or Antelope Creek, both about 50 km from Gila River Farm.
- Locally sourced raw materials found during the six field seasons included chalcedony (17.9%), chert (0.018%), and basalt variations (0.009%).

Comparison with other Upper Gila Sites after A.D. 1150
The projectile points found at the Gila River Farm site are comparable to other sites in the area occupied after A.D. 1150, such as the Dinwiddie site in the Upper Gila area tested by the ASW / University of Arizona field school (2013 – 2014). Other comparable sites are the Cliff phase 3-Up and Tularosa phase Fornholt sites near Mule Creek, New Mexico, tested during the 2008-2010 ASW / Hendrix College and 2011-2012 ASW / University of Arizona field schools.

The types of points found at the Gila River Farm site and these three other sites are similar. Southwest Triangular and Side-notched points are the most dominant type of projectile point found at all four locations.

At all four sites, obsidian was the most utilized raw material, followed by chalcedony and chert.

Discussion
The Gila River Farm site’s projectile point assemblage was primarily Southwest Triangular points, followed by side-notched points, and a small number of corner-notched points and darts. Small triangular unnotched points are common throughout the region and are also dominant in other Cliff phase sites. Obsidian is the most common raw material in the assemblage. At present, no X-Ray Fluorescence analysis (XRF) has been performed on Gila River Farm collection. Samples have been analyzed from other Upper Gila sites, and the Mule Mountains and Antelope Creek were the dominant localities for obsidian procurement for sites such as Dinwiddie, Ormand Village, and Villareal II, all of which are within proximity to Gila River Farm (Ryan 2015, Shackley 2012, Wallace 1998). Although procurement of raw materials may differ, the abundance of good quality obsidian and the similarity of projectile point types may reflect shared social influences and cultural affiliations between the Gila River Farm site and other A.D. 1130 sites in the area.

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References

Projectile Points
There were one-hundred and twelve points recovered during the six field school seasons at the Gila River Farm Site.

- Southwest Triangular and Southwest Short Triangular points made up 67% of the assemblage. These points are small (2 to 3 cm), unnotched, and can have a straight or concave base. These types of points are seen throughout the Southwest and from A.D. 1150-1350 (Silva 2006).

- Side-notched points were the next most common at 0.11%. These points range in size from 1.4 cm to 2.5 cm in length. Two types of side-notched points were found. The most common is distinguished by a shallow c-shaped side notch, along with their base-to-blade ratio. These points are similar to late Hohokam and Salado sites in southern Arizona, and Cliff phase (A.D. 1300-1450) sites in the Mimbres Valley (Nelson 1986). The other side-notched type has a high notch placement; only one was found at the Gila River Farm Site. These points are usually associated with post A.D. 1150 sites in southern Arizona and the Mogollon Highlands (Moore 1999, Silva 2006).

- A total of 5 corner-notched points were found, one of which includes crazing from fire damage occurring after it was made. Another was notched on one side.

- Five points were classified as dart points, based on the dart-arrow index (max thickness + neck width > 11.8mm) (Hildebrandt and King 2012). Complete points ranged in size from 3.4 to 5.1 cm.