

Living on the Mimbres Western Edge: Regional Affiliation and Identity in Arizona's Upper Gila River Valley A.D. 750 - 1130

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Introduction

Archaeologists in the U.S. Southwest have increasingly focused their research on understanding the lives and identities of people who lived outside core cultural areas. The Mimbres region encompasses southwest New Mexico and southeastern Arizona but the Mimbres core is believed to be the Mimbres River Valley area. The York Duncan Valley lies at the far western edge of the Mimbres region, and understudied area heavily impacted by looting and land modification. Using new data derived from survey and local informant knowledge, we investigate how regional affiliation and identity shifted through time in the valley by analyzing material culture

- We address these questions using analytical methods developed by Pat Gilman (Gilman 2018) in her research on identity and social relationship formation in the Mimbres region. Gilman argues that daily practices in constructing residences, making and decorating pottery, and ritual performance reflect people's community affiliation and group membership. Gilman suggests that while some edge communities' identities and relationships were separate and different from those in the Mimbres heartland, they were long-term, constant and stable until at least the end of the Classic period ca. A.D. 1130.
- To evaluate social relationships and affiliations in our research area, we compared architecture, site sizes and densities, pottery types and sequences, ratios of Mimbres Style III Black-on-white (B/W) representational versus geometric designs, and types of non-local pottery with those of the Mimbres core area.







Chihuahua

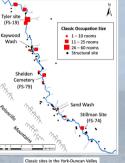
Mimbres Style III pots from the Tyler (FS-19) and Stillman (FS-74) sites



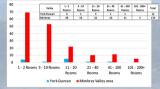
Regional Cultural Areas

Sources, Blake et al. (1986) Changing Settlement and Population in the Ministers Valley, Creek (2006) Excausions at the Old Your Burn, Lucy 1989-2003; Neison and Leblanc (1989) Short-Term Sebrition in the American Southwest; Girman (2028) Long-Ter Berlifes and Social Relationships with and within the Mimbres Region of Southwestern New Mexico; Gilman and Is URI and Society: The Matacks: Sto of Southwestern New Mexico; Hard et al. (2015) Proliminary Relid Report fo

Architecture and Population Density



- In the York-Duncan Valley, we see an architectural shift from nithouses to. pueblo roomblocks in the Late Pithouse to Classic Mimbres periods. mirroring architectural change in the Mimbres core area.
- However, kiva or large nithouse ritual structures found in the Late Pithouse period and plazas linked to the Classic period appear to be absent or not visible on the surface in York-Duncan Valley settlement natterns, unlike the Mimbres Valley, Local informant site descriptions only rarely reference the existence of ritual structures in either chronological period.



Classic occupations in the York.

in comparison to those in the

The chart to the left shows an

170 occupations.

Duncan Valley are fewer and smaller

Mimbres Valley. Only 12 Classic sites

with surface architecture have been

identified in the York-Duncan Valley, in

comparison with the Mimbres Valley's

intervalley comparison of structural

sites normalized by the number of

kilometers surveyed in each valley. Even after normalization, the Mimbres

population during the Classic period.

core area shows a much higher

York-Duncan Valley Classic sites

typically include 12-15 rooms. In

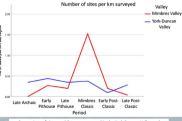
contrast. Mimbres core settlement

greater population aggregated into

very large settlements of more than

patterns suggest that much of its

Comparison of Classic room counts in the York-Duncan and Mimbres Valleys

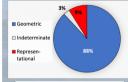


Comparison of sites per kilometer surveyed in the York-Duncan Valley and Mimbres Valley normalized by kilometers surveyed

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Material Culture

- Surface assemblage data acquired through survey, informant descriptions, and photos of pots removed from York-Duncan Valley sites in the 1980s show the entire sequence of Mimbres-Mogollon pottery from the Early Pithouse period (AD 200 - 750) to the Mimbres Classic period. Further, like the core Mimbres Valley area, Late Pithouse assemblages include Hohokam ceramics and shell bracelet fragments, Informants also describe Late Pithouse Hohokam burials and shell workshops no longer present on the archaeological landscape.
- Unlike the core Mimbres area, however, in the York-Duncan Valley, relations with the hohokam annear to have extended into the Classic period. Hobokam nottery with production periods covering the Mimbres Classic were found in several sites in the York-Duncan Valley. Pottery from the Reserve area is present in both research area sites and the Mimbres Valley.



Gilman (2018) notes that the ratio of Mimbres Style III B/W representational and geometric designs on nottery are one of several measures reflecting chosen social identity and relationships.

In the York-Duncan Valley, we studied photos of whole pots taken from research area sites in the 1980s. Six of 65 Late Style II and Style III vessels from 4 sites, or 9.23 percent, showed representational imagery.

Ratio of representational to geometric designs on Mimbres Late Style II and Style III pottery in the York-Duncan Valley. based on analysis of photos that include ceramic vessels taken from sites in the York-Duncan Valley in the 1980s





- Two howls, one each from the Tyler site (FS-19) (left) and the other from the Sheldon Cemetery site (FS-79)(right) show stylized fish figures that may symbolize the Hero Twins, a possible linkage to Mesoamerican imagery, A local informant also described finding the burial of a macaw at the Tyler site in the 1980s
- In contrast, In the Mimbres Valley, 30-34 percent of Style III pottery sherds found in Classic occupations have representational designs (Gilman 2018).
- Gilman's research showed that In peripheral areas in the San Simon region and New Mexico's Upper Gila Drainage, representational designs are virtually absent

Conclusions

 Similarities in architecture and ceramic sequences from AD 750 – 1130 suggest that people in the York-Duncan Valley had stable and long-lasting relations with the Mimbres core area. However, stark differences in population size and the ration of representational to geometric designs in Mimbres Style III pottery suggest they had a separate identity. Further, people in the York-Duncan Valley enjoyed social relations with their Hohokam neighbors to the west well into the Classic period, unlike the Mimbres River Valley residents.