Short-term Sedentism at Gila River Farm Site, NM
Insight into Cliff Phase Salado Settlement Patterns
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Introduction
During the 2021 field season, as a part of the Archaeology Southwest field school, construction data from the Gila River Farm site outside Cif O’F New Mexico was compiled in order to visually map the sites construction. This was achieved by mapping mapping of bonded and abutted walls along with footing stone (cementos stones) placement and quality. Patterns of accelercent and rapid growth at Gila River Farm support the larger short-term sedentism model used to interpret Salado migration and settlement patterns during the Cliff phase Salado period.
Settlement around the upper Gila was characterized by frequent migration between river valleys and short-term occupation of adobe pueblos. Short-term migration is thought to have been a preventative measure for flora, fauna, and soil nutrients to recover between periods of occupation. This study supports the short-term sedentism model by highlighting the accelercent and rapid growth of the Gila River Farm site. Furthermore, Salado life-ways in association with construction patterns allow comparative modeling to demonstrate shifts in subsistence and construction during the Salado periods.

Background Information
The Salado Phenomenon
The Salado period (1200 – 1450 CE) is a late-present culture that has become a recent focus in Southwest Archaeology. The term Salado is used to understand a phase in Southwestern culture history. Salado, while it includes ethnic markers, is instead defined as a unidirectional ideology among groups.
After the abandonment of the northern Ancestral Puebloan region during the late 1200s and early 1300s (Figure 1), Kayenta peoples migrated south and began to settle and construct villages with local Hohokam and Mogollon populations. Kayenta groups brought new styles of pottery with them and through cultural intermingling new definable Salado ceramic types emerged. These are known as Salado Polychrome and Roosevelt Redware.
The Gila River Farm site (LA 39315), represents a large Cliff phase Salado village of adobe room-blocks. The site includes many archaeological markers of the Salado period as well as providing insight into many aspects of peoples’ lifeway and spatial patterning indicative of the period. While direct dating of the site has yet to be achieved, the site is significant because surface collections indicate the site was occupied during both early and late Salado periods.

LA39315 Short-term Sedentism and Reflective Architectural Characteristics:

Settlement and spatial patterning:
• Large pueblos and lower population density
• Sites consist of multiple room blocks
• Constructed on terraces within river valleys

Subsistence patterns:
• Irrigation and flood plain farming
• Physut nuts, walnuts, pigweed, deer, elk, tight sheep, rabbit

LA39315 Faunal Remains:

Feature 450:
• Small mammal
• Deer (antilodolian)
• Burnt in association with hearth

LA39315 504 Room block Architectural features:

Architectural characteristics of short-term sedentism:
• Cliff phase Salado pueblos have been estimated to have been occupied for only short periods of time (20 – 30 years). The short-term sedentism model highlights evidence of frequent migration between river valleys in the upper Gila region. Short-term sedentism and frequent migration served as a preventative measure for soil, flora, and fauna resources and nutrients to replenish between periods of occupation. Patterns of frequent migration and short-term sedentism can be identified by key architectural characteristics that highlight the short-term use of pueblos.

Architectural characteristics of short-term sedentism (Figures 1, 6, 7, and 8):
• Accidental and rapid growth
• Bonding and abutting patterns
• Use of multiple adobe materials
• Wall alignment continuous with inconsistent bonding
• Inexpensive repair and remodeling
• Cemento stone quality
• Single and double-coursed aligment
• Variable quality in stone selection

Conclusion
Gila River Farm site (LA 39315) represents a large Cliff phase Salado village of room blocks constructed out of adobe and cementos footing stones. The sites construction was rapid and characteristic of accidental growth. This is evidenced by bonding and abutting patterns to form continuous streches of wall with inconsistent bonding between sections and corners. Cementos stones used to create the base of each wall are double-coursed and variable in quality and size. Rooms at Gila River Farm show minimal evidence of repair and infrequent remodeling. All of which supports a short-term sedentism model during this period.
Subsistence and settlement patterns during the Cliff phase is comparable to past subsistence and settlement patterns of Clasico Mimbres and Kayenta (pre-migration). Many resources and farming techniques used during previous periods are similar to that of Salado. Yet, frequent migration to account of resource replenishment represents a shift in subsistence strategies that is represented in the rapid construction and short-term occupation at Gila River Farm.

References