

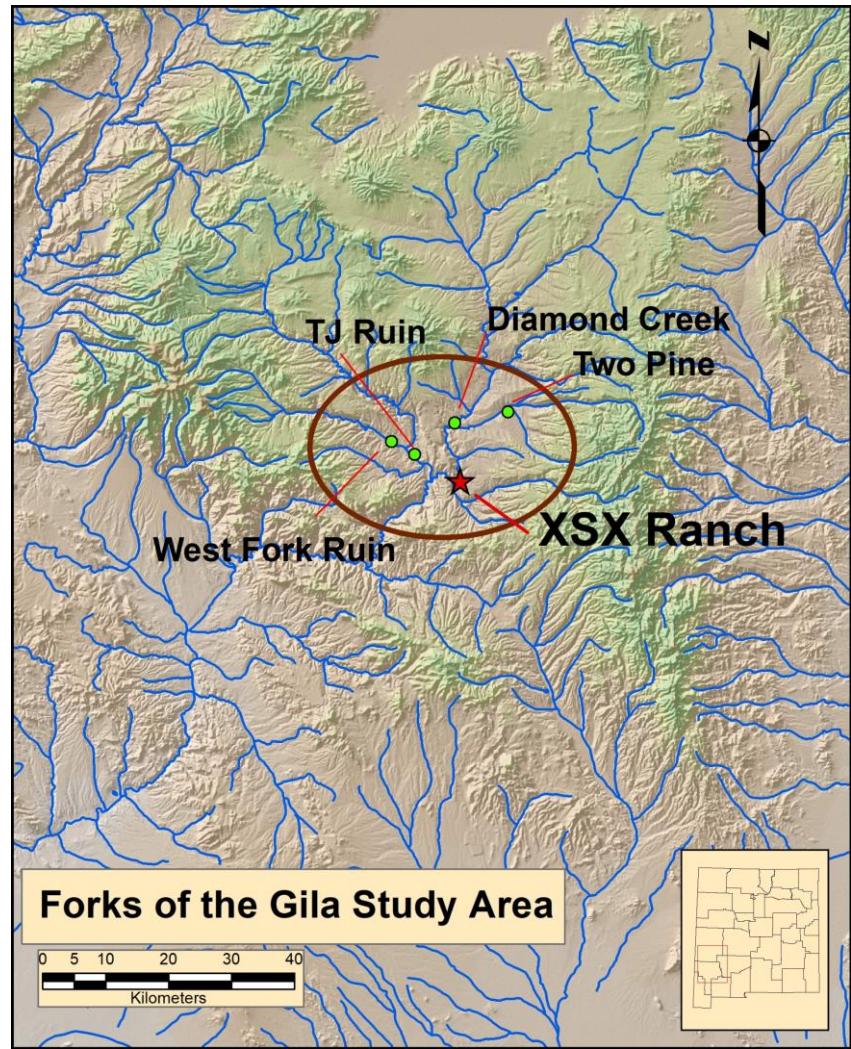


XSX Ranch Ruin: Excavations of a Late Classic Mimbres to Early Post Classic Pueblo in the Upper Gila Forks, New Mexico

By Christopher A. Turnbow and Robert E. Forrester

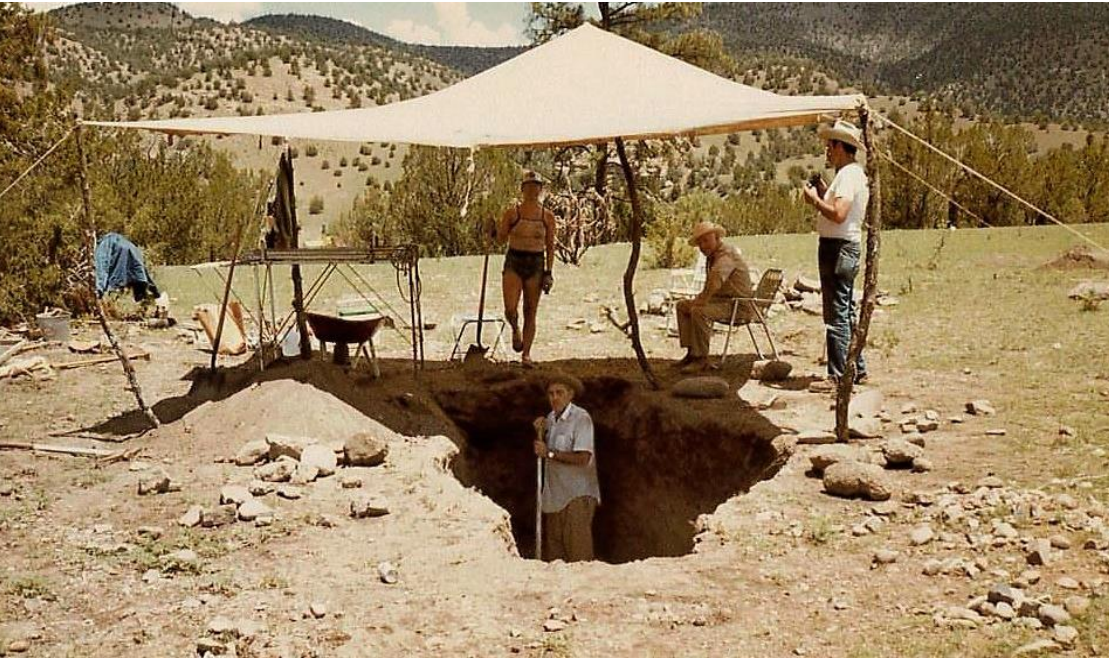
A Quest for Post Classic

The Upper Forks of the Gila River in Grant and Catron counties, New Mexico, have often been considered a Mimbres frontier that was abandoned between the Classic period and the late AD 1200s Tularosa phase occupation of the Gila Cliff Dwellings. However, in a synthesis of Post Classic occupations in the Mimbres region, Hegmon and her colleagues (1999) suggested the Gila Forks were occupied by Reserve/Tularosa phase populations from AD 1130 and 1200. Recent re-analyses of site collections and new field research in the Gila Forks now argue that while the Gila Forks Mimbres shared many cultural traits with their Reserve phase neighbors, they maintained their own cultural identity as they transitioned from the Classic to the Post Classic periods (Leitermann 2017; Turnbow 2014, 2016). The forgotten manuscripts of the XSX Ranch excavations provides important new information on this period.



XSX Ranch Site (LA 50702)

The XSX Ranch site is a multicomponent occupation located near the mouth of the East Fork. Between 1980 and 1992, Robert E. Forrester (deceased), a chemist and passionate avocational archaeologist, excavated 10 pithouses, 32 pueblo rooms in five roomblocks, and 91 burials. His nine excavation reports identify the site as a Classic Mimbres pueblo reoccupied by a Reserve/Tularosa population; however, reviewing his data, it may best be interpreted as a medium-sized transitional Classic Mimbres to Early Post Classic pueblo.



Pithouse 2 (1981), Bob Forrester in trench



San Francisco to Three Circle Phase Occupations

XSX Ranch contains a large late San Francisco to early Three Circle phase village. Their pithouses were round or oval rather than the sub-square or rectangular forms typical of the phase. Ceramics included Mogollon Red-on-brown, Three Circle Red-on-white, and San Francisco Red, best revealed in a sealed pit in Pithouse 3. One burial produced a Three Circle Red-on-white bowl.

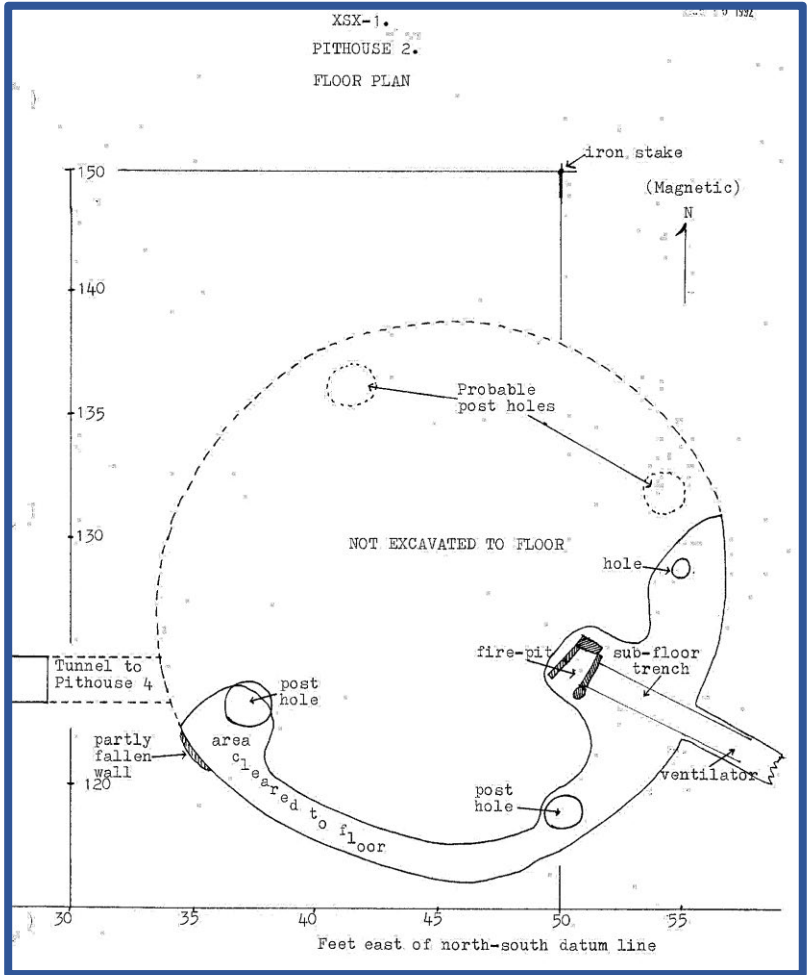


Mogollon Red-on-brown



San Francisco Red in Forrester's type collection

Circular Pithouse 2 is a likely late San Francisco phase communal structure with an estimated floor size of 40.6 sq m. An unkill Mimbres Black-on-white Style II bowl found 10 cm above the floor may have been a later offering (see below).



Pithouse 2

Later Three Circle Phase Occupations

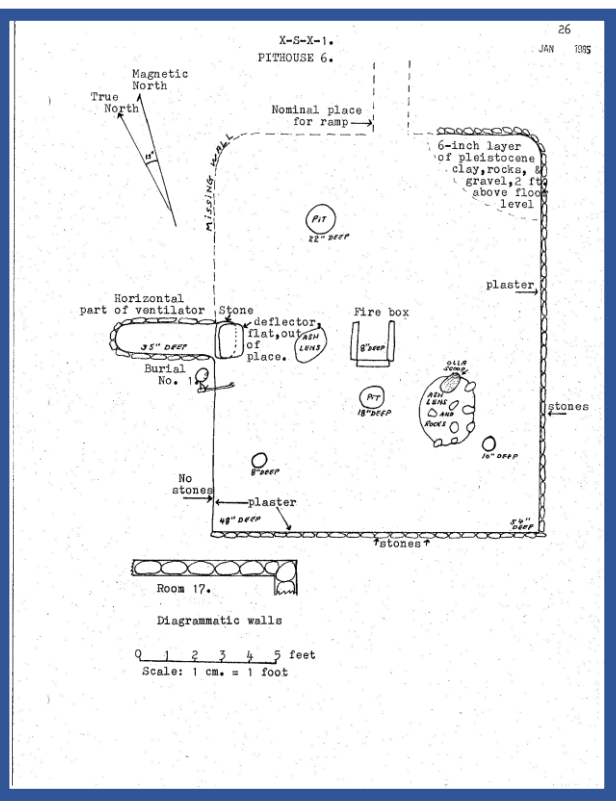
A later Three Circle phase occupation is represented by three pithouses (4, 6, and perhaps 10) and Mimbres Black-on-white Styles I and II. Pithouse 6 was rectangular with a ventilator shaft, deflector slab, slab-lined hearth, and plaster over partial cobble masonry walls. Ventilators appear after AD 900 in the Three Circle phase (Shafer 2003) which correlates with Transitional Boldface (Style II) on the floor of Pithouse 6. Forrester believed the structure was deliberately destroyed (decommissioned ?).



Mimbres Bw Style II from Pithouse 2



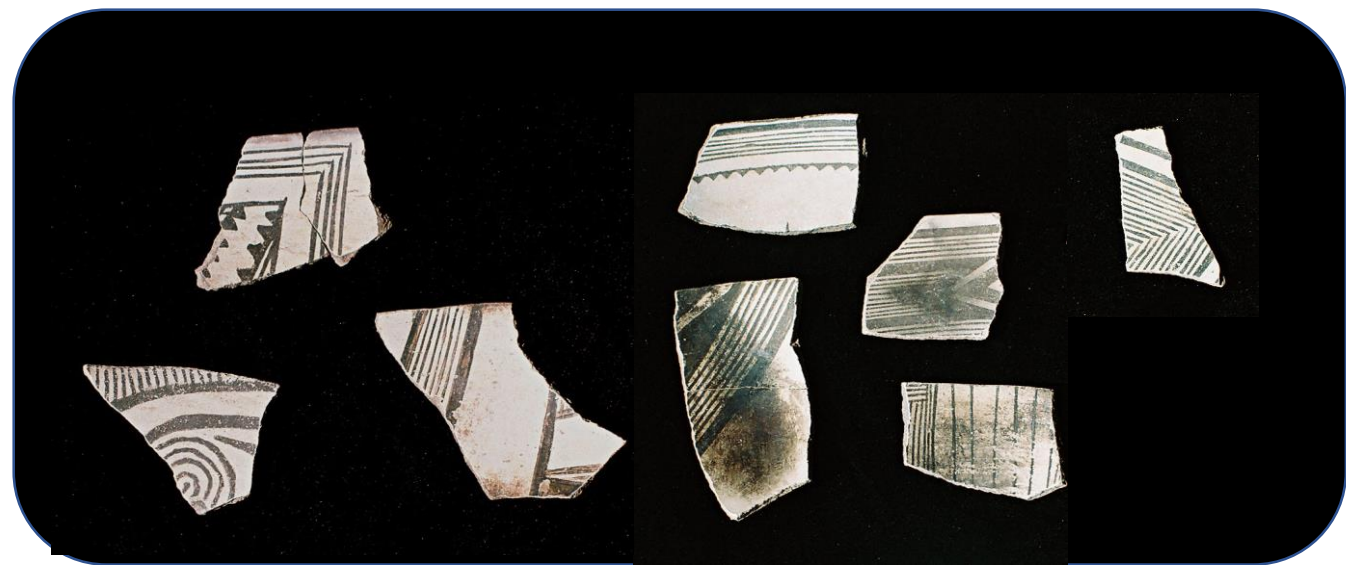
Mimbres Black-on-white Style I



Pithouse 6, a late Three Circle phase structure

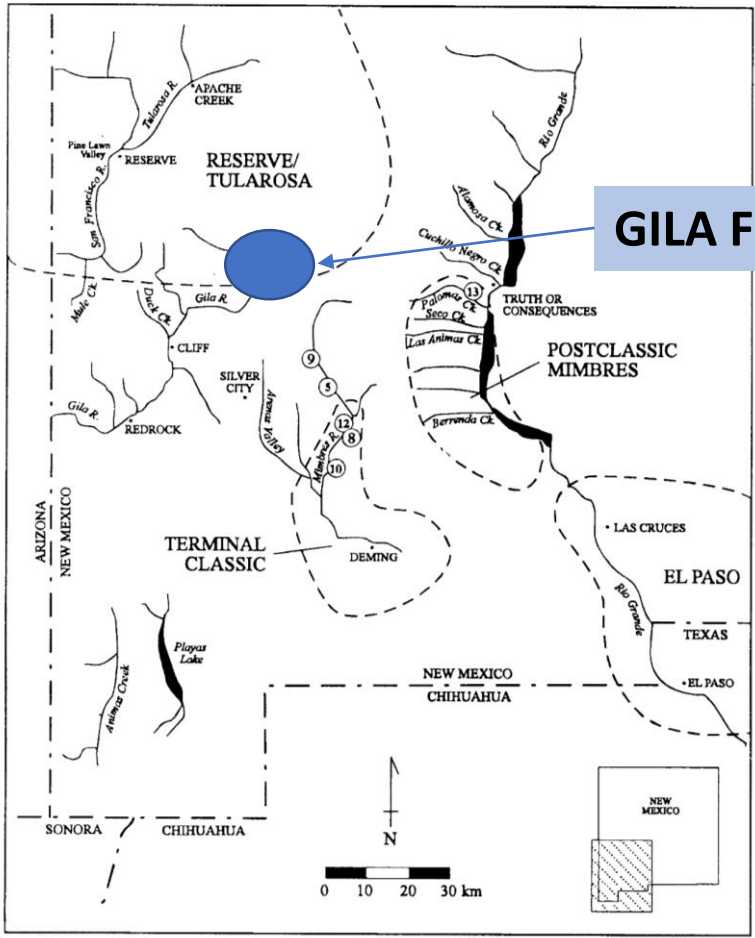


Mimbres Bw Style I

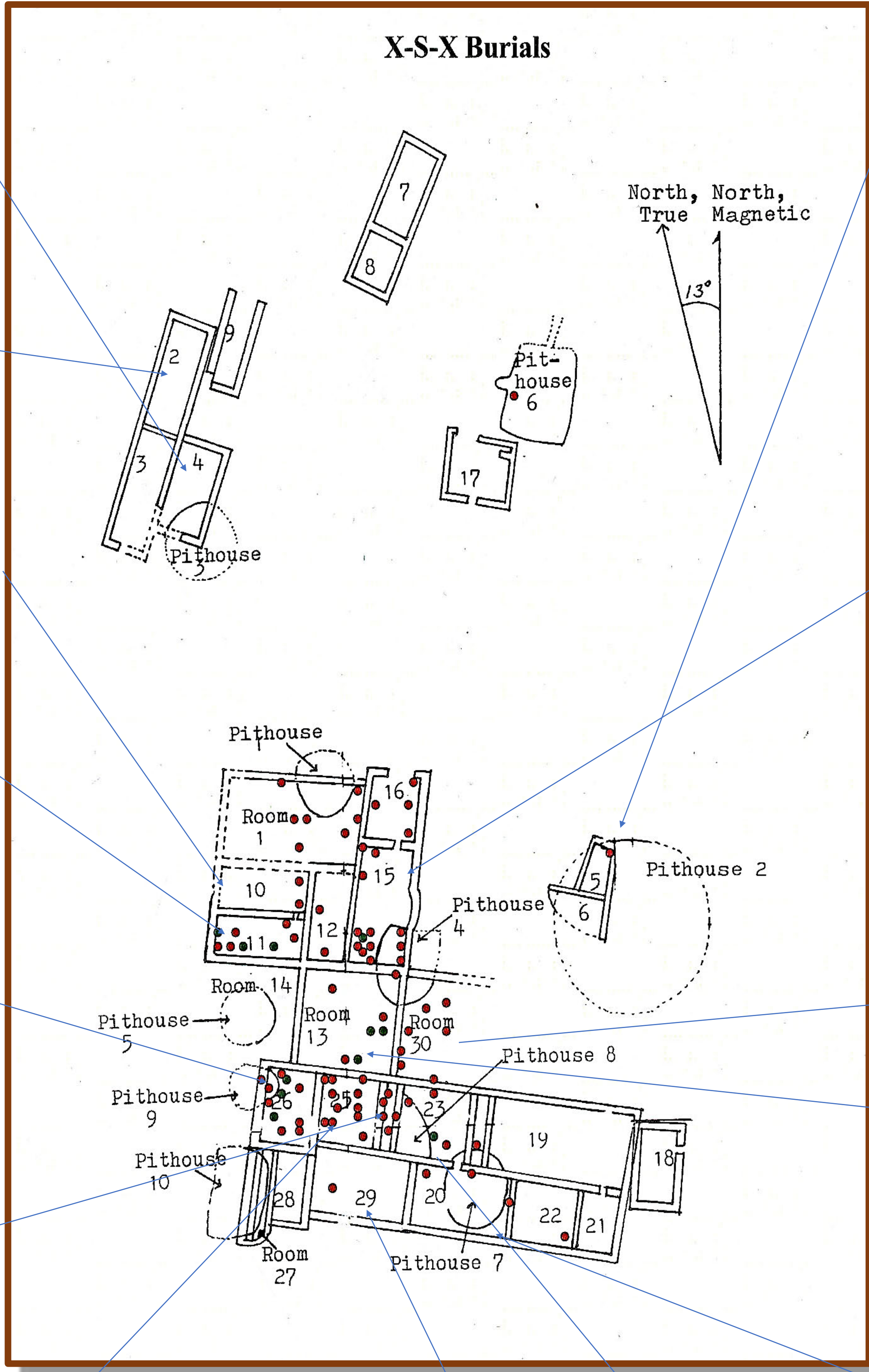


Mimbres Black-on-white Style II

Figure 2. Southwest New Mexico, circa A.D. 1130 to 1200. Different kinds of Based on Hegmon et al. (1999)



Roomblocks, Burials, and Vessel Distributions



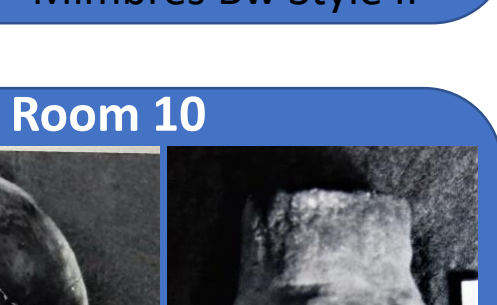
Room 4 Floor



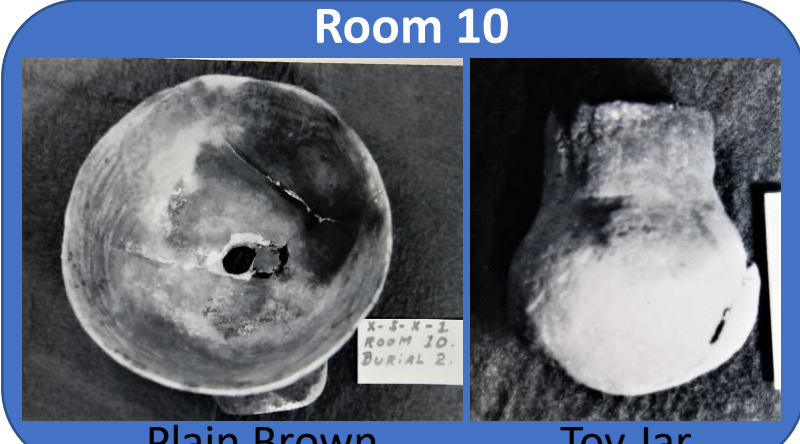
Mimbres Corrugated



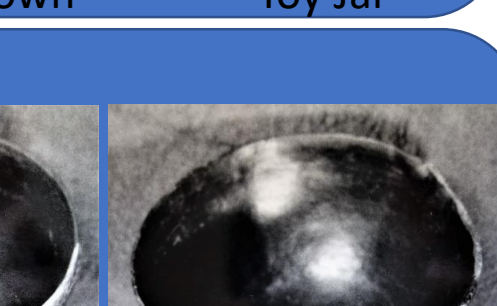
Room 2 Floor



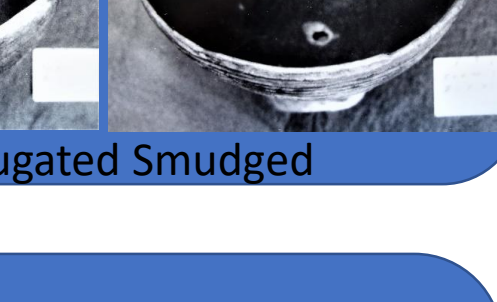
Mimbres Bw Style II



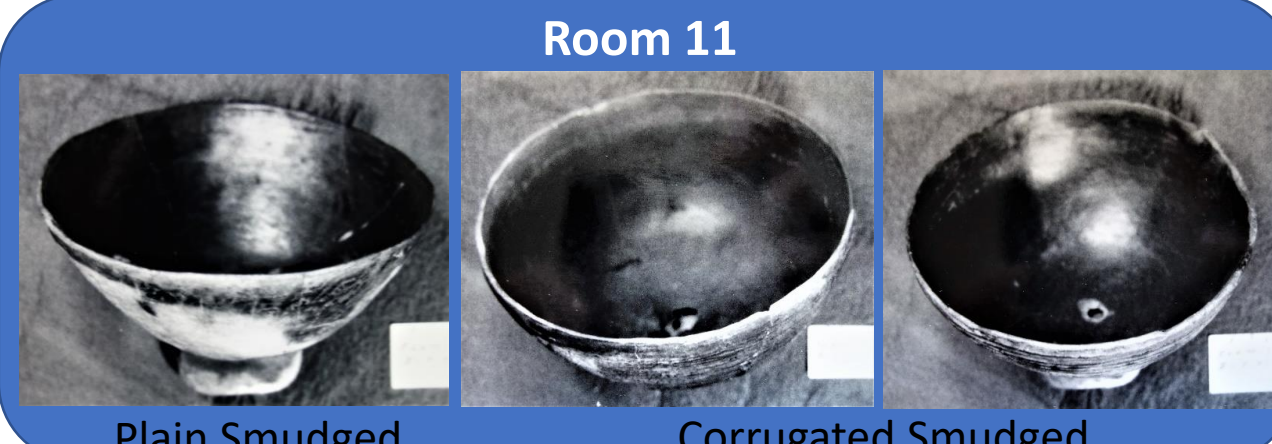
Room 10



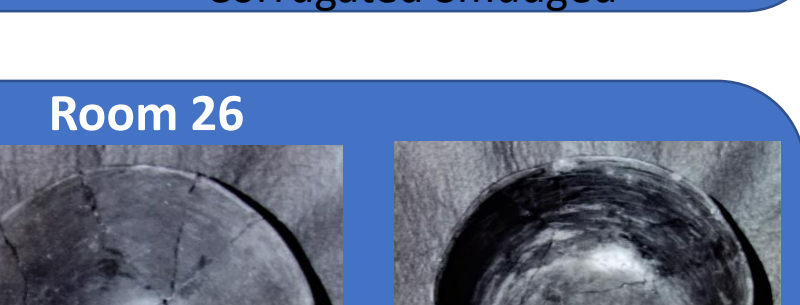
Plain Brown



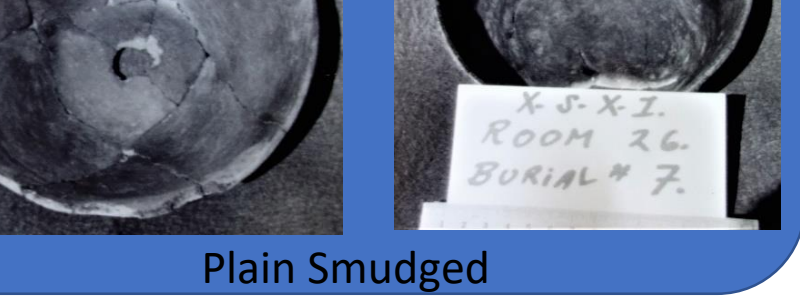
Toy Jar



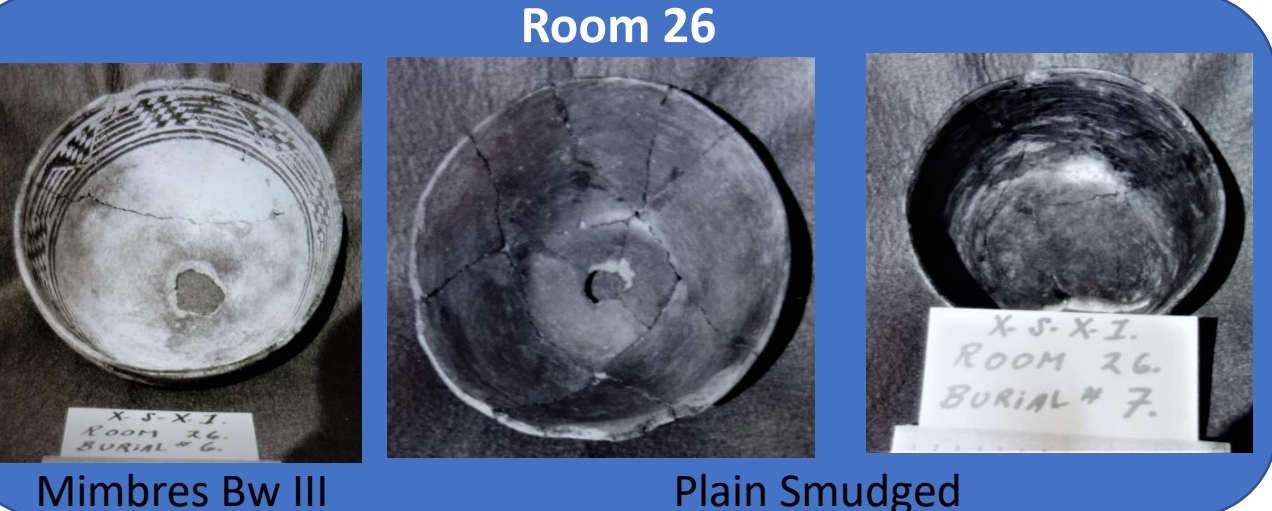
Room 11



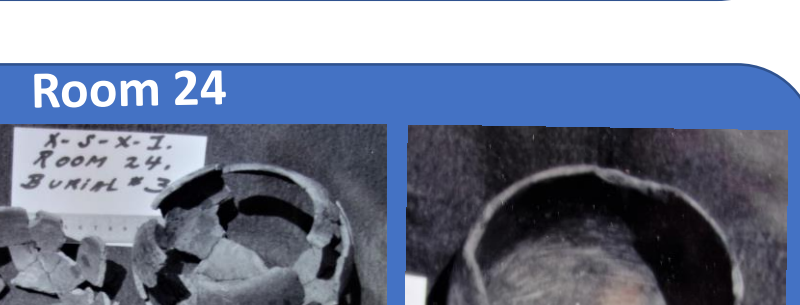
Plain Smudged



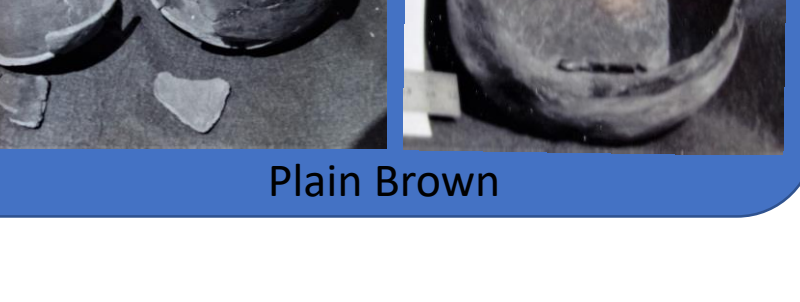
Corrugated Smudged



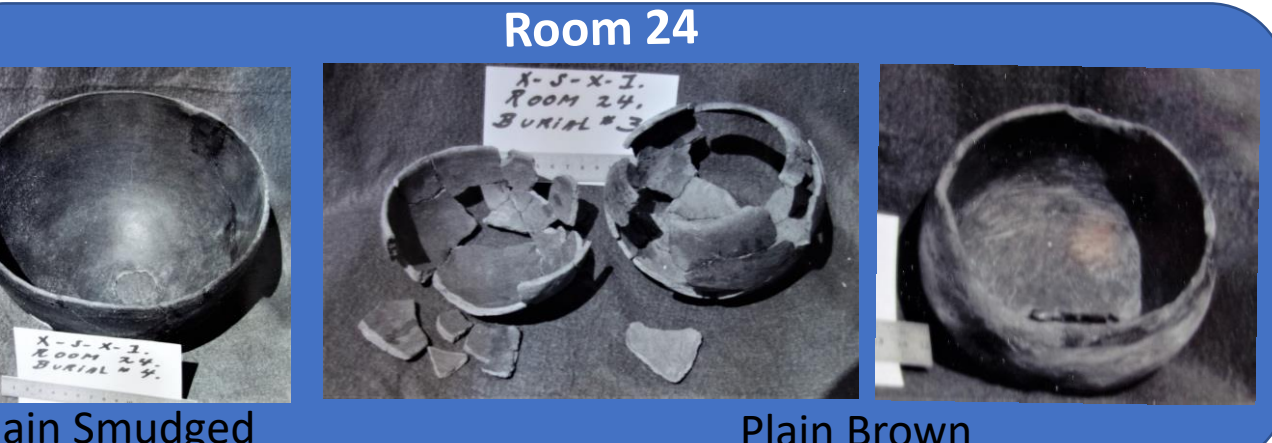
Room 26



Mimbres Bw III



Plain Smudged



Room 24



Plain Brown



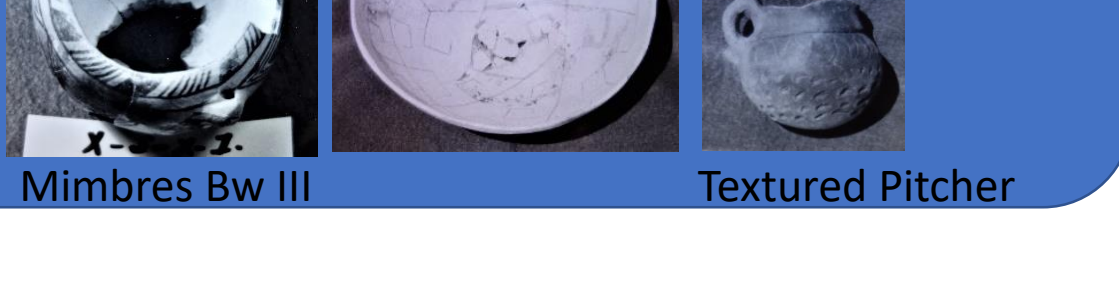
Indented Corrugated Smudged



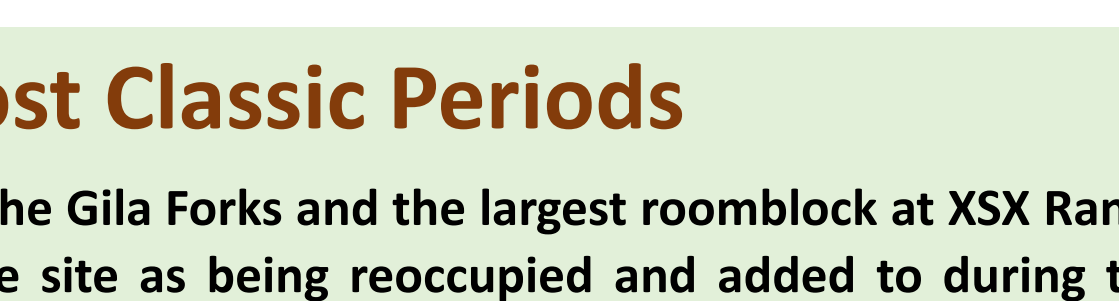
Room 25



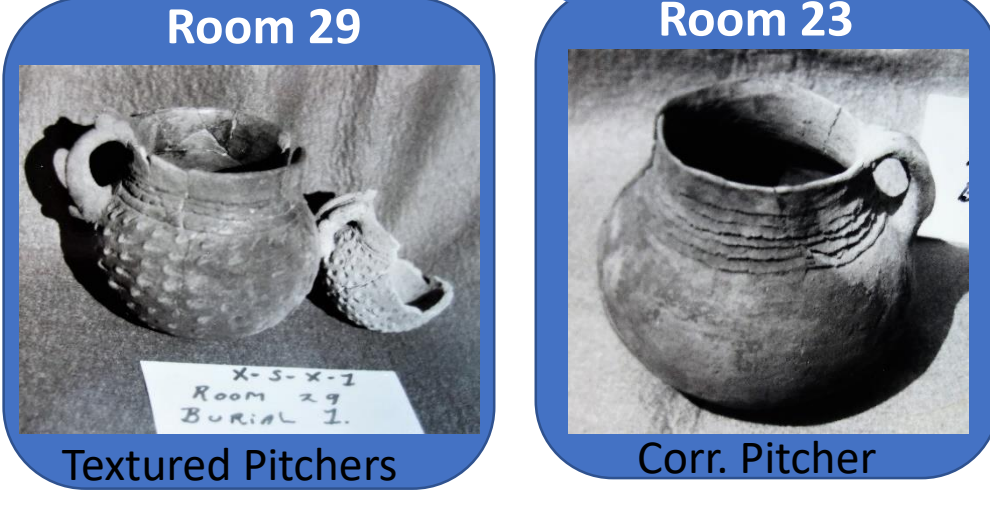
Mimbres Bw III



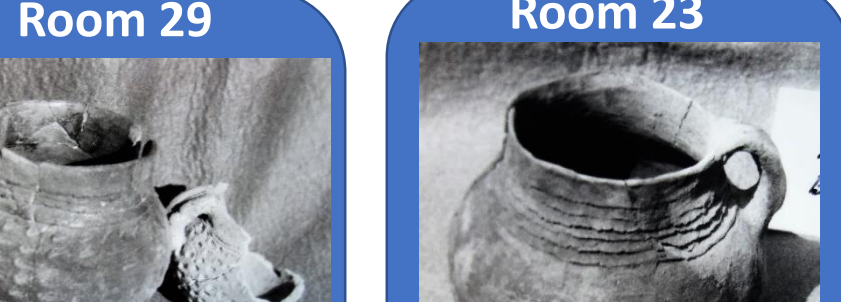
Indented Smudged



Textured Pitcher



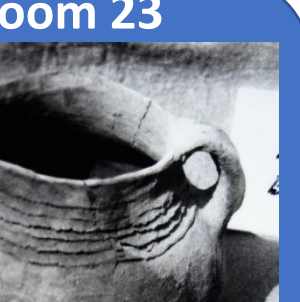
Room 29



Textured Pitchers



Room 23



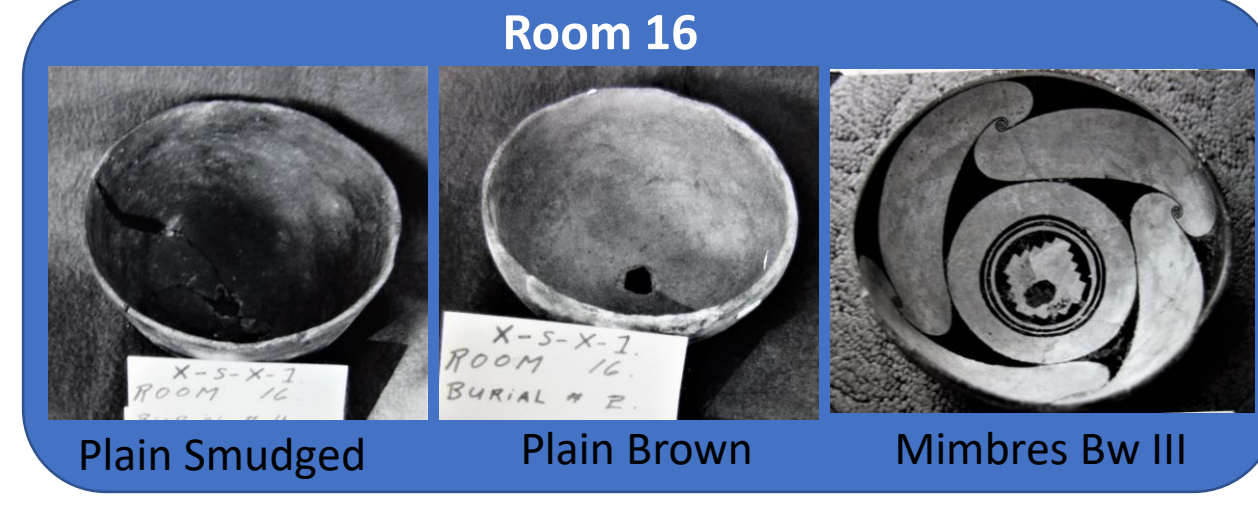
Corr. Pitcher



Room 5 Floor



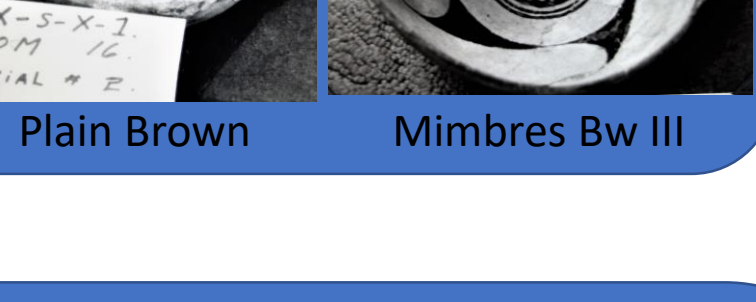
Room 6 Floor



Room 16



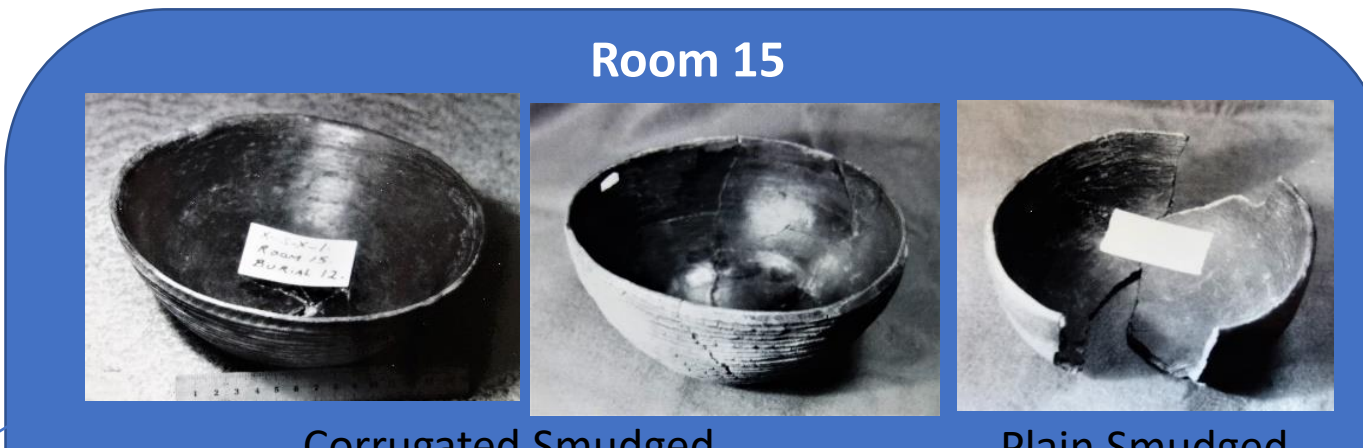
Plain Smudged



Plain Brown



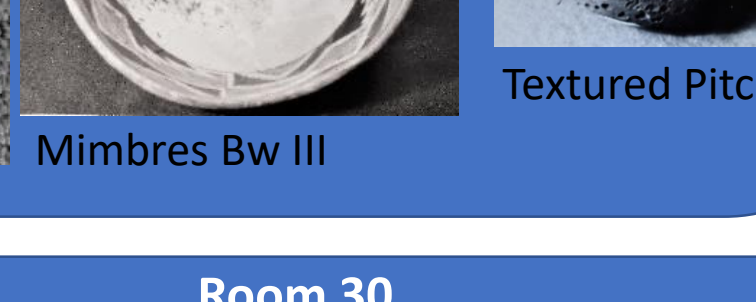
Mimbres Bw III



Room 15



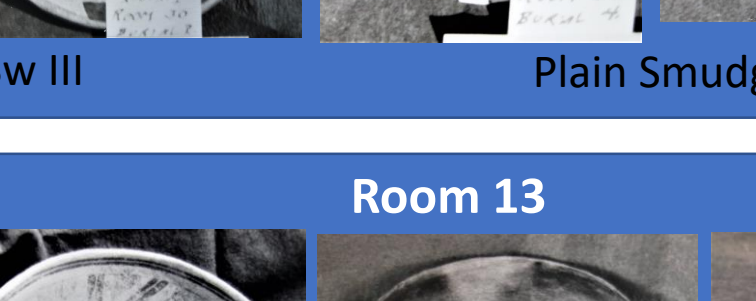
Corrugated Smudged



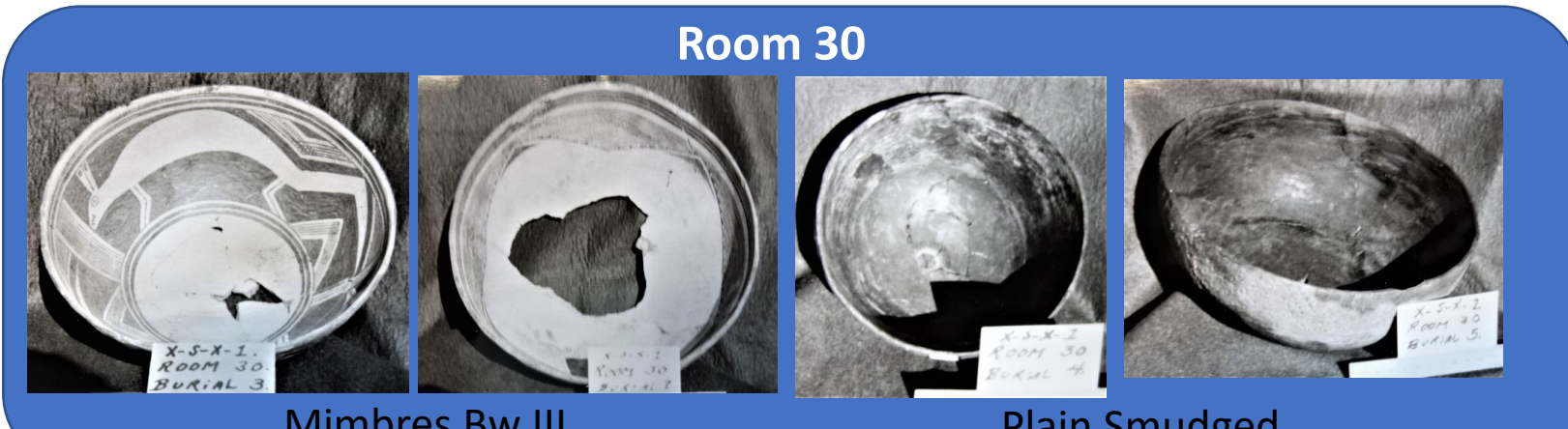
Plain Smudged



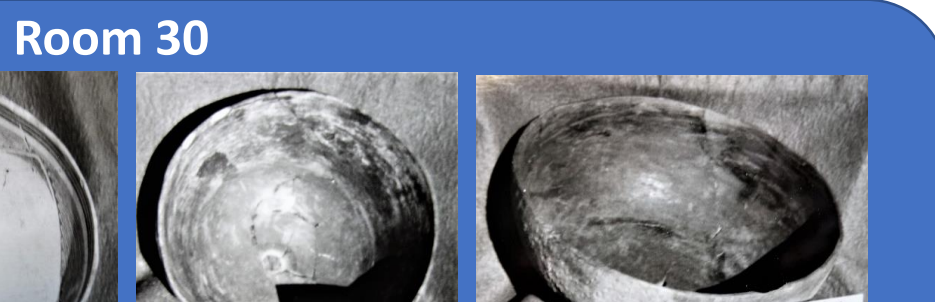
Mimbres Bw III



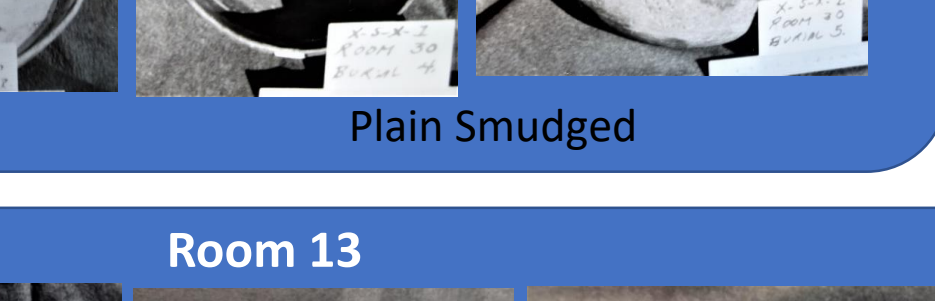
Textured Pitcher



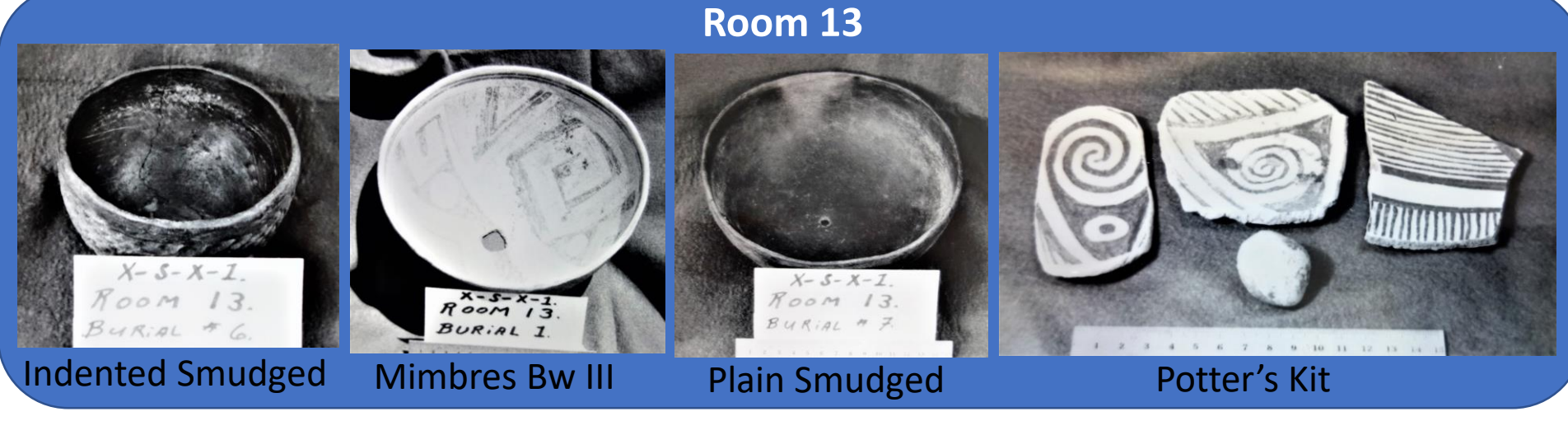
Room 30



Mimbres Bw III



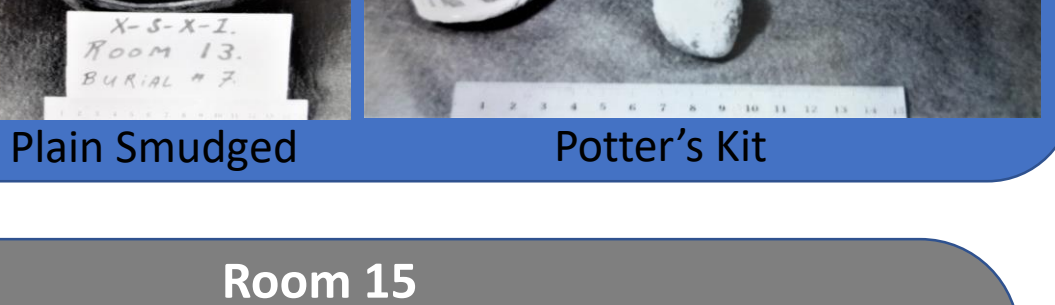
Plain Smudged



Room 13



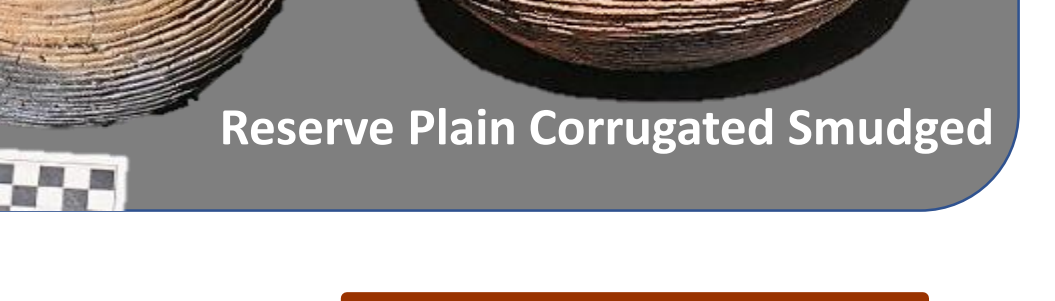
Indented Smudged



Mimbres Bw III



Plain Smudged



Potter's Kit



Room 20



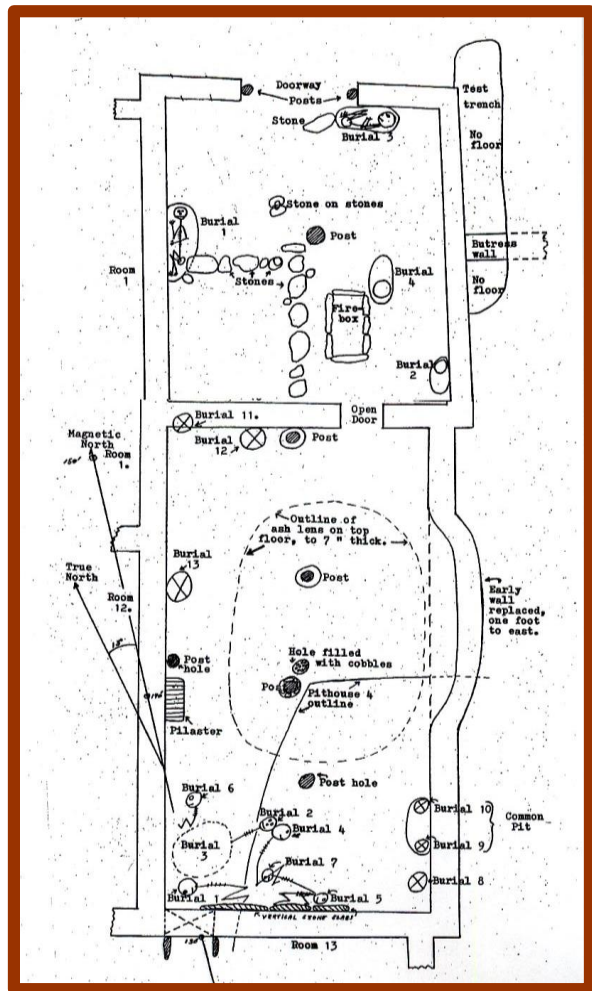
Stone Bowl Over Head



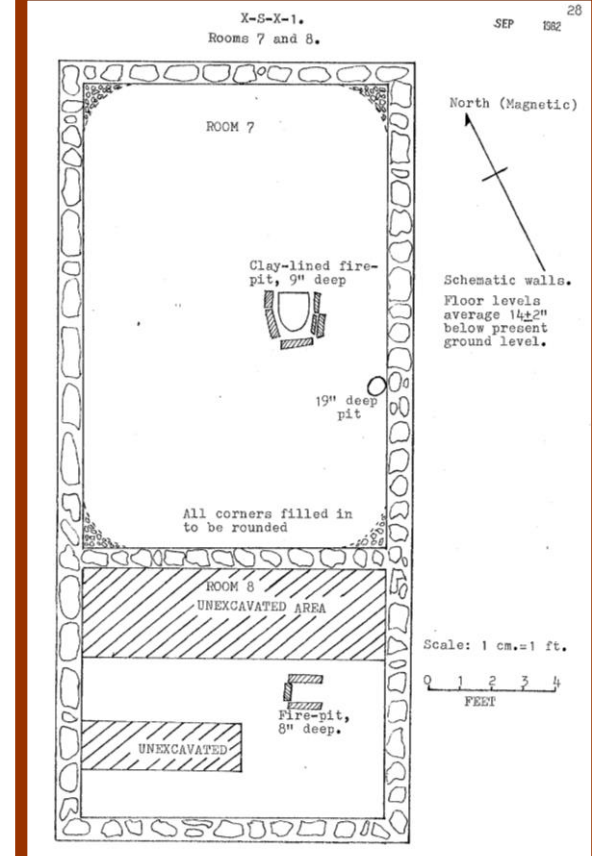
Room 15



Reserve Plain Corrugated Smudged



Rooms 15 and 16



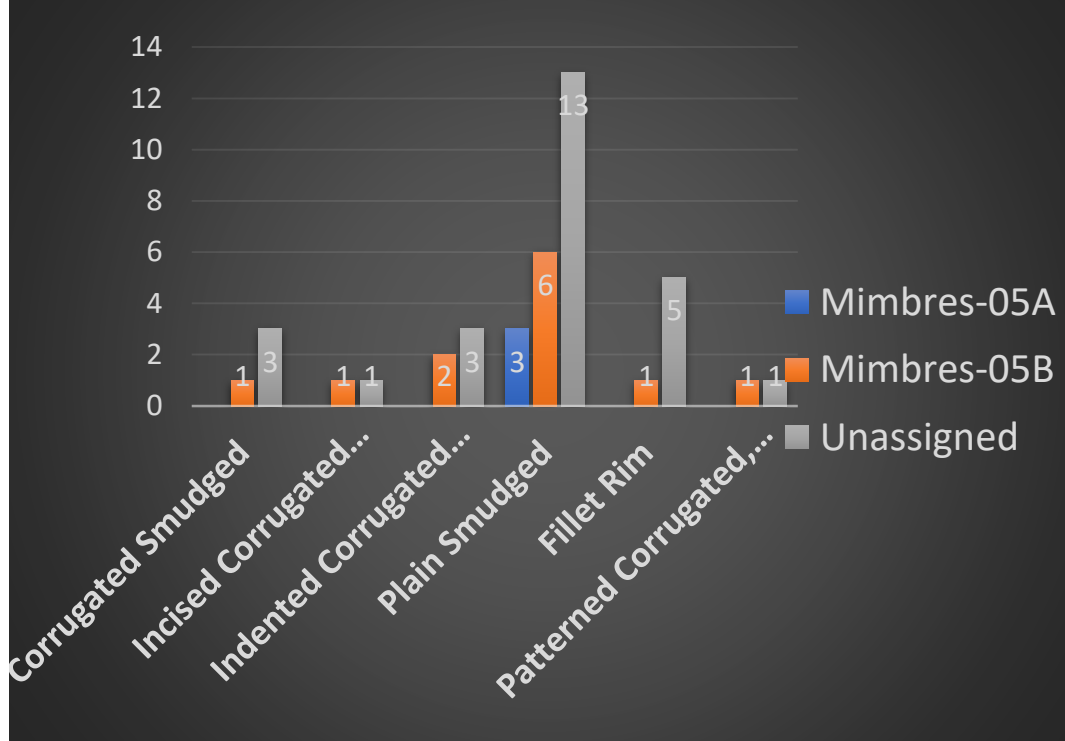
Room 7

INAA Research

Forty XSX Ranch sherds were submitted for INAA analysis thanks to the generosity of Darrell Creel. Although the sampling was bias towards whitewares believed to be locally produced in the Gila Forks, other types were also analyzed for comparative purposes (see table below). Groups 3, 5b, and perhaps 5a and 9 are assumed to be local production (Speakman 2013).

Ceramic Types	Mimbres-01	Mimbres-03	Mimbres-04A	Mimbres-05A	Mimbres-05B	Mimbres-09	Mimbres-21	Mimbres-22	Mimbres-24	Unassigned	Grand Total
XSX	1	14	1	3	2	2	6	1	1	9	40
Plain Brown			1		2					2	5
Mimbres B/W Style II								1			1
Mimbres B/W Style III				2		2	4		1		9
Mimbres B/W Style indeterminate								1			1
Plain Smudged				1						4	5
Three Circle R/W							1				1
Whiteware	1	14								3	18
Grand Total	1	14	1	3	2	2	6	1	1	9	40

Archaeologists sometimes equate Reserve corrugated and plain smudge wares with exchange or direct migration into the Gila Forks from the Reserve region. These types are, however, found to co-occur with Classic Mimbres components throughout the Gila Forks and continue into the Post Classic. INAA results for 41 smudged vessels sampled from the Gila Forks indicate that 37% were likely produced locally.



SUMMARY

XSX Ranch is now interpreted as a major late Classic Mimbres to early Post Classic pueblo. It bears strong cultural continuity to Classic building methods and mortuary behavior but reflects a shift from the placement of Mimbres Black-on-white to smudged and undecorated plain bowls with the deceased and perhaps changes in ceramic production that resulted in a lighter variety of Mimbres Black-on-white.

In terms of architecture and ceramics, it does not compare well with either the Tularosa phase (AD 1200-1350) or the Black Mountain phase (AD 1200-1300s). It does resemble both the Terminal Classic (AD 1130-late 1100s) in the Mimbres Valley and Postclassic (AD 1150-early 1200s) in the Eastern Mimbres region but thus far, no El Paso Polychrome, Chupadero Black-on-white, or Playas Red have been identified at the XSX Ranch site. Future analyses of the site collections housed at the Smithsonian Institute are critical to further interpreting the occupation, expanded regional ties, and aged.

Besides XSX Ranch, there are other pueblos in the Gila Forks that have similar collections and probably date to the early Post Classic. Among those are West Fork Ruin, TJ Ruin, Diamond Creek Village, and Tiwn Pines.

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