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# THOUGHTS ON POTS; CHASING RED MESA

by C. Dean Wilson, OAS

Observations from analysis of pottery recovered from sites spread across the Southwest indicate that for many Pueblo regions, ceramic change is largely reflected by gradual accumulative transformations that result in a sequence of distinct types associated with a particular ceramic tradition. There are, however, some interesting exceptions. In some cases pottery forms exhibiting similar combinations of traits have been assigned by ceramicists to one particular ceramic “type” that is found in a number of regions. In such cases, a particular ceramic form may seemingly appear, almost out of nowhere, and then disappear over vast areas of the Southwest. This capricious appearance and disappearance of new styles is seen in regions that, during most time periods, are reflected by distinct and related sequences (series) of ceramic change that are unrelated to the new style. Observations relating to such cases can provide important clues about the nature of changing movements of and relationships between different Pueblo groups across regions of the Southwest defined by archaeologists.

An example of a ceramic type that seems to suddenly appear in many places and is often included with a number of different regional series is Red Mesa Black-on-white. This type was originally defined for Cibola (Chaco) White Wares, and is most commonly associated with the Early Pueblo II period. It was produced and distributed from about A.D. 875 to 1050 over extremely wide areas of the Southwest. “Red Mesa Black-on-white” describes painted white ware vessels exhibiting a distinct combination of material resources, technology, and design styles.

I first became familiar and interested in Red Mesa Black-on-white during the early part of my career, while examining pottery from Early Pueblo II sites from different regions of the Colorado Plateau. I noted pottery exhibiting decorations and treatments indicative of forms similar to Red Mesa Black-on-white but tempered with materials indicative of production in distinct regions of the Colorado Plateau. Examples included Naschitti Black-on-white, distinguished by the presence of trachyte temper associated with the Chuska tradition (pottery produced by peoples living along the drainages of the Chuska Mountains), and Cortez Black-on-white which is distinguished by the presence of andesite or diorite temper indicative of the Northern San Juan tradition (produced north of the San Juan River).

Analysis of pottery from these distinct regions revealed a range of tempers in pottery exhibiting very similar styles and surface treatment that indicated a great deal of exchange and interaction between groups from different regions. Major shifts and movements are also reflected by the appearance and wide distribution of Red Mesa Black-on-white and associated pottery forms produced during the late ninth and early tenth centuries. This period has been characterized as a time transition, reorganization, and mass population movement. In the Colorado Plateau this shift seems to have begun with the abandonment of Pueblo I villages in some areas and movement into, and construction of, villages at Chaco Canyon. These new settlements appear to mark Chaco’s beginning as an important regional center. In fact, Red Mesa Black-on-white seems to be the most commonly identified decorated pottery type recovered during investigations of the Chaco Project.

An opportunity to examine similar influences in regions outside of the Colorado Plateau has been provided by examination of pottery from sites investigated over the years by the OAS. Based on analysis of ceramic assemblages from projects across much of New Mexico, particularly in regions to the east and south of the Colorado Plateau, pottery exhibiting characteristics used to define Red Mesa is much more widely distributed than most archaeologists had thought. One important observation involves the occurrence of white wares that look remarkably like, if not identical to, Red Mesa Black-on-white (as defined from sites in the Cibola region in the Colorado Plateau). These samples were recovered from sites in other regions located outside the Colorado Plateau along or just to the east or west of the Rio Grande including the Upper Pecos, Northern Jornada Mogollon, Northern Rio Abajo, and Northern Rio Grande. At sites in these regions, Red Mesa Black-on-white was mainly associated with utility ware types indicative of long-lasting local and unrelated gray or brown ware traditions and sometimes with local decorated types.

Identifying Red Mesa Black-on-white from assemblages in these various regions is like finding an old friend in a crowd of strangers, and its presence hints to widespread movements of and influences between different Pueblo groups at a scale that does not seem to be represented during any other time-period. In these various regions, Red Mesa Black-on-white appears to have developed into white wares commonly associated with different regional local traditions. In the Northern Jornada Mogol-



*Red Mesa from LA 391 (PojoaqueProject).*

# BLACK-ON-WHITE IN THE EASTERN SOUTHWEST

lon region Red Mesa Black-on-white appears to have developed into Chupadero Black-on-white. In the Rio Abajo region it seems to have transitioned into Socorro Black-on-white. In the Northern Rio Grande region, it is followed by the production of Kwahe'e Black-on-white. These trends are indicative of connections and interactions between these different regional ceramic traditions that were often brief and changing. But there are a few places, like the heart of the Gallina Region, where the Red Mesa style does not seem to occur at all, and the local decorated pottery develops in a way all its own.

So what does all this mean in terms of the identity and relationship between different Pueblo groups? Are we witnessing the spread and then decline of influences associated with groups centered in the greater Chacoan world? For the easternmost Pueblo regions, are we seeing the gradual differentiation and emergence of the different groups who historically spoke variations of the Tanoan languages in different Pueblo provinces? Like many other archaeologists, I am still struggling to fully grasp both the scale and significance of the kinds of trends implied by placing pottery into one ceramic type or the other. The definition and use of ceramic typology, with all its strengths and pitfalls, represents an important tool through which information relating to the history and relationship of Pueblo people across the Southwest can be examined and hopefully understood. Certainly, in regions across the Southwest during the tenth century, the production of similarly decorated and white ware vessels exhibiting the distinct combination of traits resulting in their classifications as Red Mesa Black-on-white, and their later development into different regional types, have important ramifications concerning cultural connections between different Pueblo groups. There are very interesting and important developments during this time some of which we don't yet fully understand. That is why we keep separating sherds from sites across the Southwest into little piles of somewhat arbitrarily defined pot-

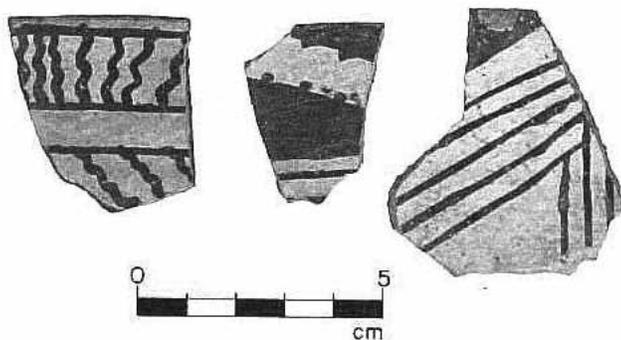
tery types; each time trying to better understand the nature and significance of the patterns we think we see, and from there devising better methods and strategies to use on the next ceramic assemblage we are granted the privilege to study. ❖



*Red Mesa Black-on-white from Taylor Draw, Chupadero Mesa*

## RED MESA BLACK-ON-WHITE

Red Mesa Black-on-white pastes are usually light in color often with carbon streaks and sometimes covered with a thin white slip. Temper may be sand, sherd, or sherd and sand. Red Mesa Black-on-white is represented by a wide range and relatively even mixture of jar and bowl forms that may also include pitchers, ladles, and effigies. Decorations are usually executed in a black to dark brown mineral paint. Designs noted for this type are usually well executed and quite distinct. These may consist of multiple parallel lines embellished with triangles or ticked lines, ribbons, checkerboard patterns, widely spaced straight hachure, squiggle hachure, scalloped or ticked triangles, and scrolls. These designs often consist of a number of elements organized in fairly complex patterns. They may include several distinct motifs combined together in banded, quartered, or all over design layouts. Repeating designs are often organized in evenly spaced patterns separated by a series of parallel lines often resulting in a distinct precisely executed and well organized pattern of intricate and opposing designs. Some changes reflect an increasingly complex organization of overall design through time, sometimes resulting in the distinction of Kiathulanna versus Red Mesa Black-on-white, but the overall styles of pottery produced from the very late ninth century to first half of the eleventh century are quite similar. ❖



*Red Mesa B-w Bowl from LA 835 (Pojoaque Project).*

## 2016 Trips

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### AGRICULTURAL FIELDS ABOVE ZIA PUEBLO

SATURDAY, APRIL 16

Located above the eastern bank of the Jemez River, Zia Pueblo was one of several related villages that were occupied for at least 200 years before Capitan Juan Jaramillo of the Francisco Vasquez de Coronado came upon the settlement in 1541. The settlement was described two years later by Espejo as a city with eight large plazas and housing 4,000 adult males in addition to women and children. Subsequent reports by various early Spanish colonizers praise the variety of fine crops grown in the area. Today the pueblo is known for distinctive pottery produced from rich red clay painted with polychrome geometric or bird designs on white or orange background. A historic Zia vessel is the source of New Mexico's state symbol: the Zia sun.

An enigma of Zia regional history is extensive areas of agricultural terraces in the hills above the modern pueblo. These are in the tradition of the gravel mulched fields of the Chama River valley and the waffle gardens of Zuni Pueblo, but they are unique. Despite their dramatic scale, details of their history are uncertain even in the oral tradition of the pueblo.

Join the FOA for a trip to Zia's fields high above the river with Ulysses Reid of Zia Pueblo. This will be a strenuous hike in the cool of the morning from a parking area up into the hills behind the pueblo. After the hike, we will have lunch, and see the wares of modern Zia artists. Mr. Reid was The School for Advanced Research 2009 Ronald and Susan Dubin Native Artist Fellow. Before becoming a potter, Mr. Reid worked with the Pueblo of Zia language and cultural preservation program.

### THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF CAJA DEL RIO/ LOS AGUAJES

SATURDAY, MAY 7

First identified by Adolph Bandelier in 1883, Los Aguajes Pueblo (LA 5), near Tetilla Peak south of Santa Fe, is a treasure of landscape archaeology. Los Aguajes ("the water traps") was referred to by Gwynn Vivian (unpublished report) as a "frontier pueblo" dating from ca. 1450-1500. He used the term "frontier" because no existing pueblos at the time of Vivian's report claimed it ancestrally. Catalyzed by Dr. James Snead's book *Landscapes of Pueblo Archaeology* and supervised by Mike Bremer, Archaeologist for the National Forest Service, volunteers Bill Davis and Jerry Cooke have been involved for four summer seasons in the identification and GPS mapping of over 35 km of trails in this area, with more to be done in the future.

On May 7, Mike, Bill, and Jerry will lead a tour of the Aguajes landscape. On the approximate 3-mile (easy to moderate) hike we will view the pueblo itself, fieldhouse structures, agricultural features, local shrines, a world shrine, petroglyphs and 2 large lithic fields that date from the Archaic to the Aguajes periods. We will also trace some ancestral trails to discover how they connect to the pueblo.

The trip will be a full day starting at 8:00 am and ending about 4:30 pm. Carpooling will be necessary in high-clearance 4-wheel drive vehicles (the road into Aguajes is very rough). Participants will be asked to bring their own lunch and 2 one-liter bottles of water.

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#### Trip Rating:

*Strenuous*

\$85 for FOA members / \$95 for non-members. Spaces are limited.

**Reservations:** Sign up beginning March 22, 2016 at 7:00 am.

Call: 505-982-7799 x5.

Check [nmarchaeology.org](http://nmarchaeology.org) and [museumfoundation.org/friends-archaeology](http://museumfoundation.org/friends-archaeology) for updates

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#### Trip Rating:

*Moderate*

\$85 for FOA members/\$95 for non-members. Spaces are limited.

**Reservations:** Sign up beginning April 12, 2016 at 7:00am

Call: 505-982-7799 x6.

*Note: If there is rain on May 7 or up to 2 days before, the trip will be re-scheduled for Saturday May 14, 2016 because the road will be impassable.*

# INTO THE DINETAH LABYRINTH: EXPLORING PUEBLO I AND NAVAJO ARCHAEOLOGY

FRIDAY, JUNE 3- SUNDAY, JUNE 5

As archaeological enthusiasts venture north along US 550 on their way to explore the Ancestral Pueblo world, most turn to the west, conscious only of the Great Houses of Chaco Canyon, Salmon Ruins, and Aztec Ruins. Few travelers turn to the east and take the less traveled path into the Dinetah, known best as the traditional homeland of the Navajo. The labyrinth of canyons, mesas, and dirt roads characterizing this region can be intimidating, and this sentiment may have extended deep into the past. In addition to the better known Navajo presence, the region was the home to a strong early Puebloan population, but the Chaco people did not seem to venture much east of the Great North Road. Why? The Dinetah extends from Aztec in the north to Dulce in the south and is sandwiched roughly between US 64 on the east and US 550 on the west. The majority of the region is administered by the Bureau of Land Management, and the Dinetah may be the richest federal archaeological land holding in the United States. However, the archaeological sites are subtle, are not developed for the visiting public, and are effectively unknown to most of the world.

Hiking will not be strenuous but high clearance vehicles are recommended. Carpooling is highly encouraged. Trip cost and lodging info will be forthcoming.

## DAY ONE

US 550 from around Huerfano Mesa north is the modern analog of the Chaco Great North Road. There will be two stops along US 550 to view Great North Road manifestations. However, the main destination for the day will be Salt Point at the confluence of the Largo-Blanco-Carrizo arroyos in the Dinetah. Richard Van Valkenburg originally recognized a large prehistoric community at this locality in the 1940s, which was also the home of the Navajo diety, Salt Woman. Frank Hibben and Herb Dick excavated one of several great kivas at the locality as part of the 1940s UNM field schools. The rest of the day will be spent exploring several sites comprising this large Salt Point Pueblo I community, the largest community in the Dinetah. The area was the focus of numerous Pueblo I great kivas, but the settlement did not mature into a classic Chacoan site with a great house and imposing trash mounds. There will be much to discuss as we explore the sites and examine the plentiful artifacts. Day one will end at Bloomfield for the night.

## DAY TWO

We will return to the confluence of the Blanco-Largo-Carrizo arroyos for a day of exploring a range of outlying Pueblo I and Navajo sites in the vicinity of the Salt Point community. This will be a chance to explore some of the incredible Navajo archaeology including Yei petroglyphs, unusual Navajo pictographs, and Pueblitos in Jesus Canyon. This area was the setting of one of the earliest Navajo occupations in the Dinetah. Again we will end the day in Bloomfield.

## DAY THREE

We will head slowly back to Santa Fe along US 64 and visit several Pueblo I stockaded settlements excavated by Ed Hall in the Gobernador region during the 1940s. Both the Pueblo I and Navajo regional occupations are characterized by strife and this will be a chance to discuss settlement far north of the Salt Point central community. A unique Pueblo IV warrior petroglyph in this area closely resembles styles seen in the Galisteo Basin, and begs the question, just how many Pueblo families moved to the Dinetah during the Pueblo Revolt?

### Trip Rating:

*Moderate*

**Reservations:** Sign up beginning **May 10, 2016 at 7:00am**

Call 505-982-7799 ext. 5.

Check [nmarchaeology.org](http://nmarchaeology.org) and [museumfoundation.org/friends-archaeology](http://museumfoundation.org/friends-archaeology) for updates and cost. Spaces are limited.

## 2106 Trips

### PUEBLO I IN THE CHACO HEARTLAND JUNE 25 (JUNE 26 OPTIONAL)

#### PUEBLO PINTADO

This will be a long one-day Saturday field trip on June 25, when we will be touring Pueblo I era sites in the San Juan Basin with Tom Windes. We will visit two clusters of sites near Pueblo Pintado and near Chaco Canyon. The sites represent the small settlements that are the 9th and early 10th century hamlets and villages that preceded the monumental construction of great houses in Chaco Canyon. These sites are roughly contemporary with some of the sites that will be visited on the Dinetah Labyrinth tour, but there are significant differences in their appearance.

We have also reserved a group campground in Chaco for the night of June 25. Interested participants are welcome to stay overnight in the campground and join Eric Blinman for an informal tour of downtown Chaco on Sunday morning. Hiking will not be strenuous but high clearance vehicles are recommended. Carpooling is highly encouraged.

*Trip cost will be forthcoming. Reservations will begin May 31, 2016 at 7:00am by calling 505-982-7799 ext. 6. Spaces are limited. Please check [nmarchaeology.org](http://nmarchaeology.org) and [museumfoundation.org/friends-archaeology](http://museumfoundation.org/friends-archaeology) for updates.*

### LIVING WITH ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE TEWA BASIN JULY 9

This day trip will visit the Wickersham family in the vicinity of La Puebla, New Mexico, just north of Santa Fe. After purchasing the property in the mid-twentieth century, the family discovered that many generations had lived there in the past, including during the Late Developmental period.

Hiking will be moderate to strenuous. Cost is \$85 for FOA members/\$95 for non-members. **Reservations will begin June 7, 2016 at 7:00am. Call 505-982-7799 ext. 7. Spaces are limited.**

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#### UPCOMING:

### LA BAJADA PUEBLOS AND ENVIRONS SEPTEMBER 10

### PAQUIMÉ AND THE CASAS GRANDES CULTURE OF NORTHERN CHIHUAHUA MID-SEPTEMBER

## BROWN BAG LUNCHES

### FEBRUARY 16

Stephen Post  
OAS Research Associate and Deputy Director Emeritus

*A Reappraisal of an Eighteenth-Century Circular Structure Located North of the Barracks Behind the Palace of the Governors.*

During the 2003 and 2004 excavations in advance of the New Mexico History Museum construction, the Office of Archaeological Studies discovered an eighteenth-century circular structure located north of the Spanish Presidio barracks behind the Palace of the Governors. Based on the artifacts recovered and features present within the circular structure foundation, it was interpreted as the remains of a *carniceria* or butcher shop. A recent reappraisal of the structure and its stratigraphy and artifact content has yielded a revised interpretation that enriches and enlivens use history of the structure and social history at the Palace of the Governors in the eighteenth century.

### FEBRUARY 23

Barbara Chatterjee  
FOA Volunteer and intrepid world traveler

*Chinese Terra Cotta Warriors*

The images of the terracotta army standing in trenches near Xi'an China have traveled round the world many times. However, the recovery work continues, and on this UNESCO World Heritage site, one can see also the loci of continued excavation and restoration of yet more warriors and horses. I will share what I observed looking at the site for clues to the archaeological process.

### MARCH 8

Eric Blinman PhD  
OAS Director

*Archaeology and Language in the Southwest*

Language is not the most obvious of the data sources available to Southwestern archaeologists. We can't hear the ancient ones speak, and there is no confident way to confirm (or deny) models of language history. But historical linguistics is relevant to archaeological models of deep culture history, and language is an important part of current controversies in migration studies. Eric Blinman will present an introduction to Southwestern linguistics and a biased view of the correlation between Pueblo languages and archaeological models of Pueblo history.

## 12 NOON

CNMA CONF. ROOM,  
7 OLD COCHITI RD,

*First left off of Caja del Rio Rd  
--Take 599 to South Meadows  
Rd, continue through the traffic  
circle west along the Frontage  
Rd to Caja del Rio Rd.*

## APRIL 12

Pam Mc Bride.

OAS director of Archaeobotanical analysis.

*Paleoethnobotany: What we do and how we do it with a special  
nod to Ethnobotanists of the late 19th and early to middle  
20th Centuries*

Paleoethnobotany can be the least understood and appreciated of the specialist studies within the field of Archaeology. The talk will begin with a description of the water separation technique used to retrieve macrobotanical material from soil samples, then a brief description of the most common plants recovered and their uses, followed by stories of the primary ethnobotanists that collected data on how plants were used, information that paleoethnobotanists still use today to make analogies to infer how people used plants in prehistory.

## MAY 10

Jerry Sabloff PhD

External Professor and Past President, Santa Fe Institute and  
Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of  
Anthropology Emeritus, University Of Pennsylvania  
Board Member FOA

*The Role of Settlement Pattern Studies and the Emergence of  
the Current Archaeological View of Ancient Maya Civilization*

Current scholarly understandings of Pre-Columbian Maya civilization are quite different from the traditional model of ancient Maya civilization that dominated the field of Maya studies until recently and still dominates public perception of the ancient Maya. In part, this new view is due to both the significant increase in archaeological studies in the Maya area in the past few decades and the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic texts, which have provided new insights into Maya history. Much of the change also is due to the introduction and rapid spread of settlement pattern studies conducted more than a half a century ago. This Brown Bag Talk examines the major impact of the methodology of settlement pattern research on Maya archaeology and looks at new directions in the field.

## Office of Archaeological Studies

The Office of Archaeological Studies (OAS) was the first museum program of its kind in the United States. Its staff conducts international field and laboratory research, offers educational opportunities for school groups and civic organizations and works to preserve, protect and interpret New Mexico's prehistoric and historic sites.

If you would like to know more about OAS, please see our website:  
[www.nmarchaeology.org](http://www.nmarchaeology.org)

## Friends of Archaeology

The Friends of Archaeology is a support group of the Museum of New Mexico Foundation for the Museum of New Mexico, Office of Archaeological Studies.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Friends of Archaeology is to support the Office of Archaeological Studies in the achievement of its archaeological services mandate from the state of New Mexico by participation in and funding of research and education.

## Friends of Archaeology Board

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## THE SHORT LIST

**FEBRUARY 16 | Brown Bag Lunch**

*A Reappraisal of an Eighteenth-Century Circular Structure Located North of the Barracks Behind the Palace of the Governors - Stephen Post*

**FEBRUARY 23 | Brown Bag Lunch**

*Chinese Terra Cotta Warriors - Barbara Chatterjee*

**MARCH 8 | Brown Bag Lunch**

*Archaeology and Language in the Southwest  
- Eric Blinman PhD*

**APRIL 12 | Brown Bag Lunch**

*Paleoethnobotany: What we do and how we do it with a special nod to Ethnobotanists of the late 19th and early to middle 20th Centuries - Pamela McBride*

**APRIL 16**

*Zia Agricultural Fields with Ulysses Reid*

**MAY 7**

*The Cultural Landscape of Caja del Rio/ with Mike Bremer, and National Parks Service volunteers Bill Davis and Jerry Cooke*

**MAY 10 | Brown Bag Lunch**

*The Role of Settlement Pattern Studies and the Emergence of the Current Archaeological View of Ancient Maya Civilization-- Jerry Sabloff*

**JUNE 3-5**

*Into the Dientah Labyrinth with Chuck Hannaford*

**JUNE 25 (June 26 optional)**

*Pueblo Pintado with Tom Windes*

**JULY 9**

*Living with Archaeology in the Tewa Basin – or –  
Where did the ancient ones live before the Pajarito Plateau? with Eric Blinman*

**SEPTEMBER 10**

*La Bajada Pueblos and Environs*

**MID-SEPTEMBER**

*Paquimé and the Casas Grandes Culture of northern Chihuahua with Tim Maxwell*

**OCTOBER 15**

*National Archaeology Day*

**NOVEMBER 13**

*FOA Auction*