

NAVAJO POTTERY AND ETHNOHISTORY

by

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With Foreword by

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FOREWORD

Navajoland has recently become the focus of much anthropological research, owing primarily to the almost simultaneous growth of energy- and development-related projects and cultural resource compliance requirements. In the past, much of this research has emphasized the prehistoric cultural sequence, while only a handful of scholars have applied themselves to the investigation of Navajo history. David Brugge was and is one of those few scholars who have devoted much of their professional and personal energy to the study of Navajo culture. Fortunately, he was able to produce a short but handy manuscript on Navajo pottery as a part of his work with the Navajo Land Claims project of the early 1960s. The manuscript, originally published in 1963 by the Navajo Tribal Museum as Navajoland Publication Series 2, has been unavailable for some time. We thought it appropriate, as one aspect of the celebration of the Museum's twentieth anniversary, that the manuscript be updated and reprinted, but as a part of the new Navajo Nation Papers in Anthropology series, sponsored by the Navajo Nation Branch of Cultural Resources, of which the Museum is one program.

Mr. Brugge's analysis addresses several important issues, such as the origin and physical appearance of Navajo pottery, as well as how pottery usage fits into Navajo lifeway patterns. Currently, traditional forms of Navajo pottery are primarily used during ceremonies as drums or as containers for herbs or other substances. Modern pottery-making emphasizes shapes ranging from unpainted jars and bowls to piggy banks, tea pots, and pencil holders. Such items have proved to be of market value, and it appears that Navajo pottery-making, in its current form, is a vital craft with great survival potential. Traditional Navajo pottery may be seen in our new exhibit hall at the Navajo Tribal Museum, and we plan to prepare a display of modern pieces in the near future.

Credit for the production of this publication should be given to Dave Brugge for preparing a new author's preface and to John Robertson for his masterful editing skills. Russ Hartman, Curator at the Navajo Tribal Museum, assisted in obtaining the new photographic illustrations, while Charles Sternberg of Oracle, Arizona, prepared the line drawing reproduced herein as Figure 7. The cover illustration was produced by Clay Hamilton of the Navajo Nation Cultural Resource Management Program. Orders for this publication may be placed with either the Branch of Cultural Resources or the Navajo Tribal Museum in Window Rock, Arizona. We are certain that "Navajo Pottery and Ethnohistory" will be used and enjoyed by both professionals and the interested public.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I have made only minor editorial changes in the text of the first edition of this paper, and Figure 7, which was not reproduced well from my original drawing, has been revised. I have had no opportunity to work with any major collection of Navajo archaeological ceramics since the first edition, but have processed collections resulting from the National Park Service's Chaco Project and have also examined sherds from a number of other projects that produced greater or lesser numbers of Navajo sherds. It is apparent that there is far more regional variability in the later Navajo types than the Land Claims collection, which was largely from sites on the peripheries of Navajo country or within the 1882 Executive Order reservation, could reveal. Most of this diversity will probably prove to be on the variety level, but new types have since been described and more may be expected (James 1976; Sudar-Laumbach 1980).

A more important conclusion has been the result of the discovery of Navajo sites in the Abiquiu Reservoir that had Puebloan trade pottery in some quantity, but lacked any demonstrably Navajo ceramics (Schaafsma 1979). While I had already begun to feel relatively confident that the Navajo did not manufacture pottery prior to the arrival of Pueblo refugees from Spanish rule, the Abiquiu sites provide strong evidence to support this idea.

I have long viewed Dineta Utility as basically a product of the Anasazi tradition introduced by the Pueblo refugees. The new data from the Abiquiu Reservoir now show with little doubt that no other type preceded it in Navajo culture. Its jar form obviously derives from the utility forms of the Largo-Gallina Culture, but not from direct contact with the people of that culture. The vessels that inspired the use of this quite characteristic shape were probably already archaeological specimens at the time they were used as the pattern and perhaps for the refugees were a symbol of the old days of freedom before the coming of the Whites. The extreme uniformity of shape among the jars of the type suggests that a very few pieces served as the inspiration and that there was some strong force that led the women to retain this form over a very long period. A factor in this force could have been the expression of the potters' desire to regain the old ways by copying something from ruins that dated from the remote past. As the refugees became Navajo, the form became characteristic of Navajo pottery and, in time, subject to the variability that is so frequent in much of Navajo culture today.

I also believe that it is time to revise my type names to conform better to the binomial system used in most archaeological ceramic studies. I have already submitted for publication elsewhere a paper in which I have

proposed the names Dinetah Gray, Navajo Gray, and Pinyon Gray for Dinetah Utility, Navajo Utility, and Pinyon Utility. This nomenclature also appears in this new edition. I have not tried to include the new types and varieties that are now beginning to appear in the literature. The sources for these descriptions are, or soon will be, available, and integration of the new data would be more than this small booklet deserves. Most of the newly recognized variations have not yet been assigned type or variety names, and I prefer to leave this to those who should receive the credit.

The theory of the origin or at least the final shaping of Blessingway in a revitalization movement during the mid-18th century has been neither disproven nor proven since original publication, although it has received acceptance by some students of Navajo religion (Wyman 1970; Luckert 1975). I have continued to find the concept useful in interpreting other aspects of Navajo culture, such as rock art (Brugge 1977), but believe that more research is needed. While I still regard it as a viable theory, I sense a complexity in the events of the 18th century that the bare outlines given here make to appear simplistic. Archaeology alone cannot resolve the many questions raised, but should be able to provide objective data that can form a basis for greater insights into the drastic changes that the Navajo experienced during that century and that led to what we now regard as traditional Navajo culture.

As a final comment, I should note that the vitality of the Navajo ceramic tradition during the past 18 years, its resources for innovation, and the ability of Navajo potters to capture more of the market for Southwestern Indian pottery have been remarkable. It may be a humble art, but it is far from a dying one.

David M. Brugge
Albuquerque, New Mexico
January, 1981

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The following descriptions are based on the pottery collections made during the archaeological survey conducted for the Navajo Land Claim. Ceramic collections were made at 278 sites (about 12 percent of the total number of sites included in the survey), but most of these collections include fewer than 50 sherds. The only area in which most of the sites yielded sherds and in which many of the collections include large numbers of sherds was the classic Dinetah area in the upper San Juan River drainage. This factor has led to a relative neglect of Navajo archaeology, and Athabaskan archaeology in general, by Southwestern archaeologists, who have come to rely upon potsherds for much of their data, both in the field and in the laboratory. The only important exception to this is the work that has been done in the Dinetah and adjacent areas, primarily with sites dating to the 18th century.

The second part of this paper is an attempt to account for the lack of pottery on Navajo sites and the changes in the ceramics of the Navajo in cultural terms. In order to do so, it has been necessary to utilize ethnographic and historical data as well as archaeological evidence. The author believes that the availability of these data from a variety of sources allows for the recognition of a theoretical model that may be applicable to archaeological sequences analogous to that of the Navajo sequence. This section is based on a paper read at the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in 1963.

Credit is due most of the people who worked for or against the Navajo Land Claims case for aid or stimulating discussions or both that helped to make this paper possible. Particular recognition is due the following people: Mabel Bighthumb of Cow Springs, Arizona, and Angela Ashley of Burnt Water, Arizona, who allowed me to observe modern Navajo ceramic techniques; Hastiin Keshkoli Begay Atakai of Forest Lake, Arizona, whose knowledge of Navajo traditional practices gave me many valuable insights; Bernadine Whitegoat and Maxwell Yazzie, who assisted both in the collection of the specimens upon which this study is based and in the interpretation and translation of Navajo into English; Dr. George P. Hammond of the Bancroft Library and Dr. Myra Ellen Jenkins of the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, who supplied me with many important unpublished documents; J. Lee Correll, who directed the archaeological research project; and, especially, the late Richard F. Van Valkenburgh and the late Stanley A. Stubbs, who were the first to recognize the change from the earlier to the later types in the Navajo ceramic sequence.

The author takes full responsibility for the opinions expressed in this paper. For Navajo readers who may disagree with some of these

opinions on religious grounds, two points should be stressed. First, the historical reconstruction in the second part of this paper is theoretical, and the fact that it appears in print does not prove that it is true in all respects. Second, it is my belief that most of the other great religions of the world, including Christianity, originated under similar circumstances. The philosophical interpretations of this are perhaps best left for your own Hata'i and theologians to work out.

CHAPTER 2

NAVAJO POTTERY TYPES: DESCRIPTIONS

Dinetah Gray (Figure 1)

Construction: Coiled and scraped

Firing Atmosphere: Reducing, occasionally oxidizing

Core Color: Light gray to black, sometimes buff, brown, or red

Temper: Abundant quartz sand, protrudes slightly on the surface

Core Texture: Medium, ranging from medium fine to medium coarse

Vessel Walls: Usually weak, sometimes medium

Fracture: Crumbling

Surface Finish: Interior usually wiped with shredded juniper bark or corn husks, sometimes scraped with a corncob or smoothed, rarely lightly polished, or combination of these techniques. Exterior usually scraped with a corncob, sometimes wiped with shredded juniper bark or corn husks or smoothed or rarely lightly polished. Usually scattered small mica glints on the surface.

Surface Color: Light gray to black, sometimes brown, tan, buff, orange-buff, pink, or red

Forms: Jars, sometimes bowls

Wall Thickness: Ranges from 8.0 mm to 2.0 mm, averages 5.0 mm to 3.0 mm (100 sherds)

Rims: Jars---I A3, I B3, I B4, II A4, II B3, III A10, III B3, III B5, V B4, ---- V B5; Bowls--- I A3, I A4, I A5, II A2. (For the system used to designate rim form, see Colton 1953:44, Figure 10.)

Decoration: Very rarely incised lines or lugs

Range: From Field, New Mexico, on the south to the Mesa Mountains on the New Mexico-Colorado state line on the north. Eastern boundary marked by the lower Rio Puerco of the East, Jemez Creek, and the Continental Divide, westward to Wide Ruins Wash and Canyon de Chelly in Arizona.

Period: ca. 1700 to ca. 1800

Western Variety: Similar to Dinetah Gray, except that texture is fine to medium fine, temper includes red and black particles, and both interior and exterior are usually scraped. This variety very rarely has a fugitive red paint. Known distribution is limited to the Black Mesa area in Arizona.

Micaceous Variety: Similar to Dinetah Gray, but paste contains a moderate amount of mica, many of the particles of which are large enough to be recognized without the aid of a lens. Range is from Mt. Taylor, New Mexico, to Chacra Mesa, New Mexico.

Indented Variety: Similar to Dinetah Gray, but surface is shallowly indented-corrugated and sometimes wiped after texturing. Range is the Largo and Gobernador drainages in New Mexico. This variety has been called "Gobernador Indented" by Dittert.

Previous References: "Blackware" (Kidder 1920:325); "Plain black cooking ware" (Stubbs 1930:78); "Navajo Utility Ware," in part (Keur 1941:46-47); "Dinetah Scored" (Farmer 1942:74-75); "Black Utility Ware" (Hurt 1942:92); "Navaho Utility Ware," in part (Keur 1944:82); "Dinetah Utility" (Van Valkenburgh 1954); "Gray, scored utility ware" (Riley 1954); "Conical bottomed utility ware" (Vivian 1957:153-154); "Dinetah Utility" and "Gobernador Indented" (Dittert 1958b:68-69); "Dinetah Utility" and "Gobernador Indented" (Dittert 1958a:20); "Dinetah Utility" and "Gobernador Indented" (Dittert, Hester, and Eddy 1961:244-246).

Navajo Gray (Figures 2 and 3)

Construction: Coiled and scraped

Firing Atmosphere: Reducing

Core Color: Usually black or dark gray, sometimes light gray, brown, or buff

Temper: Finely ground sherd, usually some sand, probably from the temper of original sherds ground for tempering

Core Texture: Fine to medium fine

Vessel Walls: Weak to medium weak. Wall strength sometimes greater owing to thickness of walls.

Fracture: Crumbling to medium crumbling

Surface Finish: Interior usually wiped with shredded juniper bark or corn husks or lightly polished, sometimes smoothed, rarely scraped; occasionally a combination of these techniques. Exterior usually scraped with a corncob or wiped with shredded juniper bark or corn husks, sometimes smoothed; occasionally a combination of these techniques. Sometimes the surface is somewhat crackled. A few small mica glints occasionally present on the surfaces.

Surface Color: Light gray to black, sometimes red, orange, buff, tan, or brown

Forms: Jars, sometimes bowls

Wall Thickness: Ranges from 7.0 mm to 3.0 mm, averages 5.5 mm to 4.0 mm (31 sherds)

Rims: Jars---- I A3, I A4, II B4, V B4

Decoration: Single, double, or triple fillets, usually appliquéd, rarely modeled, around necks of jars, 12 mm to 30 mm below rim; either straight or zig-zag; decorated with repeated indentations produced with the fingertip, the end of a tool, or the side of a stick. Rims sometimes notched.

Range: East of the Carrizo, Chuska, and Zuni mountains and southeast to the northern end of the Monica Mountains; north to the lower portion of the Rio Puerco of the East, Jemez Creek, and Cabresto Mesa; west to about the New Mexico state line and the Four Corners areas.

Period: 1800 to present

Comparison: Finer texture than Pinyon Gray and more sand in temper; decorative fillets usually appliquéd.

Micaceous Variety: Similar to Navajo Gray, but with a moderate amount of mica in the paste and visible on the surface. Many of the mica particles are large enough to be identified without the aid of a lens. There is far less mica present than in Taos, Picuris, and Jicarilla pottery. This variety appears to be the result of the use of micaceous clay and is localized from Mesa Gigante north to Salado Creek.

Previous references: "The utilitarian cooking pot," in part (Hill 1937); "The crude ware made in recent times" (Malcolm 1939:12); "'Navaho-like' pots" (Huscher and Huscher 1940:140); "Unpainted cooking ware," probably this type (Tschopik 1950); "Modern Navajo jars," probably this type (Cassidy 1956:78); "Athabaskan," probably this type in part (Danson 1957:73); "Navajo Culinary," in part (Vivian 1960: 108-111).

Pinyon Gray (Figure 4)Construction: Coiled and scrapedFiring Atmosphere: Poorly reducing, occasionally oxidizingCore Color: Light gray to black, sometimes brownish gray to redTemper: Angular fragments of sherd easily visible without a lens, often of a lighter color than the paste; usually some sand. Temper often visible on the surface. Abundant temper. Sometimes sand or crushed rock.Core Texture: Medium, ranging from medium fine to medium coarseVessel Walls: Usually weak, occasionally medium owing to wall thicknessFracture: Usually crumbling, occasionally mediumSurface Finish: Interior usually wiped with shredded juniper bark or corn husks or sometimes scraped with a corncob or lightly polished; occasionally a combination of these techniques. Exterior usually scraped with a corncob, occasionally wiped or smoothed, rarely lightly polished; sometimes a combination of these techniques. Surface sometimes crackled, especially if smoothed or polished, the small cracks connecting the particles of temper visible on the surface.Surface Color: Light gray to black, sometimes brown, buff, or reddish pink. Lighter shades of gray sometimes have a faint bluish tint.Forms: Jars, sometimes bowlsWall Thickness: Ranges from 8.5 mm to 2.0 mm, averages 5.5 mm to 4.0 mm (76 sherds)Rims: Jars-- I Z3, I A4, I B3, I B4, I A10, I B10, II B2, II B7, III A4, III B3; Bowls--- I B10.Decoration: Single, double, or triple fillets, usually modeled, sometimes appliqued, around necks of jars; either straight or zig-zag; zig-zag fillets 4 mm to 54 mm below rims, straight fillets 5 mm to 20 mm below rims; decorated with repeated indentations produced with the fingertip, end of a tool, or side of a stick. Rims sometimes notched.Range: West of the Carrizo, Chuska, and Zuni mountains, from Quemado, New Mexico, on the south to the Abajo or Blue Mountains in Utah on the north and westward to the Coconino Rim in ArizonaPeriod: 1800 to present

Comparison: Coarser texture than Navajo Gray and less sand in the temper; decorative fillets usually modeled rather than appliqued.

Remarks: New vessels are usually oxidized. Firing may usually be in an oxidizing atmosphere, with reduction taking place through use in cooking fires.

Previous references: "The utilitarian cooking pot," in part (Hill 1937); "Navajo pots," probably this type, at least in part (Douglas 1937); "Navaho" and "Gray ware, decorated" (Hunt 1953:172 and Figure 74c).

Gobernador Polychrome (Figure 5)

Construction: Coiled and scraped

Firing Atmosphere: Oxidizing

Core Color: Red or orange to buff near surface, gray to dark gray in central part or, rarely, buff

Temper: Sherd, sometimes mixed with sand; rarely sand only. Temper usually rather sparse, but relatively large fragments used. Much of the sherd temper appears to be from Gobernador Polychrome sherds. Usually small white particles of unidentified material in the paste, possibly temper, but probably natural inclusions in the clay.

Core Texture: Fine to medium, but usually fine with some large particles. Small air bubbles usually present. Sometimes the heat of firing was so intense that the clay melted and fused in a cinder-mass in parts of the wall.

Vessel Walls: Medium strong to strong

Fracture: Brittle to very brittle

Surface Finish: Interior of bowls and exterior of jars polished, often not too well done. Interior of jars wiped or lightly polished. Exterior of bowls polished, smoothed, or wiped.

Surface Color: Usually orange to buff, but often varying to red, yellow, brown, or gray

Forms: Bowls, some carinated or shouldered, most common; some jars.

Wall Thickness: Ranges from 10.0 mm to 2.5 mm, averages 5.5 mm (35 sherds)

Rims: Bowls--- I A3, I A4, I B4, III A3, III A4, III B3, III B4, V B4

Painted Decoration: Dull red, black, rarely white

Pigments: Red and white of mineral origin; black mineral, but apparently mixed with an organic base in most cases.

Decoration: Usually solid red geometric areas outlined in black; also independent black lines and solid elements. Interior and exterior of bowls, exterior of jars.

Range: From Big Bead Mesa north to the San Juan River and from El Huerfano on the west to the Lapis Mesas on the east, all in New Mexico; occasional pieces found as far west as Nazlini, Arizona.

Period: ca. 1700 to ca. 1800

Previous references: "Thin three-color Painted Ware" (Kidder 1920:326-327); "Polychrome ware similar to the Kayenta" (Stubbs 1930:78); "Gobernador Polychrome" (Kidder and Shepard 1936:372-373); "Navaho painted ware," possibly a variant, described as having a red slip (Malcolm 1939:12); "Gobernador Polychrome" (Keur 1941:47); "Local decorated pottery," although not identified by Farmer as Gobernador Polychrome, seems at least in part to fall within the range of this type (Farmer 1942:75-76); "Gobernador Polychrome" (Keur 1944:82); "Gobernador Polychrome" (Riley 1954); "Gobernador Polychrome" (Dittert 1958b: 69-70); "Gobernador Polychrome" (Dittert 1958a:20); "Gobernador Polychrome" (Vivian 1960:120-125); "Gobernador Polychrome" (Dittert, Hester, and Eddy 1961:245-246).

Navajo Painted (Figure 6)

Construction: Coiled and scraped

Firing Atmosphere: Oxidizing

Core Color: Gray, cream, buff, pink, and orange

Temper: Sand, crushed sandstone, sherd

Core Texture: Medium to fine; occasional large fragments of temper as much as 6.0 mm in diameter.

Vessel Walls: Weak to medium

Fracture: Crumbling to medium

Surface Finish: Interior of bowls polished, rarely slipped; exterior of bowls usually polished, sometimes scraped, rarely slipped. Exterior of jars polished; interior of jars wiped, smoothed, or polished.

Surface Color: Orange to buff, sometimes gray, reddish gray, brown, or yellow

Forms: Usually bowls, sometimes jars, also plates and miniatures. Jars sometimes have indented bases.

Wall Thickness: Ranges from 8.5 mm to 3.0 mm, averages 6.5 mm to 4.5 mm (18 sherds)

Rims: Bowls--- I A3, I A4, III A4, III B4, III B6

Pigments: Red of mineral origin; black of mixed mineral and organic pigments or, rarely, organic alone.

Decoration: Exterior of jars; interior and sometimes exterior of bowls. Polychrome designs similar to those on Gobernador Polychrome; these are probably generally earlier than the red-on-orange and black-on-orange designs, which are usually done with broader lines and poorer craftsmanship.

Range: From Big Bead Mesa, New Mexico, to Black Mesa, Arizona, and north of the San Juan River in Utah.

Period: 1750 to present

Remarks: This type is very variable. It developed out of Gobernador Polychrome, and early examples resemble that type except that the paste is not as hard and brittle and is generally an even buff color throughout. Later examples are red-on-orange or black-on-orange, and in some cases the paste more nearly resembles that of the utility wares. Further subdivision of the type into varieties or new types should be possible with larger collections. In areas near modern Pueblo Indian settlements, it tends to resemble the painted pottery made by the nearby Pueblos, but is seldom as well finished as that made by the neighboring group.

Previous references: "Painted wares" (Hill 1937); "Navaho Polychrome" (Keur 1941:48); "Local decorated pottery," in part (Farmer 1942:75-76); "Painted sherds" (Hurt 1942:92-95); "Painted ware" (Tschopik 1941); "Navajo Polychrome" (Dittert 1958b:70); "Navajo Polychrome" (Dittert 1958a:20); "Navajo Decorated" (Vivian 1960:114-120); "Navajo Polychrome" (Dittert, Hester, and Eddy 1961:245).



Figure 1. Dinetah Gray jar
(NTM No. 1963-18-78)
(max. diameter 34.0 cm, height 52.1 cm)

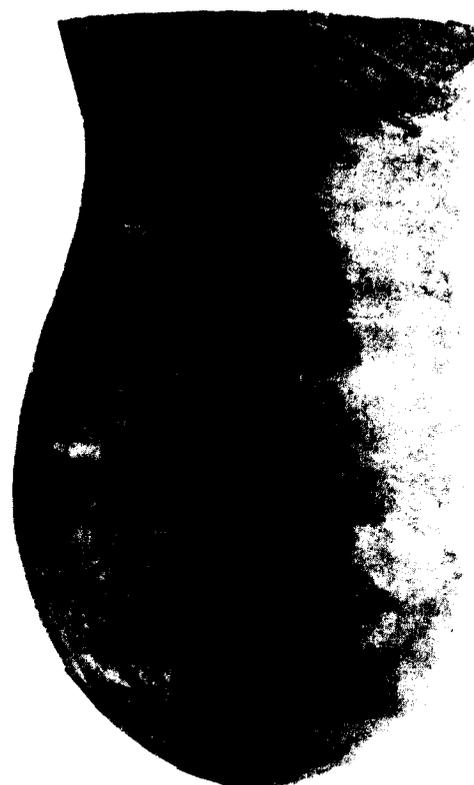


Figure 2. Navajo Gray jar, early to mid-1800s
(NTM No. 1976-13-1)
(max. diameter 26.2 cm, height 38.8 cm)



Figure 3. Navajo Gray jar, late 1800s
(NTM No. 1981-1-1)
(max. diameter 20.3 cm, height 26.3 cm)



Figure 4. Pinyon Gray jar
(NTM No. 1963-18-103)
(max. diameter 18.5 cm, height 26.2 cm)



Figure 5. Gobernador Polychrome jar (max. diameter 22.3 cm, height 20.2 cm)
(Photograph courtesy of University of Colorado Museum)



Figure 6. Navajo Painted jar (max. diameter 11.0 cm, height 17.0 cm)
(Photograph courtesy of Museum of New Mexico)

CHAPTER 3

NAVAJO POTTERY AND ETHNOHISTORY

The study of Navajo pottery in archaeology must be based upon surface collections and upon excavations reported in such general terms that the precise associations of types with structures often cannot be made. Sufficient data are available, however, to trace the general trends of the craft during the past 280 years. Because of the great individualism of the Navajo, some exceptions to the general practice at any particular time can be noted, but these do not necessarily contradict the developments outlined.

Prior to the Pueblo Revolt, it is generally assumed that the pottery of the Navajo was of a generalized woodland type. It is not known how early the type called Dinetah Gray developed, although the important factors in its development would have been a change from paddle-and-anvil construction to coil-and-scrape construction, the use of corncob scraping instead of various other forms of surface roughening, and a modification of jar shapes that appears to have been due to influence from Anasazi ceramic traditions, particularly Gallina forms (Hall 1944).

Following de Vargas' reconquest of New Mexico in 1692, many Pueblo refugees fled to the Navajo country; most of these people settled in the Largo-Gobernador area. These refugees and their descendants had a profound effect on the culture of the Navajo, and it is the century following their arrival that has received the greatest attention from archaeologists.

The decorated pottery of this period, at least up until about 1760, is a very distinctive type called Gobernador Polychrome. This is an oxidized type, having an orange surface decorated with designs in red, black, and occasionally white paints (Figure 5). The paste is extremely hard and appears to have been fired at a greater temperature than that usually used for Indian pottery in the Southwest. In spite of the technical knowledge apparent in the selection of clay and firing methods to produce a very hard paste, the finish and decoration are usually sloppily done. This type was traded over a wide area, though in small quantities. It shows the influence of several Puebloan styles and was a product of the refugees and their immediate descendants.

The utility pottery of this period is Dinetah Gray (Figure 1), which had a friable paste, temper of rounded particles of sand, thin walls, and the surface scraped with a corncob. Vessels were usually relatively large jars that were well formed with pointed bottoms, the greatest diameter usually at or below the midpoint of the height, and with thickened everted rims. It was a ware poorly adapted for transport. Dinetah Gray was made over a much wider area than Gobernador Polychrome and appears to have been basically a product of the Athabaskan portion of the tribe. An indented variety that

seems to date to the period immediately following the arrival of the refugees exhibits definite Puebloan influence, but does not seem to have been manufactured in any great quantity. A micaceous variety, centering in the Mount Taylor-Chaco area, suggests Jicarilla or Plains Apache influence and may be the result of the arrival of Jicarilla or other Plains Apache driven from their homes by the Comanche expansion; its exact dates, however, are not known.

A transitional period began about 1750. Painted pottery rapidly declined in popularity and in quality, leading to Navajo Painted (Figure 6), an inferior and highly variable product that often shows strong influence from the nearest neighboring pueblos. It is best known from ethnographic studies, owing to the paucity of archaeological material, and it is probable that most of the ethnological specimens were produced as the result of the interest in the craft by ethnographers and other whites (see Hill 1937; Tschopik 1950; and Hurt 1942) and for ceremonial use.

The changes in the utility pottery are of greater interest. The use of sherd temper in utility pottery probably began during the 1750s. By about 1760 it was the predominant type of temper in use in the upper Puerco of the West drainage. Sherd temper produces stronger walls than does sand temper, owing to the greater irregularity of the particles, which allows better binding of the clay and temper (Shepard 1956:131-132). The ultimate source of this innovation is the Puebloans, probably through the refugees. By about 1800 other changes had also appeared; four of these, an increase in wall thickness, a decrease in vessel size, a tendency to make the bottoms of jars more rounded, and a tendency to make the bodies of vessels more cylindrical, increased durability and made the vessels easier to transport. Another change to produce the modern types of Navajo pottery was the addition of a ridge of clay, either an appliqued fillet or a modeled ridge, around the neck of jars, the ridge having a "ceremonial break" or gap. The use of a raised decoration around the rim or neck of vessels was common on the plains, that on Wichita vessels resembling the Navajo style most closely (Wedel 1959: Plate 30), and on Jicarilla pottery, but the "ceremonial break" is a Southwestern concept. This feature seems to appear earliest in the eastern Navajo area. Also, pottery of any kind becomes progressively scarcer on Navajo sites of later periods, the decrease beginning about 1750 and continuing to modern Navajo sites, where pottery is extremely rare.

Sources outside Navajo culture can be suggested for most of the innovations in Navajo pottery, and periods of close contact with other tribes that show how these ideas were transmitted can be identified in some instances. These do not explain why the innovations were accepted by the Navajo or how they were made a part of their ceramic tradition, however.

It seems to me that at least three factors were involved: (1) a need to resolve the conflicts between the cultures of original Athabaskans and of the Pueblo refugees; (2) pressures on the Navajo by other peoples; and (3) growth of the Navajo livestock industry. These factors are interrelated,

but may be considered separately.

During the period immediately following the Reconquest, the Athabaskans and the refugees were united by their common cause against the Spaniards. As the refugees gradually lost any hope of returning to their homes as liberators, and as the combining of the technological resources of the two cultures led to increased economic potential, a working arrangement led the two peoples to unite to exploit their new economy. The refugees built small pueblos, called pueblitos, close to the Navajo rancherías. Warfare with the Spaniards ceased and a trade developed. The cultural conflicts were of the type that would increase with the passage of time and particularly with intermarriage. To the Athabaskans, meat was a necessity of life and one of the staple foods, while to the Puebloans corn was the only real staple and meat a luxury, beans supplying much of the protein.

There were more fundamental conflicts than that over diet. Navajo social organization lacked the controls necessary to enable sizable numbers of people to live together year-round in crowded communities. Pueblo people, on the other hand, felt lonely and isolated when living in scattered family groups. The strong individualism of the Athabaskans and their loosely organized society contrasted strongly with the rigidly organized system within which the Puebloans lived. Athabaskan religion at this time was probably practiced entirely by shaman, while Puebloan religion had an elaborate hierarchy of priests. Athabaskan fear of the dead and the abandonment and destruction of dwellings in which death had occurred were directly opposed to the Pueblo practice of building substantial homes that involved the investment of considerable labor and materials and of burying the dead near or even within the dwellings.

Evidence of increasing stress is found in the historic record during the 1740s. The Navajo appear to have been searching for a solution to their problems and showed an interest in Christianity. The missionaries in New Mexico made several trips into Navajo country, and some Navajo even settled at missions, with plans to build pueblos. The experiment did not last long, however, as it was soon apparent to the Navajo that living under Spanish rule would merely increase their troubles (Reeve 1959:12-19). At about 1750 the two most characteristically Puebloan elements in the new culture, pueblitos and painted pottery, declined rapidly in popularity. These are the two elements most specifically prohibited by Blessingway, the basic ceremony of modern Navajo religion. An additional trait associated with Blessingway that seems to appear about this time or a little later is the practice of disposing of broken pottery vessels under a bush or ledge away from the dwelling rather than in the ash heap, so that only a few stray sherds are found at sites other than those abandoned because of death or an enemy attack.* It is very

*Ethnographic data acquired in the course of the Navajo Land Claims research show this custom to extend to all parts of Navajo country; it had been previously documented for the Ramah area only (Tschopik 1950:14). For data on destruction of pottery at death, see Abel (1916:208).

probable that Blessingway, if it did not begin at this time, began to assume its modern form and was the core of a nativistic re-assertion of the Athabaskan way of life with mechanisms for the integration of foreign elements that were compatible with it. The "ceremonial break," a concept that pervades many aspects of Navajo life, was probably one of the mechanisms to Navajo-ize non-Navajo traits, and its general appearance on pottery after 1800 may mark the completion of the evolution of Blessingway. It was the development of simple mechanisms of this kind to allow for the symbolic Navajo-ization of foreign traits that gives Navajo culture its incorporativeness, so that entire technologies can be integrated into the culture without causing basic changes, and the culture can be adapted relatively easily to changing conditions. The flexibility of Navajo material culture seems to be in part due to the fact that permissive and restrictive injunctions relating to material culture are considered to be largely a private matter for the individual to observe according to his own beliefs, society applying specific sanctions against failure to obey only if the individual should suffer illness attributable to disobedience. (See Tschopik 1938 and 1940 for data on the function of taboo in this context.) The relative isolation of the individual in dispersed family groups allows greater freedom than in an urbanized society, and actions may be dictated to a greater degree by economic need and personal desire than by social pressure.

During the early part of the 18th century, there was frequent warfare between the Navajo and the Ute (Hill 1940). The increasing wealth of the people in the Dinétah area may have induced the Ute to raid. Whatever the cause, Ute pressure finally became greater than the people there could endure, and most of them left. It is probable that the temporary success of the Spanish missionaries was in part due to Ute pressure and to Navajo hopes of securing Spain as an ally against the Ute. During the 1750s, white settlers began to move into the eastern part of Navajo country (Reeve 1959:29). At first the Navajo welcomed them as allies against the Ute, but conflicts over land use probably began to arise quickly. In 1773 the Governor of New Mexico secretly sided with the Ute against the Navajo (Reeve 1960:219), and in 1774 the Navajo declared war and drove out the white settlers (Reeve 1960:209). Relations between the Navajo and the whites alternated between peace and war for the next hundred years, but the tempo of warfare gradually increased as the competition for land continued, mistrust and grievances on both sides mounted, and the opportunities to take loot and slaves were recognized by the poorer part of the population. These developments culminated in the Carson campaign and the Fort Sumner exile. While warfare on an aboriginal level made pueblitos of considerable value as fortifications, warfare with whites armed with superior weapons did not allow for the holding of strong points, and guerrilla warfare tactics became necessary. Concealment and mobility became the principal methods of defense, entailing adaptations within all aspects of Navajo life, including settlement patterns and ceramics. Pottery decreased in importance, but retained a place in Navajo culture through becoming more portable.

The livestock industry was probably introduced by the Pueblo refugees, but did not become important until stimulated by (1) the decrease of game brought about by a larger population and (2) the need for economic resources that were not rooted in one place. The animals of greatest importance were sheep, goats, and horses, livestock that can be moved most rapidly. A pastoral economy not only aided mobility but required it even in times of peace; this, in turn, increased the need for more portable containers. It also supplied a large quantity of wool to be woven into fabrics, a task that required a great deal of the women's time and allowed less time for making pottery.

The final period of the decline of pottery among the Navajo came with access to manufactured containers of crockery, glass, and metal from the whites in sufficient quantity to meet household needs and with the expansion of the market for Navajo woven goods. The arrival of the railroads during the 1880s was the most decisive factor in this commerce. Navajo women found that they could spend their time more economically by weaving and trading rugs for pots and pans than they could by making pottery. The craft exists today primarily to meet the limited demand for ceremonial purposes and for sale to tourists and ethnologists. The latest development in Navajo pottery is a black smudged ware with incised decorations for tourist trade, probably an adaptation from Rio Grande Pueblo styles and a sufficiently handsome product that it may help to stimulate the craft and prevent further decline.

CHAPTER 4

SPECULATIONS

It would be possible to discuss in greater detail the data suggestive of the origin of modern Navajo religion in a nativistic movement that gave rise to much of modern Navajo culture, but most such data would be based on ethnographic studies and out of place in the present paper. It should be pointed out, however, that Blessingway holds a central position in Navajo religion and the Navajo way of life, giving both a unity in spite of a complex diversity. It is the impression of the author that most tribal religions lack this kind of association with a single basic ceremony that influences all the other ceremonies. Such a ceremony would seem to be one that the people acquired to fill a very great and basic need, such as would be the case with a nativistic movement.

There are two characteristics of nativistic movements that should be considered here. First, there is often a succession of unsuccessful religious innovations that lead up to a movement that adequately meets both the demands of the changing physical environment and the spiritual needs of the people. The earlier religious movements may be outside the culture, but nonetheless will help to predispose the group to look for and accept a religiously oriented solution to their problems. In the case of the Navajo, the earliest nativistic movements with which they had contact were those among the Puebloans in their reaction against Spanish rule, which culminated in the partially successful Pueblo Revolt with its strongly nativistic orientation. There can be little doubt that the Navajo participated in the Pueblo Revolt, at least on the sidelines, and that they gave some support to the Puebloans during the Reconquest, both in military activities and in accepting refugees when the Puebloans lost. These refugees must have brought with them a strongly nativistic outlook that could not have failed to influence Navajo attitudes. While the resurgence of Navajo values and ways appears to have been almost overwhelming during the decade of the 1750s, there was some use of pueblitos even into the early 19th century, and the fillet decoration does not appear as a standard element until about 1800, suggesting that there may have been successive refinements of the theology of the movement over a period of about a half-century. It may well be that the nativism of Navajo religion still retains its power to adapt to changing modern conditions. The author suggests that a likely test of this hypothesis would be found in the future developments of the Peyote Ceremony among the Navajo. If it should become another truly Navajo ceremony, Peyoteway, so to speak, consecrated by Blessingway, this would be substantial evidence that Blessingway has not lost its unifying force in Navajo culture.

The second characteristic of nativistic movements is that they often have intertribal influences. More critical comparative studies with historical orientations are needed if we are to be certain that this has been

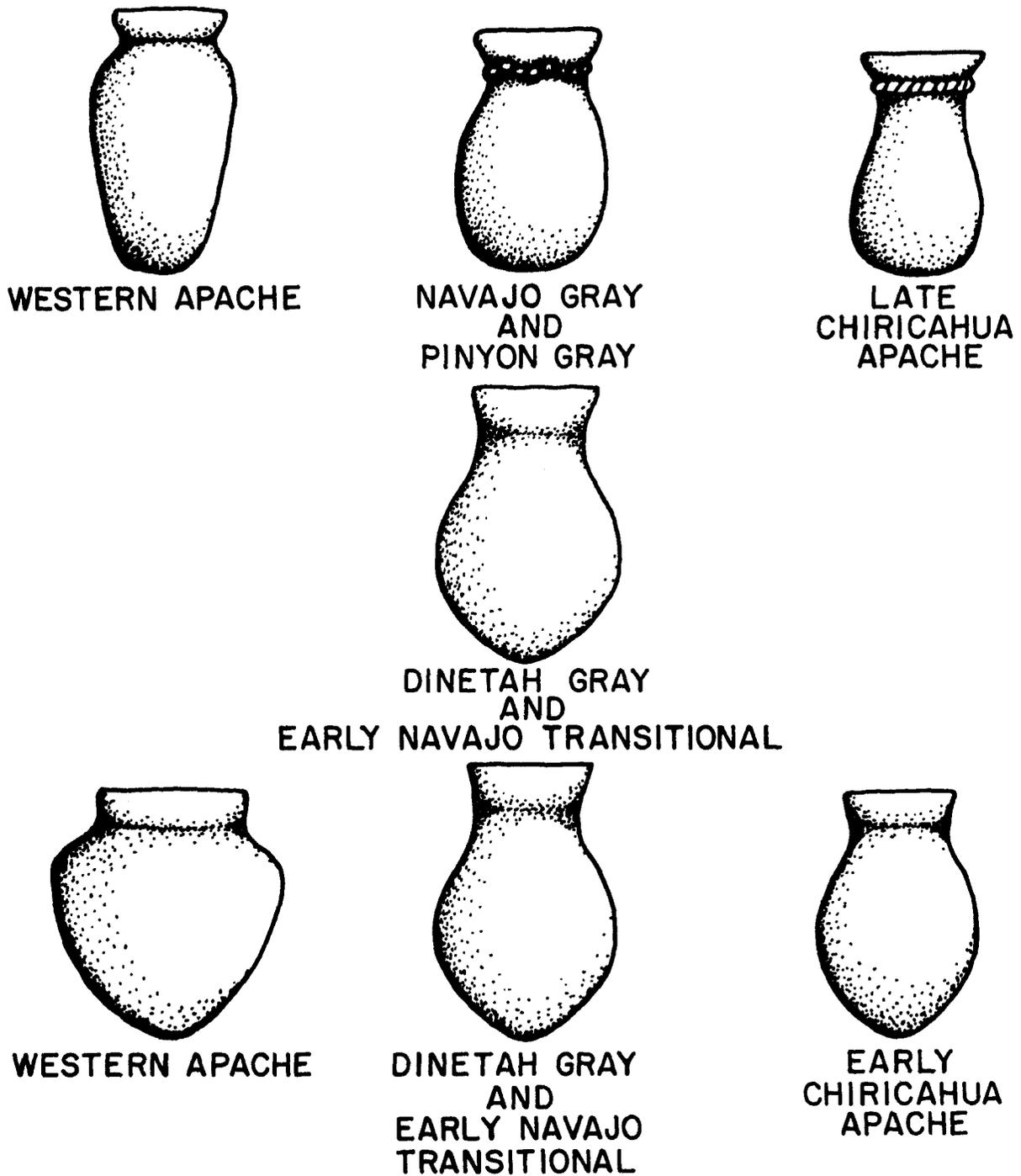


Figure 7. Comparison of vessel shapes for early and late Navajo and Chiricahua and Western Apache pottery

true with Blessingway, although religious similarities within the Southwest suggest that the nativistic philosophies of the tribes, while lacking pan-Indian orientations today, may have come from a few common sources. Certainly a number of material traits have spread from the Navajo to neighboring tribes within historic times, a good example being the spread of sheep raising and cribbed-log hogans to the southern Ute during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but whether religious ideas went with them is not known. To judge from the few specimens in museums, the ceramics of both the Chiricahua and Western Apache underwent changes somewhat analogous to those of the Navajo (see Figure 7), but data with which to date these on any basis other than typology are lacking at present, and to attempt to identify any religious sanctions that may have accompanied diffusion of these traits would be very difficult. The apparently recent derivation of Western Apache clans from Navajo clans suggests a possible avenue for ethnographic inquiry that might show religious diffusion. A letter written in Santa Fe in 1805 refers to the Navajo headmen who, "for a long time, have been found neighboring on the Coyoteros" (Alencaster 1805), suggesting a possible date for such a diffusion that would be early enough to relate significantly to the major developments in Navajo culture.

A final suggestion is that the pattern occurring in the Navajo archaeological sequence might serve as a model for identifying successful nativistic movements in purely prehistoric contexts. The essential element of this pattern would appear to be the intrusion of a group with a different and usually, if not always, more complex culture into the area occupied by another group. This would be followed by a period during which the two cultures exist side by side as separate entities with little intermixture, either at separate sites or as separate components of the same sites. The intrusive culture would come to dominate the archaeological picture through larger and more complex manifestations, but would not necessarily become numerically superior. Following this there would be a rather sudden change, with the intrusive culture disappearing and the native culture becoming again the dominant local pattern, but with selected elements derived from the intrusive culture persisting, often in simplified or modified form or in more restricted distribution. The identification of traits related to religion might help to increase the certainty of a religious movement, but would not seem to be essential, particularly in view of the difficulty of identifying the ceremonial function of many archaeological finds. It is best not to outline too rigid a model, as the peculiarities of other sequences in archaeological or ethnohistoric contexts may allow or require modifications.

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