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American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol. 46, No. 1, Part 1. (Jan. - Mar., 1944), pp. 98-105.

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RECENT CLUES TO ATHAPASCAN PREHISTORY IN THE SOUTHWEST

By EDWARD TWITCHELL HALL, JR.

FOR the past few years archeological research in the southwest has been directed toward gaining an insight into Navajo history and prehistory. While scientific interest in the Navajo problem is relatively recent, considerable data has been accumulated, data which may be variously interpreted.

The development of the Navajo problem is interesting in light of the history of the study of archeology and the way in which archeological problems have been solved in the past. In the present instance the attack has been launched on several fronts instead of from one angle or point of view. This was made possible by the number of workers and their varied interests, and also by our progress in unravelling the threads of Anasazi prehistory. Keur, Farmer, Van Valkenburgh, Malcolm, and others have utilized the direct historical approach. Mera and Hibben have implied that their studies of the Largo[1] and Gallina[2] Phases may have some bearing on the prehistoric Navajo, while work by the writer with the Rosa Phase has unearthed evidence that may eventually prove significant to the synthesis of Athapascan prehistory.

Those working in the historic field have given us a good idea as to the degree of cultural change in the Navajo over a two to four hundred year period. Navajo hogans during this time span show variation in accordance with their location, age, available building material and cultural contacts. Regardless of architectural innovations in Navajo, the old style forked stick hogan is almost always present and shows little change in the historic period.

Navajo cooking ware, while not as yet subjected to petrographic analysis, shows little obvious deviation in its general character from early to late. While the shapes of Navajo pottery show a great deal of variation for any given time or place, this variation may be found throughout the known range of the culture. Painted pottery apparently started as a style under the influence of Pueblo Indian refugees in the early eighteenth century, probably between 1690 and 1700, immediately after the Spanish reconquest. This type persists with variations up to the present day but was strongest right after the period of its inception, and became increasingly rare as time went on.

Emphasis on agriculture and the way of living and orientation of life of the Navajo seem to have changed little in many respects in the last 240 years, if we accept Rabal.[3] Our archeological evidence would strengthen rather than detract from this premise.

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[1] H. P. Mera, *Some Aspects of the Largo Cultural Phase, Northern New Mexico* (American Antiquities, Vol. III, No. 3, 1938).

[2] F. C. Hibben, *The Gallina Phase* (American Antiquities, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1938).

[3] W. W. Hill, *Some Navajo Culture Changes During Two Centuries* (Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. 100, 1940).

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As to placing the Navajo in the southwest, the first known center seems to have been the northeast portion of their present range and eastward. While the archeological evidence would tend to fit that published by Harrington,[4] a few corrections might be made on his map.[5]

1. For the eighteenth century the northern limits shown on the map are too far south. Our most numerous dated Navajo remains of this century occur in the vicinity of Governador, or at about the center of the area shown by Harrington for the sixteenth century.

2. On the basis of archeological evidence the writer sees no reason for recording a shift in the area from west to east in the seventeenth century, and from east to way outside of their old range in the eighteenth century.

Kidder,[6] Morris,[7] Mera,[8] Stallings,[9] Keur,[10] and the writer,[11] have recorded, excavated, or dated Navajo remains, in the vicinity of Governador Canyon,[12] which cover a span of over two centuries. Briefly, Kidder was the first to record early Navajo remains in association with refugee Pueblos, this was in 1912. At about this time Morris investigated the Governador and excavated several refugee Pueblos; he also recognized the associated Navajo remains. One specimen of wood collected by Morris was dated by Dr. A. E. Douglass at 1732 ± 3.[13] Later on Mera, while working in earlier sites, noted the numerous refugee ruins in the area. His interest in these resulted in the collection of a number of beams later dated by Stallings. All fell within the early half of the eighteenth century. In 1938 Mera and the writer collected additional beams and numerous sherds. These timbers produced the same range of dates as the first series.

The writer having also dated specimens from Canyon Largo[14] which were collected by Farmer, and from Cabezon,[15] collected by Keur, noted that the dates of these specimens ran about a half century later than those from the Governador. On the basis of this information Keur spent the season of 1940 in the Governador excavating Navajo and refugee sites. Some 34 speci-

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[4] J. P. Harrington, *Southern Peripheral Athapascan Origins, Divisions and Migrations* (Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. 100, 1940).

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] A. V. Kidder, *Ruins of the Historic Period in the Upper San Juan Valley, New Mexico* (AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGIST, Vol. 22, No. 4, 1920).

[7] E. H. Morris, personal communication.

[8] H. P. Mera, personal communication.

[9] W. S. Stallings, Jr., *Southwestern Dated Ruins: I* (Tree-ring Bulletin, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1937).

[10] D. L. Keur, *Big Bead Mesa* (Memoirs, Society for American Archaeology, No. 1, 1941).

[11] E. T. Hall, Jr., *Southwestern Dated Ruins* (Tree-ring Bulletin, in press).

[12] Between Aztec and Dulce, New Mexico.

[13] A. E. Douglass, *Southwestern Dated Ruins, V* (Tree-ring Bulletin, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1938)

[14] South southeast of Governador Canyon.

[15] About 50 miles due south of Governador Canyon.

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mens were dated in the course of this project, ranging from 1656±20 to 1764±20. In 1941 the writer spent the season excavating earlier sites in this same area and recorded additional Navajo remains in all states of preservation. On a survey trip at the end of the season the writer located an old hogan which appeared to be earlier than any he had seen up to that time. Three specimens from this site dated from 1491+X to *1541±20*, which places the Navajo in the Governador at a time verging on the prehistoric. In other words our record of Navajo occupation has been constantly pushed backward so that we now have concrete evidence of their occupation of the Governador area for over 200 years, circa 1540 to 1760, and of their presence in the southwest for over 400 years. The striking thing considering the time involved and the cultural contacts open to the Navajo in this period (Pueblo, Ute, Comanche, Spanish, and American)is the small degree of change that actually took place in the Navajo culture.

Up to this point we have adhered to the direct historical approach. The writer has not attempted to fill in details of Navajo history and prehistory but has merely presented an outline showing the known centers at various times and the lack of radical change in the culture over a 400 year period. It will be obvious to the reader that although our information is scant and made up of purely material remains for the earlier period, it has the additional check of historic documentation. The writer's part in the development of the historical aspects of this problem has been that of an interested outsider, while he has recorded and dated numerous Navajo remains he has not worked directly on Navajo archeology in the same way that have Keur, Farmer, and others, so he has of necessity drawn on their work.

The next aspect to be considered is that of the Largo Phase. In 1935 Mera[16] published descriptions of Navajo-like pottery in association with what appeared to be definitely prehistoric Pueblo pottery. This was from the Gallina area about 40 miles airline south southeast of Governador. A Laboratory of Anthropology field party excavated some of these sites under Mera's direction. The pointed bottom pottery proved to be the most important non-Puebloan trait of a series which included excessive use of antler, a specialized shaft straightener, and anomalies in certain architectural details. Painted pottery, utility ware other than pointed bottomed, architecture in general, and many other traits in the complex fitted Anasazi patterns. Mera has named this complex the *Largo* Phase[17] which dates from 1106 to 1254 A.D.[18]

At the time of Mera's studies Hibben was also investigating this same horizon, he published his first conclusions under the heading of the *Gallina*

[16] H. P. Mera, *Ceramic Clues to the Prehistory of North Central New Mexico* (Laboratory of Anthropology Technology Series, Bulletin 8, 1935).

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Dated by W. S. Stallings, Jr., *Southwestern Dated Ruins: I* (Tree-ring Bulletin).

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Phase.[19] Both Mera and Hibben state that the pointed bottom Gallina pottery, associated with Mera's Largo Phase and Hibben's Gallina Phase, is difficult to distinguish from Navajo pottery, and that it occurs nowhere else in the southwest at this time, (1100 to 1250 A.D.). Although neither writer commits himself, they infer that this pottery type may have some connection with later Navajo wares.

The whole problem of the origin of the Gallina pointed bottom pottery and certain other traits in the Largo Phase was sufficiently important to warrant additional excavation on the part of the Laboratory of Anthropology. Mera selected an area northwest of Gallina as a probable center for the most closely related pottery which might prove to be ancestral to Gallina types. This area was the Governador. On a reconnaissance trip Mera and the writer located a number of pit houses, one of which was later excavated, in addition to some surface storage rooms at a nearby site. The results of the first expedition were inconclusive except for the dates obtained, these ran through the later half of the ninth century. Despite this inconclusiveness both Mera and the writer felt that the original premise was correct and that the Governador area was the one in which to look for the origins of the Largo development.

In 1941 the writer led a Columbia University expedition into the Governador, during this project seven pit houses and numerous surface features were defined. This complex has been termed the *Rosa* Phase.[20] It has been dated by tree-rings as running from 710 to 875 A.D. Since these are probably not terminal dates we may assume that the Rosa complex ranges from about 650 to sometime in the first half of the tenth century. No visible remains in the Governador have been located for the period between 950 and 1540 A.D., the earlier date marking the latest possible one for the Rosa Phase and the later date being that of the oldest Navajo remains.

There are enough traits in the Rosa Phase to link it with the later Largo Phase.[21] The Rosa Phase provides us with a logical source for ceramic and architectural features defined in the Largo Phase 150 to 200 years later, with the exception of pointed bottom pottery which is *not* present in Rosa but strong in Largo, and a few other traits.

In the Largo Phase we have noted the presence of a Woodland-like pottery very similar to later Navajo types in shape, color, and surface finish. In addition to this pointed bottom type there are painted and utility styles which may be traced directly to the Rosa series. Architectural features of Largo such as the specialization of the storage bin within houses may be traced to earlier Anasazi horizons, but are more highly specialized than elsewhere in the southwest. The triple-notched axe of Largo is found elsewhere in the south-

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[19] F. C. Hibben, 1938.

[20] E. T. Hall, Jr., *Early Stockaded Settlements in Governador, New Mexico*, 1942. [21] *Ibid.*

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west, whereas the specialized type of shaft-straightener can not at present be correlated with any cultural level of comparable depth either inside or outside of the area. The copious use of antler is definitely not a southwestern trait and may have Plains origins. In the writer's mind the Largo Phase seems to be a marginal manifestation of the Anasazi culture which received a number of traits from the Rosa Phase, also marginal to the Anasazi. In addition to the basic Largo complex we have the addition of a few traits definitely alien to the southwest: Woodland-like pottery, a peculiar shaft-straightener, and copious use of antler. When these traits are considered, plus the fact that there is evidence of violent warfare in the Gallina region at this time,[22] we might assume the presence of an alien group whose relation to the Largo people was similar to that of the Navajo to the Pueblo up to the middle of the nineteenth century, one of trade, intermarriage and warfare.

While both the Rosa and Largo Phases contain traits not typical of the Anasazi, they also include many typical southwestern elements such as painted pottery, house forms which can be related to other southwestern houses, manos, metates, agriculture, lambdoid deformation in the Largo Phase, and so on. Consequently we can not relegate either Largo, "Gallina," or Rosa to the category of non-puebloan Phases, but we should consider these phases as marginal manifestations of the Anasazi.

In the Rosa Phase one finds many parallels with Largo in indications of alien influences. While pointed bottom pottery is absent in Rosa, it is the writer's opinion that this type became known in the area at about 1000 A.D. for reasons to be mentioned later. Prior to this date, instead of pointed bottom pottery, a *scored* variety is present. The scoring is often very deep and is readily recognizable, it is of interest in that it does not occur elsewhere at an early date outside of the Mogollon region. *Rosa Scored* bears much the same relationship to the rest of the Rosa series that Gallina pointed bottom does to the other Gallina types, in other words scored pottery cannot assume significance unless it is accompanied by other traits. In this case it is associated with post stockades surrounding pit houses, unlined earth storage pits, surface granaries and work areas, outdoor fire pits in rows, very small semi-subterranean houses of unknown use and, in one case, a small earth lodge, the floor plan of which is similar to that of many hogans.[23] In addition we have the evidence of the burning of all Rosa sites, including the stockades, and the abandonment of the area sometime between 900 and 1000 A.D. The presence of masonry sites on high protected ledges in the nearby forest which yield pottery of a type between Rosa Black on White and Gallina Black on White

[22] All Gallina houses excavated to date were burned, many of them contained skeletal remains of which the occipital region of the skull had been punctured or crushed.

[23] E. T. Hall, Jr., House D, Site 12, this house is identical in floor plan to a hogan excavated by the writer which dated 900 years later, in mid eighteenth century, 1942.

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implies: 1. That the Rosa people probably moved into protected locations. 2. That the pit house was gradually superseded by safer, above ground structures.[24]

The stockades and scored pottery of the Rosa Phase as yet can not be labelled indigenous to the southwest. The stockades themselves indicate the proximity of an enemy at a time when other southwestern sites seem to have been unprotected. The desertion of a fertile area and burning of all structures after abandonment[25] would lead us to believe that pressure became too great, and that the enemy destroyed all visible remains after he had taken over the country. This closely parallels what we know of the Largo Phase.

The writer's reconstruction of what took place is as follows:

1. In the vicinity of Governador we had a people with a culture allied to that of the San Juan Basket-maker III and Pueblo I horizons.

2. Also in the area, or not very distant, there were nomadic people who traded with, fought with, and probably intermarried with the Rosa people, and who may have been the carriers of scored pottery.

3. As the nomads increased in numbers the area became crowded and the Rosa people were forced to move up on the less desirable but more easily defended highlands.

4. At about the time of this exodus, caused by more, or new, nomads, pointed bottom pottery appeared.

5. The Rosa people, plus probable additional Pueblo elements, formed the basis of the Largo Phase.

6. The nomads maintained their trading contacts with the Largo people when they were not fighting with them.

7. These nomads may have been the ancestors of the Navajo first found in the adjoining Governador area (the old Rosa territory), 300 years later.

It is interesting to note that the first construction of the major pueblos in Chaco Canyon occurred slightly after the exodus from the Governador, and slightly before the earliest dated Largo site. The Chaco ruins antedate other structures of comparable size in the southwest. While their function was obviously protective, the inference is that the same aliens who caused abandonment of the Governador, and presumably brought in pointed bottom pottery, also caused Pueblo people in the adjoining area to move from small settlements and build the large pueblos in Chaco Canyon for their own protection.

Having stated this theory it is well to outline a few of the gaps in our evidence, and some of the alternatives.

1. We have as yet no proof that the people who brought pointed bottom

[24] Although these stockades must have given a degree of protection, once the enemy was inside, the pit house became a death trap from which escape was impossible, rather than a refuge.

[25] Burned roofs of houses rested on up to 18 inches of waterwashed fill, indicating abandonment prior to burning.

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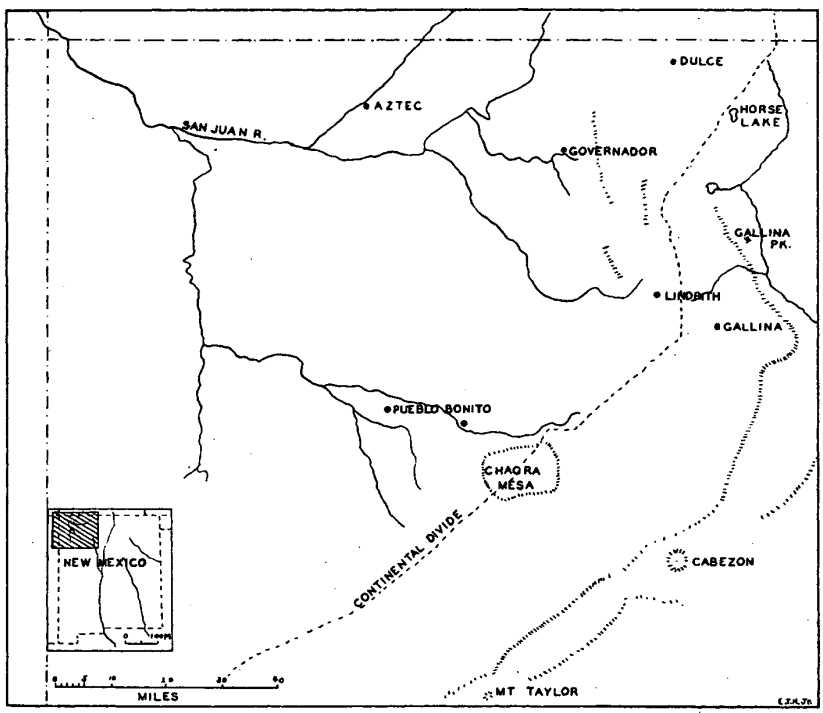
pottery to the southwest were Navajo, as no hogan-like structures have been found in the Gallina area of twelfth or thirteenth century to date. All that we have is the pottery and other alien traits, plus the presence of an unknown enemy either within or outside of the culture.

2. The gap between the earliest dated Navajo remains and the latest dated



Map of Northwestern New Mexico

Gallina sites is about 300 years. Since our dates for the last Largo house and the first dated hogan are probably not terminal dates, we may allow about 50 years at each end of the gap, which reduces it to 200 years.

3. The dated gap between the Rosa Phase and the Largo Phase is about 200 years, in this case we have sites which would seem to bridge the gap, if we may accept pottery and architecture as indicators. Unfortunately it has not as yet been possible to date these sites.

4. We are not sure that the aliens who forced the Rosa people to live defensively were the same who caused the eventual abandonment of the area, or

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that they were the same ones who brought pointed bottom pottery, or that these carriers of pointed bottom pottery were the same as those who fought with the Largo people. In fact it has been suggested that the Largo people taught the Navajo to make pointed bottom pottery. This is a possibility, but we should have to account for the selection by the Navajo of the pointed bottom style from all of the other available and, to our standards, more esthetic types. We should also have to account for *the presence of pointed bottom pottery in Gallina sites in the first place.*

5. The hogan is such an unspecialized type of earth lodge that we are skating on thin ice when we infer that a ninth century earth lodge found inside a Rosa stockade is a hogan. There is no doubt that it looks like a hogan, that this type of shallow, unspecialized house is uncommon for the southwest at this date, and that it is an architectural anomaly in the Rosa complex. In this case we can only state the facts and await additional evidence.

We have then certain culture patterns which seem to run throughout the known range of the Navajo occupation of the southwest. If we apply these patterns to what we know of the Rosa and Largo Phases we find that they explain a number of points in reference to these cultures, the scored and pointed bottom pottery, protective measures, warfare, and a number of architectural anomalies. We also know that the Navajo although flexible in their acceptance and integration of new culture items, have also a capacity for maintaining certain items in their own culture, such as the forked stick hogan, and could have occupied the southwest for the past 900 years and still maintain their cultural integrity.

The writer has presented evidence and his interpretation of that evidence. No doubt many will not agree with him, which is in accord with scientific procedure. He has attempted to point out some of the loop holes in his own theories, undoubtedly others will make themselves apparent as time passes. However it is the consideration of such ideas as these which may lead to additional work that ought to verify or refute these premises. The areas to be investigated are self-evident.

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