



The
Archaeology
of Navajo Origins



Edited by

RONALD H. TOWNER



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made our shared summers in the Dinétah the highlight of my year. Finally, thanks to Gary Brown for his comments and suggestions. The above-mentioned people deserve some credit for the good parts of this paper; the author, however, is solely responsible for any errors in fact or interpretation.

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Early Navajo Occupation West of the Chuska Mountains

DENNIS GILPIN



INTRODUCTION

Studies of the early Navajo migration and adaptation to the region west of the Chuska Mountains in northeastern Arizona (Figure 8.1) have been far fewer than for the Dinétah and northwestern New Mexico. Native American traditional histories and Euroamerican documentary sources suggest that the Navajo colonized the region in the seventeenth century. What few archaeological data exist indicate that by the 1760s, the Navajo west of the Chuskas were constructing pueblos, living in large villages, practicing herding and agriculture, and creating rock art identical to that of the Dinétah. Thus, the western Navajo have a longer history in the region than is often recognized, and participated in pan-Navajo cultural changes. Archaeological research has only begun to document the early Navajo use of the region. This paper provides a summary of the current state of western Navajo archaeology and suggests avenues for future research.

NAVAJO TRADITIONAL HISTORY

Navajo traditional history provides evidence that the area west of the Chuskas was known to the Navajo and used by them at least as early as the Gobernador phase (ca. A.D. 1700-1775). Hopis fleeing the destruction of Awatovi in 1700 are said to have moved to Canyon de Chelly to live with the resident Navajo (Brugge 1972b:95). The Navajo Taachii'nii Clan is said to be descended from some of the survivors of the destruction of Awatovi who settled at Tachii, a spring at the eastern edge of Black Mesa (Brugge 1974:29).

overwhelming majority date to the twentieth century. Uneven quality of survey, recording, and reporting of results makes the forestry data difficult to use and evaluate.

In 1981, 1983, and 1985, the National Park Service conducted test excavations at the Sand Dune Site, an eighteenth-century Navajo habitation at Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site at Ganado (Adams 1982; Bradford 1987; McKenna 1987). The site was then completely excavated in 1987 (Jones 1988).

In 1984, Joseph K. Anderson (1984) of the Navajo Nation Cultural Resource Management Program conducted an archaeological survey of a proposed power line right-of-way near Canyon de Chelly and recorded six sites possibly dating prior to A.D. 1800 (AZ-I-60-1, 7, 10, 11, 12, and 15 [NNCRM]). Five of these were probably habitations; site AZ-I-60-7 was a scatter of Navajo Painted sherds and fire-cracked rock. Elizabeth Miksa and Michael Yeatts of the Navajo Nation Archaeology Department conducted archaeological surveys for extensions of this power line and also recorded early Navajo sites (Miksa 1987; Yeatts 1990). In a 1986 survey for a power line, Anderson (1986) recorded an early Navajo site south of Many Farms Lake. This site was later re-recorded by Gilpin (1992). In 1988, Statistical Research, Inc., of Tucson, excavated an eighteenth-century Navajo summer camp at Lukachukai (Ayres 1989:29).

Despite these examples, contract archaeology projects west of the Chuska Mountains have only rarely recorded eighteenth-century Navajo sites. Pre-Fort Sumner era sites, however, are relatively common throughout the western area, including sites in Canyon de Chelly, on the Defiance Plateau, and on Black Mesa. Unfortunately, most of the sites that have been recorded have not been analyzed.

SITE TYPES AND SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Few studies have been done on early Navajo site types and settlement patterns west of the Chuska Mountains. Lee (1966) classified Navajo sites as fortified crags, hogan depressions, forked-pole hogans, cribbed-log hogans, masonry hogans, stock corrals, storage bins, and check dams. Kemner (1974:117-19) classified early Navajo sites on the 1880 Hopi Reservation into three types: (1) habitations, (2) summer or warm-weather settlements, and (3) game traps. James (1976) provides the most detailed excavation data on a range of early Navajo sites west of the Chuska Mountains, but even in his report most of the sites described are habitations. The paucity of studies on early Navajo site types and settlement patterns for the region underscores the problem of identifying early Navajo

sites, especially nonhabitation sites. In the following discussion, the range of early Navajo sites in the region west of the Chuska Mountains is considered in terms of four site types: (1) pueblos and other defensive sites, (2) habitations, (3) limited activity sites, and (4) rock art sites.

Pueblos and Defensive Sites

Only a few pueblos have been reported west of the Chuska Mountains (see Towner, this volume). Brugge (1972a) mentions Nazlini and Kinmazinde. James (1976:60) makes a distinction between pueblos (Nazlini and Kinmazinde) with masonry buildings, and fortresses (Spider Rock Fortress, Black Rock Fortress, and Massacre Cave), which are merely defensible locations. James states that only fortresses are present in Canyon de Chelly and Canyon del Muerto and that Nazlini is the nearest pueblo. Fall et al. (1981) identified five, possibly six defensive sites in the Canyon de Chelly area: CDM 19 (Black Rock Fortress), CDM 126 (Del Muerto Navajo Fortress), CDM 130 (White Lady Fortress), CDM 176 (Massacre Cave), MCC 8, and possibly CDM 42.

Kinmazinde (*Kin Nááziní*, or Lone Towering House [R. W. Young and Morgan 1980:495]) is the best documented pueblo west of the Chuskas. This site was first recorded in 1883 by the Mindellefs of the Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology (Powell 1887:xxiv-xxv; V. Mindelleff 1891) who thought it was a field house of Kin Tiel (Wide Ruins). Mindelleff (1891:Plat LXVI; and photograph Arizona 367a in the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution) shows it as a boulder-top structure two stories tall on the north side with two-story sections extending partially into the east and west walls (Figure 8.2). It was one story tall on most of the east and west wall and a full story or more on the south wall. A largely intact, two-story room, missing only its roof, was present on the east side of the boulder. Fewkes (1898:434; 1904:134) also thought that Kinmazinde was a prehistoric site. Reagan's 1928 photograph of the site shows Kinmazinde from the west looking east, and the boulder-side room cannot be seen (Reagan 1928b:359). In another article, Reagan (1928a:22-23) describes the site as a rectangular ruin on a rocky ledge, suggesting that by the time he visited the site, the boulder-side room had been destroyed. Reagan (1928a:23) collected twenty-three decorated sherds from the site, 30 percent of which were "three-colored, yellow-buff ware" with "drawings of birds and insects." He felt these ceramics were historic and probably related to Zuni pottery. The Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) recorded Kinmazinde three times, assigning it the numbers NA1018, NA2383, and NA5664 (Brugge 1972b:9). The MNA collection

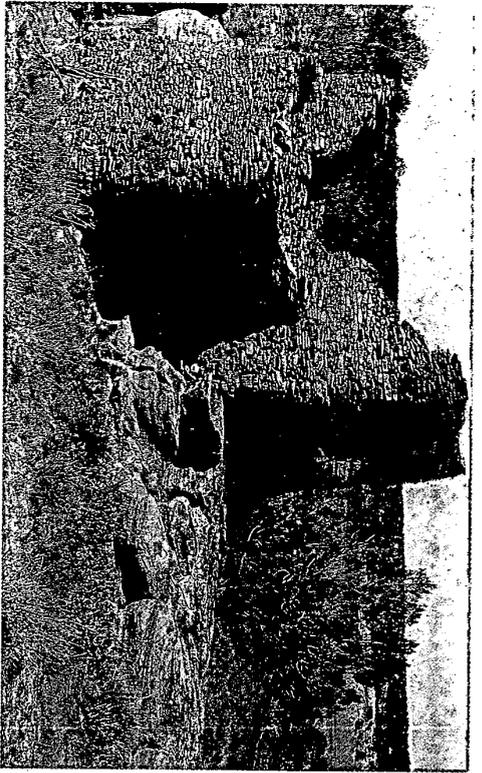


FIGURE 8.2. Photograph of Kinnazinde taken in the late 1800s. (Reproduced courtesy of Smithsonian Institution.)

from NAr018 comprises forty-five sherds (Brugge 1972b:9). The site was examined during the Navajo Land Claims research and given the designation S-MLC-LP-L (Brugge 1972b:9). Brugge (1972b:9) reported that the site was two and a half stories tall with loop holes, rounded corners, and vigas embedded in the walls. He also noted that it was associated with "3 forked-pole hogans, a stone hogan, 2 burned hogans, and a corral" (Brugge 1972b:9). Land claim researchers collected 170 sherds from the site. Fifteen tree-ring dates from the site included eight cutting dates of 1759 and one of 1760 (Bannister et al. 1966b:24; Douglass 1935:52; Smiley 1951, No. 70c). According to traditional history the site was associated with the Ma'iideshgizhni (Coyote) Clan, which is descended from Jemez. Michael J. Andrews rerecorded the pueblito in 1982 (Andrews 1982), and Gilpin prepared a sketch map of the pueblito and associated habitations in 1990 (Figure 8.3).

The overall site of Kinnazinde consists of the pueblito, one stone hogan ring, five ash concentrations, three rock piles (including one with two upright slabs on its north side), one rock alignment, and one concentration of juniper branches (possibly natural, possibly a hogan). The Boulder-top room measures 4 m by 8 m and originally stood as much as 5 m tall. It had a doorway in the northern wall and a sealed doorway on the western wall. The room on the eastern side of the boulder measured approximately 4 m by 4 m and was as much as 5 m tall. Artifacts associated

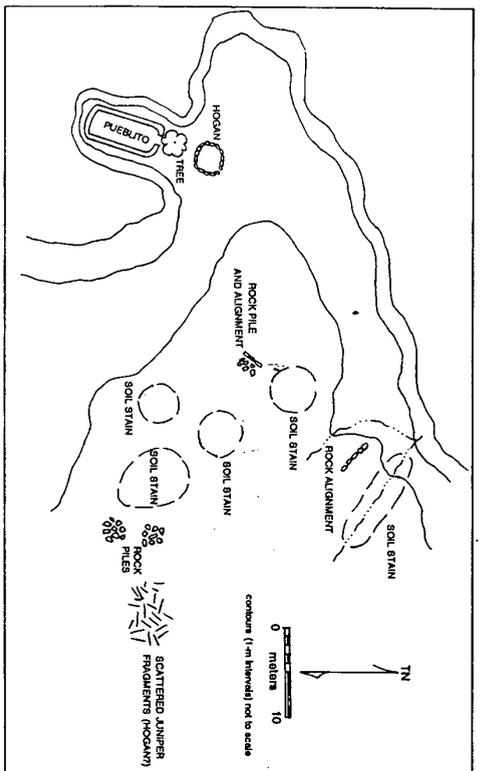


FIGURE 8.3. Sketch map of Kinnazinde pueblito and surrounding features.

with the site include Dinetah Gray and Gobernador Polychrome ceramics, flaked stone of petrified wood and chert (including one piece of Washington Pass chert), and large mammal bones.

Sadly, in recent years Kinnazinde has become a popular party spot for local residents who have extensively vandalized the site. Since 1989, Larry Benallie, Jr., of the Navajo Nation Archaeology Department has been working in the Wide Ruins-Klageroh area and has documented much of this destruction in reports to the Navajo Tribal Rangers. On February 27, 1990, he found that the notched log ladder on the site had been stolen. On June 19, 1990, he noted that the walled-up doorway on the west side of the pueblito had been pushed out, and the lintel of this doorway, which had been sampled for tree-ring dating, was missing. On June 26, 1990, he discovered that rock from within the pueblito had been thrown to the ground below the pueblito. On February 27, 1992, during an inspection of the site with a tribal ranger, it was noted that the western wall had been kicked down to the level of the fill. More recently, a photograph of the site (Klesert 1992:72) shows that the lintel over the doorway in the northern wall, which had been intact as recently as 1990, has been destroyed.

Nazlini Pueblito has been described by Brugge (1972b:9-10) as having five ground-floor rooms and two second-story rooms associated with two nearby hogans, one of which is in a rock-shelter and both of which are small and poorly preserved. This site was recorded by Thomas Lee (1966) as AZ K:3:51 (ASM) and by the Navajo Land Claim researchers as

W-CH-UC-1. Tree-ring dates cluster between 1759 and 1761 (Brugge 1972b:9-10; Stokes and Smiley 1964:22), suggesting that the structure was probably built in a single episode in the summer or fall of 1761. The land claims researchers collected 177 sherds from the site, including 81 Dinéah Gray, Transitional Variety (Brugge 1972b:10).

Ganado Crag is located northwest of Ganado on a small butte connected to Ganado Mesa by a narrow saddle. Access from the saddle to the top of the butte is blocked by a defensive wall of stone, and the top of the butte contains eight forked-stick hogans (Brugge 1966b; 1972b:11). Eight tree-ring dates are reported (Stokes and Smiley 1966:6), six of which range between 1757 and 1764. The Navajo Land Claim researchers designated this site S-MLC-LP-O and collected fourteen sherds, ten of which were Dinéah Gray Transitional Variety (Brugge 1972b:11). The Navajo name for the site is Taalagodijool ("Small Round Place Where a Sing Was Held") because a Ye'ibichei was held there during a war with other tribes (Brugge 1966b; 1972b:11). The site is reported to have been successfully defended from both the Ute and Comanche (Brugge 1972b:11).

Round Top, near Ganado, is another possible defensive site. Brugge's Navajo consultants reported that "defensive works" were present there at one time and that the site is associated with Jhaal (1974).

Black Rock Fortress (CDM 19) is located at the junction of Canyon del Muerto and Black Rock Canyon. The site contains forty-nine hogans, twenty-two defensive walls, six storage facilities, a possible corral, and a reservoir (Figure 8.4). Eighteenth-century, noncutting tree-ring dates were obtained from each of three log ladders located on the trail to the site. During the Carson Campaign (1863-1864) some three hundred people took refuge there from October to March (Fall et al. 1981:212).

Del Muerto Fortress and White Lady Fortress, also in Canyon de Chelly National Monument, are much smaller than Black Rock Fortress. Del Muerto Fortress (CDM 126) consists of ten defensive walls located on either side of and within a crack that provides access to the point of a mesa (Fall et al. 1981: 209). White Lady Fortress (CDM 130) consists of four defensive walls flanking an access crack to the top of a pinnacle that contains two walled alcoves (Fall et al. 1981:209). Spider Rock, a defensive site for which I have no description, dates between about 1774 and 1780, based on noncutting tree-ring dates (James 1976:60).

Several of the defensive sites are fortified rock shelters. Site MCC 8 is a 30m-long rock shelter containing nine masonry hogans and having walls running across most of its length (Fall et al. 1981:212). Site CDM 42 is a rock shelter containing five storage bins (Fall et al. 1981:212). Massacre Cave (CDM 176), which is not fortified, was last used for refuge in 1805

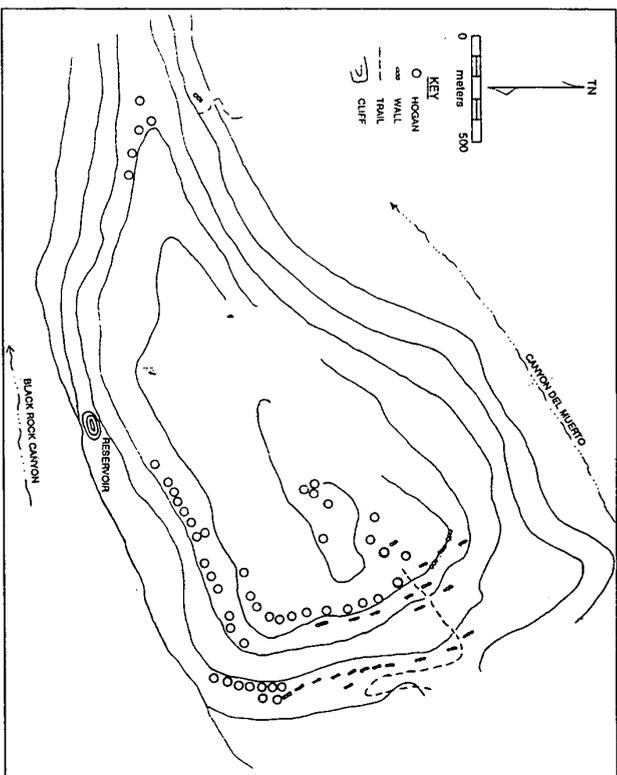


Figure 8.4. Map of Black Rock Navajo Fortress (after Fall et al. 1981).

when at least seventy Navajos were killed there by the Narbona Expedition.

Stokes and Smiley (1964:22) report a single tree-ring date of 1790+incG from a fortified crag with at least three associated hogans (site W-LLC-UO-DD) on upper Oraibi Wash. The only other tree-ring date from this site (from one of the associated hogans) is 1873+inc. Site W-LLC-MD-III, at Big Mountain, consists of a fortified crag, an eagle crag, two hogans, a corral, a lamb pen, and a storage chamber. This site has not been dated by either dendrochronology or artifact cross dating, but it may be the site seen by the Vizcarra Expedition in 1823 (Brugge 1964).

Habitations

Eighteenth-century Navajo habitation sites west of the Chuska Mountains, typically evident as hogans or hogan clusters, are mostly concentrated on the Defance Plateau, particularly in the area around Canyon de Chelly and Canyon del Muerto (Fall et al. 1981; James 1976). Perhaps the largest early Navajo habitation west of the Chuskas is the one around Black Rock

AZ E:2:5. Five of the sites classified as open sites are located on mesa tops. AZ E:2:5 and E:2:6 are associated with petroglyphs on nearby rocks. Those found at site E:2:5 have been described by David Brugge (1966a); they consist of numerous Anasazi and Navajo glyphs, horses, men on horses, yei figures, deer and lion tracks, a peculiar hunch-backed hook-nosed figure, motor vehicles, and other less certain motifs. The names of Blas Lucero and C.B. Brady, members of the 1860 Navajo Expedition, are discernible. (1974:30, 32)

The significance of Carson's Wall is that it suggests a large Navajo population in the middle Chinle well before the 1850s and indicates that they were using Navajo religious iconography also seen in Dinetah.

MATERIAL CULTURE

James (1976) and the Sand Dune Site (Jones 1988; McKenna 1987) provide the most extensive information on early Navajo material culture west of the Chuska Mountains. Artifacts from the Sand Dune Site have not been completely analyzed, but some data are available on numbers and types of artifacts (Jones 1988; McKenna 1987). James (1976), however, does not provide any subsistence information (i.e., no faunal or botanical data).

Ceramics at early Navajo sites west of the Chuska Mountains include Gobernador Polychrome, Dinetah Gray, and, occasionally, Hopi and Zuni sherds. Lee (1966) found that imported ceramics on Navajo sites east of the summit of the Defiance Plateau were most likely to be Zuni-Acoma sherds, while sites west of the Defiance Plateau summit were most likely to have Hopi ceramics. Gilpin and Hays-Gilpin found that Lee's collections from the Black Creek Valley contained 125 Navajo Grayware sherds, thirty Zuni sherds, and three Hopi sherds, while the collections from the Nazluni drainage contained 102 Navajo Grayware sherds, twenty-six Hopi sherds, and seven Zuni sherds. Fourteen of the Hopi sherds were Payupki Polychrome, a type manufactured between A.D. 1680 and 1780 (Wade and McChesney 1981). Several sites (AZ K:4:4 [ASM], AZ K:12:24 [ASM], AZ K:12:27 [ASM], and NA2334, all in the Black Creek Valley; AZ K:3:51 and AZ K:3:52, both designating Nazluni Pueblo) had a pottery, possibly Zuni, with gray paste, sand-and-sherd temper, a white interior, and a red exterior. Reinspection of Lee's collections thus confirms his observation of imported ceramics. Anderson (1984), however, observed approximately 150 Eastern Pueblo ceramics and only fifteen Dinetah Gray sherds on site AZ-I-60-1 [NNCRMP], a habitation site on the rim of

Canyon de Chelly. James (1976) found Gobernador Polychrome, Dinetah Gray, and Pinyon Gray at the early Navajo sites at Canyon del Muerto and also identified a locally produced polychrome. McKenna (1987) reported no Gobernador Polychrome from the Sand Dune Site; Dinetah Gray, Transitional Variety, was the only Navajo-produced pottery at the site. A few Hopi sherds were also identified.

Flaked and ground stone assemblages were well developed at the Sand Dune Site and at Canyon del Muerto. Bones of sheep, goats, cattle, and horse or mule were recovered from the Sand Dune Site, along with charred maize.

James (1976:100) recovered glass beads and metal artifacts (including beads, a knife, a file, a projectile point, and a tinkler) from eighteenth-century Navajo sites on the Canyon del Muerto rim. Thirty pieces of glass and ten pieces of metal from cans were recovered from the Sand Dune Site (Jones 1988:45), but probably reflect the later use of Hubbell's Trading Post.

Kent describes Navajo textiles from the Dinetah and from west of the Chuskas during the 1700s and early 1800s as "almost identical in technique, form, function, and many aspects of design" to Puebloan textiles of the same period. Both the Navajo and their Pueblo neighbors wove woolen "mantas, wool shirts, breechcloths, and belts" using "plain, twill, and alternating-float weaves" in natural colors, indigo, and yellow (1985:49).

DISCUSSION

It is common to summarize a cultural adaptation to a region and period in terms of such general cultural patterns or processes as subsistence, social organization, demography, settlement patterns, and trade. Because such limited research has been done on early Navajo sites west of the Chuska Mountains, however, the following discussion can only sketch the outlines of these patterns.

Virtually all of the data currently available on subsistence come from the Sand Dune Site, where livestock raising (of sheep, goats, cattle, and horses or mules) and maize agriculture are evident (Jones 1988). Granaries and other storage facilities are reported at defensive sites in the Canyon de Chelly area, but what crops or other goods were stored in them is not known. Eighteenth-century antelope corrals located on the 1880 Hopi Reservation suggest the importance of communal, large-game hunting by the Navajo. Based on these limited data, Navajo subsistence appears to have been based on a mixture of maize horticulture, wild animal