

\*\*Excerpts from *Culture Complexes and Chronology in Northern Texas* by Alex D. Krieger, 1946, pp. 71-74.

## SUMMARY OF ANTELOPE CREEK FOCUS AND PANHANDLE ASPECT

The Antelope Creek Focus has been described as a provisional complex of associated traits. Certain sherds of Pueblo painted pottery found at the type site and other ruins have provided a clue to the time of existence of the focus. This seems certainly to have been between 1300 and 1450 A.D., a span to which a few years may have to be added at either or both ends. It has been indicated that abandonment of these villages was due to warfare, or a long, killing drought, or both. Many ruins seem to have been filled with wind-blown material rather than that the buildings were originally made in deeply excavated pits. The general abandonment was possibly connected with such long periods of drought as those recorded for western Nebraska in 1439-1454 and 1459-1468.

The presence of multiple-roomed buildings of stone and adobe has suggested to most archaeologists some sort of influence from Pueblo Indian cultures to the west. A brief survey of masonry in the Southwest points to the closest comparisons being with such sites as Pecos and Unshagi in northcentral New Mexico established in early Pueblo IV times. This is to be taken as a clue, not an established relationship. Use of four large roof supports has been shown to have been of wide distribution in the Southwest, first in connection with pit houses, and later in a few cases with surface buildings of masonry, as in Gallina buildings of Pueblo III times. Ventilator shafts occur in connection with early Southwestern pit houses, and with surface masonry houses of the Largo-Gallina Phase and in Unshagi Ruin, in which cases entrance was through the roof. Both Jemez (*e.g.*, Unshagi) and Largo-Gallina houses reveal a peculiar arrangement of walled bins at the sides of the ventilator-deflector-firepit axis, and it has been suggested that Antelope Creek Focus houses with two small "anterooms" or bins flanking an extended masonry tunnel or ventilator might bear relationship to the former, with entrance also gained through the roof.

Other features of Antelope Creek Focus seem to point generally to the Southwest. Among these are circular, slab-lined storage cists, burial in such cists and under house floors, use of plaster on walls and floors, and building of odd-shaped rooms between and around the more regular rooms. The cists are strongly remindful of Basket Maker culture rather than Pueblo and may represent a survival of this trait rather out of keeping with the rest of these remains. However, the cist idea may have lasted well into Puebloan

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\*\* Page numbers and footnotes represent original pagination.

times in certain cases.<sup>107</sup> Burial under house floors was evidently a common Puebloan trait.

There have been hints of the presence of kivas in the Panhandle villages, but as no typical features have been identified this remains an open question. There is no evident arrangement of the buildings around a plaza or kiva. However, quasi-ceremonial use of the houses may be indicated by consistent orientation of the masonry tunnels to the east, and the occurrence in some of raised clay banks (altars?) in the rear, opposite the tunnel. It is said that houses of the northern Rio Grande area have been found to contain altars, and the same is true of the important material from Presidio in the Rio Grande Valley of western Texas; when these are published, there is no doubt that many clues to the use of altars in the northern Panhandle will be gained. In the opposite direction, Pawnee houses are known to have had a small altar in the rear, opposite the extended entrance passage,<sup>108</sup> which might possibly bear some relation to the bank found in Canadian valley rooms. No such features are reported from prehistoric Plains sites.

Thus several architectural features of the Canadian Valley villages point to a relationship with a restricted area in north-central New Mexico which reaches from the vicinity of Pecos Pueblo northwestward into the mountain masses across the Rio Grande. This area is almost due west of the Canadian Valley in Texas, and, as we have seen, there is a close temporal agreement in the comparable remains of these two areas: they extend from Pueblo III into Pueblo IV in New Mexico, and from the end of Pueblo III into Glaze I and II of the early Pueblo IV period in the Texas Panhandle. And, although we know of no transitional materials between the Panhandle border and the Las Vegas-Pecos area, there is certain evidence within the Panhandle itself of improvement in architecture from east to west along the Canadian, i.e., toward New Mexico.<sup>109</sup>

This still leaves unaccounted for a number of other features in buildings of Antelope Creek Focus. Among these are: off-set method of wall construction with vertical slabs; masonry ventilator (?) with level floor lying on or near ground level and without vertical flue; sinking of the central third of the floor across from east to west, and jutting of ventilator (?) opening into the room on a level with this sunken area; raised curbs along the inner edge of the two side banks of the floor and around the altars (?); and perhaps other features not yet clearly known. They were perhaps strongly modified Puebloan elements in some cases, in others perhaps purely local inventions. Many houses, ranging to as much as 25 by 30 feet, are distinctly larger than ordinary Puebloan dwelling rooms.

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<sup>107</sup> Kidder, A. V., *An Introduction to the Study of Southwestern Archaeology*, mentions isolated cases of burial under a floor (p. 29) and a stone-lined cist or bin (p. 30) at Pecos Pueblo.

<sup>108</sup> Wedel, Waldo R., *An Introduction to Pawnee Archaeology*, pp. 43-51 and figs. 1 4.

<sup>109</sup> Studer (letter of June 6, 1945) writes as follows: "I might say that the differences in architecture between the western and eastern ruins are quite apparent to the careful observer. This difference, however, lies in the size, shape, and manner in which the wall stones are laid. Fundamental differences in the overall structures are not so great, or expressed a little differently, most of the general characteristics of all the structures are the same or similar."

Burials seem not to be found in rubbish heaps in the Panhandle sites, but rather in sub-floor graves, abandoned cists, and stone-lined pits near the buildings or nearby ridges. Every account mentions destruction of houses by fire, and it would be instructive to learn whether this may have been done purposely after an interment in the floor.

While the above points indicate relationship with contemporaneous Puebloan cultures, the Texas Panhandle villages cannot be thought of as merely a peripheral Puebloan development. The economic life, based jointly on agricultural and hunting, use of bone hoes, many artifacts of bone, antler, and chipped stone, carved elbow pipes of stone, and the making of a single pottery ware, utilitarian and cordmarked, all point to affiliation with central Plains cultures, especially Upper Republican. It should be noted, however, that Antelope Creek pottery is only generally similar to Upper Republican in consisting almost wholly of globular-bodied jars with cordage impressed over almost the entire surface; more specifically, the jars differ somewhat in shape, those of Antelope Creek being simpler, rounder and higher-rimmed than Upper Republican, lacking the typical flattened shoulder area and specialized collared rim with incised designs, of the latter.

In the distribution of large underground cache pits with constricted mouths, and of houses with square or rectangular ground plan, four central support posts, and central fire basin, Antelope Creek Focus was seen to occupy an intermediate position. These features occurred more or less contemporaneously to the west in north-central New Mexico, and to the northeast in the central Plains cultures mentioned.

To attempt to classify Antelope Creek Focus as either a Plains or Puebloan culture is infeasible, for it was clearly a combination of both. A crucial point might be the identification of the physical stock. One can hardly escape the impression that the peoples of this focus were Plains agriculturalists who pushed southward from one valley to another as far as eastern New Mexico. Here contact was established with Puebloans who were expanding their territory at about the same time. In a southwestward direction, these Plains groups did not extend beyond the Canadian Valley of Texas and New Mexico, but along the well-watered eastern side of the Texas Panhandle they settled as far south as the Red River Valley near Vernon, a limit marked by the distribution of cordmarked pottery (Map 1).

"Contact" with Puebloans, however, explains little. If Puebloan architectural elements were established in the Canadian Valley of Texas, should there not be more Puebloan pottery in the ruins than the few dozen pieces found to date? We find that at Pecos Pueblo numerous artifacts having to do with hunting, skinning, sewing, etc. were adopted from Plains cultures by early Glaze times (although occurring in much greater numbers in late Glaze periods), while Antelope Creek Focus borrowed almost nothing from eastern Puebloans except architectural features. It has already been remarked that Pecos artifacts of ceremonial nature do not appear in the Panhandle. The situation rather clearly points to selective borrowing and acculturation between the two peoples.

The passage of certain Puebloans into the plains on bison hunts may account for some of the trade material, such as glaze-paint pottery, turquoise, and obsidian found in the Panhandle ruins, and the "Alibates flint" carried to Pecos. I am indebted to J. Charles Kelley for pointing out another explanation for the selective borrowing just mentioned. He suggests that a few intermarriages between the two peoples might well account for the differences in traits borrowed. For example, women were ordinarily in complete control and authority over the Puebloan house, and, had even a half-dozen of them gone to live in the Plains tribes along the Canadian, this might easily account for the initial construction of masonry buildings there. The same circumstance might also account for the lack of borrowing of Puebloan ceremonial artifacts, which would have been almost exclusively the property of men. On the other hand, the Plains elements adopted at Pecos were almost all connected with men's work-the pursuit of game, skinning, butchering, etc. I will not attempt to carry Mr. Kelley's suggestions further at this time, but am heartily in agreement with him that archaeology is occasionally able to point out some potent problems in social relations. The present instance provides an excellent example and deserves more attention. It appears to me to put meat on the bare bones of the usual "historical reconstructions" of archaeology which depend solely on the presence or absence of certain traits for their degrees of relationship.

Regarding the "Panhandle Aspect," this term is advanced to allow for expansion in future cultural terminology in the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles and immediately surrounding areas. Thus far, only the Antelope Creek Focus has been outlined and discussed. Hints were given of stonewalled single-room houses in Wolf Creek Valley in the north-eastern Texas Panhandle and the North Canadian Valley in the Oklahoma Panhandle, which may work out into one or more separate foci in the same aspect. Another focus may develop in the southeastern Texas Panhandle, where artifacts are very similar to those of Antelope Creek Focus though masonry is lacking. Northeastern New Mexico may yield further material to be placed in the same aspect, and so on. At present the southern limits of such an aspect appear to be defined by the limits of cordmarked pottery in this region.