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A PRELIMINARY ACCOUNT OF THE EXCAVATION OF PAA-KO
SAN ANTONITO, NEW MEXICO

On September the eleventh, nineteen hundred and thirty six, the second season of excavation was begun on the ruin of Paa-ko under the direction of the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque, New Mexico, and the School of American Research at Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Paa-ko is an extensive ruin lying between the Sandia Mountains on the west, and the San Pedros on the east, and is some twenty-five miles from Albuquerque, New Mexico. There are at least four different plazas with their surrounding houses, one other distinct cultural unit included on the ruin, and many smaller sites lying scattered up and down the canyon in close proximity to the main ruin. Before the second season's work was begun, it was believed that Paa-ko was built entirely of crude, rock masonry in a manner similar to that of Pecos to the northeast.

Not quite sixty rooms and one large central kiva had been excavated by the first season's crew when the author of this paper took over the excavation. The excavation had been concentrated on the southernmost side of the South Central Plaza Unit which lies approximately in the middle west end of the ruin. Twenty eight more rooms were excavated in this section, and one small clan kiva in the northwest corner of the plaza. Cultural material from nearly all parts of this section tested either post-Spanish, or slightly pre-Spanish.¹ However, there were several instances of older shards lying below the floors of the more recently occupied rooms. Pottery types consisted of utility ware generally tempered with mica, a small percentage of late biscuit wares and related types, and, the bulk of which was very poor, late and degenerate glaze. Many of the latter types bore shapes strongly influenced by European contact. Spanish porcelain also occurred.

The small clan kiva excavated by us proved to be the last, or one of the last, used by the inhabitants before abandonment took place. It was totally barren of any cultural material excepting in the vicinity of the altar-deflector and ventilator shaft on the east side. This material could easily have washed down during a heavy rain storm. Sherd material belonged to the late glaze V-VI group. The kiva was built in circular fashion of crude stone laid together with heavy adobe mud, and entirely plastered over. It was subterranean, the greatest height being six feet seven inches, the greatest diameter was twenty one feet ten inches, and was in a fair state of preservation. The kiva features consisted of a fire box, altar-deflector, altar-stone, sipapu, and a ventilator shaft. Rooms and dwellings were built around it on the north and west sides.

Fifteen burials were removed from this part of Paa-ko, which occurred in rooms below floor levels, and in the areas surrounding rooms which touched, or nearly touched the plaza on the north and the west. There was a marked paucity of mortuary material, and all of the skeletons occurred in a flexed, or semi-flexed position. They were in an excellent state of preservation for the most part.

1. All shard material from both season's work was classified by the author.

Abundant animal bones, many of a post-Spanish type, occurred consistently in all of the rooms and areas adjoining rooms. Shard material was equally plentiful. Corn occurred frequently, and many manos and metates were taken from rooms containing burned corn. Projectile points and smaller stone tools were very poorly represented, and were of mediocre quality. Bone tools were better made. Building construction, pottery making, and many other things showed a carelessness in making, and one had the feeling that this phase of Paa-ko was the last, and the degenerate one, and that the people were fast slipping, physically and mentally. The pueblo was either abandoned, or had died out at this point.

It was felt at this time that a fair picture of the above described part of Paa-ko was had, and since we were pressed for time and wanted to get as much of a picture as possible of the entire site we thought it best to leave this section of the ruin, and concentrate our efforts elsewhere. We ran two stratigraphic tests in the plaza area before leaving, and at this time all of the pottery from both seasons' work was classified so we felt sure we had completed this section reasonable well for the time being.

Surface examination of various parts of Paa-ko convinced us that two, if not three, other main parts of the ruin were much older. To the extreme northeast end of the ruin lay a great grass covered mound devoid of rock and building material, but whose slopes contained many shards of a much earlier type than noted generally on the ruin. The mound was isolated with the exception of a long section which seemed to slope gradually into the great North-South House whose crumbled walls still rose high enough to obliterate the other plazas of the ruin with their immensity. We thought that this mound might possibly be the refuse heap for this Great House, but it seemed a bit too large and isolated for that purpose. However, it was obviously a mound that needed testing, so we decided to run a small trench into it from the outskirts near the fence. Material from the first day's testing was so abundant that we decided to concentrate most of the crew on this mound. Shortly afterwards we came upon an adobe wall running north and south, and shortly afterwards we came upon another room wall. Both of these walls were of solid beautifully made adobe. Here, then, lay the secret of the mound, and these adobe walls explained for themselves the absence of fallen stone, so characteristic of other house mounds on the ruin.

This mound is entirely uncovered now, and its association with the rest of the ruin is now pretty well understood. A good many of the rooms still had walls six to eight feet deep, and were all made of heavy adobe blocks laid in position while still pliable with adobe mortar. The mound evidently contained one large community type of building compactly built, and was at least two stories high in some places. Entrance from one room to another was made by small rectangular shaped doorways with stone or wooden lintels, or by doorways in the ceilings. Many stone door covers of the roof type were found in situ on the floors of rooms. Four large square room kivas were found, which brought to mind those of the same type found at Kuaua, near Bernalillo, New Mexico. Kuaua has three square kivas in its plazas, as well as the type built among the rooms.

It is important to note at this point that the two circular stone kivas found in the South Central Plaza Unit of Paa-ko contained largely late and post-Spanish material while the four oldest kivas on the ruin were square, and definitely pre-Spanish, and of a much earlier period. Two of these square, adobe kivas were on the outskirts of the mound, one was sheltered on the south side of the mound by several rows of rooms, and the other one was in the middle of the mound entirely surrounded by many rows of rooms on every side. Two had their altar-deflectors and ventilator shafts to the south, and the others had them to the east. In all other essential kiva features they were alike. All had fire and ash boxes, kiva stones, sipapus, and all were constructed alike. The East Kiva had an adobe niche in its west wall, and its deflector surrounded the firebox on three sides, instead of having just the protection at the back. The west kiva had been sunk in refuse and hard pan dirt, and was subterranean. The middle kiva was much deeper than the rooms surrounding it, and had probably been subterranean too. The most interesting feature of the above kiva was the presence of small patches of painted plaster on the west and north walls, and while very crudely done it shows that the germ of mural paintings in kivas existed at a distance much further to the northeast than heretofore believed. The prize of mural kiva art comes from a square adobe kiva at Kuaua, and probably represents this practice at its height. Alternate layers of bright yellow, black and white plastering occurred on the Paa-ko kiva wall, and in one place on a yellow layer washed lightly in black occurred two motifs which, unfortunately, were incomplete. One was part of a square, or rectangular figure, and the other was a pair of parallel black lines evenly drawn, but broken at both ends. On this same layer were splashes of red paint on a black background. The west kiva had been plastered in white, and in several places there were remnants of crudely drawn black lines. All four of these kivas were filled with rich refuse, and two had been used as burial places. The middle kiva had been abandoned as a kiva, and been divided into four rooms after it had stood accumulating debris for some time.

As was mentioned before this great adobe building was built as a single unit, but it was noted shortly after the mound was opened, and all during the excavation of the place, that scattered and adjoined rooms occurred at intervals. These were of a still earlier type, and had been broken into, and torn down to make way for later buildings. These rooms just mentioned, I believe, are the earliest rooms on the site of Paa-ko. They were built by a people who came to this area with the idea, or habit, of building in adobe well established in their culture, for it would have been easier to take the stones that lie in some profusion near the site, and use them for building purposes. These first rooms contained some Pueblo II material, and a great deal of early Pueblo III. It is entirely possible that remnants of these earlier dwellings will occur to the west, under other mounds, and may have been built on other parts of the ruin as well.

There were some one hundred and sixty ground floor rooms uncovered in this house, all of which were not occupied at the same time, and there were many other rooms that had been built in old rooms, and over them, which we excavated, recorded, and then removed to get at the rooms below. All through this sec-

tion the refuse was heavy, and sherd and animal bone material was abundant. Many mortuary bowls were recovered, in addition to many restorable pieces of pottery. Types of pottery from nearly every part of New Mexico occurred as well as types from Arizona. The strongest affiliations and relationships were with the peoples of the Galisteo and the region in and about Santa Fe. They were probably closely related to the inhabitants of pueblos north of Santa Fe. The gradual process of going from a black on white pottery making phase of culture into a glaze and biscuit making era of pottery production is to be well traced by what was left behind in these old adobe rooms. We know which rooms were made first, and what kind of pottery and tools they made. After early glaze came into usage with Biscuit A to supplant the older black on white types we find the building pushing to the west and northwest. The people adorned themselves with jewelry made of shell, turquoise shell and turquoise inlay, bone and stone. They made many implements of bone, some of which are musical instruments. There is one fine specimen of a harp like musical instrument made from the jaw bone of an animal. Stone material is well represented by many beautiful spearheads, arrowpoints, hammers, axes, manos, metates, floor polishers, and door covers. Fetishes and ceremonial stones were also found. Food must have been abundant, and the people were great meat eaters. We found evidence of the domesticated turkey, the mountain lion, bear, wolf, bison and rabbit. Corn was represented by several varieties. No squash or melon seeds were encountered.

Tree ring specimens were removed, but have not been dated yet.

Burials were represented in prolific numbers, and of the some one hundred and sixty or so that were removed an excellent series for study purposes was obtained. The number of children per family was small, and adult females slightly led the adult males in number. The most interesting of all the burials encountered was that of a mass burial found in a room already abandoned and filled with several layers of refuse before the individuals were placed there. There were sixteen young adults and one unborn infant in this group. They appeared to have been dumped, or thrown into the corner of the room from above. This was probably not a true burial, in that no form or rule had been followed in placing them there. Other burials were flexed, or semi-flexed, although the extended type of burial occurred. Several youths were found who appeared to have been left in a position suggestive of having been killed. Several human bones were found which appeared to have been severed before death, or before decomposition set in. Scattered human bones literally filled every refuse section, and it was not uncommon to come upon disturbed skeletons which had been partially removed to make room for other individuals. Bone pathology was not uncommon, and several diseases of a serious sort must have been known by these people long before white man set foot in New Mexico. Burials occurred in the natural course of excavation in refuse filling abandoned rooms, below room floors and on the floors of rooms. Many rooms were found to contain several periods of occupation, and on each level burials occurred. The location of many more of these skeletons from this section is plotted out by the author, and it is hoped that at some future date they may be removed to supplement the study that will be made upon these.

For some reason shortly after the glazes replaced the older types of pottery a new form of building came into vogue. Over and above these old adobe rooms, and heading always in a westward direction, crudely constructed, rectangular, stone dwellings took the place of the more finely made adobe rooms. In these rooms we find a modified type of utility ware, early glaze one and two vessels, and Biscuit ware. These rooms were plastered on the interiors. The fact that stone masonry first occurs over these adobe rooms leads me again to believe that this northeast mound is the nucleus of the earliest inhabitants and that at some point while still dwelling here, they struck upon the idea of stone masonry, or possibly some new comers brought it to them. These stone rooms gradually tie into the Great South-North House rising to the front of the main group of ruined buildings. One question which can only be answered by future digging is how extensive the adobe structure is underneath on the west. We have its extremities well outlined on the north, south, and east sides, but the west is yet a puzzle. It is significant to note here that at the time the excavation was closed this spring we were beginning to find Glaze three in some of these first stone rooms, a type not found anywhere else on the ruin up until now.

Many problems arise in my mind concerning Paa-ko, and since we have only excavated about a third of the ruin, there yet remains much to be gleaned in future digging. One must postulate and guess at the present concerning many things, and can surely be certain of others where excavation has already unfolded the story. There are certain gaps in pottery types in which one must go by surface finds for a great deal of the information, and at the same times there are gaps large enough even where excavation has taken place to make one dubious as to whether Paa-ko was occupied continuously from earliest times down to the time of the arrival of the Spaniards.

The gaps would indicate periods of abandonment, and a re-occupation at later times by a closely related people, or by the same group who might have gone away and returned for some reason or another. Stratigraphic tests were run, and proved beneficial in interpreting data. It is hoped that many of these problems may be answered more satisfactorily in the complete report to be made soon on Paa-ko.

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DEAN BYRON CUMMINGS

Dr. Byron Cummings was born in Westville, New York, September 20, 1861. He received his A.B. in 1889, his A.M. in 1892, and his D. Sc. in 1924 at Rutgers College. He studied at the University of Chicago in 1896 and at the University of Berlin in 1910-1911. An LL.D. degree was conferred on him by the University of Arizona in 1921. He married Isabelle MacLaury in 1896. After teaching in several public schools in New York, he came to the University of Utah where he started as an instru-