

## EXPEDITION DISCOVERS NEW PREHISTORIC HOUSE TYPE

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After several months spent in excavating the ruins of an ancient New Mexico village which was occupied sometime between 1,200 and 2,400 years ago by a prehistoric American Indian people belonging to what we call the Mogollon (pronounced "muggy-own") civilization—a culture which has been recognized only within the last few years—the Field Museum Archaeological Expedition to the Southwest has completed its 1941 season of operations and returned to Chicago. The expedition, under the leadership of the writer, was a continuation of his work on one previous expedition in

Meanwhile, it is possible to make a few general statements and to sketch hastily the meaning of the season's work:

Was the expedition a success? Emphatically, yes. Did we bring back any showy specimens? No; but such acquisitions do not constitute a proper criterion—archaeology is not a search for specimens, and emphasis on them indicates a lack of perspective on "what it's all about." Archaeology is, instead, a study dealing with man's history. Archaeologists try to recover and interpret man's past; and in order to carry out this purpose they excavate. In the digging of a ruin in the Southwest, one finds tools of stone and bone, and generally

ment and growth of towns situated in fertile agricultural areas. The United States government at the present time encourages isolated farmers to gather in or near centralized communities, where they may benefit from better social, psychological, and educational environments. To know whether such an experiment would be successful today, one must study the past.

We are also interested in the religious, social, and economic structures which the Mogollon Indians developed long ago; for an understanding of these fundamentals may guide our footsteps on the right path to realize man's eternal urge for progress.

Furthermore—and this is what so closely links the present with the past and gives one a warm, comfortable feeling that one is not an isolated phenomenon on this globe without antecedents or successors—we are interested in showing that in spite of differences in time, climate, race, and geography, men possess certain fundamental urges which cause them to act more or less similarly at all times and in all places. Thus we can easily see a sameness of development throughout all civilizations.

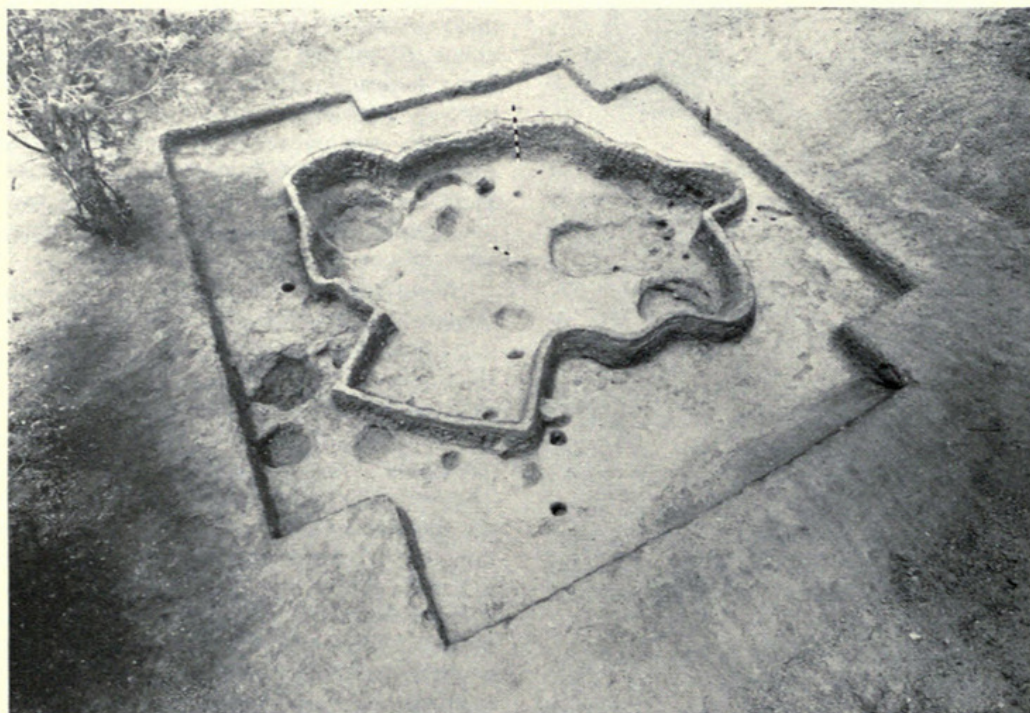
Therefore, our reasons for digging at the SU site are clear. We wished to learn how these primitive folk lived, how they grouped themselves socially, how they solved their economic, agricultural, and religious problems, and why and how they lived in clusters of houses or villages. We desire this information because we must understand man in both past and present if we are to understand our own civilization and how it may be improved.

### THREE MAIN SOUTHWEST CULTURES

Until a few years ago, archaeologists believed that there was only one civilization in the Southwest and that it produced all the various types of pottery, houses, and tools that we dug up. We now know that this idea was incorrect. Within the last few years archaeologists have demonstrated that there were two other civilizations which left their mark on the Southwest. The one most recently laid bare is the Mogollon civilization, towards the discovery of which the Field Museum Archaeological Expeditions have greatly contributed.

What was the Mogollon civilization like?—what were its chief characteristics? The Mogollon civilization was a comparatively poor one. The people of this culture lived for the most part in pit-houses, which were nothing but big holes in the ground, roofed with logs, twigs, bark, and earth.

We discovered also that, in addition to pit-houses, the Mogollon Indians built and occupied other houses, the floors of which were not sunk into the ground. The walls of these consisted of upright poles set eight to fourteen inches apart. Mud and small sticks were placed in between these poles, forming a good tight wall. This kind of construction is called "wattle-and-daub"



STRANGE DESIGNLESS TYPE OF ANCIENT HOUSE LAID BARE

Aerial view of one of the areas excavated by the 1941 Field Museum Archaeological Expedition to the Southwest. The irregular lines of the inner enclosure mark the odd meandering walls of the hitherto unknown sort of dwelling place just discovered by Dr. Paul S. Martin and his associates. The giant geometrical pattern formed by the outside lines illustrates the technique of "stripping" employed this season as a means of assuring the finding of the site's every buried artifact.

the same area, and eight previous expeditions for investigation of related cultures in other regions of the Southwest. Personnel included other archaeologists, research assistants, and a "labor force" of twelve workmen for the actual digging.

Approximately 600 stone and bone tools and 18,000 potsherds (pieces of broken pottery) were brought to light on the site excavated, which has been designated by the name SU\*. The stone and bone tools are of an early type, and the pottery is crude and without decoration. These rare specimens, together with the facts gleaned during the digging season, will be further studied and correlated for a detailed report within the next five or six months.

\*SU (pronounced "Shu") is the brand mark used on cattle at a large ranch near-by, and has become the name also of one of the canyons in the region.

pottery and houses. These tangible remains of the culture form the basis for reconstructing man's past, and in this respect specimens achieve their prime usefulness. It should always be remembered that probably 90 per cent of a civilization dies when a village or town is deserted. From the dust, the archaeologist cannot recover the language spoken by the villagers, the dress, the social customs, and a thousand and one other items that make up any culture. We can, however, by careful study and observation make reasoned and reasonable guesses about the past.

Why was the Mogollon civilization chosen for study?

We are interested in studying the Mogollon civilization for many reasons. It represents an early stage in the develop-

and contrasts with the below-ground houses found by the 1939 expedition to this site.

Firepits were not found in any of the houses. Therefore, we believe that these Indians rarely used fire inside the house for cooking, warmth, or light. Extensive digging outside the houses likewise failed to bring to light any firepits, but large deep pits were discovered and perhaps these were used for barbecuing; or perhaps these people did little or no cooking.

Most of the houses were equipped with large or small entrance-tunnels which always faced east. Why these tunnels faced east is not known, although probably the orientation was for religious reasons.

Life in the underground houses must have been somewhat dark, and perhaps damp and not very comfortable. At some future time we hope to reconstruct a roof over one of the old pits, let it stand for several weeks, and then burn it. In this way, we may be able to learn the answers to some of these puzzling questions.

The stone and bone tools of the Mogollon Indians were crude and unlike those which one ordinarily associates with Indians. In fact, the stone tools, such as scrapers, choppers, hammerstones, polishing stones, and pestles, are so primitive that one would probably pass them by without recognizing that they had ever been used by human beings for any purpose whatsoever. But, finding many such stones in all the houses caused us to note that they fell into distinct patterns and types and therefore could not be natural, unused stones.

It is interesting to note that no axes of any kind were found. The absence of this important tool makes us wonder how these ancient Mogollon people felled their trees, for we know that they used fair-sized trees for roofing their houses.

#### BURIALS

The dead were always buried in pits. Some of these lay outside the houses, and some were dug in the house floors. The corpse was wrapped in a sitting or doubled-up position and was then placed in a pit. Generally, burials were not placed in house pits until after the house had been abandoned. But in some instances the family continued to live in the house after a burial, presumably of a family member, had been placed in a floor pit. Of course, the burial was covered with earth, and the floor was thus completely restored. Offerings to the dead were very rare. The only objects we found with skeletons were tobacco pipes and sometimes shell bracelets and necklaces. Whole pottery was never found, which may be an indication that pottery had only recently been adopted by this civilization and was therefore not yet really part and parcel of it.

The human skeletons themselves were in a very poor state of preservation, while animal bones found in the same excavation

level were sound and well-preserved. This may indicate that the animals obtained a better-balanced diet than the Indians of that period.

#### FOOD

During the season, only a few projectile points (arrow- and spearheads) were found. On the other hand, many food-grinding tools were brought to light in great abundance from all houses. It is assumed, therefore, that the Mogollon Indians of the SU village lived mostly on berries, roots, herbs, and grasses, and depended very little on hunting or agriculture. This may also be a sign that this civilization is ancient, as the people were mostly seed-gatherers rather than farmers.

#### AGE OF THE SU RUIN

The age of the houses, pottery, and stone tools which the Field Museum Expedition discovered at the SU Village is difficult to determine. Dating the village by means of tree-rings has thus far been impossible because the rings on timbers from the ruins do not fit into any known sequence. Some light on this question can be obtained by means of cross-dating or comparison of the Field Museum tools with those from other ruins. It is known, for example, that the SU ruin is earlier than A.D. 700 because no painted or decorated pottery was recovered during the season. Painted pottery occurred in that area after A.D. 700. The pottery which we found is probably among the oldest in North America.

Conversely, although the SU village stone tools are similar to those found in southern Arizona by Gila Pueblo investigators (in the San Pedro time period which dates at about 3000 B.C. to 500 B.C.), yet the SU village must date after that period because the SU villagers made pottery while the San Pedro people did not.

Therefore, the Field Museum village must have been founded and occupied sometime between 500 B.C. and A.D. 700.

#### INVERTEBRATE FOSSILS OBTAINED

Dr. Sharat K. Roy, Curator of Geology, has returned from a two and one-half months' expedition to western and northern New York where he collected exhibition specimens of invertebrate fossils, chiefly from the Upper and Middle Devonian formations. Dr. Roy limited his field work to type localities and for the most part collected only those specimens that were needed to fill some of the gaps existing in the Museum's collection. The bulk of the material is intended for the exhibits in Frederick J. V. Skiff Hall (Hall 37), which is scheduled to be reinstalled as soon as a more complete representative collection showing the stratigraphical and biological sequence of the Paleozoic periods can be made. Duplicate specimens will be added to the study collection, and new species will be the subject of research and publication.

#### ECONOMIC BOTANIST DEPARTS ON VENEZUELAN EXPEDITION

Arrangements have been completed for a joint Field Museum-Venezuelan Government botanical expedition to the upper Orinoco. It will be conducted by Mr. Llewelyn Williams, Curator of Economic Botany, who sailed late in October. The territory south and east of the Orinoco River, generally known as the Venezuelan Guiana, has been visited or traversed by famous scientists, but nevertheless it is still regarded as one of the least explored areas of tropical America.

This is the third expedition to the Venezuelan Guiana to be conducted by Mr. Williams. Early in 1939 he spent several months in the lower and middle reaches of the Caura, one of the principal affluents of the Orinoco, and from March to July of the following year he botanized in various widely separated areas ranging from near the delta of the Orinoco to the rapids of Atures, almost 1,000 miles up-river.

In December Mr. Williams plans to leave Caracas for Ciudad Bolívar, where he will embark on a small sailing vessel for a 10-day voyage to Puerto Ayacucho, the limit of river navigation by vessels of deep draft. Beyond this point he will travel in dugout canoes, with several portages around rapids, to Yavita and overland to the River Guainia, which empties into the Río Negro, continuing to the Brazilian frontier at El Cucuy. The return will be made by way of the Casiquiare and the Orinoco.

One of the greatest collections of weird and grotesque artistry in the form of carved wooden figures is to be seen in the Melanesian collections in Joseph N. Field Hall.

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Martin, Paul S. 1941. "Exhibition Discovers New Prehistoric House Type." *Field Museum news* 12(11), 4–5.

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