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0521225817 - Stylistic Variation in Prehistoric Ceramics: Design Analysis in the American Southwest

Stephen Plog

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## Preface

The analysis of stylistic variation on prehistoric artifacts has been a major component of archaeological research for decades, and the amount of literature that has been generated is immense. It would be extremely difficult for a single monograph to discuss all of the different issues that have been raised concerning stylistic variation and this study does not attempt to do so. Rather, it is an attempt to deal with one primary topic, the explanation of patterns of stylistic variation, which I feel has not received enough attention in previous analyses, particularly many that have been carried out in the last two decades.

Many types of inferences about the past and several methods of measuring characteristics of prehistoric human adaptive systems are based on patterns of stylistic variation and on assumptions about the factors which cause that variation. However, these assumptions are oversimplified in many instances and have not been adequately tested. Given this problem and the importance of patterns of stylistic variation in archaeological inferences, we must begin to try to understand the full range of factors that determine degrees and patterns of stylistic variation rather than to assume that these factors are already known. This study is an attempt at an initial step in that direction. It examines the extent to which change in stylistic attributes over time, the exchange of goods, the movement of people, and the association of stylistic attributes with the form of artifacts can explain ceramic design variation in one area of the American Southwest. In addition, the extent to which alternative theories of stylistic variation can account for spatial and temporal patterns in design variation in the American Southwest is addressed.

While this study is based on the analysis of a specific type of data from a specific area, I feel that the results of the research should be relevant to those interested in the analysis of stylistic variation on other types of artifacts from other areas of the world. In particular, the results have implications for a variety of methods that have been used to infer characteristics of prehistoric human interaction and social organization from patterns of stylistic variation.

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Numerous individuals deserve thanks for their help in completing the research discussed in this study. First, David Braun, Genevieve Jones, Cay Loria, Laura Mason, and Christine Rudecoff, then of the University of Michigan, participated in the collection of data during the summer of 1974. In addition, several individuals from the State University of New York at Binghamton under the direction of Dr. Fred Plog also assisted in the data collection. Of these individuals, Bruce Donaldson, Margie Green, Patricia Rubertone, Isolde Wait, and Walter Wait deserve special thanks. Richard I. Ford, then my dissertation chairman, also assisted in the initial stages of the fieldwork.

Analysis of the data during the 1974–75 academic year was done with the help of Kurt Anschuetz, Mike Hambacher, Laura Mason, Frank Peryea, Diane Phelps, Christine Rudecoff, and Ellen Zak. Christine Rudecoff, in particular, deserves special thanks for her work on the preliminary design analysis. The petrographic analysis of the Chevelon ceramics was done by Elizabeth Garrett of the Department of Geology at Western Michigan University. She worked long hours making thin sections and doing the superb analysis described in this study.

This manuscript is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation. Richard I. Ford, Kent V. Flannery, John D. Nystuen, Robert E. Whallon, and Henry T. Wright, members of my dissertation committee, all provided invaluable comments on the dissertation proposal and on drafts and the final copy of the dissertation itself. George J. Gumerman, Fred Plog, and David Wilcox also read drafts of the dissertation and provided useful comments. Kent Flannery, Richard Ford, and Fred Plog also deserve special thanks for their guidance throughout my undergraduate and graduate years. Finally, my thinking on a number of the issues discussed in this study has been influenced by many long talks with David Braun and Alan Zarky.

A dissertation improvement grant (GS-42783) from the National Science Foundation made possible the collection of most of the data used in this study. A grant from the Graduate Student Research Fund at the University of Michigan in 1973 aided the formulation of the dissertation. Finally, the National Science Foundation provided a graduate fellowship to support my first years in graduate school. I am grateful for all this support.

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S.P.