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Fort Apache Indian Reservation—Arizona

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KINISHBA....

A Classic Site of the Western Pueblos

by

JAMES B. SHAEFFER



Fort Apache Indian Reservation—Arizona

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Education

KINISHBA RUINS

General Location

Kinishba Ruins and Museum are located on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in east central Arizona, some 7 miles southwest of the agency town of Whiteriver. They can be reached by leaving Highway 60 at Showlow or at the cut-off sign about 25 miles south of Showlow. The latter route is preferable for visitors traveling north from Globe and the former for those traveling south.

The Fort Apache Indian Reservation

The Fort Apache Indian Reservation, where the ruins are located, is situated in the White Mountains and covers an area of 1,665,000 acres. The principal drainages of this region are the north and south forks of the White River which, in turn, join the Black River to form the Salt River.

The climate is probably much as it was when inhabited in prehistoric times by the Pueblo people, being little given to extremes at any season. Temperatures average 72.6 degrees in summer, 36.6 degrees in winter. Rainfall averages 17.83 inches per year, falling mainly in July and August and from December through March.¹

The ground cover of the reservation is divided into four general types depending upon elevation.¹ The greater part of the reservation lying between 2700 and 6000 feet is semi-desert. Growth is preponderately juniper, cedar, and pinon pine with lesser occurrences of walnut, elder, alder, and cottonwood. Oak predominates from 6000-7000 feet. Between 7000 and 8500 feet is a yellow pine and Ponderosa pine belt which is followed by a sub-alpine environment at 8500 to 10,000 feet. The latter contains Mexican white pine and Douglas fir. Finally, there is a limited Alpine flora on Mt. Thomas, locally known as Mt. Baldy, 11,459 feet, consisting of cork bark and white fir, Engleman and Colorado spruce.

1. U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1942.

There is a diversified fauna including such animals as bear, mountain lion, coyote, fox, bobcat, wolf, elk, deer, skunk, rabbit, porcupine, squirrel, wild pig, beaver, otter, prairie dog, and raccoon. The larger forms of birdlife include the eagle, hawk, owl, turkey, crow, duck, goose, grouse, and quail.¹

The Site

The reservation is situated at the upper end of a large flat valley which slopes away toward the White River. The floor of the valley is well spotted with clusters of juniper and pinon while pines are scattered along the arroyos and on the northern slopes of the hills.² The hills and mesas which surround the valley rise rather abruptly to an average height of 500 feet above the valley floor.



1. This list, which contains the major species, was supplied by R. C. Culbreath, Indian Bureau trapper and hunter.
2. The juniper and pinons, a recent invasion from the hills, are in the process of being eliminated to make available more grazing land.

Early References to Kinishba

The first mention of the site in archaeological literature was by Adolph Bandelier in 1892.¹ Thereafter, it was visited from time to time by a number of prominent archaeologists.² Locally it was well known to residents and soldiers from the Fort Apache garrison who evidently dug occasionally in the ruins for souvenirs. However, no systematic digging was done until 1931 when Dr. Bryon Cummings, then Director of the Arizona State Museum and Head of the Department of Archaeology at the University of Arizona, began his work.³



Development of the Site

Dr. Cummings established a permanent camp at the ruins for students and the staff of the University's Archaeological Field School. This school was in operation during the summer months from 1931 to 1939 and it was during this time that the eastern half of the ruins was excavated and partially restored. Most of the restoration was done by Apache labor employed with Civilian Conservation Corps funds. Following this, in 1939, a small museum designed to house a representative collection from the site was built near the ruins.

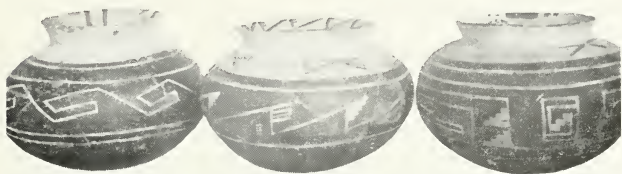
1. Bandelier, 1892

2. Hough, 1907, 1930; Spier, 1919

3. Cummings, 1940; Baldwin 1934, 1936, 1938

Culture of Kinishba

Kinishba is a Pueblo site of the Classic or Pueblo III period in southwestern prehistory. The people who occupied it were quite likely the ancestors of some of the present Pueblo Indians, the Hopi of northeastern Arizona, and/or the Zuni of northwestern New Mexico.



The center of the Pueblo complex is located in the Four Corners area where the States of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah join.¹ From there it spread in time over a number of lesser traditions and eventually came to dominate a greater part of the Southwest. One of the lesser centers over which this northern complex flowed was the Mogollon pithouse complex in the central part of the southwestern area. The White Mountain area, where Kinishba is located, is a sub-district of this early complex.² The later Pueblo complex of the White Mountain district is therefore distinctive from that found in the Four Corners area because of its somewhat different base. To distinguish the various regional aspects of the Pueblo complex, that of the Four Corners has been designated as the Anasazi, or northern Pueblo, that along the Rio Grande River as eastern Pueblo, and that part which includes the White Mountain area as western Pueblo.³

1. Martin, Quimby & Collier, 1947; McGregor, 1941

2. Haury, 1940a, 1940b, 1940c, 1942a, 1942b; Haury and Sayles, 1947

3. Reed, 1948

It is this western Pueblo complex which is exemplified at Kinshba and which lasted in the White Mountains from about 800 A.D. to 1400 A.D.¹ Thereafter, there was a time when the region was almost completely abandoned and it was not until the advent of the nomadic Apache from the Western Plains, possibly in the 16th or 17th century, that the area was again populated.

Plan and Age of the Ruins

The ruins consist of two large apartment houses containing more than two hundred rooms each, which are located on opposite sides of a deep arroyo. There are, in addition, seven smaller outlying buildings ranging from 7 to 20 ground floor rooms. Altogether, there are between 400 and 500 ground floor rooms which, if roughly contemporaneous, would have housed a population of 1000 to 2000 people.

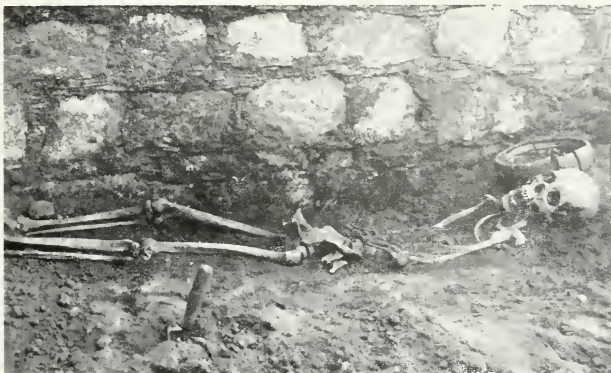
The peak of this occupation was reached in the late 1200's. But the site was occupied much earlier and was not finally abandoned until sometime after 1350 A.D.



1. Fewkes, 1904; Haury, 1930a, 1930b; Haury and Hargrave, 1931; Hough, 1903, 1930

Masonry Characteristics

One of the unique features of Kinishba is the use throughout its construction of a double wall, one side of which was faced, the other side being rubble. The faced side is ashlar masonry of rather decorative effect due to the generous use of layers of small spalls between the larger courses of stone. Masonry of this type is found in other parts of the Southwest but it is rare to find it employed as the only type in such an extensive ruin. Its incorporation in a double wall with another type of masonry is possibly unique to this locality.



Roof Construction

In general, the roof construction was of two kinds. In the most commonly employed type, the beams were laid from wall to wall across the width of the room. Smaller poles were then placed at right angles. Brush or cedar bark followed and several inches of packed clay completed the insulation. The other type of roofing was characterized by a long center

beam down the length of the room. It was usually further supported by several uprights beneath it. Upon this beam rested smaller poles placed at right angles to the opposite walls. The remainder of the roof construction was as above.

Other Architectural Features

The rooms of the pueblo average 14'x12' in dimension and are simple in their features. The majority were probably entered through hatchways rather than through lateral doorways. Mud plaster was often used to finish both floors and walls. Furnishings consisted mainly of a firepit or firebox in the center of the room which provided both heat and light. Pairs of mealing bins are found frequently in the corners of the rooms where the women ground corn meal. At least half of the excavated rooms are without distinguishing architectural features and are assumed to be storage rooms.

In all probability, each family occupied an apartment consisting of two rooms, one for living and one for storage. It is believed that the people lived outdoors almost altogether when the weather permitted.



The Great Kiva Area¹

In the center of the pueblo are two courtyards. The smaller contains a pole-and-masonry¹ lined kiva, or underground ceremonial room, which is a very simple structure containing a central fireplace and a small storage room at the south side.

The larger courtyard which measures 63x51 feet showed evidence of three distinct stages of ceremonial use. In the earliest stage, during the late 1100's or the early 1200's, it was the site of five underground rooms similar in size to the



kiva in the smaller courtyard but having earthen walls instead of being lined with masonry. Later, possibly around the middle of the 13th century, these underground rooms were filled up and five rows of large juniper posts were set into the courtyard floor. These supported beams and a roof, thus changing the courtyard into a large chamber, one of the largest, above-ground, rectangular rooms in the Southwest. Finally, the roof is believed to have burned down and to have been dismantled because no

1. Shaeffer, 1949

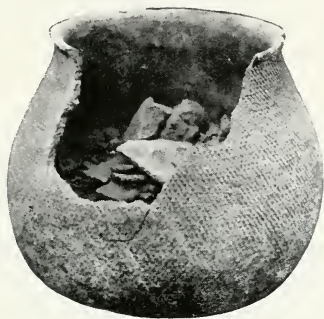
sign of roof material was found during excavation. From that time the courtyard looked much as it does today. Ceremonies during these later times must have been held in large specialized rooms in the pueblo itself as is the custom among the modern Pueblo peoples.

Economy

The life of the pueblo depended mainly upon agriculture. Corn, beans, gourds, and possibly cotton were raised by dry farming on the flats which surround the pueblo. It is probable that, like the Apache of today, the Pueblo peoples selected only those spots in the valley where there was some moisture rather than farming the entire area indiscriminately. Corn was undoubtedly planted as it is today among the Hopi, in hills together with beans and gourds, a system which results in the conservation of moisture.



In addition to these cultivated foods, seeds, berries and roots of the local plant life furnished a large proportion of the food. At a primitive level of economy and in an environment as limited in rainfall as the Southwest, collection of wild foods is necessary in order to augment reserves so that unpredictable dry seasons may be survived.



Hunting was also practiced but from the relative dearth of arrow points and animal bones, it appears to have been of secondary importance. The bones most in evidence in the refuse were deer, rabbit, and turkey bones. It is quite likely that all of the animals present today in the region were killed by the Pueblo peoples for food whenever the opportunity offered and religious taboos did not intervene.

Other Activities

In addition to subsistence activities, such other activities as pottery making, tool and ornament manufacture, weaving,

and sewing were carried on as the artifacts displayed in the museum attest.

In pottery, the decorated wares were black-and-white and polychrome types. These were principally for storage purposes while plain brown wares, red wares, and corrugated pottery were for utility purposes. Corrugated ware was much used for cooking.

Tools and implements manufactured from stone included scrapers, knives, points, drills, abraders, grinding and milling stones, polishing stones, choppers, hammers, axes, mauls, grooved arrow polishers, etc. Other tools, made from bone, were needles, awls, arrow-straighteners, and scrapers.



The Pueblo peoples were fond of wearing various kinds of jewelry. Ornaments were principally of shell, often used whole, or ground into disc beads or rectangular pendants and strung as necklaces. Bracelets were made from the rims of large shells. For variety, animal bones were cut into segments for rings and into tubes for necklaces. Earrings were ground from turquoise and various other colored stones.

Burned fragments of cotton and yucca cloth, strands of charred yucca, plaited yucca leaves, and ropes of twisted human hair all suggest that dress was similar to that of the other Pueblo people whose clothing is found well-preserved in the dry caves of northern Arizona and northwestern New Mexico. There one finds sandals, breechcloths, small aprons, and

occasional fur and turkey feather robes in addition to various objects of personal adornment.

Numerous amulets, prayer stones, and fetishes are evidence of a rich ceremonial life. Mineral paints, which were found in great abundance at Kinishba, include most of the colors of the spectrum and probably entered into the religious symbolism in the past as they do among the modern Pueblos. Painted stone plaques, some of them with rare naturalistic designs, painted animal jawbones, and the skeletal remains of the macaw parrot were additional colorful adjuncts of the religious activity at Kinishba.



Abandonment of the Pueblo

The question most frequently asked by visitors is, "What happened to these people?" The answer to this cannot be accurately stated as yet. All that can be said at present is that their disappearance had something to do with the general desiccation of the region. When life in the area became extremely difficult, the populations of the large pueblos probably split into smaller groups which, in turn, gradually drifted out of the White Mountain region.

While it is not known from present day evidence just what the source of water was for Kinishba, it is thought that some sort of seep or spring existed prehistorically in the arroyo which now separates the two large apartment groups. Local residents remember such a seep in the bottom of the arroyo some 30 or 40 years ago. It is quite possible that some such source of water may have been the determining factor in the selection of this particular spot as the site for a pueblo development. When it dried up, it may well have been the major factor in the final abandonment of this site.



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ROUTES TO KINISHBA