

Tsiping' uinge: A Case Study for Social and Cosmological Transformation on the Northern Periphery of the Tewa World

Samuel Duwe¹ and Kelly Swarts²

¹School of Anthropology, The University of Arizona; ²Field of Plant Breeding and Genetics, Cornell University

Introduction

Rapid transformations characterized the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century Pueblo world. The depopulation of the Four Corners region triggered widespread population movement; one result was a large influx of migrants to the northern Rio Grande (Ortman 2010). Concurrent with large-scale demographic change were shifts in social and cosmological focus among the ancestral Northern Tiwa (Fowles 2009), Keresan (Snead 2008), and Tewa (Anschuetz 1998) as migrants and indigenous Rio Grande populations actively negotiated ideas of society and worldview. The resulting Pueblo identities and cosmologies recorded in the ethnographic-era were likely created and negotiated in the tumultuous, and poorly understood, period between A.D. 1300 and 1350. The ritual landscape and site history of the ancestral Tewa site of Tsiping' uinge (LA 301) provides a case study to begin to understand how the processes of migration and population coalescence acted as a catalyst for becoming Tewa.



The world-quarter shrine at Tsiping' uinge.

Ritual Landscapes in the Tewa World

The Tewa Pueblos of northern New Mexico have a highly complex cosmology and social organization. Ortiz (1969) describes how the Tewa map worldview onto the mountains, hills, springs, caves, and shrines in the northern Rio Grande region. Shrines, which are archaeologically visible and identifiable, were built across the landscape but concentrate around villages. Tewa shrines generally fall into two classes: (1) those immediately adjacent to the village and used by households; and (2) those used by ceremonial specialists.

Anschuetz (1998) argues that while ritual landscapes resembling those of the ethnographic-era are found at ancestral Tewa villages after A.D. 1350, the earliest villages in the region (A.D. 1250-1350) generally associate with smaller and simpler ritual landscapes comprised solely of village household shrines. Shrines associated with ceremonial specialists, such as the world-quarter shrine, appear sometime in the fourteenth century. The appearance of specialist shrine types likely coincides with the development of an ethnographic-era cosmology. This project addresses how and when this transformation occurred.

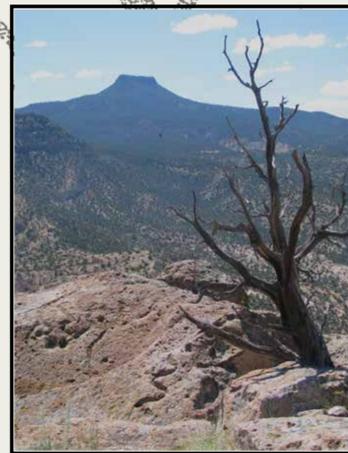
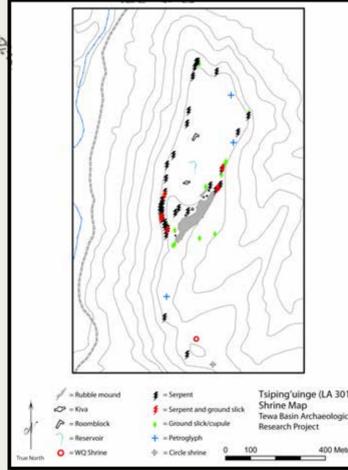
World Quarter Shrines

Although rock rings are an important and ancient shrine type common across the Pueblo world, the world-quarter shrine is unique to the Rio Grande and a Tewa phenomena widespread after A.D. 1350. Comprised of a ring of available stone (basalt, granite, or tuff) 10-12 meters in diameter with an opening oriented due east, Tewa world-quarter shrine design is tightly constrained. Only one world-quarter shrine is present per village and it is located on a hill or ridge approximately 500 meters to the southeast

Jeancon (1923) explained that historically the world-quarter shrine was a primarily used to encourage rainfall. During a long drought the Summer and Winter chiefs, with their top lieutenants, would retreat to the shrine and "would stay there for four days and nights and make magic to bring rain" (Jeancon 1923:53). From this description archaeologists learned two important points: 1) for the Historic period Tewa, the world-quarter shrine was associated with agriculture and, 2) the shrine was the purview of Tewa ceremonial leaders, suggesting that world quarter shrines are in a separate class from household shrines.

Study Area: The Rio Chama

Population levels in the Chama were low until the early-fourteenth century when hundreds, if not thousands, of people settled the watershed, likely originating on the Pajarito Plateau to the south (Duwe 2011). These people were either displaced by incoming Four Corners migrants or were an amalgamation of both migrant and indigenous Rio Grande populations. Whatever their identity, the settlers brought with them novel ideas of place-making and social organization, which they began to express during this tumultuous time of climatic and residential (Anschuetz 1998) instability.



A village shrine at Tsiping' uinge.

Case Study: Tsiping' uinge

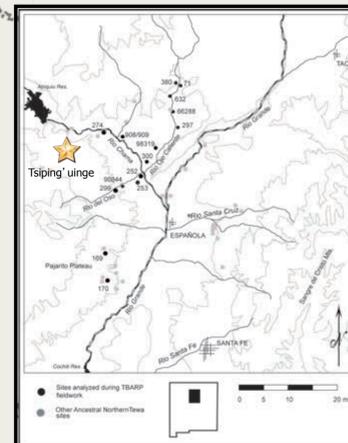
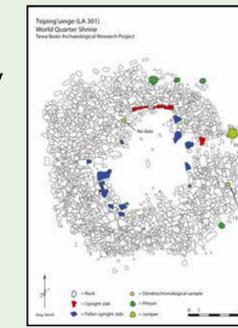
Tsiping' uinge is 450-room village located on the northwestern frontier of Tewa world and is one of the largest Wiyo phase Tewa sites in the region. Although situated on a highly inaccessible mesa, Tsiping' uinge was a major population and ceremonial center as evidenced by three-story tall room block architecture, a great kiva, 23 cavate rooms, and a highly complex ritual landscape.

There were two main building events at Tsiping' uinge based on tree-ring dates collected from exposed beams in both the 1930s (Smiley 1951) and during the current project in collaboration with the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research. The village was initially built between A.D. 1312-1314 as part of the large-scale colonization of the Chama, and remodeled and expanded in A.D. 1325-1326. Whether the expansion and remodeling of Tsiping' uinge was related to an influx of population into the region or internal growth is currently unknown. What is known is that at the very end of this building episode the only dated world-quarter shrine in the northern Rio Grande region was constructed in the fall of A.D. 1326.

World Quarter Shrine of Tsiping' uinge

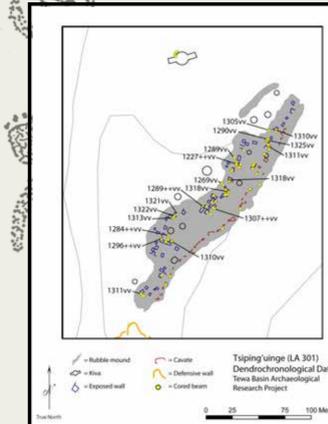
The world-quarter shrine at Tsiping' uinge is located approximately 0.5 km southeast of the site on a small mesa connected to Pueblo Mesa by a narrow ridge. The shrine is 12 meters in diameter and is constructed from piled sandstone slabs. Wall height was 1.5 meters on the northern portion of the shrine with an entrance oriented to the east.

We discovered a piñon limb buried within the eastern wall of the world-quarter shrine that yielded a bark ring and cutting-date of A.D. 1326. The discovery of wood within a world-quarter shrine was unusual, however, based on the standing wall size the walls of the world-quarter shrine may have stood two-meters tall. Wood beams, possibly cut during the clearing of the shrine area, may have been used to shore the walls composed of dry-laid sandstone slabs.



References Cited

- Anschuetz, Kurt F.
1998 *Not Waiting for the Rain: Integrated Systems of Water Management by Pre-Columbian Pueblo Farmers in North-Central New Mexico*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
- Duwe, Samuel
2011 *The Prehispanic Tewa World: History and Cosmology in the Northern Rio Grande*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, School of Anthropology, University of Arizona, Tucson.
- Fowles, Severin M.
2009 *The Enshrined Pueblo: Villagescape and Cosmos in the northern Rio Grande*. *American Antiquity* 74(3):448-466.
- Jeancon, Jean A.
1923 *Excavations in the Chama Valley, New Mexico*. Bulletin 81. Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C.
- Ortiz, Alfonso
1969 *The Tewa World: Space, Time, Being, and Becoming in a Pueblo Society*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Ortman, Scott G.
2010 *Genes, Language and Culture in Tewa Ethnogenesis, A.D. 1150-1400*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Arizona State University, Tempe.
- Smiley, Terah
1951 *A Summary of Tree-Ring Dates from Some Southwestern Sites*. Laboratory Bulletin of Tree-Ring Research No. 5, Tucson.
- Snead, James
2008 *Ancestral Landscapes of the Pueblo World*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.



The cored piñon beam in the world-quarter shrine at Tsiping' uinge.

Discussion

The appearance of a world-quarter shrine at Tsiping' uinge in A.D. 1326 suggests that a social and cosmological organization similar to that of the ethnographic Tewa may have been present in the Rio Chama watershed in the latter part of the Wiyo phase. The building of the shrine concurs with population expansion at the site, suggesting that increased social and ceremonial complexity was a consequence of migration and population aggregation and growth.

Tsiping' uinge was probably not unique in its landscape transformation during the Wiyo Phase. Ancestral Puebloan sites across the northern Rio Grande region (Fowles 2009; Snead 2008), especially those of large (>400 rooms) size, were likely undergoing similar changes as they adapted to population, subsistence, and metaphysical pressures.

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by the National Science Foundation through a Dissertation Improvement Grant (BCS-0741708) and was possible through the blessing by the Santa Fe National Forest and Ohkay Owingeh (San Juan Pueblo).