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(VA384B) Notes from the excavation of feature 2 at Bc 50.

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1939

VA 384B-

Dear Dr. Setzler:

This is the manuscript, incomplete. Jones has never completed the photographic work, hence plates of photos are not included. I have not been able to locate the artifacts from the feature, nor the descriptive blanks for them. If and when I find these I will send you their description to insert in the ms. Since there were only a few, and they not significant, the conclusions will not in any way be modified, and the descriptive paragraph or page can easily be included in your completed manuscript. I have not attempted any comparative studies nor documentation of similar finds. At the present time and for some months to come I will simply not have time to do so. As to the diagrams, it seems to me that another block diagram continuing the east-west section of Feature 2 fill and the overlying strata would be worthwhile. Since you have already been kept waiting criminally long, however, I will not further delay the ms. at this moment.

I remain at your service to make any changes, additions, or deletions as the case may warrant that you should desire. Lois has aided me with the diagrams, and will continue to do so. Please do not hesitate to call on us at any time.

Very sincerely yours,

J. Charles Kelley
 J. Charles Kelley

1124 1/2 E. Silver
 Albuquerque, New Mexico

1939

Excavation of Feature No. 2 - Bc50 - Season of 1939

I. Introduction

At the northeast edge of Bc50 and underlying to some extent the Pueblo II rooms and kiva is a circular subterranean structure tentatively identified as a kiva of early Pueblo I times. This is the preliminary report on the discovery, excavation, and characteristics of that structure.

During ^(1938?) previous seasons of work at Bc50 a major test trench had crossed Feature 2 exposing ^{the} its upper walls and ~~the~~ enclosed fill. A pronounced syncline in the strata, exposed ^{by} in the trench wall at this spot led to the discovery of the structure. During the 1938 Field Session at Bc50, Helen Stevenson cleared away much of the debris overlying the feature and partially excavated its northeast quadrant. At the beginning of the present session the writer was assigned the excavation of Feature 2, as ~~his special project.~~

Preliminary work consisted of the clearing away of debris accumulated during previous excavation, and the stripping of the overlying strata ^{on} ~~to~~ the northeast down to undisturbed adobe outside of the kiva. When a horizontal plane was established along the top of the adobe the edge of the kiva was clearly outlined by the wall plaster and the distinction between the sandy ashy fill and the light compact adobe. The northeast quadrant ^{of the kiva} was then cleared to within two feet of the floor, ^{for} with the exception of a test block left undisturbed near the center of the quadrant. The southeast quadrant was then cleared in a similar manner, and the entire eastern half troweled down to floor level. The test block was excavated ^{and the potshards assembled} in six inch arbitrary levels, ^{recovered within a zone of two feet above the} and the cultural materials ~~from floor levels~~ and the four inches of refuse directly upon floor level was kept isolated

from that found in the general fill. ^{which had subsequently been built} Next the Pueblo II wall ^{of the Kiva} superimposed upon the fill of the northwest quadrant [^] was removed and the fill of that sector likewise cleaned out to floor level. The southwest quadrant with a superimposed Pueblo II room and kiva upon the fill was left unexcavated as a check section for demonstration purposes.

Fill was largely removed by use of shovel and wheelbarrow. Wherever there was any question of the nature of the fill troweling and the use of brushes was resorted to. The stratigraphic test block was removed entirely by trowel and brush. The debris lying upon and two feet above floor level was similiarly excavated with trowel and brush.

Pottery from the general fill was saved and sacked, as was animal bone and miscellaneous artifacts. Artifacts of especial interest from the fill and all artifacts, save pottery, from the floor and debris immediately above it were located by triangulation from two of three arbitrary datum stakes. ~~Pottery from the floor and the closely overlying fill was, as previously noted, sacked separately.~~

II. The Site Prior to Excavation

(Kiva)

Feature 2 [^] was cut into undisturbed natural deposits. Tests show that these deposits consist of horizontally bedded carbonaceous shale, probably representing undisturbed bed rock, with interbedded lintels of hard compact "clay", to an unknown depth, topped by an accumulation of approximately 2 - 3 ft. of "adobe" clay, probably alluvial in origin. The later refuse deposits of Bc50 at this spot rest disconformably upon the surface of the adobe, and it was into ~~from~~ this erosional surface, likewise, that the kiva was excavated. The surface of the adobe was not ~~sufficiently~~ cleared ~~to exhibit~~ over a wide enough area to exhibit its topographical features. It

Feature 2 - Bc50

seems likely that the surface at the time of kiva excavation was a gently sloping surface of erosion from canyon edge to alluvial flat.

The cultural landscape at the locality prior to the construction of Feature 2 is poorly known. Certainly at this spot there is no evidence of a pre-construction occupation. From earlier work on Bc50 and Bc51 it seems probable, ~~however~~, that an earlier settlement existed within a few yards of the kiva locale.

III. Description of Feature 2

A ground plan (Fig. 1a), vertical sections (Fig. 1B, C), and detailed drawings of especial features are attached. It does not seem necessary therefore to go into detail in the following descriptions. Since the drawings, plan, and sections are given ^{IN} scale, measurements are likewise omitted in the text, unless they are lacking in the diagrams.

Feature 2 is a roughly circular structure cut into shale and adobe. Its walls are simply the plastered sides of the ^{exposed adobe} excavation (see Fig. 1B & C). ^{Fig 2} On the northwest side "turtle-backs" of adobe had been laid along the edge of the excavation to bring the all at that point to the same approximate level as that of the south side. The plastered walls do not rise absolutely vertically but tend to overhang, ~~slightly the interior~~. This is intensified at the "banquettes" by the overhanging curb or lip of plaster. The floor consists of a thin layer of adobe applied to the roughly smoothed bottom of the excavation. To the east of the stone slab partition the floor is higher by several inches than elsewhere, rising to a peak near the inner opening of the ventilator from both sides, and having roughly the form of an alluvial

fan with apex ss stated. This was a deliberate construction, weathered shale having been applied to the bottom of the excavation to gain the form described. A thin layer of fine yellow sand covered the floor and filled the pits and cavities therein. This was at first thought to represent a wind-blown deposit accumulated immediately after the abandonment of the structure. Later studies showed that it apparently ran beneath and partially behind the last coating of plaster on the walls where they contacted the floor and that metates and other artifacts in the kiva rested upon it. It therefore seems probable that this stratum represents a deliberate treatment of the floor by its last occupants.

Postholes were discovered in the north-west, north-east, and south-east corners, and a fourth probably exists beneath the unexcavated block of fill in the south-west corner. A stone casement supported the north-west corner post, ~~also~~. This post may have been removed, or a small post substituted for a large one, prior to *the destruction of the roof.* ~~abandonment of the structure,~~ since the floor overhung the north-western edge of the post mold. The posthole in the north-east corner was a large one, approximately one foot in diameter. That

1 Posthole discovered by the courtesy of Sid Stallings and Stanley Stubbs of the Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
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in the southeast corner was merely a shallow circular depression. The post, if any, that had rested there was apparently based almost directly on the kiva floor. No evidence of roofing was found. Judging from the depth of the structure it may have had a cribbed roof placed directly on the wall tops, *and supported* ~~reinforced~~ by four center support posts.

The external opening of the ventilator shaft, which lay to the east (east north-east) of the feature, was badly eroded. Apparently

it was merely a plastered earth cut, although the position of certain stone slabs in its fill leaves available the possibility that it was lined with stone slabs. The horizontal passage was a simple plastered earth cut, reinforced by small vertical poles along the sides. It had been dug much larger than its present size, apparently to facilitate construction, and then formed as at present by refilling with an adobe admixture containing charcoal. In shape it varied from an oval on one end to a rectangle with rounded corners on the other. The internal orifice was unusual in type. A structure in the form of half a truncated cone of adobe and stone slabs, flat or halved side to the wall, ^(Fig. 2) had ~~and~~ been erected before it. The truncated surface was on a level with the horizontal passage of the ventilator and represented an extension of that passage into the kiva. As a further elaboration adobe had been applied to the sides of the orifice and wall edges of the truncated cone giving the entire construction the form of an arm chair, with rounded arms of adobe. In appearance it did not differ greatly from some of the present Pueblo fireplaces.

^(Fig. 3)
The deflector was formed of a large sandstone slab set on edge in the floor and leaning slightly towards the center of the kiva. It had been covered with a thick rounded coating of adobe, much of which has slumped away from the lower part of the slab. The slab itself is now broken into several pieces, all of which still stand. Other stone slabs set on edge but at present lacking the adobe coating, curve away towards the southeast and northeast walls from the ends of the deflector to form a rather high partition. The slabs of this partition at the northeast have ^{partially} fallen over; some that have completely toppled still lie on the floor in the proper positions. An opening may have been left in partition between the northeast post and the wall. As previously noted the floor was higher to the east of this partition

and adjoining the ventilator than it was to the west.

(Fig. 3)
The fire pit, ^{the} lying to the west of ^{the} deflector and in "ceremonial alignment" with the interior ventilator orifice, is roughly circular in form with the north side severely flattened. It was constructed of stone slabs set on edge and covered with adobe, now burnt red and hard. In places adobe was applied directly to the sides of the pit excavation. A curb of adobe raised the fire-pit edge slightly above the surrounding floor level. Sandstone slabs formed the pit bottom. When uncovered the pit was filled with loose gray sand containing small flecks and occasional strips of charcoal, identified by Hawley as cedar wood.

Approximately five feet west of the fire pit and in alignment with the fire-pit- deflector- ventilator axis was a small hole representing the sipapu.² This was an unplastered hole in the floor,

²

Identification by Sid Stallings and Stanley Stubbs.

approximately three inches in diameter by five inches in depth, filled with yellow sand in common with the other floor pits. Between it and the firepit were two irregular shallow pits, the usage of which is not clear.

On the north side of the feature the upper quarter of the wall was cut back to form a long recess or shelf, ~~probably a rough or rudimentary banquetter~~. A similar recess was present on the southwest side, but here the western extent of the shelf cannot be determined since it lies beneath the unexcavated column of fill. These recesses are neatly plastered and have an upturned and outcurved adobe curb or lip along their kiva edge. They bear no imprints of post-butts or other signs of usage of any sort. They are far too high above the floor to have served as actual benches. Their general height, neat

construction, and upturned lip suggest that they were simply shelves for the storage or temporary retention of ceremonial or utilitarian items.

At several places the floor was cut by roughly oval shallow pits with plastered sides and bottoms. No hint of their original purpose was found. They were filled with the same fine yellow sand that covered the floor. Against the north wall a shallow pit, semi-circular in form, had been excavated and lined with adobe and stone slabs set on end. This was possibly a storage bin. In addition to these, numerous unplastered and irregularly shaped concavities in the floor were encountered. All were filled with fine yellow sand and none revealed any clue as to their usage.

In the wall on the east side was a rough unlined cavity with its bottom fifteen inches above the floor. Extending from the bottom of this niche to the floor was a thin sandstone slab leaned with one flat side plastered against the wall. A few feet to the west and slightly higher was a roughly plastered shallow concavity in the wall. In the northwest wall, 22 inches from the floor, were three plastered niches in a row. The end niches in the row were comparatively deep, the middle one quite shallow. In the northeast wall there had apparently been a deep plastered recess, or series of recesses side by side, starting at floor level and extending upward 22 inches. Slumping off the top and south sides of this recess has removed all traces of its original form.

Numerous items lay on the floor of Feature 2. Just south of the ventilator opening a shallow "scoop" metate had been leaned against the wall, resting on one long edge and with its face to the wall. ^{concave side} Further to the south a similar metate had been placed on ^{one} end with the other end leaned against the angle formed by the junction of the

slab partition with the wall. ^{The concave side} ~~Its face~~ ^{toward} was likewise ~~to~~ the wall. Just opposite the partition at this spot a thick flat stone rested on the floor. Its upper face was a polished concavity. Flat on the floor a few feet south of the firepit was a shaped stone resembling a poker chip broken in half. No hint as to its purpose was obtained. A large thin unshaped sandstone slab was leaned against the west wall. It bore no marks of usage, but may have served as a hatch cover, assuming from lack of a side entrance that the structure was entered through the roof. It may ^{also} have served as a cover for one of the numerous floor pits. Several miscellaneous stones, one an unused imported core of argelite (?), rested on the floor at various localities, but none appeared to have any special significance.

At the southwest corner of the interior ventilator structure the lower portion of an Abajo ^{Red} ~~Black~~-on-orange bowl rested on the sandy floor. A portion of a culinary pot (Lino Gray) was found lying against the northeast edge of the firepit. A large portion of a Lino Gray seed bowl was discovered in the fill of the ventilator tunnel, but not resting on its floor. A few potsherds lay on the floor. Laboratory classification of the pottery from the floor and the four inches of fill lying immediately above it, with the exception of sherds from the test block, is as follows: ³

<u>Type:</u>	<u>No. Sherds</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Lino Gray	77	77.77
Red Mesa Black-on-white	11	11.11
Forestdale Smudged	4	4.04
La Plata Black-on-white	3	3.03
Abajo Red-on-orange	3	3.03
Escavadq Black-on-white	1	1.01
	99	99.99

3

All pottery statistics are by Florence Hawley and the staff of the field laboratory.

A few artifacts of stone and bone were likewise found in situ on the kiva floor. They will be discussed in a later section of the paper.

The combination of a deep subterranean circular structure with such characteristics as a specialized ventilator shaft, deflector, fire pit, "banquettes", ^{sipapu,} and niches suggests that Feature 2 was not a secular structure but a specialized ceremonial room, or kiva. This tentative identification is followed throughout this paper. The ceramic types suggest the Red Mesa Pottery Complex, hence the age of the structure was probably that of Pueblo I in the Chaco Canyon.

IV. Post-Kiva Events

There is no evidence available as to the length of time ~~represented~~ ^{was used.} by the kiva occupation. After its abandonment thin layers of refuse accumulated on the floor and drifted against the wall. Layers of wind-blown sand mingled and interbedded with the refuse. Following this deposition a thick deposit of adobe, with very slight admixtures of charcoal probably derived from overlying refuse, came into the kiva from the west and south, and immediately thereafter a layer of large slabs of carbonaceous shale. These two strata are notably lacking in cultural inclusions. Since the normal profile of deposits at Bc50, below the cultural dumps, is adobe underlain by shale, this twin deposit probably represents debris from excavations for another kiva or deep room nearby. There is of course the possibility that a period of abandonment of the site is indicated, but in view of the other evidence this seems improbable.

Upon the shale lies a thick deposit of refuse composed of many lenses of charcoal, silty cultural debris, etc. This stratum is quite thick in the eastern sector of Feature 2 but wedges out on the west. Deposition of this refuse was interrupted by the intrusion of a

Feature 2 - Bc50

thin layer of carbonaceous shale, possibly the debris of further excavations nearby, which now appears at about the median line of refuse stratum. In the western portion of the pit this layer rises above the kiva walls and shows a hard tramped sandy surface, apparently a level of occupation rather than deposition. Upon this surface small lenses of very rich refuse accumulated and upon them and upon the surface ~~of~~ masonry walls of the Pueblo superstructure of Bc50, in this case ~~the~~ those of the rectangular room inclosing Kiva IV, () were erected, cutting across ^(Feature 2.) the kiva walls and resting on the lower fill of the kiva itself. Still another masonry wall, in the same axis as the east wall of the Kiva IV enclosure, cut across the fill and walls of Feature 2 on the north and west. This wall had apparently connected with the corner of the Kiva IV structure at one time, but an early exploratory trench cutting along the north wall of the structure had removed this connection if it existed. A diagrammatic sketch of the relation of Feature 2 to underlying deposits, its own fill, and the later structures superimposed upon its fill is shown in Fig. 7 .

Against the east wall of the Pueblo II structure and filling the slight depression remaining in the east sector of Feature 2 there was a further deposition of refuse, probably from the Pueblo II structure itself. This not only filled the last exposed portions of Feature 2, above the thin shale lens and erosional surface, but formed a thick blanket of debris over the surrounding ground level. A lense of sand and silty clay in this refuse may represent temporary abandonment, ~~or~~ heavy rains, or nearby building operations. The upper refuse layer, slightly reworked by wind and wash, forms the present ground surface of the site.

Cultural factors associated with the mechanical stratification

Part ~~V~~ V - Artifacts Other Than Pottery

(To be inserted later)

Part VI. - Summary and Conclusion

Feature 2, Bc50 has been identified as a kiva of early Pueblo I times. On the basis of associated ^{pottery} complex, overlying pottery complex in the fill, and superposition of structures, the following sequence of events may be reconstructed.

1. Feature 2 was constructed, used, and abandoned during early Pueblo I times. Its relationship to earlier Basket Maker III occupation of the site is not known.
2. For a short period following its ^{and the removal of a roof,} abandonment, the structure was used as a dumping ground by the occupants of nearby early Pueblo I peoples. Refuse and wind-blown sand accumulated on its floor, and it was probably robbed of its roofing timbers.
3. The digging of pits for Pueblo I subterranean structures south-west of Feature 2 resulted in a large quantity of culturally sterile adobe and shale being dumped into the pit. Following this, refuse was thrown habitually into the remaining depression until about the end of Pueblo I times.
4. Following this long period of dumping some erosion of the surface occurred and the enclosing walls of Kiva IV, together with one wall of another structure to the north, were built on the fill of Feature 2 and on the surrounding eroded surface. This apparently occurred in early Pueblo II times.
5. Refuse from the Pueblo II houses accumulated in the remaining small depression of Feature 2. Occasional building operations brought up Pueblo I and Basket Maker III refuse from deep levels of Bc50 and ~~this~~ ^{was} this was mixed with the Pueblo II refuse overlying Feature 2. Later some Pueblo III debris was mixed with this layer.
6. The site was abandoned and a long period of erosion resulted. The surface of the site was somewhat washed and wind-blown sand and humus mixed with the upper part of the refuse. No sign of the existence of Feature 2 was left at the surface. This was the condition of Feature 2 at the time of first excavations at Bc50.

Feature 2 - Bc50

Figure 1 - Plan and Sections of Feature 2, Bc50

Code

- a. Bench or shelf
- b. Internal orifice of ventilator
- c. External orifice of ventilator
- d. Firepit
- e. Deflector
- f. Slab partition
- g. Plastered floor pits
- h. Slab lined bin.
- i. Irregular floor pits
- j. Pit in floor plugged with adobe and a large stone.
- k. Small wall cavities, plastered.
- l. - (not used)
- m. Unworked slabs leaned against wall .n. Similar slab plastered to wall
- o. Metate leaned against angle of wall and slab partition
- p. Worked semi-lunate stone slab on floor.
- q. Stone on floor.
- r. Abajo Red-on-orange bowl base set on floor.
- s. Slump in wall representing former wall cists
- t. Bowl fragment in fireplace (Lino Gray ?)
- u. Postholes
- v. Small postmolded lining ventilator horizontal passage.
- w. Sipappu
- x. -Not used
- y. Stone with polished concave upper surface; rests on floor

B - C; - Datum points

XX' - East -West Section line

DD' - North- South Section line.