TRADE AND CONTACT IN THE PREHISTORIC SOUTHWEST

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ABSTRACT

Studies of diffusion and migration, whether interhemispheric or within a more localized area, have been mainly particularist in nature. There has been very little attention given to the development of either systematic methodologies or underlying basic theory.

In this paper, problems of methodology and theory are discussed in terms of Southwestern-Mesoamerican contact. Possible explanatory models for this interaction are considered, and one based on trade contacts is presented in some detail. The need for additional work is stressed.

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The question of contacts between and among the disparate peoples whether interhemispheric or in more restricted areas has been of longterm interest—scholarly or otherwise. The intellectual conflict over pre-Columbian contacts between the Old World and the New World has a history of several centuries (see for example Lafaye 1976 for a recent discussion). Within the last century, influenced by the polarizing schools of unilinear evolution on the one hand and the various diffusionist schools on the other hand, the controversy has taken on a most vigorous life.

As we all know, this dispute has produced a great deal of heat and all too little light. The major reason for this, I believe, is that most of the discussion has revolved around particularist topics—generally the absense, presence, or likelihood of specific traits or complexes shared by the two hemispheres. Even such wide spectrum volumes as The Quest for America (Ashe et al, 1971) or Man across the Sea (Riley et al, 1971) have not unduly stressed methodological matters. In the latter volume, however, the editors did make certain suggestions for a coherent methodology, and presented a series of theoretical assumptions, some of which might be rephrased in terms of testable hypotheses while others were more or less in the nature of covering or nomethetic laws.

Since these were presented in a very tentative way, and people have not paid much attention to them, it might be worthwhile to restate them in terms of the use they may have to the problems specific to this paper. There were five points:

1. Man is a close-knit species in which all fully functioning adults participate at about the same level of culture.
2. Human beings universally react the same to various situations—the result of both cultural and biological heritage.
3. Man is inventive but the conformist and conservative nature of culture acts as a limiting factor in invention.
4. Invention demands some of the same kinds of psychological and cultural adaptations as diffusion. It is a kind of internal diffusion.
5. Additions to man's cultural inventory (whether invented or diffused) tend to be patterned.

There has, of course, been other attention given to the development of firm theory and method for diffusion studies. Robert L. Rands and I attempted some years ago to demonstrate that one could make general statements about the channelled nature of invention (Rands and Riley 1958). Recently Schneider (1977) has outlined what he calls a "genetic model" that tends to give theoretical underpinnings to diffusionist claims for widespread contact. Still and all, lack of attention to theory and method has been a great weakness in diffusion studies generally.

For the last few years I have been mainly interested in diffusion studies on a more restricted scale—the problems of Southwestern peoples and cultures and their relationship to the civilizations of Mesoamerica. My position in these studies has undergone change over the years. Beginning with the assumption that the development of Southwestern cultures was largely autonomous, I have come to believe, over the past two decades, that the Southwest is basically an extension of Mesoamerica.

In point of fact, the problems of Mesoamerican-Southwestern relationships are a microcosm of the problems of interhemispherical relationship and the approach has been much the same. In discussing contacts between Mesoamerica and the Southwest, experts, of whatever persuasion, tend to argue the case of specific events, trait distributions, artifactual finds, and to pay all too little attention to the underlying dynamics of cultural process that might allow working generalizations. As I indicated above, this is a basic problem when we deal with interhemispherical problems.

For a more theoretically oriented approach to Southwestern-Mesoamerican studies, we might logically expect help from the processual approach to archaeology, because of its strong hypothetical-deductive and model building proclivities. Unfortunately, a number of those Southwestern and Mesoamerican specialists who have been most affected by the "New" or processual archaeology have not—so far—shown any great interest in such problems as diffusion (see for example, Martin and Plog 1973). In the introduction to a recent book on Southwestern-Mesoamerican contacts, I make the point that:

> To date the "New Archaeology" . . .has contributed little to solving the problems of Mesoamerican-Southwestern connections. "New Archaeology" is primarily concerned with processual anthropology (usually defined as the interaction of cultural subsystems and of these systems with the natural environment). This approach tends to encourage internal explanation of cultural change, within arbitrarily defined universes. However, contacts, migrations, and diffusion in general also involve process . . . (Riley 1978a:7-8).

The desire to find internal explanations for the nature and direction of culture change is in itself a strong theoretical position drawn from neo-evolutionism and cultural ecology. There seems to be a tendency to disregard outside influences as being particularist events and of no value in explaining socio-cultural systems. This attitude can of course lead to a *reductio ad absurdum.* Inagine an anthropologist of the future explaining the human condition in southern California between A.D. 1500 and A.D. 2000 as the result of adaptive change by the various local Indian groups.

We may hope one day to have the sophistication to deal with controversial matters of diffusion and migration in terms perhaps of covering laws or at least of good-probability hypotheses. At present what we have in Southwestern studies is a problem in search of a theoretical base or at least of a firm methodology.

The opinions concerning the nature of Southwestern aboriginal culture vary from outright migrationism (Gladwin 1957) through strong and repeated contacts between Mesoamerica and the Southwest (Kelley and Kelley 1975, DiPeso 1968, Riley 1975, 1976, 1978b) to various degrees of treatment of the Southwest as autonomous. Curiously, when Southwestern studies were begun in the late 19th century the scholars of that time were nearly unanimous in a belief that the Southwest and Mesoamerica were intimately connected. Only after about 1910 with a rapid growth of Southwestern archaeology, ethnology, and ethohistory concentrating on the northern or American portion of the Southwest does the swing to theories of autonomy really get underway. At its extreme in the 1930s, serious and talented researchers were even ready to suggest that pottery itself had been independently invented in the northern part of the Southwest in spite of a virtually continuous distribution of ceramic producing groups from Colorado to the Andean region. Only maize, squash and beans were conceded as diffused items and they were thought to have moved into the area with little or no cultural baggage. It is almost as if the normal assumptions concerning the spread of culture did not operate for the upper Southwest. If one was to formulate a hypothesis to test this situation it might go something like this.

"The barriers between Mesoamerica and the Southwest are of such a nature that nothing of cultural significance can pass from one area to the other."

Underlying hypotheses might have to do with the structured nature of culture and parallelism of growth.

By the 1940s, however, this parellelism had become extraordinarily hard to accept. In the 1930s ethnological experts like E.C. Parsons had pointed out the striking similarities between Southwestern and various Mesoamerican cosmologies and of actual ceremonials including masked dances. The elaborate studies of men like J.W. Fewkes around the turn of the century on iconographic similarities between the pueblos and Mexico began to be revived, as well as the contact theories of scholars like A.F. Bandelier.

At first, Pueblo and Mesoamerican similarities especially in detail of ceremonial life were postulated to be post Spanish in origin (it was known that something like a thousand Mesoamerican Indians came with Coronado and many of them stayed in the Southwest). However, in the 1940s and 1950s archaeological details such as platforms and rows of columns at Chaco Canyon were identified and archaeologists began to rethink the implications of such pre-Columbian trade items as parrots and macaws, copper, pseudo-cloisonne pottery, and other southern materials. The stripping off and photographing of layer after layer of murals at the late prehistoric site of Kuaua and their publication by Bertha Dutton (1963) demonstrated the pre-Columbian date of Mesoamerican-like ceremonies.

Beginning in the late 1940s archaeologists like Isabel Kelly and Gordon Ekholm and in the 1950s still other scholars, including J. Charles Kelley, Charles C. DiPeso and R.L. Lister began large scale exploration especially of the much neglected lower portion of the Southwest. By the 1960s, as a result of work by these and other scholars, it could be demonstrated that cultures clearly Mesoamerican had penetrated deeply into the southern portions of the Southwest from at least the late Classic period. That there had been earlier contact from the south had already been demonstrated by finds of maize perhaps as early as 2000 B.C. in west Central New Mexico, and other early cultigens in adjacent northern Mexico. In the late 1960s and 1970s this work has continued, culminating in such large scale operations as Kelley's work at Alta Vista, DiPeso at Casas Grandes, and Lister and his associates at Chaco Canyon.

My own interest has been primarily focused on late prehistoric and early historic times. In that period there is rich documentation for trade and other contacts not only from the Southwest to Mesoamerica but also westward to the Pacific coast of California and eastward to the Mississippi River. Trade itself was widespread and deep and involved a variety of materials. This trade is farflung not only in space but in time; for example turquoise from the Cerrillos mines near Santa Fe (identified by neutron activation studies) shows up in central Zacatecas in the early A.D. centuries. Turquoise, again from Cerrillos, has been discovered in eastern Oklahoma in a site dating *c.* A.D. 1400 (Weigand personal communication). Exotic southern goods including parrots and parrot feathers were reaching Chaco Canyon by around A.D. 1030 (Kelley and Kelley 1975, 201-204), and Chaco also had stores of turquoise—tens of thousands of pieces. This and other evidence strongly suggests that the Chaco Canyon pueblos were functioning as suppliers in a trade network.

Turquoise, perhaps from central New Mexico, has been found in the Texarkana area, northern Mississippi, central Missouri, the Southern Colorado River area, and northern Sinaloa all on roughly the same time horizon, that is, *c.* A.D. 1400-1500. In this same late prehistoric period Olivella shells from coastal California reached central Kansas, and New Mexican pueblo pottery is found from eastern Texas to central Kansas and perhaps even Missouri. (Riley 1976, and 1978b and personal communication with R.T. Bray). In addition, Rio Grande glazed sherds dating around A.D. 1400 have been found in the Magdalena-Etzatlan area west of Guadalajara (Weigand 1976:3).

When the space and time implications of these trade centers are analyzed there seems to have been three major periods of contact. One of these is in the early A.D. centuries and corresponds to the rise of Anasazi Pueblo, Hohokam, and Mogollon to fully functioning macro-traditions. From

other evidence it seems clear that certain kinds of ceremonial structures and probably various religious elements came in at this time (Kelley 1966). A second wave of contacts corresponds to the rise of the Great Pueblo period in Chaco Canyon, the Sedentary Period in the Hohokam, the expansionist period at Casas Grandes, and, to some degree Classic Mimbres (LeBlanc 1976:5). This period is marked by a rich complex of Mesoamerican traits, differing from one sub area to another. There was, then, a "retreat" (that is, a lessening of Mesoamerican influences) dating from about A.D. 1130 to 1150 at Chaco Canyon to *c.* 1260 or later at Casa Grandes. This retreat may have related to the time of troubles in central Mexico that followed the collapse of the Toltec kingdom, and perhaps, specifically, the Tarascan interdiction of trade routes to the Mexican west and north.

A third time of intense interaction seems to have begun sometime between A.D. 1300 and 1400. By A.D. 1500 trade routes (through a series of middlemen) linked areas as distant as Sinaloa and Kansas; California and Texas. This situation was still in existence at the time of the first Spanish contact with the Southwest in the 1530s and continued to be reasonably well documented for the next half century. Aboriginal trade networks were finally disrupted by Spanish occupation of New Mexico around A.D. 1600 and Sinaloa-Sonora from the 1620s and 1630s (Riley 1976: 44-45; n.d.a, n.d.b).

What I have just outlined represents a chronological ordering of data and a series of historical inferences from these data. It is, however, possible to construct a model that has both diachronic and synchronic implications that fit these data. This model was not invented by me. Versions of it have been utilized in the past by DiPeso and J.C. Kelley, among others, and, indeed, certain elements were discussed as early as the late 19th century. To some extent it rests on the economic work of Karl Polanyi.

I suggest that the Greater Southwest, slowly picking up cultural baggage (e.g., techniques of maize agriculture) from the Mesoamerican heartland, but lagging behind that heartland in sophistication, became very early an area of exploitation by Mesoamericans. The process was initiated and encouraged by a strong demand for certain kinds of luxury, rare, and exotic materials in the Mesoamerican heartland and the development of trade networks and trading organizations to meet this demand. That such organizations *did* develop is a necessary hypothesis for this model and it can be tested in various ways. I do not wish to go into this kind of testing in this summary paper but—let me say—I think that it has been adequately demonstrated both for Mesoamerica itself and for the Southwest. For more general purposes the hypothesis should be phrased in broader terms—that civilized or surplus producing societies utilize some of that surplus for luxury or prestige goods obtained by trade.

Of course, alternative models for the Southwest, specifically, and for early civilizations, generally, that would fulfill the conditions of the hypothesis, are ones that involve political or religious conquest or both. Such alternative models are not, of course, mutually exclusive with the trade paradigm—for example we have clearcut evidence that Aztec traders (the Pochteca) were also agents of state military and political imperialism.

Since trade networks are sensitive to changing political situations one would expect a fluctuation on the frontier as conditions changed in the heartland. Indeed, as far as the Southwest is concerned this likely does happen, the ending of two great contact phases seeming in a broad way to relate to events at the ends of Classic and Post Classic times in Mesoamerica. The third contact period was ended by the Spaniards and the beheading of the Mesoamerican Great Tradition.

Another hypothesis (or perhaps a more fundamental nomothetic statement) that is crucial to this model involves the functional nature of human culture. Put in basic terms it states that introduction of one foreign element to a culture *must* bring in other elements. Trade networks, therefore, introduced significant religious, ceremonial, artistic, and technological changes into the Southwest. Some of these doubtlessly went beyond the Southwest for this large area, itself, became a kind of center with rather farflung trading ties to the east and west as well as the south (Kelley and Kelley 1975; Riley 1976, 1978b).

The period of intense trading activity brought a series of drastic political and religious innovations. DiPeso (1968: 45-61), sees the introduction of Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca, and Huitzilopochtl worship by successive waves of trade-oriented Mesoamericans.

In order to maximize the research effort on Mesoamerican-Southwestern contacts, regardless of whether this or another hypothetical model is used, it is necessary to utilize interactively the fields of archaeology, ethnohistory, and ethnology. The first allows us to trace actual trade goods from Mesoamerica to the Southwest and vice versa, gives information on the nature of these trade goods, and on regional specialization. Through the methodologies of processual archaeology we can investigate the social and political organization of various Southwestern peoples, their demographic situation, and their abilities to exploit their environment, etc. The ethnohistorical data are very important, indeed, for in the Spanish accounts of the period 1530-1600 we have documentation of the existence, nature, and intensity of the trade situation. Later ethnological studies, especially for the Pueblo Indians from whom we have very detailed reports, give us rich clues to the aboriginal situation, especially in terms of cosmology, religion, and ceremonial life.

Because of the large date base, and the relatively clear-cut nature of the contacts, we should be able to work out for Mesoamerica and for the Southwest at least a partly verifiable sequence of events. In a sense we can work backwards, not only testing hypotheses but also testing methodologies against known series of events. Those hypotheses and those methodologies that are developed for the Southwestern-Mesoamerican contact situation can be analyzed for wider application. The Mesoamerican-Southwestern studies might then become a microcosmic testing ground for larger, interhemispheric problems.

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