

JOHN D. SPETH – “THE BEGINNINGS OF PLAINS-PUEBLO INTERACTION—THE VIEW FROM SOUTHEASTERN NEW MEXICO”

“...the people follow the cows, hunting them and tanning their skins to take to the settlements in the winter to sell, since they go there to pass the winter, each company going to those which are nearest, some to the settlements at Cicuye [Pecos], others toward Quivira, and others to the settlements which are situated in the direction of Florida. They travel like the Arabs, with their tents and troops of dogs loaded with poles and having Moorish pack-saddles with girths” (George Winship, *The Coronado Expedition, 1540-1542* [1896, p. 527]).

Plains-Pueblo interaction has fascinated anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians for well over a century. When did it start? Why did it occur? Who was involved? The conventional view is that close social and economic ties between sedentary Pueblo farmers and nomadic bison hunters first emerged during the Protohistoric period after about AD 1450, hand-in-hand with the expansion of Athabaskan-speaking peoples (ancestors of the Navajo and Apache) into the Southern Plains. Archaeological evidence from two 14th-century villages near Roswell in southeastern New Mexico offers rather different answers to some of these questions, and highlights the potential shortcomings of relying on the observations of early Spanish explorers to understand the roots of Plains-Pueblo interaction in the past.

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