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# 1

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The chapters in this volume represent the results of a multi-year, multi-researcher project to create a regional synthesis of prehistoric mortuary practices across the Southwest United States and Northwest Mexico. Inspired by Adler's (1996) and Adam and Duff's (2004) volumes that assembled, systematized, and reported data on sites and settlements in the region, we (the editors and authors of the volume) assembled and systematically aggregated mortuary data from four sub-regions across the Southwest United States and Northwest Mexico (table 1.1). The primary goals of the project were to (1) collect data from prehistoric human burials from the region in one place, (2) chronicle the modal patterns and diversity of mortuary programs and behavior across the region and through time, and (3) encourage the responsible, respectful, and ethical curation of the already existing and extensive Southwest/Northwest mortuary data sets. We see considerable value in pursuing these goals. For example, preserving data and making it more accessible allows future researchers to make use of the data and ask new questions or reevaluate old interpretations. Our project also encourages the integration (to the extent possible) of data from both the biological and cultural remains of human funerary features. Finally, we feel that chronicling the prehistoric funerary practices and making the data used to develop those chronicles available responds to the needs of both anthropological scholars and indigenous descendant groups in the era of repatriation.

## *Introduction to Ancient Southwestern Mortuary Practices*

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TABLE 1.1. Samples included in Southwest mortuary database

<i>Sub-region</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Sites</i>	<i>Records in SWMD</i>	<i>Features</i>
WESTERN BASKETMAKER			140	140
Kanab	UT	1	6	6
Glen Canyon	UT	5	20	20
Black Mesa	AZ	10	102	102
Chuska Mtns	NM	1	12	12
MESA VERDE			464	438
Mesa Verde	CO	9	327	309
Durango	CO	6	137	129
NORTHERN RIO GRANDE			436	436
Santa Fe	NM	5	310	310
Taos Valley	NM	2	73	73
Central Rio Grande	NM	3	53	53
MOGOLLON PUEBLO			2,206	2,115
Mimbres	NM	3	1,482	1,457
Casas Grandes	CHIH	8	724	658
SONORAN DESERT			842	813
Tucson Basin	AZ	11	480	475
Cienega Creek	AZ	2	17	12
La Playa	SON	1	345	326

This volume's synthesis of mortuary behavior from across diverse times and places in the Southwest United States and Northwest Mexico will allow researchers to incorporate understandings of the mortuary record more fully into regional archaeological interpretations. Mitchell and Brunson-Hadley's (2001a) *Ancient Burial Practices in the American Southwest* represents the most similar collection of Southwestern mortuary research. Our work seeks to complement that volume whereby, apart from Martin and Akins's (2001) chapter examining trauma and mortuary behavior at La Plata, our authors cover different (complimentary) areas and temporal periods. Chapters in the Mitchell and Brunson-Hadley volume focus on mortuary practices among the Hohokam along the Salt and Gila Rivers (McGuire 2001; Mitchell and Brunson-Hadley 2001b; Sheridan 2001), the Sinagua (Hohmann 2001), Salado (Loendorf, 2001), highland Mogollon (Whittlesey and Reid 2001), ancestral Zuni (Howell 2001), and in Chaco Canyon (Akins 2001). The areas considered by these authors

represent the geographic “core” of the Southwest, focused largely around central and eastern Arizona and the central and northern edge of western New Mexico. In contrast, the chapters in our volume focus on the northern and southern borders of the Southwest, including southern Colorado and northern New Mexico and the Southwest international borderlands (southern Arizona and New Mexico and northern Sonora and Chihuahua).

In the Mitchell and Brunson-Hadley volume, Goldstein (2001, 249–251) remarked that there was still much work to be done to integrate the incredibly rich, extensive mortuary data sets that exist for many parts of the Southwest. We believe our volume takes a step in that direction by filling gaps in describing regional patterns in mortuary behavior and offering a cohesive set of extensive bioarchaeological data sets that provide the empirical basis for those patterns. Thus it provides for the continued archiving and storage of prehistoric Southwest/Northwest mortuary data and a rich resource for comparative research on mortuary ritual for archaeologists in other regions and social scientists generally.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The Southwest United States and Northwest Mexico is a dynamic culture area with a rich history of research. Preservation of both material culture and biological remains is excellent, and precise chronometric dating techniques provide solid temporal control over prehistoric sites and features. The region is also home to living communities of vibrant indigenous cultures whose existence in the region reaches back through time, and we have access not simply to ethnographic analogies to help us interpret archaeological remains but to a wealth of oral history and indigenous knowledge about the past. While colonial activities had devastating impacts on native societies, Southwest/Northwest indigenous groups were able, through isolation, perseverance, and both active and passive resistance, to maintain their societies and cultures. Moreover, colonialists have left rich descriptions of the communities they encountered as they encroached on the region. For all these reasons we have a long history of active anthropological and archaeological work within the region. It quite simply is an exceptional place to test anthropological theories and ask anthropological questions.

## **EARLY WORK**

The history of mortuary studies in the Southwest/Northwest is dominated by big projects and big data. Projects like Kidder’s work at Pecos Pueblo,

Cushing's expedition to the Salt River funded by Boston socialite Mary Hemenway, and Hodge's excavations at Hawikuh led to the recovery of massive quantities of funerary remains (both cultural and biological). Many of these projects, though by no means all, displayed some of the best aspects of scholarship at the time. Both Kidder and Cushing assembled multidisciplinary research teams that were guided by specific research questions. Both had osteologists or medical scientists in the field who later published reports that contextualized the biological remains within the cultural setting. In the case of Cushing, his interest was kindled by his work with living Zuni and his goal of verifying Zuni oral history with archaeological data.

Kidder's focus was on the development of a chronology that would be applicable not just at Pecos but as a tool to order other sites in the region. The fact that Pecos was occupied both prehistorically and historically allowed him to use the direct historical approach to understand some of the prehistoric materials he recovered. However, both projects and the later one by Hodge also show the flaws in these early projects. All three of these projects actively sought out and uncovered human burials. This was a conscious excavation strategy that was based on the overwhelming density of data found in these features. Kidder (1924, 94) himself set a financial bounty on human burials for his field workers: "We were most anxious to discover burials; so a reward of twenty-five cents was offered to the workmen for every skeleton uncovered. The next day one appeared, the following day six; the reward was reduced to ten cents; this brought fifteen more, and in the course of a week or so we were forced to discontinue the bonus or go into bankruptcy."

By the fourth season of digging, in 1920, Kidder (1924, III–III2) reports that nearly 700 skeletons had been recovered, and it was at this point that Earnest A. Hooton of Harvard joined the field project "to learn the conditions under which the material was found, and to assist in developing more perfect methods for caring for it." Yet this focus on burials took little consideration of the descendants of those buried. Not only were they removed without consultation, but collections—cultural and biological—were separated both physically and in analysis. Divided collections were often sent to disparate institutions. Detailed records of mortuary practices were either not collected or not reported in sufficient detail. For example, Hodge's work, completed in 1923, was finally summarized four decades later by Smith and colleagues (1966), and a detailed examination of the mortuary practices awaited seven decades (Howell 1994).

Cushing's work awaited Haury's (1945) dissertation and even longer (Hinsley and Wilcox 1996) for a more complete reporting of his field notes

(Fowler 2000, 377). Because of the treatment and limited reporting these large collections received, many saw limited sustained and consistent restudy, adding insult to the injury inflicted on native descendants of those excavated (whom themselves were often employed in excavation work). Subsequent large skeletal and funerary collections were developed by archaeologists working at Aztec Ruin (Morris 1928), Pueblo Bonito (Judd 1924) and other Chaco Canyon sites, Grasshopper Pueblo (Reid and Whittlesey 2015), Black Mesa (BMAP) (Powell et al. 1983), Dolores (DAP) (Stodder 1987), Arroyo Hondo (Akins 1986), and Casas Grandes (Di Peso 1974).

## RECENT WORK

In recent years, few large data recovery projects have been initiated in the region, and most are designed to limit the impact to human burials. Thus even large projects that would once have generated large skeletal samples with their associated funerary objects are rare. Those projects that do impact large numbers of graves have learned from the error early projects committed in not seeking out consultation with descendant communities in planning (Heilen 2012, 31). These are positive outcomes and results of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act's (NAGPRA) implementation. In addition, NAGPRA-mandated repatriation inventories developed large biological data sets from skeletal collections, some matched by equally large mortuary data sets.

However, much more common these days is the small cultural resource management project that results in the excavation of a few burials. These small samples are often difficult to contextualize and are difficult to articulate with research questions to obtain meaningful results. Thus while NAGPRA has had many positive effects, one less positive impact is the creation of isolated, small samples of human burials that while culturally and anthropologically important need relevant data to compare them to. Moreover, the data from both recent Cultural Resource Management (CRM) and older larger projects need to be ethically and culturally appropriately curated.

## FUTURE WORK

Despite the pessimism during the 1990s after the passage of NAGPRA, indeed perhaps because of it, the future of bioarchaeology is bright. Nowhere is this truer than in the Southwest United States and Northwest Mexico. New and revised techniques, methodologies, and technologies are reinvigorating

the field. Some of these novel approaches allow us to press even greater understanding out of old samples and data. Others provide new data or allow us to explore human remains and mortuary practices. For example, increasingly sophisticated statistical methods allow us to evaluate hypotheses regarding paleodemographics and migratory patterns. Remote sensing technology provides a way to explore funerary features with minimal disturbance. Next-generation sequencing allows researchers to better replicate or amplify DNA from prehistoric samples for both pathogen detection and bio-distance studies. These are positive innovations that allow us to reduce the number of burials disturbed, disturb them to a lesser degree, appropriately contextualize those we must disturb, and answer questions of interest to descendant communities.

## ANALYSIS IN THE ERA OF REPATRIATION

This volume also addresses several dilemmas that bioarchaeology and mortuary research must confront in the twenty-first century. First, the volume and its associated archived data present one solution to the preservation of invaluable legacy data. In the production of the chapters, our authors secured, stored, and provided controlled access to large mortuary data sets from the major subregions of the Southwest United States and Northwest Mexico. The development of the volume required the assembly and curation of large mortuary data sets and associated meta-data that are essential to documenting these data. The authors and editors worked closely with the Digital Archaeological Record (tDAR) to store all data and meta-data securely and to provide proper access control to all curated digital materials. Readers can access these data and associated materials on the tDAR website. The preservation of these data in a digital repository ensures that future researchers have access to them for continued study. Buikstra and Gordon (1981) demonstrated the importance of ongoing study and restudy of mortuary and bioarchaeological data sets nearly thirty years ago, and Roberts and Mays (2011) more recently drew attention to this issue again. The volume is the published introduction to and main summary of these assembled and archived data sets for other scholars.

Since 1994, bioarchaeologists have benefited from the guidelines for data collection published in *Standards for Data Collection from Human Skeletal Remains* (Buikstra and Ubelaker 1994). While establishing these guidelines was by no means a simple feat, the fact that all humans share certain aspects of skeletal biology means that osteologists around the globe can agree on data structures, especially when the focus is on delineating “the necessary minimum data set to be collected.” In addition, the researchers who arrived at



*Standards* had the imposition of NAGPRA-mandated inventories of massive skeletal collections to impose significant external pressure to arrive at common data collection methods. Funerary remains, however, have few universal underlying structures and can vary widely over even short spans of geography and time. Thus data collected from funerary treatments, burial feature characteristics, and any associated material culture are more difficult to standardize.

The original goal of this project, formulated at the first Society for American Archaeology (SAA) symposium in 2011 in which this group of authors participated, had been to arrive at a standardized set of definitions, list of variables, variable states, and data recording standards; ultimately, though, we found it very difficult to agree. Sprague's (2005) standardized data collection protocols for funerary features are a useful guide; however, archaeologists have been slow to adopt both the terminology and data structures proposed. As Sprague (2005, 10) notes, archaeologists are reluctant to accept others' classification schemas. Moreover, our group found that it is often difficult to impose specific data structure systems to data from older excavations that may not be reported in sufficient detail. Recent moves toward Archaeothanatology or *Anthropologie de terrain* (Duday 2009; Knüsel 2014) may prompt the adoption of more detailed in-field collection of observations that will allow for more consistent data collection paradigms. However, what the authors of this volume have been able to do is pull the data from their sub-regions into standard data structures. Thus at least within those sub-regions, the data are comparable.

Authors in this volume also strove to aggregate and preserve mortuary data associated with human biological data. While federal regulation and repatriation efforts have focused on the recording of biological information from human skeletons, there has been little concerted effort targeting the documentation of associated mortuary data. Our authors have completed a thorough, standardized documentation and curation of their sub-regions' mortuary data sets. Moreover, they have integrated mortuary and biological data together into cohesive data sets stored in a single digital repository. Thus this volume employs contemporary bioarchaeological approaches to present and interpret a diverse set of sub-regional mortuary data.

Just as NAGPRA emphasizes the value and importance of keeping the actual biological and material cultural aspects of a funerary feature together, so, too, we argue that there is scholarly value in keeping the data from these two sources together. In the past, the integration of biological and mortuary data has rarely gone much beyond using the age and sex of the interred as a variable included in mortuary analyses. Within the past several decades, however, the fuller integration of data from skeletal and non-skeletal mortuary remains has

appeared (Robb et al. 2001) and been explicitly argued for (Martin, Harrod, and Pérez 2013). Integration is thus in keeping with recent approaches and allows for more nuanced questions to be asked and answered. Moreover, it allows for an expanded range of questions, some of which may speak to indigenous communities' concerns, including land claims, response to environmental change, and health outcomes.

Third, the volume foregrounds the opportunities and challenges associated with mortuary and biological data in the era of repatriation. Kintigh (2006, 571) noted that federally mandated repatriation has produced large collections of information on human remains and associated objects that are no longer accessible to future researchers. However, contemporary Southwestern archaeology is dominated by small, focused survey and excavation projects often directed by cultural resource managers. As data recovery efforts continue to lower impacts on culturally sensitive features and even to avoid mortuary features, bioarchaeologists are increasingly required to work with smaller burial samples. Researchers must turn to existing literature and data to provide appropriate contextual information and comparisons. Our volume is a significant resource for those archaeologists and bioarchaeologists conducting cultural resource management projects in the region and provides a source for contextual and comparative data. The summaries reported in the volume help analysts place new samples among broader patterns in regional mortuary practices. Indeed, it might be possible to use (either conceptually or statistically) the data reported here as prior probabilities in future Bayesian analysis of burial data. Moreover, the volume encourages scholars to contribute their data (via the tDAR digital repository) for use by other researchers.

## **THEMES IN THE VOLUME**

Each of the authors of the chapters in the volume has identified the important sources of mortuary and bioarchaeological data (i.e., projects, accessible data sets, and published literature) for a sub-region of the Southwest United States/Northwest Mexico. Each participant was selected for his or her expertise with the mortuary record of their sub-region (see table of contents). These initial explorations of the mortuary data sets were presented by the authors at a session at the 76th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Sacramento, California. Project participants met to discuss the results of their efforts and to explore the key issues with the data. The results of these efforts are archived on tDAR (see <http://core.tdar.org/project/5871> or at doi:10.6067/XCV8CV4K5Z). Subsequently, each author (i) completed

the construction of their data sets, (2) documented the modal burial patterns and the diversity in mortuary practices for their region, and (3) identified prominent temporal trends in mortuary behavior. This phase of the project was completed and presented at the 77th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Memphis. The final versions of these reports are published here.

Much of the data that form the backbones of the chapters in this volume was previously reported and published. However, the work of collecting in one place and systematizing this information makes it that much more valuable to scholars. Kohler and colleagues' (2008) work is an excellent example of the good that can come from the data archives developed by the authors of these chapters. The Neolithic demographic transition is a topic of perennial interest. Because of the comparatively "big" data set at their disposal, Kohler and colleagues (2008) can assess evidence for the transition in the Southwest. Using data sets like those collected here, indigenous interests and anthropological questions can be explored. We also expect data sets like those discussed in this volume to facilitate ever greater interdisciplinary scholarship.

The chapters in this volume are organized primarily into two parts, covering mortuary variability in the Ancestral Puebloan world (part I) and across the southern deserts (part II), respectively. While the coverage of the chapters is not exhaustive (temporally and geographically), we feel that it addresses several major traditions across the region to provide an ideal complement to, and fill the marked gaps in coverage in, Mitchell and Brunson-Hadley (2001a). Moreover, the data sets developed for this volume provide other researchers with framework and meta-data structures that can be used for filling in gaps in the geographic and temporal coverage. We asked the authors to identify the modal mortuary patterns in their samples and explicitly address a few questions to enhance the theoretical interpretation of mortuary patterns in each case study, making the disparate chapters directly comparable. These questions included: Whose agency or identity predominates in the formation of mortuary features (community, kin, deceased) in your case study? What performative elements are incorporated into the construction of mortuary features in your case study that reflect/display cultural cosmology, individual identity, or the construction of social memory? Is the modal mortuary pattern(s) observed in your case study conservative or flexible (temporally or within/between sites)?

Mulhern and Charles (chapter 2) begin the case studies by identifying that Basketmaker II populations in the Durango area often placed their deceased in flexed positions with wrappings and cordage. They also consider how mortuary practices may have been used by the community to construct memories,

interact with ancestors, and recognize social boundaries and transitions in death. They also compare the conservative aspects of mortuary practices within the Durango sample to Western Basketmaker II populations to investigate the regional extent of such practices. They conclude by contextualizing their observations using ethnographic accounts of Puebloan communities.

In chapter 3, Stodder uses the context of burials, by means of location, multiples/single burials, and processing, to investigate changing ideology in the Mesa Verde region. Employing data from two large regional projects, the Dolores Archaeological Program (DAP) and the Animas-La Plata (ALP), Stodder shows that burials are increasingly found in intramural locations. She also notes that burial practices defy normative explanations in some instances such as found at Sacred Ridge, requiring further exploration of the ideology informing burial program decisions. She posits that this nonconformity to normative expectations reflects the variation we would expect “in the demographically unstable, socially fluid, and politically dynamic world of the PI period.” Stodder finds Carr’s (1995) explanation of the “placement of the dead entail[ing] intentional behavior related to cosmology” useful in interpreting burial contexts through time. She also warns us to guard against Western ideals regarding corpse placement and proper treatment of the corpse.

Akins (chapter 4) suggests that the poor reporting of mortuary data for the northern Rio Grande is a result of excavation strategies and cursory reporting. This reporting, according to Akins, suggests that burial practices had no consistency, which illustrates the need for a database that contains comparison-level data and consistent coding. She further recognizes the lack of integration of biological and cultural data prior to Palkovich’s (1980) work with the materials from Arroyo Hondo. Akins’s chapter thus highlights one of the hurdles identified by this volume: the spotty and inconsistent reporting of data that may not improve as small CRM projects increasingly become the source of new data in a region. She also observes, as many field workers can attest, that placement of burials in middens can make assignment of associated grave goods extremely difficult. In general, her data show that burials in structures (intramural) decline over time while burials without grave goods increase over time.

In chapter 5, Whitley investigates the correlation between mortuary/osteological data and the type of burial space—daily use or abandoned/special use areas—to determine if location can illuminate beliefs about separation of the living and the dead. In her compelling examination of data from the northern Rio Grande Developmental and Coalition periods, she builds on Goldstein’s (2001) observation that mortuary ritual is extremely conservative and represents critical social and symbolic aspects of society. Whitley develops

a more nuanced coding of location that distinguishes burials in areas that are “completely separated from the living” from those that are not and thus highlights the need for both more detailed field descriptions and a return to and greater scrutiny of field notes from past projects. She concludes that burial rites help separate the living from the dead, a process of both memorialization and forgetting (see Oakdale 2005). Whitley also uses similarities in modal mortuary practices to develop hypotheses regarding past migratory processes.

Part II of the volume examines mortuary variability across the southern deserts of Arizona, New Mexico, Sonora, and Chihuahua. In chapter 6, Watson explores mortuary practices that arose during the Early Agricultural period, focusing on the sites of La Playa, Matty Canyon, and the Tucson Basin. Comparing the San Pedro and Cienega phases, Watson applies statistical analysis to identify normative patterns in mortuary practices, define variability between sites and time periods, and suggest how mortuary practices reflect the relationships and interactions in early village life. The normative practice for the region is the single, flexed, primary inhumation with limited grave accoutrements. However, Watson does find diversity in his sample. The change to permanent villages altered the mortuary landscape and gave rise to both diversity between sites and homogeneity in body position. The author discusses how the emerging mortuary program might have fed into later period practices, specifically the increase of cremations that may have led to the Hohokam’s prevalent cremation mode (a practice discussed in greater detail in the chapter by Cerezo-Román).

Cerezo-Román focuses on differential cremation practices during Hohokam Classic period in the Tucson Basin in chapter 7. The author analyzes the cremation process by examining the disposition of remains, the varying treatments of the remains based on age and sex, and changes through time at three sites. At these Hohokam sites, cremation was the dominant form of body treatment with an emphasis on secondary deposits. Cerezo-Román uses statistical analysis of the remains, cremation sites, burial goods, and post-cremation treatment to identify how remains were treated by age and sex and between and within sites. The author also discusses how the burials might have been impacted by the choice of differential burial practices; for example, the collection of bones for storage in a vessel might have increased the amount of bone present as opposed to an interment in a pit. She further notes that age group membership might be identifiable using the presence of shell in burials, as it is only found with those older than two years. Likewise, female burials were found to have more ceramic vessels, possibly relating to their role in food processing tasks.

Livesay and Gilman (chapter 8) explore changes to mortuary practices in the Mimbres Valley and the connection to shifting ideological influences from Mesoamerica. Using compiled data from Mimbres sites during the Late Pit Structure period to the Late Late Pit Structure period, Livesay and Gilman track changes in the number and location of ceramic burial goods. The authors also look for connections between changes in architecture, the destruction of Great Kiva, and a greater standardization of burial practices to changing ideology related to Mesoamerica on Mimbres pots. Based on Shafer's (1995, 2003, 140) interest in changing symbolism through time, Livesay and Gilman examine the changing mortuary practices from the perspective of new ritual and iconography related to the influences from Mesoamerica, such as imported scarlet macaws and Hero Twins imagery.

In chapter 9, Rakita examines mortuary patterns from the Casas Grandes region of northern Chihuahua, Mexico. As he notes and as is common in many regions discussed in this volume, the data set is dominated by a few major excavation projects, with smaller numbers of burials haphazardly reported by smaller projects. In this case, the extensive work of the Joint Casas Grandes Expedition provided most of the data. While reporting consistency is a benefit of data coming from one project, the data are at the mercy of excavation strategies and site selection. Focusing especially on the Viejo (AD 600–1200) and Medio (AD 1200–1475) periods, Rakita describes modal burial patterns for both periods. He observes an increase in funerary diversity (in terms of location, grave goods, corpse treatment, and similar factors) during the Medio period. This increased diversity is accompanied by considerable evidence of increasing socio-cultural complexity, an observation echoed in many other Southwestern regions. However, he (like Livesay and Gilman) also suggests that novel practices seen at the major Medio period site of Paquimé may also be derivatives of practices seen in Mesoamerica.

The volume concludes (part III) with a consideration of the entire compiled mortuary data set and contextualizes mortuary practices across the Southwest United States/Northwest Mexico. Watson (chapter 10) integrates all the individual data sets—as best as possible—to consider broad comparisons and differences across mortuary behavior in the region. His work highlights the diversity of mortuary behaviors across the region and over time but also shared traditions among Ancestral Puebloan communities from southern Colorado and Utah, down into Chihuahua. Goldstein closes out the volume with an epilogue that considers what the authors' observations mean under the guise of interpreting mortuary patterns in past populations.



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