

A Furtive Mission in Los Piro: Preliminary Notes on the Archaeology of San Luis Obispo de Sevilleta

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The ruins of seventeenth-century Franciscan missions are among the most imposing structural relics of New Mexico's colonial past. Missions like the ones at Pecos, Guisewa, Quarai, Abó, and Las Humanas (Gran Quivira) figure prominently in the opening stages of organized archaeological research in New Mexico (Ivey 1988; Ivey and Thomas 2005; Kessell 1997). Together with surviving mission churches (at Acoma, Isleta, and several other pueblos), these ruins, stabilized and partly reconstructed, impress on modern visitors something of the tortuous encounter between Pueblos and Spaniards during the early colonial period between 1598 and 1680. Visibility can be misleading, however. The historical narrative of missionization efforts in New Mexico and elsewhere in Spain's overseas colonies reveals a rather more complex picture than one conveyed merely by the largest physical remains stemming from those efforts (e.g., Christlieb and Urquijo Torres 2006; Gerhard 1977; Quezada 1995). In New Mexico, the focus on late-stage mission structures combined with a general paucity of spatially representative structural and stratigraphic data from both missions and their respective host pueblos means that the initial encounter between natives and missionaries in New Mexico is still underrepresented in the colonial narrative. And aside from the question of how missions were established, administered, and received during their founding phases, the development and role of smaller missions (*visitas*) that were not permanently staffed and only sporadically "visited" by friars based at a neighboring *cabecera* or "head mission" also remains largely unknown (Bletzer 2011).

This paper offers a first overview of archaeological fieldwork at one such *visita* mission at the Ancestral Piro pueblo of Tzelaqui/Sevilleta (LA 774). In what was known during most of the 1600s as *La provincia de los Piro* or simply *Los Piro* (Figure 1), Tzelaqui/Sevilleta is the default site for any kind of mission-related field research, as it is the only one of four mission pueblos (Pilabó/Socorro, Senecú, and Alamillo were the other three) whose ruins survive to the present day (Figure 2). Archaeological and historical data indicate an occupation from ca. 1300 to 1681. Tzelaqui's beginnings possibly go back to a small Pueblo III jacal component under/near one of several seventeenth-century Spanish compounds at the site. If so, this jacal component eventually drew in people from similar nearby sites to form the pueblo's nucleus during the late Pueblo III period (ca. 1200-1300 C.E.). Growth seems to have been gradual and unspectacular; the horizontal

and vertical distribution of diagnostic ceramics suggests the prehistoric pueblo never reached more than about 100 to 120 rooms in two main room blocks arranged in inverted L-shape. Whether this prehistoric occupation continued uninterrupted up to the contact period is as yet unclear, but there are at least four periods of temporary abandonment documented for the colonial period. In addition, between ca. 1627/28 and 1680, five, possibly seven, major structural additions more than doubled the size of the pueblo (Figure 3). With the exception of the mission of San Luis Obispo and a possibly mission-related late room block, the functional associations of these colonial-period additions are likewise still undetermined (Bletzer 2015b).

At the time of the arrival in the summer of 1598 of Juan de Oñate's colonizing caravan the Rio Grande Piro were the southernmost of all Pueblo groups. Their "province" extended from Milligan

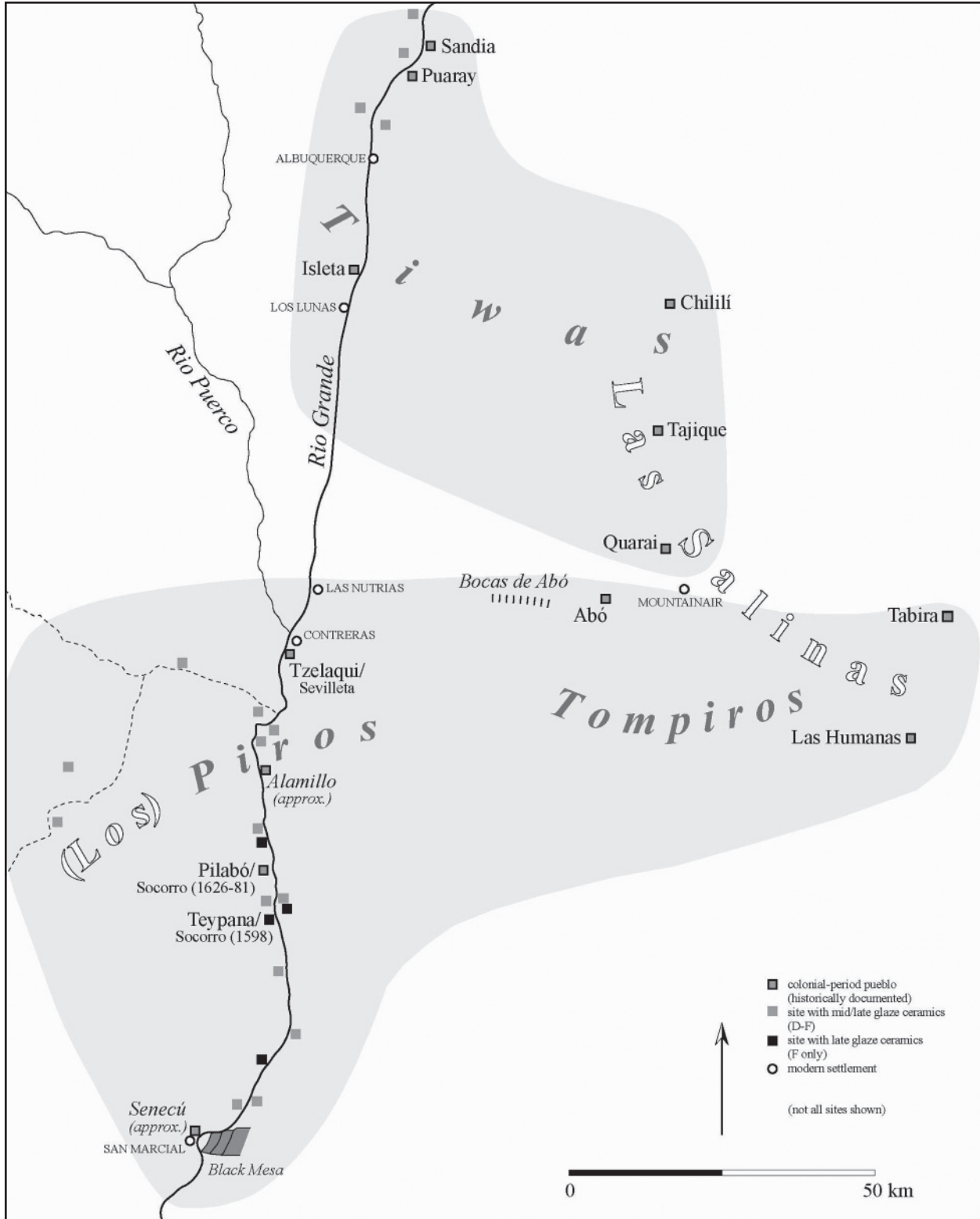


Figure 1. *Los Piroso* and the Southern Pueblo periphery, c. 1540-1680 (not all settlements shown).



Figure 2. Tzelaqui/Sevilleta Pueblo (view to northwest, Ladrón Peak in background) (photo by M. Bletzer, May, 2014).

Gulch and Black Mesa in the south to approximately the Contreras/Las Nutrias area in the north (Bletzer 2009, 2013; Marshall and Walt 1984;) (Figure 1). As the colonizers headed upriver to establish themselves in the Rio Chama-Rio Grande basin, subsequent Piro-Spanish encounters appear to have been mostly fleeting and not always friendly (Bletzer 2015b). Curiously, it is only during the very early colonial period that Spanish records speak of *Atzigues* or *Tzigues* (and variant spellings), an obvious corruption of the original native self-designation *A'tzi-em* ([the] “people”), in referring to the people that would later be known as Piros, a term of possible Tiwa origin. How or why this name change occurred at some point between ca. 1605 and 1622 remains a mystery. Up until the early 1670s, a cluster of Piro-speaking pueblos also existed outside the Rio Grande Valley in the upland region east and southeast of the Manzano Mountains from Abó and Tenabó east to Tabira and Las Humanas and probably south into the Chupadera Arroyo. The seventeenth-century Spanish *jurisdicción* or *alcaldía mayor* of *Las Salinas* included these upland/Salinas Piro or Tompiro communities, as well as the upland Tiwa pueblos of Quarai, Tajiue,

and Chililí. A Piro-Tiwa language boundary of sorts ran east-west between the (Tom)Piro pueblo of Abó and the Tiwa pueblo of Quarai (Figure 1) (Baldwin 1988; Bletzer 2009, 2016; Schroeder 1979; Wilson et al. 1983).

Fray Alonso Comes to Town: the Missionization of *Los Piros*

Colonization of both *Los Piros* and *Las Salinas* lagged behind the more northerly areas of Spanish New Mexico and never amounted to much in terms of number of colonists (Bletzer 2009). As a result, in many pueblos the most permanent and socially intrusive manifestation of the colonial regime was the Franciscan mission. Among the southern Pueblos, the process of mission establishment went north to south: in the Rio Grande Tiwa area from Sandia to Isleta in the 1610s, among the Salinas Tiwas from Chililí to Quarai in the 1610s to the late 1620s, in *Los Piros* from Sevilleta to Senecú in the mid-1620s to early 1630s, and among the Salinas Piros from Abó to Tabira in the early 1620s to 1630s. Some of these

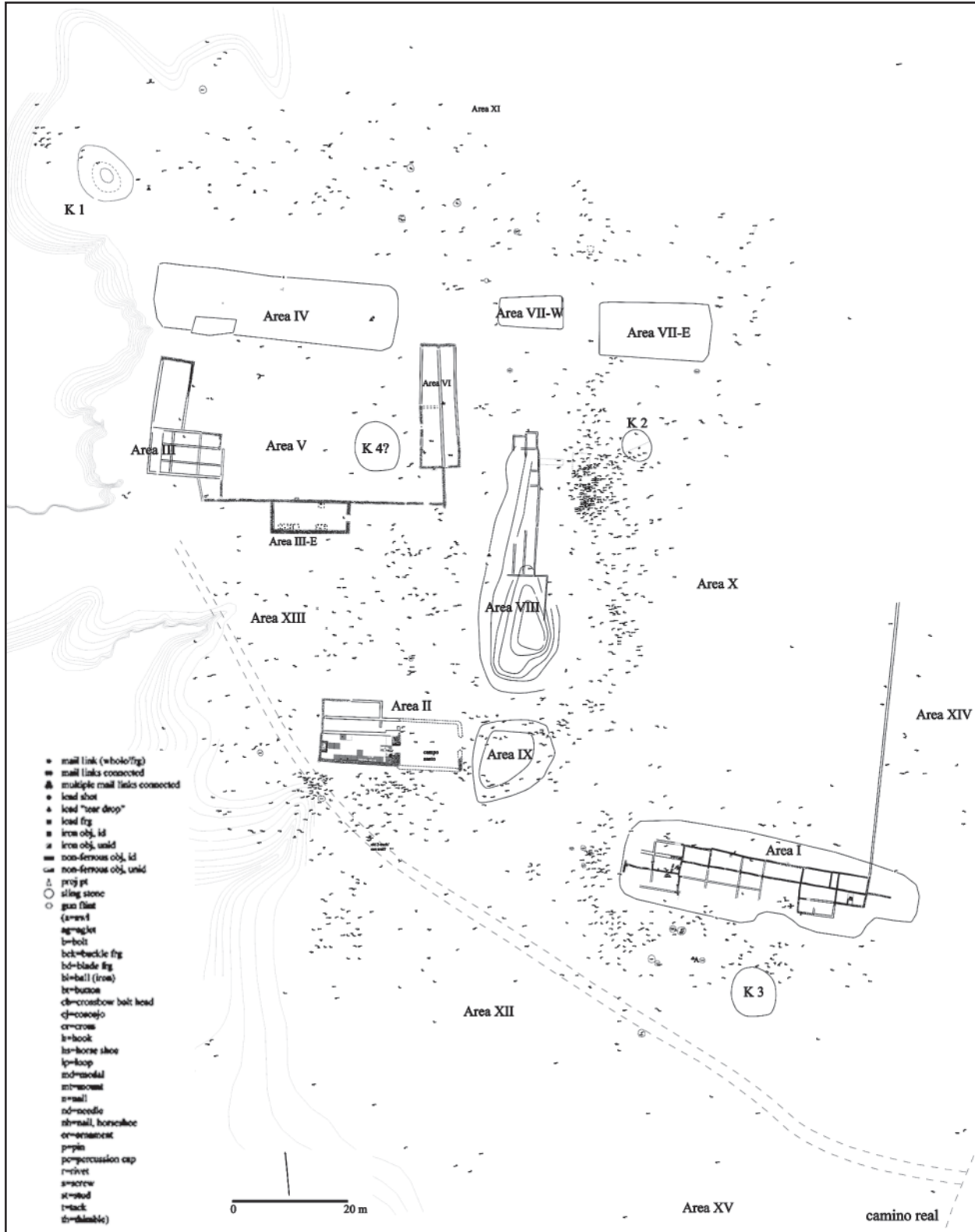


Figure 3. Tzelaqui/Sevilleta Pueblo, central area site map (as of August, 2019).

missions were *cabeceras* (also called *doctrinas*) in charge of outlying *visitas* tended by native personnel and administered at intervals by priests from the nearest *cabecera*. Communities without either *cabecera* or *visita* status could be subject to removal to a mission pueblo under the policy of *reducción* or *congregación* (Gerhard 1977; Quezada 1995). Period records relating to *reducciones* in seventeenth-century New Mexico are highly fragmentary but include references to Chililí and Tzelaqui/Sevilleta (Bletzer 2011, 2013; Ivey 1988; Schroeder 1979).

The important if patchy historical record for *Los Piros* relates mainly to three of the four documented mission pueblos: Pilabó/Socorro, Senecú, and Tzelaqui/Sevilleta. This focus of documentation is not surprising, given the administrative role of mission pueblos. Some sources have been published (e.g., Marshall and Walt 1984), but ongoing archival research has unearthed new material. Regarding Tzelaqui/Sevilleta, although this pueblo was doubtless seen by the Spanish expeditions that “rediscovered” New Mexico in the early 1580s, its specific written record begins with the *Ytinerario* of Juan de Oñate’s colonizing expedition. In June 1598, Oñate and his vanguard of sixty men stayed for one week at a *pueblecillo* or small pueblo whose inhabitants had fled and whose name Oñate’s scribes recorded as Tzelaqui. Renamed Nueva Sevilla, this first description only notes that the Spanish party moved into the pueblo for defensive purposes: “*pareciendo mas acertado tener ganada la fuerça de las cassas por si los yndios de la tierra nos quisieren dar con traycion*” (Craddock and De Marco 2013).

Later in 1598, Tzelaqui became part of the mission field assigned to Fray Juan Claros. The Claros assignment included, among other areas, *la probincia de los chiguas o tiguas* and downriver from it *la probincia de los atzigues con todos sus pueblos* (Craddock and De Marco 2014). Like all Oñate-era mission assignments, this was an impossible task and the good friar never seems to have embarked on it; he returned to New Spain in 1601. Perhaps he had a lucky escape, for around 1600 a series of bloody encounters between Salinas Piros and Spaniards at the pueblos of Abó, probably Las Humanas, and perhaps Tenabó (or Penabó) may also have involved at least

the northern Rio Grande Piro pueblos (Baldwin 1988; Bletzer 2015b). Unsurprisingly, perhaps, it was not until 1622 that the first mission at a Piro-speaking pueblo was established at Abó, which at the time was still considered, together with neighboring Tenabó/Penabó, a *pueblo de guerra*. The process of missionization finally accelerated under the aegis of Fray Alonso de Benavides. Appointed *custodio* of all New Mexican missions in 1625, Benavides arrived in Santa Fe late that year with a sizeable contingent of friar reinforcements. Despite being based at Franciscan headquarters at Santo Domingo and often present in Santa Fe, the new *custodio* devoted himself to the conversion of the still “heathen” pueblos in *Los Piros*. During manifold visits to the Piro province, Fray Alonso laid the foundations of missions at Pilabó/Socorro (spring/summer 1626), Senecú (summer/fall 1626), and Tzelaqui/Sevilleta (1627/28). Benavides’s accounts of these efforts (Ayer 1916; Hodge et al. 1945), though in places overly verbose, provide remarkable details especially of his early activities at Pilabó (Bletzer 2011, 2015a, 2015b).

For Tzelaqui/Sevilleta, Benavides also provides a brief first-hand period account of its mission founding. This account mentions an attack of unspecified *naciones enemigas*, the pueblo’s resultant abandonment, and then resettlement (and its renaming to “Sevilleta”), in 1627/28, with its surviving inhabitants and people from other, reportedly nearby, pueblos. By bringing in people from different pueblos, Fray Alonso and his helpers followed the principles of *reducción*, that is, they were “reducing” the number of native settlements by congregating people in the refurbished pueblo. It is difficult to gauge the initial stability of this approach, but within a few years Sevilleta’s mission of San Luis Obispo was reduced to the status of a *visita* which was only occasionally attended to by priests from Socorro. This suggests a downgrading in importance, perhaps related to population losses during the first recorded instance of epidemic disease in New Mexico in the mid-1630s.

In addition, increasing pressure from settlers in *Los Piros* and the exigencies of *encomienda* tributes put the surviving pueblos under considerable strain. There is, for instance, a fairly revealing record of

problems Sevilleta Pueblo had with its Spanish neighbors and *encomenderos*, the Guadalajara/Romero family (Bletzer 2009; Marshall and Walt 1984; Wilson 1977). Depending on political conditions, settlers could wield enormous influence. In 1659/60, this was borne out most blatantly when then-Governor Juan Manso sold Sevilleta Pueblo to the Guadalajara/Romero family and had the pueblo's residents moved to another pueblo. The move was reversed within a year, but the whole episode did little for Piro-Spanish relations and within a few years Sevilleta was referred to as *frontera de guerra*. Apache raiders were one concern for the Spaniards, anti-Spanish Piro another.

During the 1660s and 1670s both Rio Grande Piro and Salinas Piro rose or attempted to rise against Spanish rule, though without lasting success. Spanish reprisals were harsh, especially at Senecú and Socorro, and there are indications that surviving rebels moved away from pueblos closest to Spanish control. Period records indicate that this was a time of severe drought, disease outbreaks, and dramatic population movements (Earls 1992; Wilson 1985). Sevilleta, too, was involved in these events and suffered from Apache attacks. By the early 1670s, Sevilleta like the other three mission pueblos in *Los Piro*s took in refugees from the Salinas Piro pueblos which were abandoned in an east-to-west movement between 1671 and 1674. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 saw no initial Piro involvement, but in mid-August 1680 a plot was hatched to attack retreating Spanish colonists at Socorro Pueblo. This plot was betrayed and several hundred Piro were deported to the El Paso area by the Spaniards. Sevilleta and the three other Piro mission pueblos were abandoned. In late 1681, however, troops engaged in the first attempted Spanish reconquest found signs that someone had moved back into Sevilleta Pueblo during the interim. A new kiva had been built, with timbers reportedly taken from the mission buildings. No people were found and on the retreat in late 1681 the Spaniards burnt whatever structures could still be burnt. The pueblo was never reoccupied (Bletzer 2016, 2017).

What's Left of *Los Piro*s: An Archaeological Context of Sorts

The old *Los Piro*s province boasts an extensive record of large and small ancestral Piro sites. Unfortunately, however, many sites have been damaged or destroyed by erosion, aggradation, vandalism, or modern development and land use. Perhaps the worst examples of this ongoing deterioration of the regional archaeological record are the two mission pueblos that figure most prominently in seventeenth-century records, Pilabó/Socorro and Senecú. The former, located in downtown Socorro and in the 1620s reportedly [*el pueblo*] *principal*, *y cabeza desta Prouincia de los Piro*s (Ayer 1916), at least has an archaeological designation (LA 791), although no structural remains of it were known until just a few years ago (Bletzer 2015a). Of Senecú, the southernmost pueblo in New Mexico up to 1680, no trace has been seen since the 1800s, despite fairly specific and consistent references in documents from the 1600s and 1700s to its location on the west side of the Rio Grande opposite Black Mesa (Bletzer 2009, 2013; Marshall and Walt 1984).

This lack of overall surface visibility and structural preservation perhaps contributes to the general disinterest in things Piro today. At present, only one site in *Los Piro*s, Plaza Montoya Pueblo (LA 31744), the likely Teypana Pueblo of Oñate expedition fame, has seen enough work to generate a site-wide occupation sequence and documentation of abandonment contexts. Its identification as Teypana derives from a host of chronological and structural data, analysis of abandonment deposits, assemblage comparisons with neighboring sites, and documentary context (Bletzer 2009, 2019). Aside from Plaza Montoya/Teypana, a handful of other ancestral Piro pueblos along the Rio Grande, including the “principal” one of Pilabó/Socorro, have been subjected to limited testing (e.g., Bletzer 2015a; Earls 1985, 1987; Marshall 1986, 1987). Survey coverage is similarly limited—on the whole it has not expanded much since the 1920s and 1930s when H. P. Mera first recorded many of the larger sites in *Los Piro*s, including Tzelaqui/Sevilleta (Lekson et al. 2004; Marshall and Walt 1984; Mera 1940).

Current research at Tzelaqui/Sevilleta follows along lines similar to the earlier projects at Plaza Montoya/Teypana and—to a much more limited extent—Pilabó/Socorro. Unlike the latter in particular, the site of Tzelaqui/Sevilleta is not obscured by urban development and only sparsely covered by obstructing vegetation (Figure 2). Beginning in late 2014, survey, wall-tracing, and limited test excavations have begun to produce important data relating to the pueblo's occupation history and the overarching project goal of identifying pre- to post-colonial changes in settlement morphology. A number of assumptions and structural identifications based on old surface observations have now become untenable. Standing out amid the test excavations so far is that of Kiva 2. Approximately the southern third of this burnt-out kiva was completely excavated from the modern surface down to sub-floor natural deposits. Ceramics and two ^{14}C dates of burnt *sacatón* from the roof layer suggest a construction date between ca. 1560 and 1590. The Kiva 2 documentation includes a complete cross-profile of seventeenth-century refuse layers, a complete structural sequence, and an extensive record of kiva features (ventilator tunnel, deflector wall, ash pit, fire pit, two sets of loom anchor holes on different floors, a large bench set into the kiva's west wall, traces of painting on one of six layers of wall plaster identified, etc.).

On top of all this, intensive metal detecting around Kiva 2 and in other extramural areas, as well as of nearby segments of the *camino real* (*camino dela México* in period documents), has yielded a numerically unexpected sample of, to date, some 1,400 metal artifacts, about half of them mail armor (*malla*) fragments and fired and unfired lead munitions (Figure 3). Diagnostic objects range from early to mid-16th-century bifaceted nails and an iron crossbow *cuadrillo*, to *coscojos*, aglets, needles, boot nails, and clothing pins, to seventeenth-century religious medals and a couple of early nineteenth-century percussion caps. Spatial clustering of the recovered lead munitions indicates several instances of armed conflict at and around the pueblo, including the vicinity of the San Luis Obispo mission compound (Adams et al. 2018).

Mound(s) of Deception: San Luis Obispo or San Luis Oculto?

Since the days of Mera, visibility and arrangement of structural components at Sevilleta have formed the basis of identifying possible functional associations at the site. This has been especially true of the pueblo's southeasternmost mound (labeled Area I on Figure 3, #8 on Figure 4). Somewhat detached from the rest of the pueblo, this low mound is oriented on a long east-west axis with a footprint thought to represent a church with a small *convento* semi-attached on the east and a possible *campo santo* wall stretching north from the *convento*. There is also a faint kiva depression (Kiva 3) just south of the presumed *convento*. Amid past consensus on the mound's presumed mission identity (e.g., Marshall and Walt 1984; Wilson 1971), there was nothing to suggest a different classification at the start of the current Sevilleta project in 2014—especially after a preliminary ground penetrating radar reconnaissance of the mound's western portion failed to register any interior walls, thus seemingly corroborating the existence of a church. Subsequent wall-tracing and excavation tests, however, at last revealed a room block with numerous narrow adobe walls, hearths, mealing and storage bins, and some Spanish structural elements (including in one room a bricked-up low-threshold doorway almost exactly one Castilian *vara* [ca. 84 cm] wide). As such, this room block may well represent the last major domestic construction episode at the pueblo. Diagnostic ceramics are almost exclusively Glaze F and contemporary trade/foreign ceramics (e.g., San Luis Blue-on-white majolica, Mexico City Green-on-cream majolica, Tewa Polychrome, Salinas Red, Tabira white wares). Other colonial markers include iron artifacts and bones of domestic animals (sheep/goat, cow). With all this, the room block stands in sharp contrast to the bulk of the pueblo's other domestic components, which have sizeable early glazeware assemblages underlying later ceramics. Spatial separation, room block morphology, and artifact assemblage suggest that Area I may have been built to accommodate “outsiders” settled at Sevilleta in the *reducción* process surrounding the founding of the San Luis Obispo mission (cf., Snow 2012).

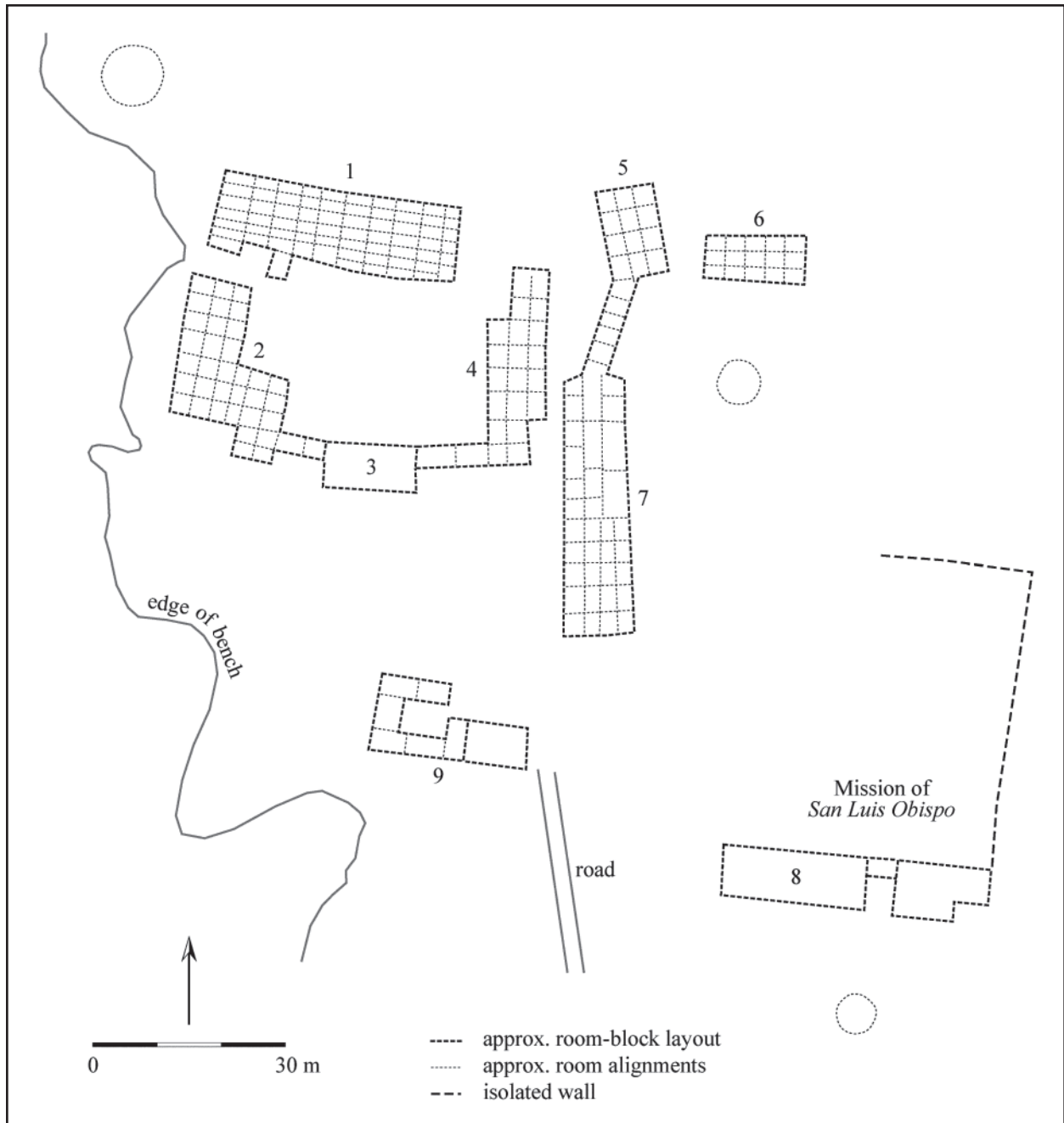


Figure 4. Tzelaqui/Sevilleta Pueblo, pre-2014 site map (adapted from Marshall and Walt [1984:Figure 9.73]).

The realization that Area I was a room block removed the obvious candidate for the mission from further consideration. In hindsight, erroneous assumptions about size and layout of a *visita* mission formed the main hurdle in narrowing down the correct location. As there are few comparative data for seventeenth-century *visitas* in New Mexico, the first church (San Isidro) at the Salinas Piro pueblo of Las Humanas (Hayes et al. 1981; Ivey 1988) was taken as indicative of the possible size range of the Sevilleta mission. San Isidro had not initially been intended to be a *visita* and neither, it seemed, had been Sevilleta's San Luis Obispo. With hindsight, too, a much closer parallel is the small *visita* compound at the easternmost Salinas Piro pueblo, Tabira (Stubbs 1959). Ultimately, it took 10 months of periodic wall-tracing and test excavations to locate the San Luis Obispo mission compound. Along the way, however, a number of other Spanish structures forming a seemingly fortified compound together with the (originally) prehistoric Area IV mound were identified and partly mapped (Areas III, III-E, and VI) (Figure 3). At first, the single large structure of Area III-E in particular appeared to be a candidate for a small church with its size, east-west orientation, substantial walls, lack of cross-walls, and entrance to the east. Yet the triple absence of an "appropriate" mound, wall plaster, and a definable sanctuary/altar base left the identification in doubt. Subsequent excavation tests also revealed a number of small post holes along the south wall and this completely removed the structure from mission consideration.

In the end, San Luis Obispo was found "hidden" in the mound labeled Area II (Figures 3, 5). In the past, this mound had been deemed too inconspicuous to represent anything but a small domestic structure, perhaps a *casa real* of the kind which colonial-period sources mention for a number of mission pueblos (Ivey 1988; Marshall and Walt 1984; Wilson 1971) (see structure labeled #9 on Figure 4). Clearly, this dismissal was based on the same size assumptions about San Luis Obispo that led to its original misidentification with the larger Area I mound. Wall-tracing outlined the nave of a chapel or small church, two long (possibly sub-divided) rooms attached to its north side, and a small *campo santo*

just to the east (Figure 6). The nave measures 12.2 (center line) x 4.35 (west end) to 4.6 m (east end) on the inside, with a substantially buttressed entrance to the east and a low platform with the remains of an altar base at the west end. The overall plan of the nave is nearly rectangular, with no angling of walls at the sanctuary end. Both interior buttress faces are nearly identical in length at almost exactly two Castilian *varas* (1.66 and 1.65m, respectively), the opening between them measures 1.35 m or roughly $1 \frac{2}{3}$ *varas* in width. A number of excavation tests show that only about 50 cm of wall height remains. These base walls consist of heavily mortared cobbles and rocks, including numerous mano, metate, and other stone tool fragments. The adobe mortar is coarse and brittle and contains many small sherds, lithic debitage, bone fragments, and burnt organic matter, all of which points to a midden as the base source of the mortar. There is little evidence of burning, certainly not enough to suggest a major structure fire. No beam fragments, burnt or unburnt, have been recovered in interior excavation tests. Judging by the mound's overall low height and rubble volume, most of the superstructure was built of adobe.

As work continues on Area II, more and more architectural and stratigraphic details are emerging (Figure 6). One such detail is the construction of the south nave wall which has narrow rock/adobe facings inside and out, both of which taper off towards the nave's west end. Maximum wall thickness is 1.4 to 1.45 m at the two frontal buttresses. The entrance between the buttresses appears to have a rounded step, leading up and then down into the building. The south face of the north buttress was built up of adobe bricks, no doubt in an effort to reach the same dimension as that of the south buttress. The latter has a semi-circular adobe extension inside the entrance that perhaps represents the base of a holy water font. From the entrance to the sanctuary platform a rough adobe floor (which has two plaster levels in several places) rises up some 20 to 30 cm. The altar base on the sanctuary platform comprises a narrow bin-like rock/adobe retaining wall filled with midden material (sherds, lithics, bones, burnt organics) and then plastered over. No traces of a wooden altar structure or associated furnishing have yet been found. Interior



Figure 5. Tzelaqui/Sevilleta Pueblo, Area II mound, San Luis Obispo mission (view to northeast, altar base visible in foreground) (photo by M. Bletzer, October 2016).

walls were plastered but only small patches of tan-grey adobe plaster remain. There are two partially rock-lined post holes on the south side of the sanctuary (Figure 7) end and (so far) one on the north side. The small *campo santo* east of the nave was delimited by a mostly dry-laid, irregularly mortared rock/cobble wall which may have been plastered with adobe. It attaches to the south side of the nave's south buttress and to the dividing wall between the two adjacent rooms. Entry to the *campo santo* was from the east. As for the two "*convento*" rooms, they still need to be investigated more closely before a detailed description can be made.

Other initial observations at the San Luis Obispo compound center on the shallow depth (ca. 40-60 cm) of mission-related deposits. By comparison, recent testing at the mission of San Antonio de Isleta has documented a 3+ m deep stratigraphy of pre-Pueblo Revolt mission material (Marshall 2012, 2015). Limited sub-floor testing in the room adjacent to the San Luis Obispo nave suggests the presence of a prehistoric midden under much of the Area II mound. Stratigraphically more complicated is the distribution of burials in the nave.

Although cremation was originally the primary pre-mission method of burial at Tzelaqui/Sevilleta (and the only one at Plaza Montoya/Teypana Pueblo, see O'Laughlin this volume; cf., Hayes et al. [1981] for cremations at Las Humanas), from the beginning of testing inhumations were expected to be present at or below floor level. This has proved only partly correct. Of seven inhumations identified so far, three are the expected "formal" grave pits excavated into the adobe floor and not paved over (similar to the burials in the Tabira *visita* church, see Stubbs [1959]). The other four, however, are located at varying depths in the fill near the entrance of the church (Figures 6, 8). These were clearly placed in the nave after the church's roof was gone and structural collapse had begun. Oriented east-west like the sub-floor burials, three of these late inhumations were briefly examined *in situ* and then covered again. Two are of middle adult females, the older (Burial 6) approximately 40 to 45+ years of age, the younger (Burial 5, placed partly on top of Burial 6, see Figure 8) 25 to 35 years. For the latter, femoral metrics yield a stature estimate of 143.5 +/- 3.72 cm (Moyer 2019). A Salinas Red bowl rim sherd and a likely relic Glaze A bowl rim sherd in the pelvic

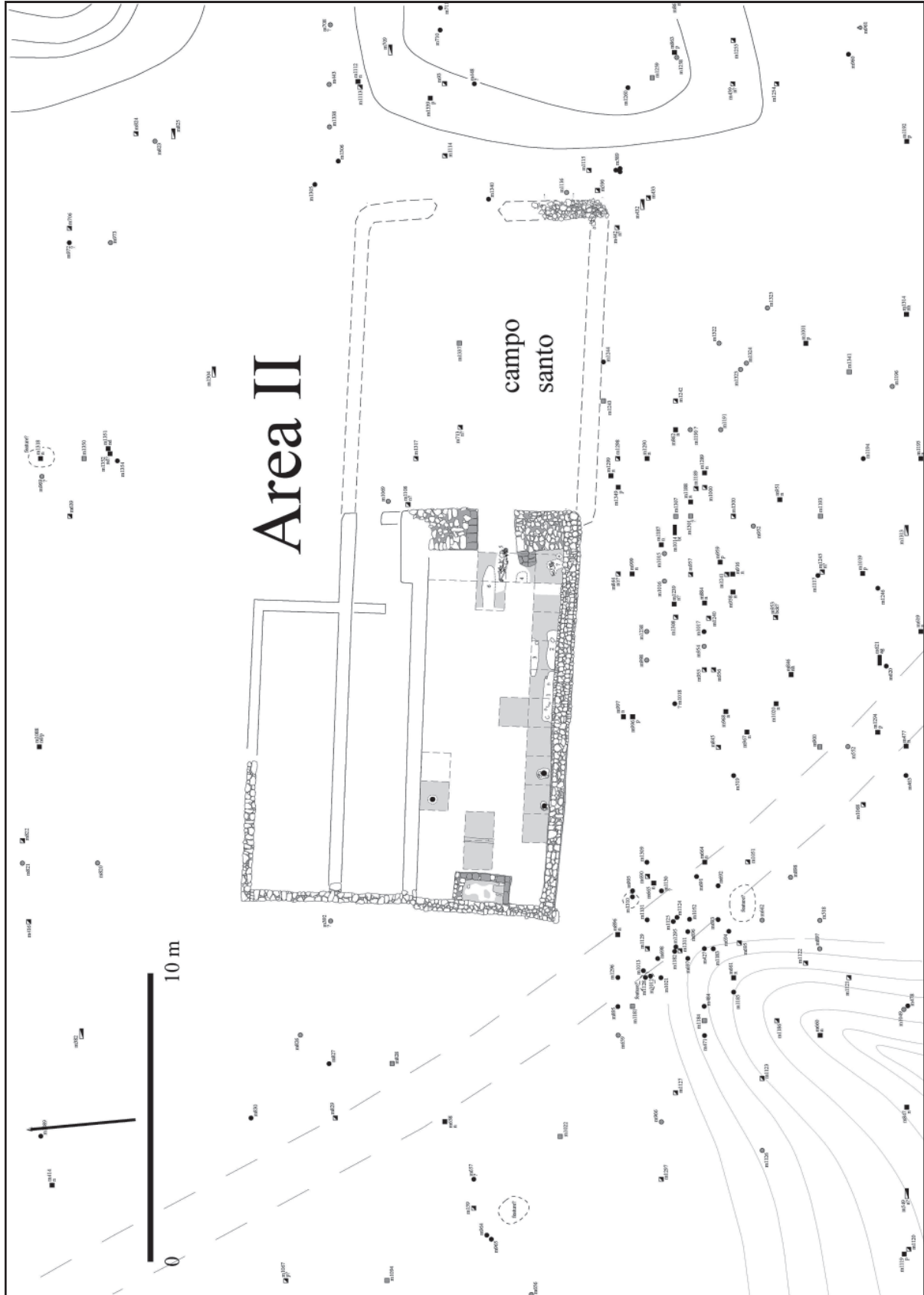


Figure 6. Tzelaqui/Sevilleta Pueblo, map detail San Luis Obispo mission (as of August, 2019).



Above
Figure 7. Tzelaqui/Sevilleta Pueblo, San Luis Obispo mission, post holes south church wall towards sanctuary end (photo by M. Bletzer, April, 2019).



Left
Figure 8. Tzelaqui/Sevilleta Pueblo, San Luis Obispo mission, Burial 6 (partly overlain by covered Burial 5 in left foreground (photo by M. Bletzer, August, 2019).

area may indicate a holdover of burial rites from the cremation days (see O’Laughlin this volume). The third inhumation (Burial 7) is that of an infant of about eight weeks post-partum age (Moyer 2019). Based on their stratigraphic position, Burials 5 and 7 are likely the last inhumations in the nave.

The discovery of these late burials raises a number of questions as to the demise of Sevilleta Pueblo in general and its *visita* mission in particular. According to Spanish accounts from late 1681, the *visita* church (then referred to as a *hermita*) was dismantled by “apostates”, i.e., Piro who had managed to avoid deportation to the El Paso area in August 1681. Whether such “apostates” would have used a Christian church as a burial ground may not be something that readily suggests itself without material evidence of the kind now available. On the other hand, there is no reference to San Luis Obispo actually being used as early as ca. 1660 (Bletzer 2017).

It is possible that the mission was abandoned in one of the various Piro revolts and after its suppression used as an extension of the old *campo santo* into the Pueblo Revolt period. This scenario is perhaps supported by the discovery of several dozen fired lead munitions and armor fragments found during metal detecting on the south and west sides of the church nave (Figure 6). Given the propensity of firearms use before 1680, it seems unlikely that anyone other than Spaniards could have laid down a fusillade of the kind suggested by the munitions finds. At the same time, it seems equally unlikely that Spaniards would have shot at a church unless it was occupied by people they deemed hostile. Whether these questions can be addressed with further data remains to be seen. As was the case with Plaza Montoya/Teypana Pueblo, few things at Tzelaqui/Sevilleta are what they seem to be even at third glance.

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