

## Time Line & Cultural Phases of the Piro Nation

**Introduction.** *The Socorro County Historical Society (SCHS) and other interested parties recognize the first residents of Socorro County, New Mexico were the Piro (Atzigues) people. The Piro lived in Socorro County until the 1680 Pueblo Revolt when they fled with the Spaniards to resettle along the Rio Grande from present day Las Cruces, NM to south of El Paso, TX. Remnants of the Piro live in this region and elsewhere today.*

*This document summarizes the commonly accepted time line and cultural phases of the Piro. The primary sources used are:*

Marshal, Michael P. & Walt, Henry J., *Rio Abajo: Prehistory and History of a Rio Grande Province* (Santa Fe: New Mexico Historical Preservation Division, 1984)

Bletzer, Michael, *Pueblos Without Names: A Case Study of Piro Settlement in Early Colonial New Mexico* (PhD Thesis, 2009)

*Michael Marshall, Henry Walt, and Michael Bletzer are clearly the recognized and qualified experts on the Piro province. They have spent years researching the Piro, translating historic Spanish documents, and excavating the Piro pueblos of Qualacu, Teypana, and Tzelaqui/Sevilleta. Their research and field work is recognized as two primary sources on the Piro people.*

### THE FIRST AMERICANS

The question of “Who were the first people to reach the Americas?” and “when did they arrive?” confounds archaeologists and other researchers to this day. Traditional thinking is the first people began to arrive shortly after the last ice age about 15,000 years ago. The earliest evidence of man in the Americas, and the Southwest, is about 13,000 years go, or about BC 11,000. These early **Paleoindians**, such as the Clovis and Folsom man, are identified by their stone tools, spear points, and hunting sites.

The **Archaic Era** (BC 8000-1500) was a slow transition from hunter-gathers to one involving seasonal camps and some agriculture. By about BC 6000, mastadons, mammoths and the other large animals were virtually extinct. The Archaic people changed to hunting smaller game and adding wild plants and nuts to their diet. The first

manos and metates originate towards the end of this period.

There are known Archaic era sites west of Socorro, NM. On the south end of the Plains of San Augustin is a rock shelter called Bat Cave. This is an important archeological site for the discovery of corn at least 3,000 years old – the first evidence of early agriculture. Nearby is the Ake Site, an apparent fishing village at the time the plains was an inland lake. These are among the first indications of the Paleoindians “settling down” by establishing small fishing and hunting villages, and growing crops for food.

The **Basketmaker Era** (BC 1500–AD 50) is characterized by woven baskets (before pottery) made for food collection, storage and preparation. These semi-nomadic people evolved into more permanent settlements living in pit houses and cultivating maize, beans and squash.



**Socorro Desert Ratts** are members of the **Socorro County Historical Society** (SCHS) and other interested parties preserving and documenting the rich history of Socorro County, New Mexico through research, field work, mapping and photography of historic and cultural sites, including El Camino Real trail and the native Piro.



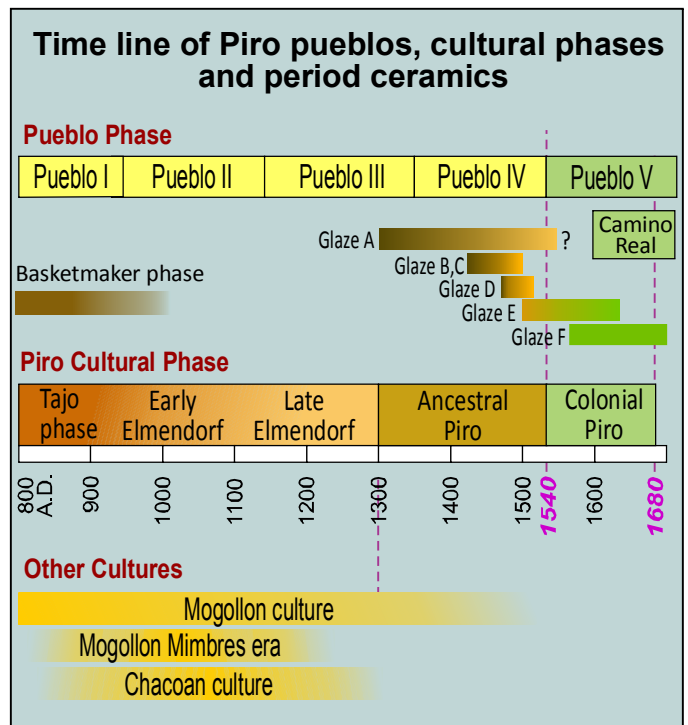
### RIO ABAJO PIRO SETTLEMENT PHASES

**San Marcial/Basketmaker III** (AD 300-800) was the transition from the nomadic Ancestral Piro era of roaming hunter-gatherers living in seasonal hunting camps to more permanent settlements. These small hamlets consisted of a few families each living together scattered along the Rio Grande in the Mesa del Contadero and San Marcial (New Mexico) region, and hence the name. They survived on hunting, collecting, and some dependence on agriculture living in pit houses and primitive jacals, mostly on the east bank of the Rio Grande. Basket making was being replaced with simple plain brown pottery and some decorated black-on-white.

**Tajo Phase** (AD 800-1000) differs little from the San Marcial phase except the small settlements expanded and migrated northward along the Rio Grande to the Elmendorf/Bosque del Apache, San Acacia and La Joya regions [see map page 4]. Other settlements expanded to the uplands – away from the river – along the Rio Salado. These early **Pueblo I** structures were linear cobble based jacals of generally one to ten rooms and some pit structures. They were built near water on flat open land for their gardens. Population has been estimated at about 1,000 Piro along the river and perhaps another 1,000 in the upland regions. Pottery began to include plain and ribbed brown ware.



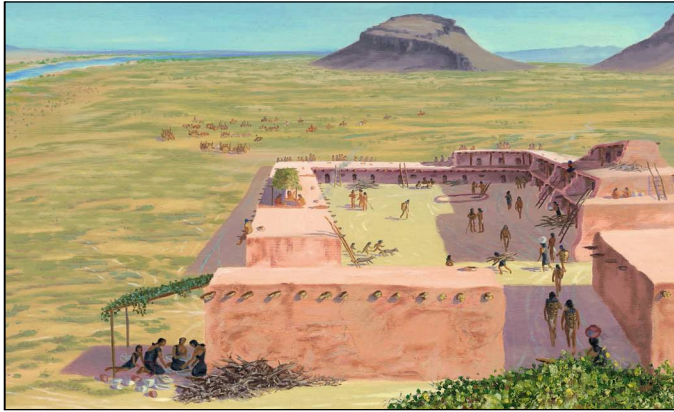
Modified from Archaeology Southwest illustration  
**Artist rendering of a Tajo phase/Pueblo I Piro village, families living in isolated jacals**



**Early Elmendorf phase** (AD 950-1000) was a relatively short period of continued expansion along the Rio Abajo with some abandonment of the older Tajo sites, notably around the San Acacia area. It coincides with the **Pueblo II** phase of slightly larger settlements.

This era is marked with small isolated family units mixed with larger multi-unit structures of around 10–20 rooms. These settlements began to be built around a plaza, forming the appearance of the “modern” pueblo.

Construction consisted of more substantial masonry (rock) foundations supporting cobble-filled jacal walls and flat roofs. Most sites continued to be built on open and exposed gravel benches, mostly along the east side of the Rio Grande. These pueblos remained as small family units, though grouping together into small villages. The additional rooms were used for living space, food preparation, storage, and animal pens (mostly turkeys) for more integrated communal living. The Piro population remained about the same as the Tajo phase; Michael Marshall estimates 75% of the population were living in five settlement areas from La Joya to El Nido pueblos.



*Modified from National Park Service illustration*

**Artist rendering of a late Piro Pueblo II village located on the bank of the Rio Grande.**

**Late Elmendorf phase** (AD 1100-1300), was the “great pueblo building era” called the **Pueblo III** phase. The pueblos became large multi-room dwellings, often multi-storied, with 100–200 rooms with plazas and kivas for forming consolidated villages.

Pueblo III marked another important trait: a shift from small family riverside settlements and pueblos to building highly fortified large pueblos atop mesas or other highly defensive locations. This is obvious evidence the Piros (and other pueblo cultures) suddenly felt the need for defense and protection. It is believed this is in response to the increasing incidences of Apache attacks and/or social conflicts between pueblo groups. These mesa top pueblos had extensive views of the Rio Grande valley.

This was also a period of tremendous population growth within the Piro settlements from generational growth and absorbing outside people. Migration began to occur in the late 1200s with the decline of the Chacoan culture.

The Chaco canyon pueblos began a decline due to drought in the mid AD 1100s followed by a rapid collapse about AD 1275. Chaco canyon was completely abandoned by about AD 1300. What caused the Chaco canyon pueblo culture to collapse and population relocation is an ongoing debate and field of study today. Many of these Chaco Ancestral Puebloans (or Anasazi) relocated west to the Hopi and Little Colorado River areas in Arizona, Mesa Verde to the north in Colorado, and eastward to the Rio Grande pueblos.

Today’s New Mexico pueblos of the Tewa,

Tiwa, and Keres language groups have oral histories of being descendants of Mesa Verde or Chaco Canyon. This may indicate the Chacoan people spoke a common or similar dialects to some of the Rio Grande pueblos. The Piro language is also a southern Tiwa (or Tigua) language with some evidence the Piros and Isleta pueblo communicated in the same or similar tongue, as did their Tompiro-Salinas pueblo cousins. Tiwa is also spoken today at Senecú del Sur pueblo near El Paso, Texas.

There is no reason to doubt the population growth from this migration to the Tiwa pueblos did not include the Piro. Regardless, Marshal and Walt estimate the Piro population grew by a factor of seven during this era to about 7,000 people or more.



*Modified from National Park Service illustration*

**Artist rendering of a mesa top Pueblo III or Pueblo IV fortified village of 100-200 rooms or more.**

**Ancestral Piro** (AD 1300-1540) spans the period from the appearance of glazeware pottery and the Chacoan migration until Spanish contact. The **Pueblo IV** period began about AD 1350 as the continued population growth caused larger and larger pueblos to be built, or substantial expansion to the existing pueblos. The largest Piro pueblo was San Pascual (Piro name unknown) on El Camino Real north of Mesa del Contadera at about 750 rooms.

For example, Teypana was a late Ancestral and Colonial Pueblo IV 200-room pueblo. Various portions of this multi-storied pueblo were excavated in 2000-2005 by Dr. Michael Bletzer. Dating of pottery and artifacts was a high priority to determine the age of the pueblo and to

verify post Spanish contact occupation. From this dating, Bletzer determined the Teypana pueblo was under almost constant construction, expansion, modification, and repair during its life (ca. AD 1500-1620s). Other occupied pueblos of this era likely experienced similar constant growth.

This era also shows more sophisticated agricultural practices, building irrigation systems, and even indication of building dams and reservoirs on the arroyos to capture the periodic water flows. Fields were extensive to support the growing population of the pueblos.

**Colonial Piro** (AD 1540-1680) is the continuation of the Pueblo IV phase from Spanish contact until the 1680 Pueblo Revolt.

First contact with the Spanish Europeans was during the 1540-42 **Coronado Expedition**. A small force traveled south looking for food with scant reference to the pueblos in the Rio Abajo.

The **Rodriguez-Chamuscado Expedition** in 1581-82 produced written accounts and experiences in the Piro Province. Their group of about two dozen people lived among the Piro for several days. They described 15 pueblos they visited as having upwards of 2,000 people and



the Piro as “clothed people living in good order.” The pueblos they visited are not known.

The **Beltran-Espejo Expedition** visited the Piro the following year over several days. Espejo estimated the Piro province at 12,000 people living in 10 pueblos along the river, others away from the river, and found four pueblos in ruins.

These early contacts did not influence the Piro people by much, but important by being the very first written records of the Piro existence and brief descriptions of their pueblos and culture.

The **Spanish Entrada** under *Juan de Oñate* is where Spanish influence forever changed the way the pueblo people in New Mexico lived, including the Piro. In 1598, Oñate led a colonization caravan into New Mexico consisting of 400 men, 129 of whom were soldiers, many bringing their wives and children, plus 10 Franciscan priests. Oñate’s starving force of about 500 travelers first encountered the Piro people at Senecú and Qualacú pueblos in their unsuccessful quest for food. Finally, the Piro at Teypana pueblo offered the weary colonists corn and other items, for which they renamed the pueblo *Socorro* for their help and assistance.

Oñate was followed in the 1600s with an influx of colonists and Spanish military officials in their attempt to colonize and control *Nueva Espana*, along with arriving Franciscans for the Christianization effort of the pueblo people. Oñate’s poor treatment and slaughter of some of the pueblo people is legendary, though the Piro seemed to escape this initial wrath.

There is little indication the Spaniards had much dealings with the Piro until the 1620s when they instituted *Reducción* – the program to control the Piro by ordering the abandonment of the outlying pueblos and consolidating the people into four pueblos: Senecú, Socorro, Alamillo, and Sevilleta. The excavation at Teypana by Dr. Bletzer revealed an orderly abandonment of that pueblo, and perhaps at the other pueblos ordered vacated as well. Hardly anything of value was left behind at Teypana. Everything was moved to Pilabó, apparently even the vigas (roof beams) and other construction material from the pueblo. They also transferred their Spanish given name, Socorro, to their new home at Pilabó - today’s Socorro.

(Thus, the 1st Socorro was the Teypana pueblo, the 2nd Socorro the Pilabó pueblo and today’s Socorro, New Mexico). By the mid- to late-1620s, the Piro province had been reduced from 14 pueblos to four with population still estimated at around 5,000 people.

During and after *Reducción*, the Christianization effort among the Piro was begun when mission building was ordered at the four above named pueblos. There is no documented evidence of any priests or mission building among the Piro before the mid-1620s (in spite of claims by some stating Socorro’s church was founded in 1598 or 1615).

The **Pueblo V phase** (1620–1680) is that period assigned by some archaeologists when pueblo construction was influenced by the Spaniards. In the case of the Piro, this occurred in the 1620s during *Reducción* and the mission building period. The pueblos were enlarged for the influx of people from the abandoned pueblos, and the Franciscans directed the construction of the missions and conventos employing European techniques. This did not significantly alter the architecture of the pueblos, but did introduce changes to individual building and structural techniques. Instead of hand formed adobe (looking like turtle shells), forming adobe into sun dried bricks was quickly adopted. With the formed adobe bricks, walls were built thicker for higher strength and durability. Fireplaces and chimneys were built for better indoor cooking and heating. Instead of cooking bread and corn in pits, the Spaniards introduced the horno for individual and community cooking.

Additionally, supply caravans along El Camino Real brought animals, food, seeds, metals tools, clothing, and other items foreign to the Rio Grande pueblos, who quickly learned to put the items to good use.

Of course, the largest influence on the pueblo people was teaching them to speak Spanish and the Christianization effort.

Archaeologists finding these European construction styles in excavations, or Spanish ceramics, metal items and the like, are proof of this late Colonial pueblo period.

The four **Colonial Piro Pueblos** after *Reducción* were:

**Pilabó (Socorro)** was called the “principal pueblo of the Piro” by Bishop *Alonso de Benevidez*, indicating it was likely the largest of the four mission pueblos. However, there are no mentions of Pilabó’s size or population in the written record.

The mission, called *Nuestra Señora de Perpetuo Socorro* (Our Lady of Perpetual Help), was dedicated in 1626. Pilabó pueblo is the site of today’s Socorro, NM. It was abandoned during the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. Resettlement was not allowed by Spain (due to its inability to protect the citizens from Apache attacks) until the early 1800s. Today’s *San Miguel* church is built atop portions of the 1626 mission church with some visible remains inside the church. Modern Socorro has erased all signs of the pueblo.

Silver was found in nearby Socorro Peak. It is recorded that the pulpit railings and other ornaments in the church were made of solid silver. When Socorro was vacated during the Revolt, these items were buried somewhere near the church and never recovered, a legend that persists to this day.

**Tzenoqui (Senecu)** is the most documented of all the Piro pueblos. It was the southernmost occupied pueblo located on the west bank of the Rio Grande very near to Mesa del Contadero (San Marcial area) and within sight of San Pascual pueblo on the east bank of the river. The *San Antonio de Senecú* (or *San Antonio de Padua*) mission was built 1626 by *Fr. Arteaga* and *Fr. Zúñiga*. It was known to be well adorned, contained the first organ in New Mexico, and with the first Colonial vineyard. The mission grape wine was used for ceremonial “Blood of Christ” purposes at many of the other mission churches in the 1600s.

Senecú was destroyed and burned by an Apache attack on Jan. 23, 1675 killing the priest, *Fr. Avila*, and many Piro. The pueblo was abandoned for fear of further attacks and thus abandoned by the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. Today, the location of Senecú is a mystery, likely claimed by the Rio Grande.

**Tzeloqui (Sevilleta)** was the 3rd pueblo mission established by Bishop Benavidez at the northernmost occupied pueblo. It was located on the east bank of the Rio Grande near the confluence with the Rio Puerco. It was a popular stop for travelers on El Camino Real, the gateway to the Salinas Tampiro pueblos, and the salt trade from the Salinas salt lakes. The *San Luis Obispo* mission was built shortly after 1626. It was ordered abandoned in 1558 with people sent to Alamillo, but ordered resettled in 1661. It was abandoned during the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. Today, Sevilleta sits on private land and relatively undisturbed. It has received some pertinent recent excavation by Dr. Bletzer which discovered and unearthed the 1620s built *San Luis Obispo* church - the only Piro mission church and convento that still exists.

**Alamillo** pueblo is the most obscure of the four mission pueblos due to only scant written mentions, its Piro name unknown, location unknown, and thus no archaeological evidence of age or founding. It was located on the east bank of the Rio Grande, likely adjacent to today’s Polvadera village area. A mission was added some time after 1629, though it is not known whether the Alamillo *Santa Ana* mission was built or not. A 1664 document lists Alamillo as a *visitas* to the priest(s) at Pilabo. However, on the 1682 return to New Mexico, Otermín records finding the church, convento and parts of the pueblo burned. Alamillo was abandoned during the 1680 Pueblo Revolt. It was resettled as a Spanish farming community in 1801, though short lived. A modern day village on the nearby west side of the river is named Alamillo after the pueblo, though not the location.

**Piro relationships with the Spaniards** is a complicated and confusing issue. There are only scant records of the Spanish involvement with the Piro. Most written records are those of the Franciscans, primarily about their ministerial dealings with the people and avoided making any adverse statements about the treatment or politics by the Spanish government.

At times, it appeared there was a harmonious relationship between the Piro and the Spanish

and Franciscans; other times, the heavy-hand of the Spaniards was evident. The Spaniards wanted control over the native populations while the Franciscan friars, for the most part, had compassion for the indigenous people.

This caused a rift between the Franciscans and Spanish governance.

### THE 1680 PUEBLO REVOLT

The Pueblo Revolt was the uprising against Spanish rule and the Catholic church by the indigenous people of New Mexico. There were about 2,900 Spanish settlers between Isleta and Taos pueblos in 1680. The unified actions by the Northern Tewa Pueblos began on August 10 targeting the Spanish soldiers and Franciscan friars. During the conflict, some 2,000–2,500 Pueblo warriors had killed 380 Spanish military and colonists along with 21 of the 38 Franciscan friars. Some colonists not strongly affiliated with the church or Spanish throne were spared, though their villages burned and churches desecrated.

To prevent further bloodshed, *Gov. Antonio de Otermín* sent out rescue parties to escort the threatened colonists and soldiers to Santa Fe. On August 21, Otermín and about 1,000 colonists began their retreat to El Paso del Norte. The warriors had seized many of the horses of the Spanish to hinder their travel, forcing most to retreat on foot. (The pueblo people were not allowed to have horses under the Spanish). In the meantime, *Lt. Gov. Alonso Garcia* had assembled another 1,000 people at Isleta pueblo, of which 400-500 were Tewas and Piro that aggregated at Isleta.

### Piro Involvement

Isleta and the Piro pueblos were not invited to join the revolt nor participated. The accepted theory is the rebels believed the allegiance to Spain and the Church was so strong within the southern pueblos, they could not be trusted. The dwindling pueblo population of Isleta and Socorro to combat the fleeing colonists may also have been a factor. During the Revolt, Isleta and Socorro were seemingly neutral and not harassed by the rebel warriors.

Otermín and his 1,000 refugees arrived at

#### Pueblos Participating in the 1680 Revolt

Taos • Cochiti • Jemez • Nambe • Picuris • Tesuque • San Ildefonso • Ohkay Owengeh Santa Clara • Santo Domingo • San Felipe Santa Ana • Zia • Acoma • Sandia • Puaray Pecos • Galisteo • Zuni • Hopi  
Some Apache assisted the Revolt

*Some pueblos listed above pledged their allegiance though participation was minimal*

#### Pueblos not participating in the Revolt

Piro pueblos • Sandia • Isleta  
Tompito/Salinas pueblos (abandoned by 1680)  
San Marcos • San Cristóbal • La Ciénega

Isleta on September 3 finding the pueblo nearly deserted. Lt. Gov. Garcia had departed Isleta earlier, against orders, with his 1,000 refugees when the Revolt began. On September 7, Otermín overtook Garcia at Alamillo pueblo and promptly had him arrested for desertion to duty. Garcia defended his actions by explaining with no communications since late August, he feared Otermín, the Governor, and all the settlers had been massacred at Santa Fe. In his view, that left him in charge of the retreat. Otermín accepted his defense and exonerated Garcia of all charges. The two leaders then continued on where they joined some of Garcia's refugees and the Piro at Socorro pueblo.

At Socorro, Otermín and Garcia contemplated their next step. Garcia had little food and supplies, Otermín escaped Santa Fe with next to nothing, and the Socorro pueblo could not feed the Spanish refugees for long. Fortunately, a northbound supply caravan along El Camino Real arrived that helped a bit. The decision was not to attempt any reconquest of Santa Fe, but to continue their retreat to the Spanish safe haven at El Paso del Norte.

### The Piro Retreat

Otermín and Garcia, their refugees, and most of the 300-400 Piro from the pueblo departed Socorro. Whether the Piro joined the retreat willingly, fear of Northern Pueblo retribution, or by force is not known, though the later is favored. With no supply wagons and few horses, the Piro men may have been forced on the march to carry

what supplies they had. Others may have gone willingly to keep their families intact and realizing there was little food left in Socorro with harvest a month away.

Traveling along El Camino Real, they arrived at Paraje Fra Cristobal three days later to meet the balance of Garcia's refugees. Every single Spanish and Tiwa/Piro survivor of the Revolt were now congregated in one place. Many were already sick, starving, and suffering from exposure. With the sole relief 120 miles away, the only choice was to push on to El Paso.

On September 14, 1680, the entire force of 2,520 souls departed Paraje Fra Cristobal, the northern gateway to the waterless *despoblado* (desolate, deserted area) passage through the desert. The trek became a grueling and deadly nine-day march. The group arrived at El Paso with 1,946 persons, a loss of 574 souls, about a quarter of the refugees. It is well documented that Otermín called this death march the "Journey of Death," or *Jornada del Muerto* for the hundreds of colonists and Piro that perished on the trail (not the ridiculous promulgated story of an escaped convict named Gruber who died on the trail supposedly around 1670).

**Aftermath of the Revolt** was the Spanish throne suffered their most punishing defeat in all the Americas. Under the leadership of Popé, the participating pueblos organized an ingenious plan that successfully eliminated the Spaniards and Franciscan priests from the pueblo empire.

Worse – it spelled the end of the **Piro Province** in the Rio Abajo region of New Mexico. The remaining 19 New Mexico pueblos well survived and have preserved their cultures to this day. The Piro people never returned to their homeland at Socorro, Senecu, Alamillo, or Sevilleta. One of New Mexico's historic pueblos is missing, though remnants of the Piro still exist and have preserved their culture in the Las Cruces, NM, El Paso, TX, Juarez, Mexico and other areas.

The Piro and Isleta Tewa did not forget their roots. They settled south of El Paso del Norte with the Mansos along the Rio Grande and established new villages. They named their new homes in honor of their original homeland. The

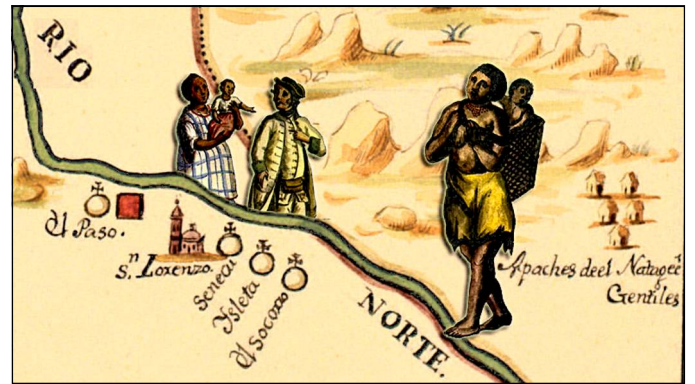


Image from University of Texas, Austin

### An historic map showing the relocated pueblos of Senecu, Ysleta and Socorro south of El Paso

Tewa from Isleta built the pueblo of **Ysleta** del Sur; the Piro built new villages they named Nuestra Señora del **Socorro** and **Senecu** del Sur. These areas are occupied today by descendants of the Piro people.

**Post Revolt.** With little argument, the treatment of the pueblos by the Spaniards was not all that honorable. The Franciscans converted many of the pueblo people by preaching Christian values with sincerity and a compassionate heart. The Spanish soldiers, on the other hand, mistreated the natives with an oppressive heavy hand, insisting on obedience to the Church and a king they never saw. They punished or killed those who continued to practice tribal beliefs or customs, while the soldiers went unpunished for acts of thievery, seizing their lands and crops, slave labor, and abusing the pueblo women. The Franciscans worked hard to separate themselves from the misdeeds of the soldiers (no separation of church and state in those days), but the pueblo people saw them all as Spanish invaders corrupting their lives. The hypocrisy came to a boil in 1680.

Popé organized the Revolt by a promise that once the Spaniards were gone and all traces of their god and churches erased, their traditional gods would return prosperity to the pueblos. This did not happen. The ongoing drought and failed crops continued. The Apache continued their ruthless attacks. Popé postured himself as the leader of all the pueblos, even demanded obeisance as if a god himself. He quickly lost favor with the pueblos.



Popé died in 1688. It is claimed the circumstances of his death is a sacred story known only by the pueblos.

The Spanish returned to New Mexico in 1692 under *Don Diego de Vargas* followed by a new influx of colonists. Learning from the Revolt, de Vargas treated the pueblos with more compassion and understanding, though not without periodic incidences. The Franciscan friars restored Catholicism to the pueblo people though became more tolerant by allowing them to exercise their tribal beliefs and celebrations. Some pueblos learned to continue their religious practices and ceremonies “under ground” to avoid criticism from the Church or the colonists – a practice that continues within some pueblos to this day to preserve their ancient cultures.

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## THE PIRO TODAY

There is still much to learn about the Piro, the Tiwa and Mansos. The Piro had no written language. What is known is based on spotty secular and ecclesiastical documents, the results of limited archaeological surveys or excavations, and seemingly little interest in the Piro Province by present day researchers except a few.

The Piro and Tiwa people are documented New Mexico puebloans; the Mansos are documented original inhabitants of the El Paso del Norte region. The historical, archaeological and academic research on these groups are scattered over dozens of institutions. There is no central clearinghouse for easy access to these documents. This should be a future endeavor of the combined Piro-Manso-Tiwa tribe to form a local clearinghouse of historical documents, oral history, and artifacts to keep the tribal knowledge intact and pertinent documents accessible.

## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

**Population.** The written record from Coronado (1540) through the mid-1600s all indicate the population of the Piro Province was about 5,000 to 10,000 people. Archaeologist Michael

Marshall estimates the Piro population towards the end of the Pueblo III era, based on the size of the pueblos before Spanish Contact, to be at least 7,000 people. Yet, by the time of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, only a few hundred Piro can be accounted for. Where did all the Piro go?

Some records and oral history indicate an unknown number of Piro left for the pueblos at Isleta, Acoma, Cieneguilla, the Hopi and others to escape Spanish rule in the Province.

It is also known many native people in the “New World” perished from small pox and other European diseases introduced by the Spaniards in the 1600s. However, there are no written records indicating any widespread death from disease in the Piro pueblos.

Perhaps others fled from the river pueblos to the uplands or far away to build settlements not yet discovered to later integrate with more contemporary towns. Or, other undocumented migration away from the Rio Grande.

Oral history of the Piro could contain the reasons for this large decline in population prior to the Pueblo Revolt to add to the history of the Piro people.

**Spanish Relationships** with the Piro is also not known with any certainty. No doubt, it differed over different periods of time. This is where existing oral history is very important. What was the attitude of the Piro towards the Spanish government officials, the colonists, and the Franciscan priests? Is there a legacy of intermarriage between the colonists and the Piro prior to the Revolt? Were the Piro enslaved to build the Socorro mission or other activities, or built willingly? The Piro point of view on these questions would be a valuable contribution to the understanding of the Spanish interactions.

**The Piro Retreat** is another historical mystery. It is not known precisely why the Piro retreated with the Spanish to El Paso del Norte. What is the Piro point of view? Were they forced to accompany the Spanish? Did they go willingly? Did they fear retribution from the Northern Pueblos, even though puebloans themselves? Why did they never return? The Piro perspective on this is important.

**Oral History** of the Piro-Mansos-Tiwa people is very important to document the history of these recognized native groups. Much of the history of the Piro people during Spanish times, the Revolt, and relocation to the El Paso del Norte region are written from the Spanish, the Church, the Anglo, or academic points of view. The Piro point of view is not well represented and also needs to be preserved for the historical record.

There is unknown recorded history passed by the elders from generation to generation that needs to be transcribed. These important stories get diluted over the generations. While oral history is not always accurate, it still needs to be preserved to archive for future generations and research, and to present the Piro point of view and knowledge. It will also help corroborate new future discoveries.

**NEW MEXICO PUEBLO  
LANGUAGE GROUPS**

**Keres or Keresan Language Pueblos:**

Acoma	San Felipe
Cochiti	Santa Ana
Laguna	Santo Domingo
Zia	

**Tewa Language Pueblos:**

Nambe	Ohkay Owengeh
Pojoaque	Santa Clara
San Ildefonso	Tesuque

**Northern Tiwa**

Taos	Sandia
Picuris	Tigua

**Southern Tiwa**

Isleta	Piro
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**Tompiro Dialect**

Isleta	<i>Chillili</i>
<i>Quarai</i>	<i>Tajique</i>
<i>Abo</i>	<i>Las Humanas</i>
<i>Tabira</i>	

**A Few Facts about the Piro Nation**

1. The Piro had no written language and thus left no record of their culture, religion, or manner of life. What little is known or assumed is based on the limited excavations at several Piro pueblos.
2. The first written descriptions of the Piro are derived from Spanish and Franciscan journals and other documents. Early documents (1540-1600) are quite limited in scope, improving in content and details in the 1600-1680 era.
3. Dating the building and occupation phases of the pueblos is problematic. Only a few pueblos have received any excavation work for diagnostic artifacts (rafters for tree ring dating, animal bones or corn husks for carbon dating methods, etc.).
4. Most Piro site dating is based on the presence and style of pottery. This is also problematic as dating must be compared to other cultures and most Piro sites contain intrusive pottery from non-Piro cultures. Some archaeologists have expended tremendous effort to classify the dozens of pottery types and styles to establish the dating cited herein. It is the dating widely accepted by most.
5. The presence of intrusive pottery and other items (such as sea shell jewelry) does show the Piro had a developed trade network with other cultures, some quite distant.
6. Piro pueblos were mostly adobe or jacal structures built on masonry (rock) foundations. Over the centuries, the adobe walls have melted and collapsed, leaving only the ground level masonry foundations showing the extent of the pueblo. In some cases, the Piro pueblos are nearly completely covered by dirt and sand. This is unlike the rock built structures that remain at the Salinas Tampiro pueblos of Quarai, Abó, or Gran Quivera, or the masonry pueblos of Chaco Canyon or Mesa Verde.
7. Upon Spanish Contact, the population of the Piro was estimated at between 5,000 to 10,000. At the time of the 1680 Pueblo Revolt, less than 1,000 Piro are accounted for.
8. It is known many native people perished due to small pox and other European introduced diseases. The Piro population seemed to decline in the mid-1600s, though the contribution of diseases vs. other factors is not known.