

PREHISTORIC SOUTHWEST POTTERY TYPES AND WARES:
DESCRIPTIONS AND COLOR ILLUSTRATIONS

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Mesa Verde White Ware (AD 550-1300)

Part of Mesa Verde White Ware has also been known as San Juan White Ware. This ware is distributed in the northern tributaries of the San Juan River from the Animas River west to the Colorado River and north to the Dolores River. In the later types it is also present down Chinle Wash to Canyon de Chelly and in the Chaco Canyon area. The early types of this ware were tempered mainly with crushed igneous rock. Later crushed potsherds were used as temper over most of the region. After the Chapin Black-on-white period, nearly all of the vessels of this ware were slipped and polished. The types of this ware are mainly distinguished by the painted design styles. The early types are decorated with mineral paint, but later this changed to organic pigments. During Basketmaker III and Pueblo I lead glaze paint is fairly common in the eastern range of this ware. All of the types of this ware are constructed by coiling and scraping and fired in a reducing atmosphere. Early rims are thin and tapered but later become round, and square rims with ticking are predominant in Mesa Verde Black-on-white. The surface of this ware is white to gray. The forms of this ware include bowls, jars, ollas, dippers, ladles, seed jars, canteens, pitchers, gourd-shaped bottles, a few effigies, and mugs and kiva jars in the later types. There are 9 types listed for this ware in Colton's 1965 *List of Pottery Type*. (Major sources: Breternitz et al. 1974; Wilson and Blinman 1991)

Chapin Black-on-white, synonym: Twin Trees Black-on-white, (AD 575-900)

The surface of this type is medium to light gray and it has no slip. It is scraped and smoothed, but not polished. The surface is quite rough. The mineral black paint has a reddish tint and is present on bowl interiors and ladle interiors and handles. There is some glaze paint in the eastern area of this type. The predominant temper is crushed rock with some sand in the east. The predominant form is the bowl, there are also large jars with long necks, pitchers, half gourd ladles, ladles and seed jars. Mugs first appear in small numbers. Designs are most commonly elaborations on single or double lines radiating outward in the field of decoration in straight, arced or zigzag paths. Elements include triangles, dashes or ticks, dots, hooks and combinations of these. Designs often indicate a relationship to basket weaving designs. Small units are often in lines between narrow parallel lines. Small circles are common in the bowl bottoms. The brushwork on Chapin Black-on-white is often carelessly executed. Chapin Black-on-white is very similar to La Plata Black-on-white and Lino Black-on-white except they have sand temper, and La Plata has organic paint. This common type is distributed north of the San Juan River from the Animas River west to the Colorado River.

Piedra Black-on-white synonym: Pueblo I Black-on-white, (AD 775-900)

The common surface color of this type is light gray, but it may be white. Piedra is most often unslipped, but slips are more common in the eastern area of its manufacture. The surface is smoothed and sometimes polished. The temper in this type is crushed rock. Bowls are the predominant shape, there are also jars, pitchers, gourd-shaped jars, seed jars, scoops, ladles and rarely effigies. The black paint is mineral on an organic binder. Glaze paints are present, particularly in the eastern area. The paint color is black to reddish brown. Band layout of designs is rare. Designs are similar to Chapin Black-on-white except larger and bolder and painted as a unit rather

than elaboration. Isolated units placed symmetrically are common. Common elements include lines or solids ticked with dashes or dots, narrow wavy lines painted over straight lines, bordered areas filled with dots, and small solid hooked or flagged triangles. Rarely there are unobliterated coils on bowl exteriors. Piedra Black-on-white is distributed from the Piedra River to the Four Corners area.

Cortez Black-on-white (AD 900-1000+)

The surface color of Cortez is grayish white to chalky white. Almost all of these vessels are scraped, polished and slipped white. The temper is crushed igneous rock with a little crushed sherd. Bowls are the predominant form. Other forms are jars, ollas, canteens, pitchers, seed jars, and half gourd ladles. Eccentric forms are less common than previously. Black mineral decorations are on bowl interiors, dipper interiors and handles, exteriors of jars, pitchers and ollas above the greatest diameter. Mineral paint is in an organic medium. Many new elements, combinations of elements and motifs appear in this type. New common elements are narrow lines, dots, scrolls triangles squiggle hatching, and straight hatching. Interlocking scrolls are found in bands and panels. Elaborated line decorations are frequent and narrow parallel lines make up much of the decorated area. A few bowl exteriors are corrugated. Cortez Black-on-white is similar to Red Mesa Black-on-white. There is an overlap of the designs on Cortez Black-on-white and Mancos Black-on-white and some sherds cannot be separated into one or the other. The distribution of this type is from the Durango area to the Abajo Mountains in Utah and from the San Juan River north to the Dolores River.

Mancos Black-on-white synonym: Chaco Pueblo III Black-on-white, (AD 980-1200)

Crushed sherds are the most common temper, but crushed rock is found in up to 20% of the specimens. Sand temper is infrequent. The surface color is white to slate gray and the surface is well polished in most cases. Surfaces are slipped with a smooth white slip except on bowl exteriors. About 5% of the bowl exteriors are corrugated and basket impressions are also found on the exteriors of a few conical bowls. There are a great variety of design elements with triangles being the most common. Triangles are arranged in a variety of patterns. Layouts may be overall, segmented or in broad bands. Elements are bold and large. Designs are not framed and usually go to the rim. The forms are similar to those of Cortez Black-on-white with a decrease in pitchers, effigies and squash pots. Other forms of this type are bowls, jars, ollas, mugs and pitchers. Half gourd ladles are most common but strap and tubular handles are also present. This type is found north of the San Juan River to the Dolores River and west from the Animas River to the Abajo Mountains in Utah.

McElmo Black-on-white synonym: Proto-Mesa Verde Black-on-white, (AD 1075-1300)

The surface color of this type is grayish white to white, and it is well polished, slipped white and often crackled. Crushed sherds are the predominant temper but rock, particularly in the La Plata area, is also common, and there is sand temper in areas south of the San Juan River. Temper is not a good diagnostic characteristic for Mc Elmo Black-on-white. Most of the paint is organic, but mineral is present west of Mesa Verde. Decorations are painted on bowl interiors and occasionally on exteriors. Other forms have decorations on the exteriors. The decorations are transitional between Mancos Black-on-white and Mesa Verde Black-on-white. There are fewer

triangles than in Mancos. Figures made of heavy solid lines are common. The designs on this type may be seen as poorly executed Mesa Verde Black-on-white designs. Bowl exteriors and olla jar necks are rarely corrugated. Bowls are the most common form. Narrow necked ollas, seed jars and pitchers are more common than in Mesa Verde Black-on-white and mugs and kiva jars are less frequent. Mc Elmo is distributed from the San Juan to the Dolores River and from the Durango area to the Colorado River. It is also found down Chinle Wash to Canyon de Chelly and in the Chaco Canyon area. The latter is sometimes called "Chaco-Mc Elmo."

Mesa Verde Black-on-white (AD 1080-1300)

This is the final white ware type made in the northern San Juan region. It was made to AD 1300 when this area was abandoned. Crushed potsherd is the most common temper, crushed rock, sandstone and sand are often present. Many vessels have combinations of two or more of these materials. The surface color is white with some pearl gray. Most vessels have a thick white crazed slip and are well polished. There are a variety of forms with mugs and kiva jars more common than in Mc Elmo, and dippers, water jugs, seed jars and pitchers less common. Designs are on bowl interiors and exteriors also on olla necks, dipper and mug exteriors and handles. The black paint is organic except west of Mesa Verde where it is usually mineral. The typical square rims are usually ticked. Painted designs are well organized and integrated. Almost all elements are in a symmetrical pattern. Bands are a common layout and are often framed by narrow and/or wide lines. Hatching is used as background filler. Round dots are very common. Some specific motifs are opposed stepped triangles, opposed ticked triangles, opposed plain triangles, groups of parallel lines, interlocking scrolls, zigzag lines and frets. The designs are most similar to McElmo Black-on-white but are more carefully planned and executed. The overall designs on Mesa Verde Black-on-white are very distinctive and easily identified. This type is found between Durango, Colorado and the Colorado River and north from the San Juan River to the Dolores River, also down Chinle Wash to Canyon de Chelly and a variety in Chaco Canyon.

White Mesa Black-on-white, synonym: Piedra Black-on-white: White Mesa Variety, (Ca. AD 825-925)

This type was originally defined as a variety of Piedra Black-on-white. Its design styles are very similar to Kana'a Black on-white to the south and it is contemporary with Cortez Black-on-white. Most of the specimens are painted with organic paint or mineral paint with an organic binder. It is polished and sometimes slipped and the surface is consistently blue-white. The forms are mainly bowls but there are also jugs, seed jars, and pitchers. The designs are laid out in a band with thin framing lines that have attached triangles that are often ticked or flagged. Squares are sometimes filled with dots. White Mesa Black-on-white is distributed in the area west of Montezuma Creek in southeastern Utah.

Galisteo Black-on-white (AD 1300-1400)

This type is found southeast of Santa Fe, New Mexico in a number of prehistoric pueblos. This pottery type is very similar to Mesa Verde Black-on-white and it may have been made by people who immigrated to this area from Mesa Verde in the early 14th century. It has crushed sherd temper and the white slip is thick and finely crazed. The surface color is light gray to blue gray and the paint is carbon. This type usually

has a broad upper framing line. The rims are usually square and ticked like those on Mesa Verde Black-on-white. The forms are mostly bowl but jars, seed jars and pitchers have also been recovered. Mugs and kiva jars are missing from this type. The designs are similar to Mesa Verde Black-on-white but lack the variety.

Magdalena Black-on-white

Further down the Rio Grande this type has been found at Gallinas Springs near Magdalena, New Mexico. It is similar in most characteristics to Mesa Verde Black-on-white. As with Galisteo Black on white, Magdalena may have been made by immigrants from the Mesa Verde area.

Mesa Verde Polychrome (Ca. AD 1200-1300)

This rare type has been found in the northern San Juan area and is not well described. It may be an unintentional mixing of mineral and carbon paint in the designs. The sherd illustrated here appears to have an area of gray clay outlined by black mineral paint. It is too rare to be of value to archaeologists.