Investigating Activities at a Spanish Ranch in 17th-Century New Mexico

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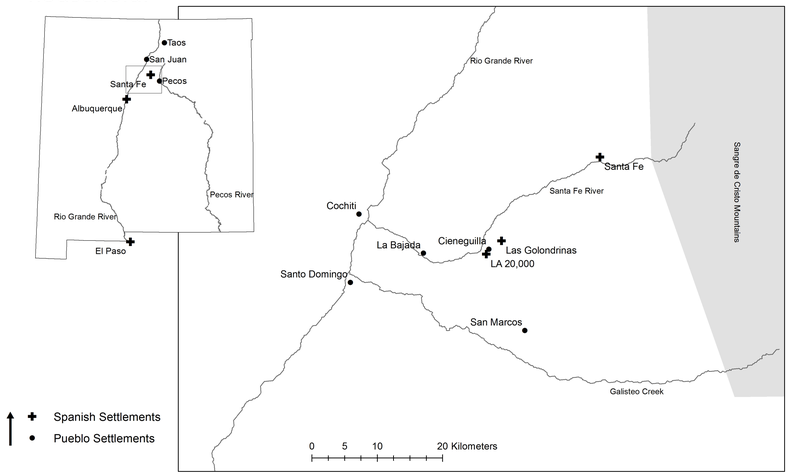
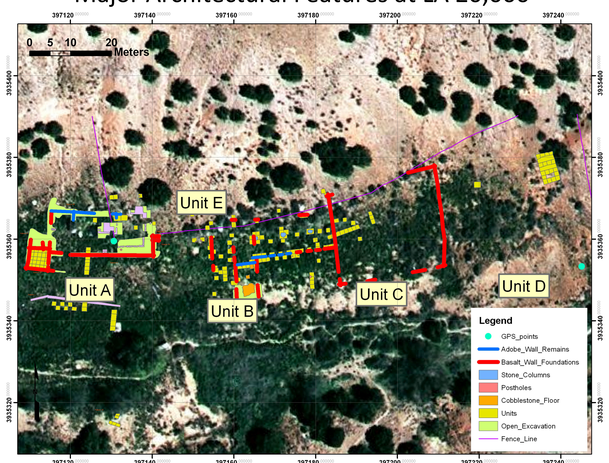
In 17th-century New Mexico, colonists' households were an important location for ethnogenesis as colonists and indigenous peoples labored together. LA 20,000 is a complex Spanish ranch with extensive architecture and material culture. It clearly housed at least one extended family and probably servants of various ethnicities. While we know the economy of this ranch was based on farming, we know little about how space was divided and used. We explore the distribution of various artifacts to understand the nature of the structures and the types of activities that occurred in this multi-ethnic household.



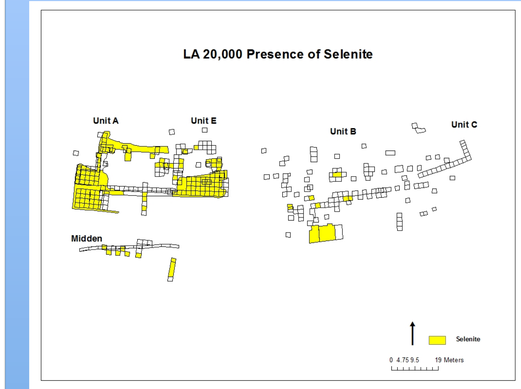
Major Architectural Features at LA 20,000



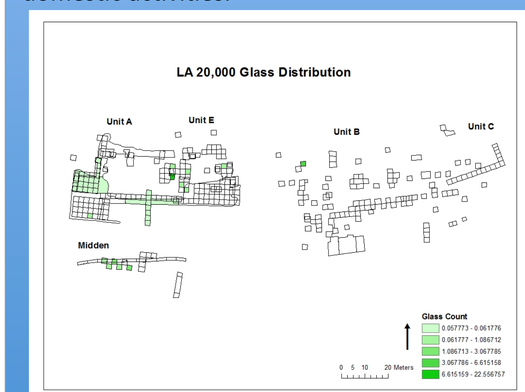
Excavations at LA 20,000 revealed 2 structures (Unit A,E and Unit B), a corral (Unit C), and a midden south of Unit A. Unit A, E is clearly a house, but the nature of Unit B is not well known. Architectural evidence suggests it is a large 2-story structure perhaps with columns, possibly connected to the corral. Its proximity to the corral and some deposits of manure suggest that it is a barn.

What is the nature of the structures? What activities were undertaken there? How do they compare?

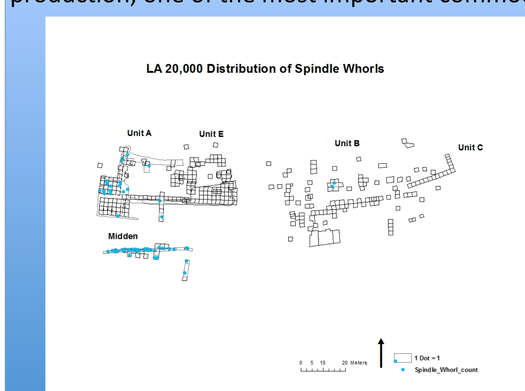
Selenite was used for windowpanes and whitewash. We expect selenite to be associated primarily with domestic structures.



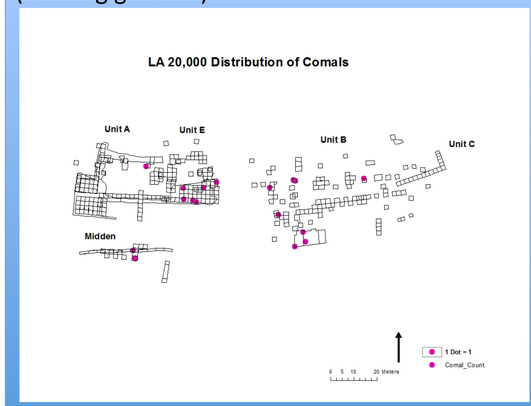
In the 17th century, glass was rare because it was imported, and we expect it to be associated with domestic activities.



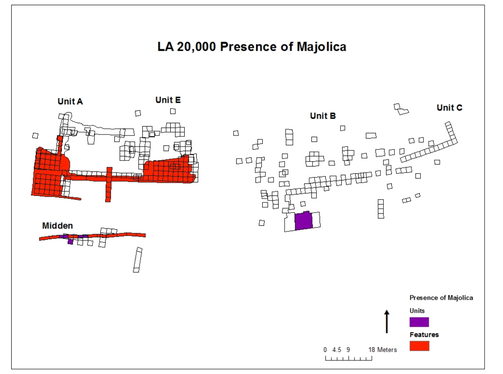
Spindle whorls provide an indication of textile production, one of the most important commodities.



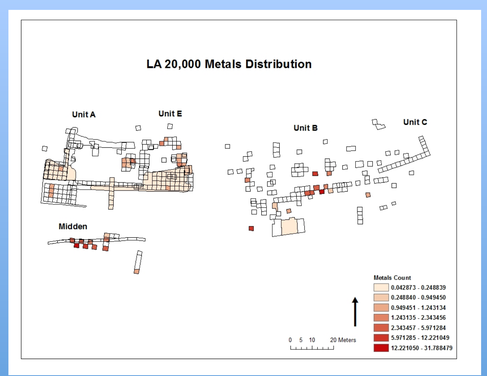
Evidence of cooking – distribution of *comales* (cooking griddles)

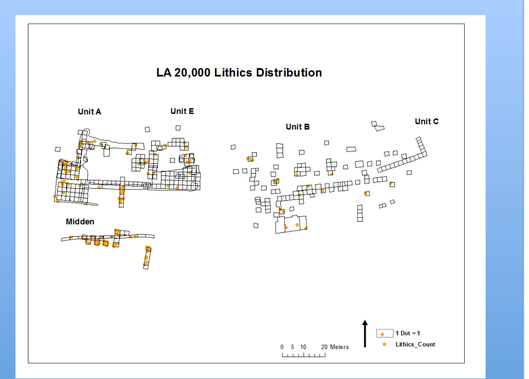


Evidence of food consumption – location of imported *majolica* ceramics



The distribution of *comales* suggests that food may be being prepared in both structures, but the majority of *majolicas* were recovered from Unit A, suggesting elite or more public consumption.





Metals, also imported, are distributed throughout Unit A, but there are concentrations in Unit B. Lithics are fairly widely distributed in Unit A, less so in Unit B. To the extent that metal and lithics illustrate Spanish and indigenous peoples' activities, respectively, there are a mix of people laboring in both structures.

Conclusions: The house (Unit A, E) is clearly evident in the distribution of selenite (used for windows and whitewash), glass, and *majolica* ceramics used for high status food consumption. Textile production, probably by women, also seems primarily related to the house. Unit B, identified previously as a barn because of its proximity to the corral and layer of manure, has some properties that suggest domestic activities such as food preparation were undertaken there. This may indicate that servants or laborers were housed in Unit B along with livestock, a practice that is common in colonial or plantation contexts. This possible blending of domestic and specialized activities in Unit B, as well as the blending of indigenous and Spanish tool technologies throughout both structures point to the complexity of the relationships between colonizers and indigenous peoples in early colonial New Mexico.