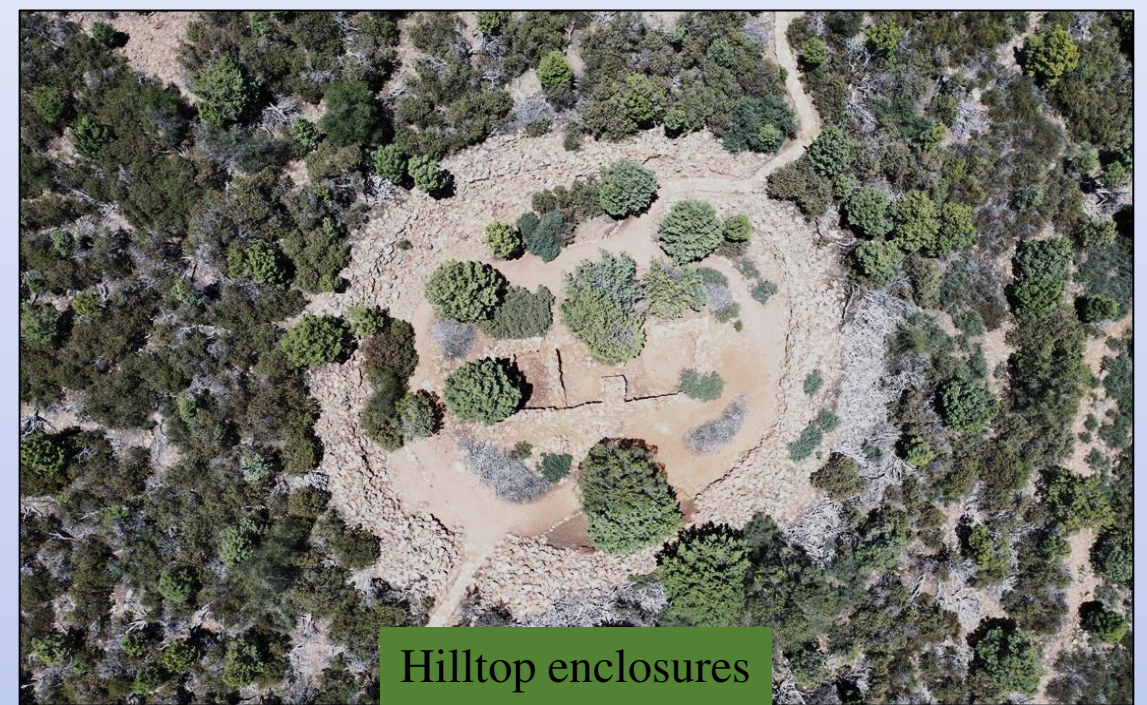
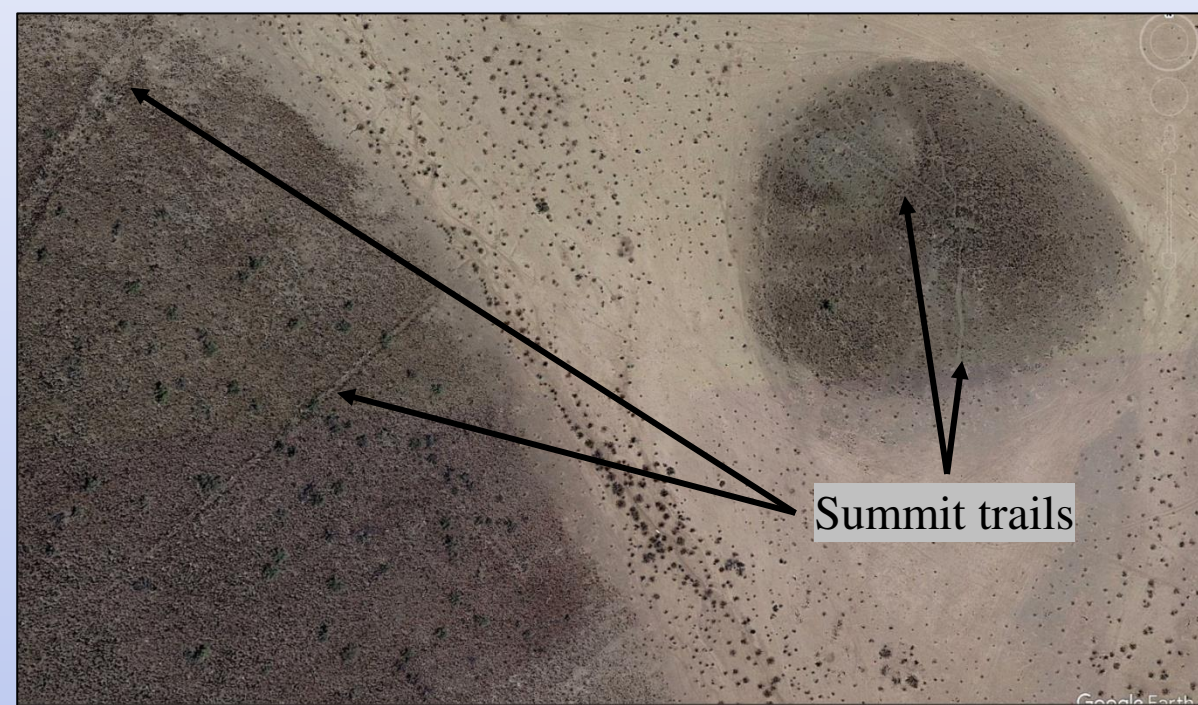


DECORATIVE ARCHITECTURE IN THE TRANSITION ZONE OF CENTRAL ARIZONA

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This report is a small portion of a larger study of landscape three types of built ceremonial spaces that occur below the Mogollon Rim, beyond the Colorado Plateau: summit trails, racetracks and hilltop enclosures.

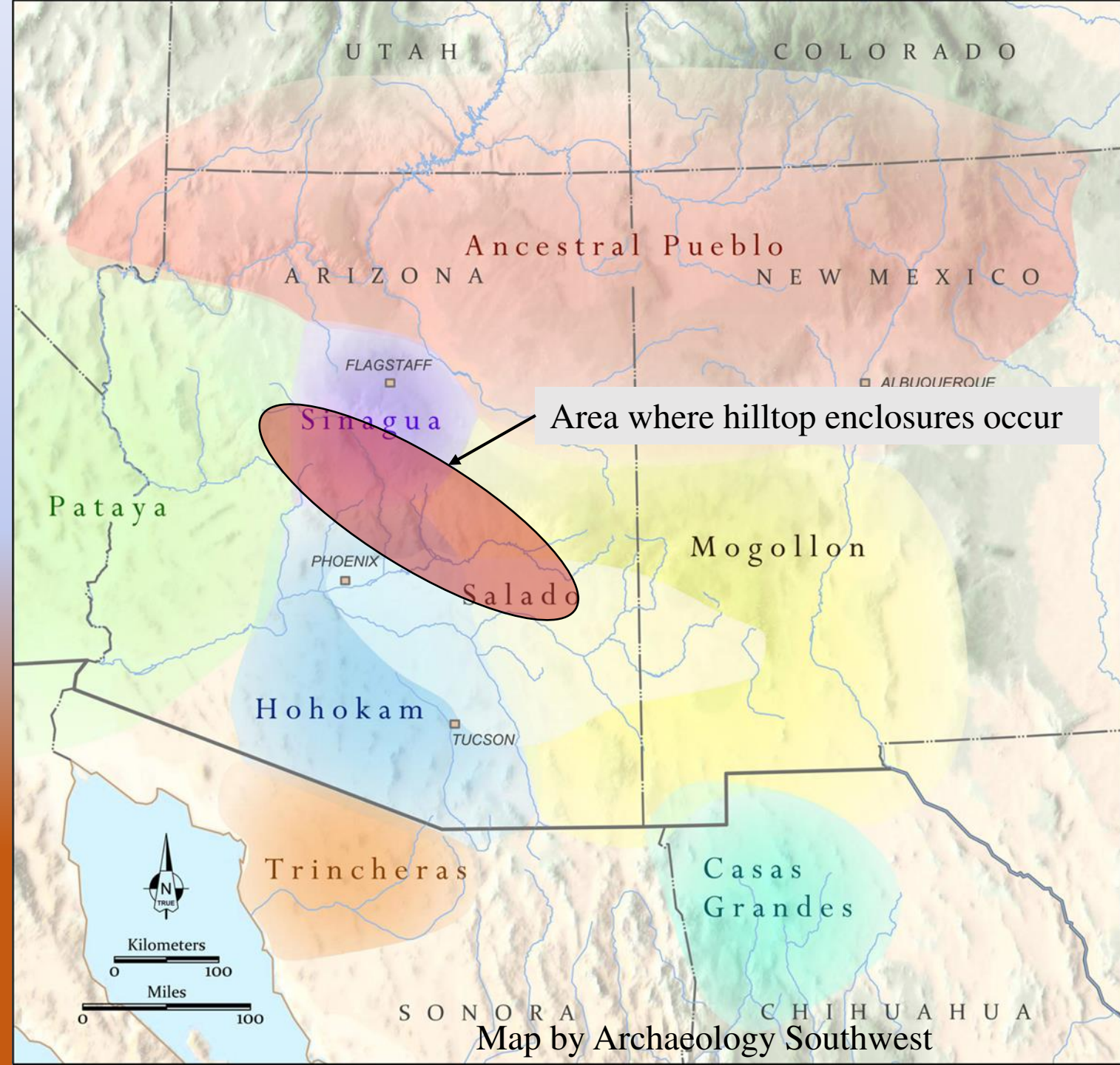
This report today is about one aspect of the architecture of hilltop enclosures—decorative architectural elements.

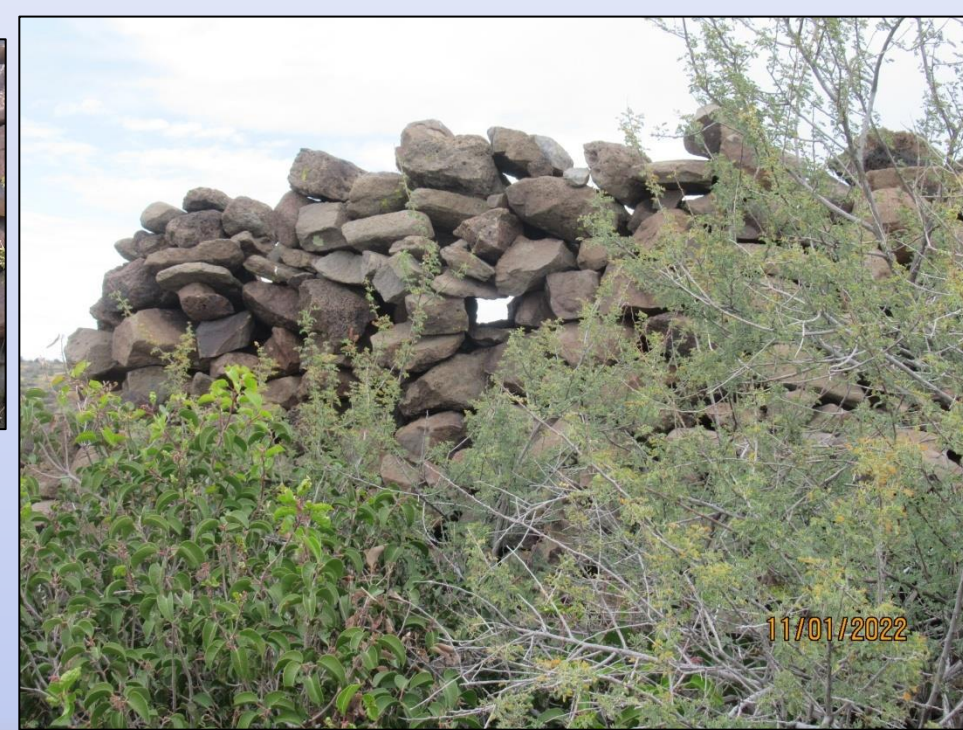
Hilltop enclosures occur in central Arizona; they are located primarily within the Arizona physiographic Transition Zone. This is a rugged area of complex topography covering about one fifth of the state; it contains over thirty mountain ranges and thousands of hills and valleys. Hundreds of the hilltops in this area are crowned by prehistoric masonry structures.

The hilltop sites addressed in this talk are present in an area that stretches roughly from the Chino Valley on the NW to Globe on the SE, from Cave Creek to the top of the Mogollon Rim.

These sites are found across multiple cultural areas: Patayan on the far NW, Sinagua, Cohonina, Prescott Culture, the general Central Arizona Tradition area, and occurring in the Mogollon/Salado cultural areas on the SE with Hohokam to the south.

These sites were built as used from roughly AD 800 through AD 1070/1100.





Hilltop sites were originally recorded as forts

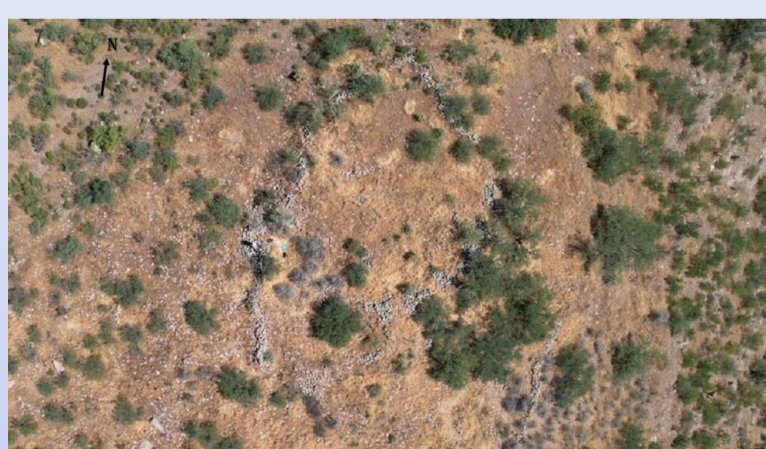
As Euroamericans moved into the area soon after the Civil War and engaged in war with the Apache and other indigenous people they saw every wall on a hilltop as a fort and named them accordingly with names such as Indian Fort, Fort Mountain, etc.

Archaeologists followed suit and generated a large body of literature and scholarship attempting to figure out who was fighting with whom, why, and when: Haas and Creamer (1996); Lambert (2002); LeBlanc (1999, 2000); LeBlanc and Rice (2001); Solometo (2006); Spoerl (1979); van Waarden (1984); Wilcox and Haas (1994); Wilcox et al. (2000); Wilcox et al. (2001a, 2001b).

More recent work has suggested a variety of functions for these sites, Abbott and Spielman (2014), Kwiatkowski (2021). Kellett (2022), Schaafsma et al. (2023) including ceremonial centers, shrines, hunting lookouts/blinds, one or two may be a eagle hunting structures, some were reused as residential locations.



Circular



Triangular



Rectangular-Divided-Open-sided



Oval

Shapes of Enclosures: Variable. Shapes are determined by local topography as well as by the builders. Current research has not found any correlation between regions and forms. It appears that all shapes can be found throughout the region in which these sites occur. Some structures occur as large walls that enclose no space.



Rectangular-Open-sided



Rectangular / Square



Irregular—minimally modified
bedrock forms exterior



Irregular—following bedrock



Decorative Elements of the Architecture



Decorative architecture appears in some of these sites, the decorative elements take multiple forms, including:

- Striped walls
- boulder/cobble walls capped with flagstone
- Bi-colored walls
- Polychrome walls
- Connecting cobbles placed over bedrock or large natural boulders
- Crenulations
- Monoliths, natural and placed
- Bedrock shapes incorporated into built walls



Striped walls have several variations:

Stripes made of contrasting colored stones such as this dramatic white stripe in a dark gray wall.



Striped walls:

Stripes are also made using different thicknesses of stone of the same color as the larger stones.



10/05/2022

Striped walls:

Stripes are also made using flagstone the same color as cobbles forming the bulk of the wall.

This results in a texture stripe rather than colored stripe.



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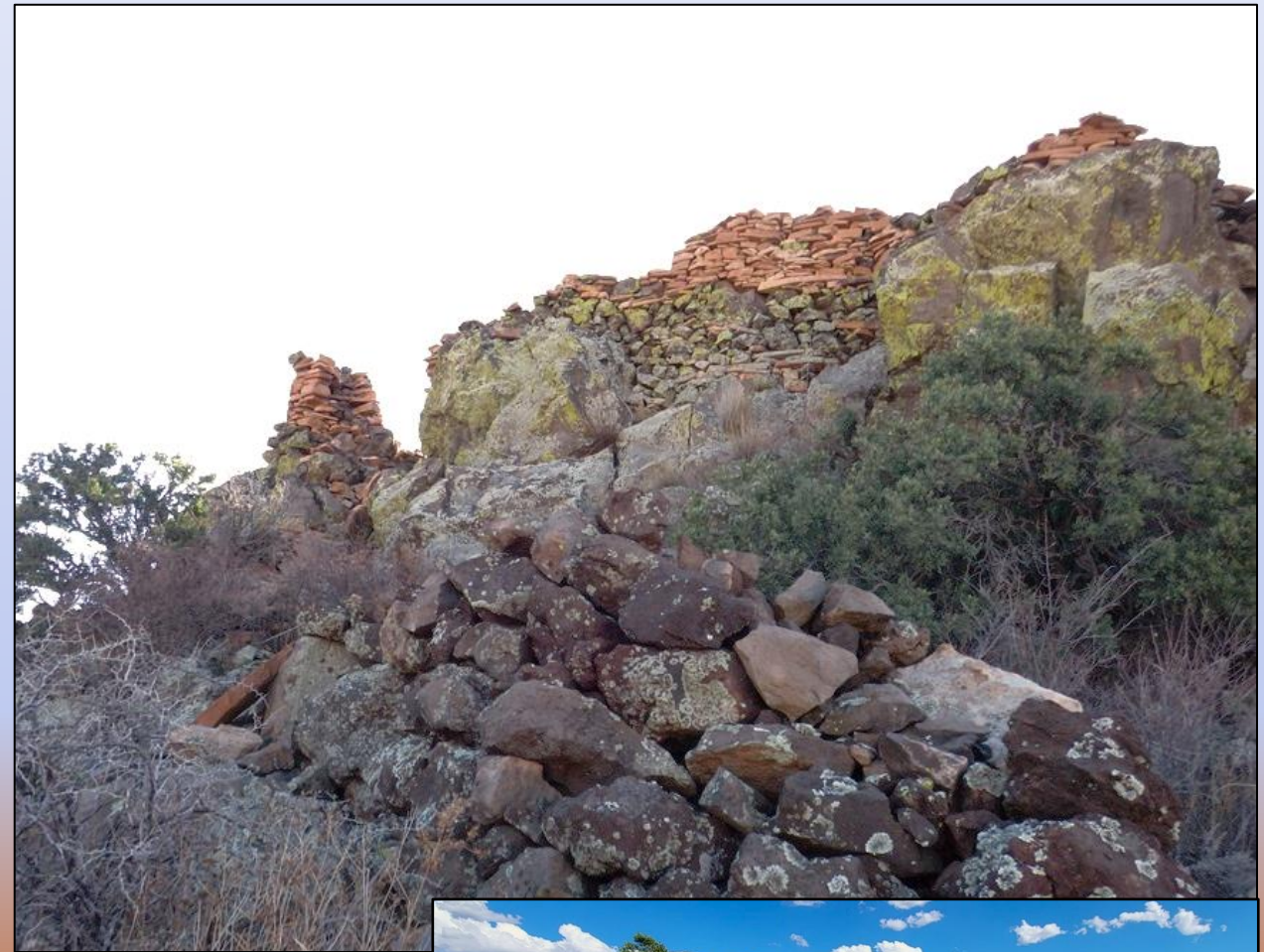
Variation on the striped walls:

Using the same technique as the striped walls, a layer of flagstone is used to cap the wall rather than forming a stripe within the wall.



Bicolored walls:

Upper half of upper rooms constructed of red sandstone cobbles forming a striking contrast with the local black basalt.



Polychrome walls:

To date we know of one site where three colors of cobble were used to construct a room. Black basalt, red sandstone, and white/light gray limestone.

Unfortunately, none of the wall that incorporated the colored stones remains standing so we don't know what the design would have been.





In all cases the primary walls were built of stone available at the tops of the hills they are constructed on. In the sites with multicolored stone, the colored stone is not available on the hilltops and had to be transported up to the top. In most cases the colored stones are available near the foot of the hills, however in one case the nearest colored stone we could find was over a half mile from the foot of the hill. In all cases several tons of stone were necessary to complete the decorations.



Connecting cobbles:

In several sites where large boulders and bedrock are incorporated into the walls rows of cobbles are placed over the tops of the natural stone. In these cases, the walls have not simply tumbled down leaving the last few cobbles, rather that these stones were placed as a single or double row above the natural stone.

These stones provide continuity of construction between the two sides of the natural stone as well as serving a possible decorative function.



Crenulations:

Two sites have walls with crenulated tops. Despite their similarity to Medieval European castle walls, there is no evidence to suggest that these were built for defense. The crenulations appear to have been built to add a 'texture' to the wall tops, perhaps to intergrade the wall with the sky as viewed from below.



Built monoliths:

One site has two monoliths built into its walls; one a large ~two-meter-tall slab, the other a ~1.5-meter-tall columnar stone built into the wall.



Bedrock monoliths incorporated into walls:

In some sites where unusual bedrock occurred it was incorporated into the general layout of the wall construction.

In this example, the wall connecting two standing bedrock pillars is fully within the larger enclosing wall, yet a wall was constructed to incorporate these stones into the built environment of the site. This is similar to the connecting cobbles, which bring the natural stone into the built.



Conclusions:

Hilltop enclosures appear to be an architectural result of an emergent ideology that resulted from a mixture of Hohokam culture and the various cultures that existed in northern Arizona. For three centuries between roughly AD 800 and AD 1100, when Hohokam people lived amongst people of the Transition Zone, hilltop enclosures were built and appear to have been utilized by all cultural groups in the area. The fact that these sites are somewhat isolated may speak to an agreed upon shared sacred space separated from habitation spaces.

Many hilltop enclosures incorporated decorative architectural elements. These elements suggest that quite a bit of care and planning was integral to the process of construction of these features.

This extra planning and work is emphasized by the quantity of rock hauled to and up the hills to create the colored stripes and walls seen in a number of these features.

Our work is ongoing and further reports will incorporate more information on these intriguing sites.

Thank you.