CHAPTER 3
CULTURE HISTORY

Introduction

The area encompassing the Colorado Piedmont and adjacent Front Range foothills has been extensively researched for over 50 years. This section is intended to review and update briefly the more important aspects of previous work; the results of excavations are emphasized over information derived from surveys. The information is presented within the framework of the taxonomic scheme provided in the most recent prehistoric research context for the Platte River Basin (Gilmore et al. 1999). Four major stages of prehistoric occupation are defined: Paleoindian, Archaic, Late Prehistoric, and Protohistoric. Taxa of shorter duration, termed periods, are identified within the respective stages. However, it is acknowledged that the Ridgegate site is located near the boundary between the Platte River Basin and Arkansas River Basin context areas (Gilmore et al. 1999; Zier and Kalasz 1999). Information from both documents is therefore appropriate for discussion in portions of this chapter. Initially it is emphasized that the culture taxonomies employed to divide and organize prehistory within these two research context areas differ significantly in the presentation of Paleoindian and Late Prehistoric stage manifestations (Table 1). The Archaic taxa are identical in their age affiliation and terminology.

Paleoindian Stage

The Paleoindian stage in the Platte River Basin research context is divided into three major periods: Clovis (12,040 to 9750 B.C.), Folsom (11,340 to 8720 B.C.) and the Plano or Late Paleoindian period (10,850 to 5740 B.C.) (Chenault 1999a:3). Identical Paleoindian taxa are defined in the Arkansas River Basin research context, but the entire sequence begins a few thousand years later (Zier 1999a:73-99; see Table 1 below).

This particular stage is defined by the earliest evidence of human occupation in eastern Colorado. Paleoindian adaptation corresponds with ameliorating climatic conditions attendant with the late Pleistocene and early Holocene. The traditional view of the Paleoindian pattern emphasizes a fully nomadic culture that is tied to the migration of large game, most notably extinct "megafauna," e.g., mammoth and *bison antiquus*. Recent studies, however, indicate that Paleoindians also exploited smaller game, fish, and waterfowl, although on a much reduced scale (Kuehn 1998; Walker 1982; Wheat 1979; Wilmsen and Roberts 1978). Perhaps the most readily recognized stone tools in the Americas are associated with the Paleoindian stage, specifically the large, lanceolate, projectile points that are often fluted (i.e., large, longitudinal flake scars extending from the base of the point along its centerline) and consistently well-crafted. Paleoindian lithic assemblages are composed predominantly of flaked stone tools believed to have been used primarily for hide and meat processing. Population densities were low during the Paleoindian stage, and therefore sites (particularly camp sites) dating to this period occur less frequently than those of the subsequent Archaic, Late Prehistoric, and Protohistoric stages.

Table 1. Colorado Research Context Culture Taxonomies

DATE BC/AD	Northern Colorado River Basin Context[1]	Platte River Basin Context[2]	Arkansas River Basin Context[3]	Rio Grande Basin Context[4]	Southern Colorado River Basin Context[5]
12,000 BC	PALEOINDIAN ERA: Clovis tradition, Goshen tradition, Folsom tradition, Foothill-Mtn. tradition	PALEOINDIAN STAGE: Clovis period, Folsom period, Plano period	PALEOINDIAN STAGE: Clovis period, Folsom period, Plano period	PALEOINDIAN STAGE: Clovis, Goshen, Folsom, Late Paleoindian Co-traditions	PALEOINDIAN PERIOD: ?, Early Paleoindian, Late Paleoindian
11,000					
10,000					
9,000					
8,000					
7,000					
6,000	ARCHAIC ERA: Pioneer period	ARCHAIC STAGE: Early Archaic period	ARCHAIC STAGE: Early Archaic period	ARCHAIC STAGE	ARCHAIC PERIOD
5,000	Settlement period				
4,000					
3,000	Transitional period	Middle Archaic period	Middle Archaic period		
2,000					
1,000	Terminal period	Late Archaic period	Late Archaic period		BASKETMAKER II
0 BC/AD	FORMATIVE ERA: Anasazi Tradition, Gateway Tradition, Fremont Tradition, Aspen Tradition	LATE PREHISTORIC STAGE: Early Ceramic period	LATE PREHISTORIC STAGE: Developmental period	LATE PREHISTORIC /CERAMIC STAGE	BASKETMAKER III
500 AD					PUEBLO I
1000		Middle Ceramic period	Diversification period (Apishapa phase, Sopris phase)		PUEBLO II, PUEBLO III
1500	PROTOHISTORIC ERA: Canalla phase, Antero phase	PROTOHISTORIC STAGE/ PERIOD	Protohistoric period	PROTOHISTORIC STAGE	POST-PUEBLOAN
1800					

1 Reed and Metcalf 1999
2 Gilmore et al. 1999
3 Zier and Kalasz 1999
4 Martorano et al. 1999
5 Lipe et al. 1999

A postulated pre-Clovis occupation of the New World continues to be discussed and debated (Kulisheck 1994; Straus 2000). The debate is unresolved at this time, although evidence from the Chilean coast in South America appears to be promising (Dillehay 1997). The Selby, Dutton, and Lamb Spring sites in northeastern Colorado were at one time believed affiliated with pre-Clovis occupation (Eighmy 1984). However, recent investigations at these sites have not been able to support conclusively the association of pre-Clovis radiocarbon dates with artifacts (Chenault 1999b:53-56). Therefore, a pre-Clovis occupation in the Platte River Basin is not supported by the available archaeological evidence.

The Clovis culture represents the earliest accepted evidence of human occupation in the New World. The highly mobile Clovis period bands are most strongly identified with a distinctive bifacially fluted, lanceolate dart point that has been found in dramatic association with mammoth bone (Chenault 1999b:57). The more current and fuller view of Clovis adaptive strategy, particularly in plains settings, emphasizes a varied tool assemblage and concomitantly diverse economy that includes plants and smaller game (Zier 1999a:81-82). Documented Clovis period components have been recorded throughout much of North America (Zier 1999a:80). Clovis sites in eastern Colorado include the Dutton and Claypool sites near the Colorado/Kansas border, the Drake Cache site west of Sterling, and the Fox, Klein, and Dent sites in the vicinity of Greeley and Kersey (Chenault 1999b). Only the Dent site has yielded indisputable evidence of a man-mammoth relationship, although there are indications that redeposition of some of the site materials has occurred (Chenault 1999b:58). Isolated Clovis surface localities are known throughout northeastern Colorado, including artifacts recovered from alluvial sediments associated with the Kersey terrace (Zier et al. 1993; McFaul et al. 1994). Currently it is undetermined whether the increased Clovis site frequency in eastern Colorado is due to factors associated with site formation and preservation, or the result of higher population density (Zier et al. 1993).

The Folsom period is marked by the transition from terminal Pleistocene to early Holocene environmental conditions. The period witnessed a continuation of the fluted point morphology initiated in Clovis times. Folsom points are generally smaller than Clovis specimens, but the flutes are more pronounced and often extend nearly the entire length of the implement. The traditional view of Folsom economy as one emphasizing the procurement of now-extinct bison species is currently undergoing significant modification (Kuehn 1998; Zier 1999a:90). These reexaminations suggest a wider subsistence base that, in addition to bison, includes vegetal processing and the exploitation of small and medium-sized game animals. Numerous Folsom components are present in northeastern Colorado including the Lindenmeier site, the largest known camp of this period in North America. Over 50,000 pieces of debitage (waste flakes resulting from the production of stone tools), approximately 5,000 stone tools, 200 projectile points, and between 10,000 and 20,000 animal bones were recovered (Chenault 1999b:67; Gantt 2002). Faunal remains recovered from the site indicate that Folsom people utilized a wide range of animal species including pronghorn, rabbit, fox, wolf, coyote, and turtle (Wilmsen and Roberts 1978). Other important Folsom sites in the Platte River Basin include Powars, Fowler-Parrish, and Johnson (Chenault 1999b:64-69).

Plano period remains, characterized by an unfluted point assemblage, are more pervasive in Colorado plains contexts than their Clovis and Folsom precursors. Several tool complexes, each exhibiting a specific style that was derived from a fundamentally similar tool manufacturing tradition, are defined for the Plano period. These include most notably the Agate Basin, Hell Gap,

and Cody complexes, in addition to others such as Firstview and Kersey that are not widely accepted as distinct types. During this period a perceived increase in population is suggested by the identification of larger kill sites and camps. Greater social complexity is indicated by evidence of organized bison kills, an activity that would have required increased coordination and cooperation among the typically small hunter-gatherer bands. In addition, the recovery of grinding slabs from Plano components such as that at the Jurgens site suggests increased exploitation of plant resources (Wheat 1979).

Numerous Plano period sites are located in eastern Colorado, most notably the Jones-Miller (Stanford 1974, 1975), Frazier (Wormington 1984), Jurgens (Wheat 1979), Gordon Creek Burial (Breternitz et al. 1971), and Olsen-Chubbuck sites (Wheat 1972). A Plano period component was also described at the Lamb Spring site near the Front Range foothills west of Denver (Stanford et al. 1981). Both the Jurgens and Frazier sites are located approximately 1 mile north of Kersey, Colorado along the South Platte River. The sites were extensively excavated during the late 1960s and early 1970s and represent bison processing areas. Whereas the Frazier site is associated with an Agate Basin component that dates to approximately 9650 ± 150 B.P., the Jurgens site is an undifferentiated Plano component that dates to 9070 ± 90 B.P. (Wormington 1984; Wheat 1979). The Gordon Creek Burial is a human interment located northwest of Fort Collins that dates to 9700 ± 250 B.P. Artifacts associated with the burial include stone tools, two cut animal ribs covered with hematite, and four elk incisors (Gleichman and Gleichman 1989:33). The Olsen-Chubbuck site, located in the Big Sandy Creek drainage basin, represents one of the largest Plano period sites excavated in eastern Colorado (Wheat 1972; Zier 1999a:91-99). Unit 2 at the Lamb Spring site near Littleton, Colorado produced Cody Complex artifacts and radiocarbon dates (from bone collagen) of 6920 ± 350 B.C. and 5920 ± 240 B.C. (Stanford et al. 1981:16). Isolated projectile points of Plano period age have also been identified throughout eastern Colorado.

Archaic Stage

The Archaic stage, further divided into Early, Middle, and Late periods, witnessed a continuation of the band-level hunting and gathering tradition initiated in the Paleoindian stage. However, this taxon is marked by an increasingly varied subsistence base, a large and diverse feature assemblage, and a range of morphologically disparate, primarily non-lanceolate, point styles. The beginning of the Archaic stage coincides roughly with the onset of the Altithermal climatic episode, a prolonged early Holocene period of general warming and drying in western North America (Frison 1991). The change in weather patterns and environments resulted in the total replacement of Pleistocene fauna with modern Holocene species. Collected wild plant foods made up a significant portion of the human diet during the Archaic stage and small mammals, reptiles, and even insects were utilized as well. Ground stone implements used to process floral material such as nuts, seeds, berries and fruits became common, and these implements have been recovered in abundance from many Archaic sites. Stone boiling pits, storage cists, and architectural features such as basin houses are also associated with the Archaic stage in Colorado and Wyoming, and are likely the result of increasing population density and a general shift toward increased levels of sedentism (Frison 1991; Metcalf and Black 1991; Shields 1998). Archaic projectile points are manifested in a range of large, side-notched, stemmed, tanged, and occasionally lanceolate forms which in general are not as well crafted as points of the preceding Paleoindian stage.

The Early Archaic period dates from ca. 5500 to 3000 B.C. (Chenault 1999a:3) and is associated with the Altithermal climatic conditions described above. Early Archaic evidence is relatively scarce not only in northeastern Colorado, but also across a vast area of the western High Plains (Frison 1991). Due to the limited number of excavated Early Archaic sites, stone tool assemblages typical of the period are not yet fully understood (Tate 1999:117-118; Zier 1999b:106). Previous studies have posited that the relatively hot and arid conditions of the Altithermal greatly affected Early Archaic settlement/subsistence strategies (Reeves 1973; Benedict 1978). Most notably, lowland regions were believed to have been abandoned in favor of mountain/foothill niches sometimes termed refugia. However, other researchers have noted that the exploitation and occupation of these niches was firmly established by Mountain Tradition populations prior to the onset of the Altithermal (Black 1991). The Mountain tradition taxon was, in part, advanced to underscore the presence of a long-standing, locally-developed, mountain-oriented population in the Southern and Middle Rocky Mountain regions. Rather than a massive migration to higher elevations, the "reduction in occupation of the plains and basins is best explained as a simple diminution in human population" (Zier 1999b:105). Although its origins remain unsubstantiated, Mountain tradition populations are believed to have entered the mountain regions of Colorado from the Great Basin during the latter portion of the Paleoindian stage (Black 1986:198-215, 1991:17).

Several Early Archaic period sites are known in the Front Range-Piedmont area surrounding Denver and Castle Rock (Tate 1999:102-117). Components are identified in mountains, foothills, and plains settings, but they tend to be sparsely represented by cultural remains. Monaghan Camp is located underneath what are now Concourses A and B at Denver International Airport in northeastern Denver County (Tucker 1990). A date of cal 4920 ± 210 B.P. was returned from a feature sample, and a large quantity of alumroot and goosefoot was recovered. Alumroot was traditionally used as a medicinal herb, while goosefoot indicates the processing of floral items for food (Tucker 1990). The Rock Creek site is situated on the north bank of Rock Creek just west of the Adams-Boulder County line (Gleichman et al. 1995). Charred pigweed, goosefoot, bullrush, and cocklebur seeds were present in a hearth that produced a date of cal 6240 ± 190 B.P. Two other large, multicomponent camps with Early Archaic components, the Magic Mountain site and the Massey Draw site, are located near the Dakota Sandstone hogback ridge in the foothills west of Denver. A variety of stone tools including perforators, scraping tools, and projectile points, as well as grinding slabs, was present at these sites (Anderson et al. 1994; Kalasz and Shields 1997; Irwin-Williams and Irwin 1966).

The Middle Archaic period is assigned a date range of 3000 to 1000 B.C. (Chenault 1999a:3) and is believed to coincide with a sweeping reversion to more mesic climatic conditions following the close of the Altithermal. Middle Archaic evidence, unlike that of the preceding period, is widespread throughout Colorado and surrounding areas and suggests successful adaptations by mobile hunter-gatherers to plains, basin/valley, foothills, and montane environments (Frison 1991; Tate 1999:118; Zier 1999b:113). This period is purportedly characterized by increased use of ground stone although it is acknowledged that "the general absence of known sites during the Early Archaic period in fact makes most classes of artifacts seem to proliferate in the Middle Archaic" (Zier 1999b:118). The fact that the presence of features, both architectural and nonarchitectural, becomes more pronounced is perhaps attributable to the same conditions. Frison (1991) believes stone circles appeared on the plains during the Middle Archaic period. These circular rock arrangements may have served a variety of functions, but are generally thought to have functioned as weights used to

hold down the conical, hide-and-pole structures (tipis) of plains nomads. The basin house, a rudimentary form of habitation architecture, becomes widespread in the Wyoming basin (Shields 1998; Zier 1999b:120). To date, neither stone circles nor basin houses have been identified in the Castle Rock-Denver area. The single example of Middle Archaic habitation architecture in the region consists of possible post molds recorded in a rock shelter (Tate 1999:134). In contrast, there are numerous examples of non-structural features. These consist of various fire pit forms believed to be representative of food cooking/processing facilities and/or sources of heat (Tate 1999:118-134). Although rare, formal burials are present in Middle Archaic plains contexts east of the Castle Rock-Denver area (Tate 1999:124)

Throughout much of the Great Plains and Intermountain West the Middle Archaic period is closely associated with a technologically-based taxon termed the McKean complex. This taxon is marked by a series of lanceolate and stemmed-indented base projectile point forms (e.g., Duncan, Hanna, McKean lanceolate) often found in direct association (Mulloy 1954; Wheeler 1954). McKean complex projectile points are widely distributed across the northern and central High Plains and the adjacent foothill and mountain areas, and appear to represent relative tool tradition uniformity on a large geographical scale.

Several multicomponent sites with Middle Archaic occupations are located in plains and foothills contexts encompassing the Castle Rock-Denver area. Prominent Middle Archaic components in Douglas County include Dancing Pants Shelter and Bayou Gulch (Gilmore 1991; Liestman and Kranzush 1987; Tate 1999). Two Piedmont setting sites, Box Elder-Tate Hamlet and Monaghan Camp, are both located in northeastern Denver County (Tucker et al. 1992; Tucker 1990). In addition to the previously described Early Archaic component at Monaghan Camp, a Middle Archaic age was recovered from a hearth. Goosefoot seeds, saltbush, and fragmentary burned bone from a large mammal were found in the feature. The Box Elder-Tate Hamlet site is predominantly an Early to Middle Ceramic period occupation associated with two small pithouses, but a smaller Middle Archaic occupation was also recorded during the excavations (Tucker et al. 1992). Abundant faunal remains representing large and small mammals were recovered. Middle Archaic dates were also obtained from the Magic Mountain and the Dutch Creek sites, both of which are located in foothills settings near Golden (Irwin-Williams and Irwin 1966; Jepson and Hand 1994; Kalasz and Shields 1997).

The Late Archaic period dates from 1000 B.C. to A.D. 150 (Chenault 1999a:3). Throughout the Platte River and Arkansas River basins, Late Archaic sites occur more frequently than those of the Middle Archaic period (Tate 1999:151; Zier 1999b:126). An impressive array of Late Archaic sites is distributed along the Front Range near Denver, particularly in the foothills west of the city (Tate 1999:Figure 5-6). Many are multicomponent camps such as Dutch Creek, Massey Draw, the Swallow Site, Magic Mountain, and Dipper Gap (Tate 1999:136-150). The continuity of occupation demonstrated by these sites is indicative of a long-standing, local hunter-gatherer population. Only minor differences in the archaeological record are evident in the transition from the Middle Archaic period, although increasing variation in projectile point styles indicates that there may have been a strong trend toward regionalism. Overall, the generalized, broad-spectrum foraging economy that evolved throughout the Archaic stage continued during this period. Rock-filled and slab-lined hearths, along with lithic, bone, and ground stone tools, are commonly found at Late Archaic sites, as are occasional decorative items and gaming pieces such as bone beads and pendants, ocher, and

amazonite (Tate 1999:151). Late Archaic hunters utilized a wide variety of corner-notched and stemmed dart points. On the High Plains evidence of communal bison procurement is abundant in some areas, suggesting the development of complex intergroup cooperation and participation (Frison 1991:56-2).

Late Prehistoric Stage

The Late Prehistoric stage in the Platte River Basin is divided into the Early Ceramic period and the Middle Ceramic period (Chenault 1999a:3). In contrast, the Late Prehistoric stage in the Arkansas River Basin is divided into Developmental and Diversification periods (see Table 1 above; Kalasz et al. 1999a:69-72). Temporally, the Developmental period coincides with the Early Ceramic period. Furthermore, the two taxa are characterized by indigenous hunter-gatherer groups that exhibit similar adaptive strategies and material cultures. The Diversification and Middle Ceramic periods, although largely contemporaneous, differ significantly. The variation in the taxa is somewhat attributable to the limited presence of Middle Ceramic groups in the Platte River Basin. Overall, the Late Prehistoric stage in eastern Colorado corresponds temporally with a number of Central Plains culture taxa including Plains Woodland (or simply Woodland) and the Plains Village tradition (Gilmore 1999:175). Although some technological- and subsistence-related innovations were introduced from these cultures, the local indigenous Colorado population continued to emphasize an Archaic hunter-gatherer strategy in exploiting a variety of game and non-domesticated plant resources.

Early Ceramic and Developmental occupations along the Front Range do not signal large-scale migrations into the region. Rather, material traits and possibly certain economic patterns believed native to areas farther east were adopted by the local hunter-gatherers. Significantly, this time period coincides with the introduction of the bow and arrow. However, a transitional interval is recognized in the first few centuries of the period during which certain Archaic material traits, particularly large corner-notched dart points, continued in use. Small projectile points fashioned for the bow and arrow appear to have been used in conjunction with dart points produced for use with the atlatl (Gilmore 1999; Kalasz et al. 1999b). Conoidal, straight rimmed ceramic vessels with a variety of cord-impressed exteriors commonly occur, as do small, sometimes serrated corner-notched points. Other characteristic elements of this period are permanent and semipermanent architecture and minimal use of cultigens. Sparse corn has been identified in Early Ceramic and Developmental period sites, most notably Recon John Shelter south of Colorado Springs and the LoDaiska Site west of Denver (Irwin and Irwin 1959; Zier 1989). In both the Platte River and Arkansas River basins the presence of free-standing habitation structures becomes more pronounced, especially in comparison to the relatively low frequency of Late Archaic dwellings.

Numerous sites of Developmental and Early Ceramic age are located in foothill and Piedmont settings along the Front Range (Gilmore 1999:181-241; Kalasz et al. 1999b:160-188). Of particular interest are a number of Platte River Basin architectural sites. This suite of sites includes those in open foothill settings that may reflect winter use patterns, and a Piedmont architectural site that is believed to be representative of springtime occupation. Early Ceramic period architectural features from the Kinney Spring, Valley View, Magic Mountain, George W. Lindsay Ranch, and Box Elder Tate Hamlet sites include basin house structures of a variety of shapes, often incorporating dry-laid rock wall foundations (Eighmy 1994; Brunswig 1996:234-236; Kalasz and

Shields 1997; Nelson 1971; Tucker et al. 1992). Similar to Developmental period basin houses in the neighboring Arkansas River Basin (Kalasz et al. 1999b:160-188), the density and diversity of artifacts associated with Platte River Basin architecture are suggestive of seasonal residential bases with dwellings that were refurbished repeatedly over an extended time period. Other examples of complex Early Ceramic period structures lie in the realm of game drives and associated blinds most often found in montane settings (Benedict 1975a, 1975b, 1990, 1992b, 1996). Early Ceramic period habitation structures have not been found in high-elevation, montane settings.

Eastern Colorado during the subsequent Middle Ceramic/Diversification period lay along the western margin of the vast geographical area encompassing cultures of the Plains Village tradition. Extending from the Dakotas southward into the Oklahoma and Texas Panhandles, Plains Village culture included such traits as permanently settled villages with wattle-and-daub (or occasionally stone) structures having four-post support construction; distinctive artifactual assemblages including small arrow points (side-notched, corner-notched, and unnotched varieties), abundant bone tools, ground stone, and cord-marked ceramics; and economies which combined maize-beans-squash horticulture with hunting and gathering (Adair 1988; Gunnerson 1987). Although a range of habitation sites with structures has been recorded in eastern Colorado, there is no evidence of permanently settled horticultural villages. The most distinctive lithic characteristic of the period is the small triangular projectile point, either unnotched or side-notched. Ceramics are also varied but in general consist of cord-marked, globular or conoidal jars. Bone artifacts are common and include awls, fleshers, wrenches, and beads. Ground stone is abundant and varied, but not highly formalized morphologically. Ground stone includes not only manos and metates but also shaft abraders.

For the current project, the most pertinent archaeological manifestations of this time are the purported Upper Republican phase components in northeastern Colorado, and sites attributable to the Apishapa phase of southeastern Colorado. Although so-called "classic" Upper Republican sites – including semi-subterranean earthlodges, either single or in clusters, and sand-tempered pottery exhibiting thickened rims – were first identified east of the project area along the Republican River and its tributaries in southern Nebraska and northern Kansas (Grange 1980; Strong 1935; Wedel 1934; W.R. Wood 1969), attenuated variants are thought to be present throughout northeastern Colorado. Some researchers hypothesize that many seasonal camps within the South Platte River and western Republican River drainages can be readily identified as the camps of Upper Republican peoples, the implication being that these sites represent seasonal hunting camps of non-indigenous inhabitants from further east (J.J. Wood 1967; W.R. Wood 1971, 1990). Roper (1990:17), however, has more recently refuted these findings, preferring instead to consider the western hunter-gatherers representative of "permanent populations ... pursuing a wide range of plant and animal foods using some form of residentially mobile foraging strategy in the less differentiated High Plains setting".

There appear to be relatively few recorded sites of Middle Ceramic age in the Platte River Basin, especially in consideration of the Early Ceramic site density of the region (Gilmore 1999:245). Most occupations of this age tend to be associated with multi-component sites, indicating considerable continuity in adaptive strategy and settlement pattern. However, there are some notable exceptions to this premise. The T-W Diamond site is a large tipi ring site associated with radiocarbon dates that range between A.D. 1000 and 1200 (Eighmy 1984:97). Flat-bottomed pottery recovered at the site was identified as Intermountain ware believed to be affiliated with Numic or Shoshonean occupation (Eighmy 1994:237; Gilmore 1999:293). Other Middle Ceramic

period sites with similar pottery include Graeber Cave and Roberts Buffalo Jump (Eighmy 1994:235-237; Nelson and Graeber 1966). Whether these ceramic attributes indicate incursions of Late Prehistoric Numic groups, diffusion of material culture traits, or trade relations is open to discussion (Gilmore 1999:293-294). Box Elder-Tate Hamlet is a multicomponent site with Early Ceramic period pithouse structures (Tucker et al. 1992). The Middle Ceramic component included hearths as well as several flaked stone artifacts, metate fragments, charred animal bone fragments, and small, corner- and side-notched projectile points. The Moffit site is a multicomponent site located in western Adams County with Late Archaic, Early Ceramic, and Middle Ceramic occupations (Tucker 1994). Three small ceramic body sherds were identified as Upper Republican ware. The scarcity of Middle Ceramic sites in the Platte River Basin may simply reflect a visibility problem since the later components are typically difficult to distinguish from those of the Early Ceramic period (Gilmore 1999:245-246). However, hypotheses about the scarcity of Middle Ceramic sites in the Platter River Basin have not been fully developed; future investigations may confirm that a change in regional settlement pattern resulted in a decrease in the utilization of the context area.

In contrast to Middle Ceramic events in the Platte River Basin, farther south in the Arkansas River Basin the Diversification period is distinguished by eastern Colorado's first well-defined occurrences of directional change in Late Prehistoric stage adaptive strategy (Kalasz et al. 1999b). Such change permits discrimination of Apishapa phase sites from those assignable to the Sopris phase. As applied in the most recent research context document for the Arkansas River Basin, phases "... emphasize only the most prominent spatial/cultural distinctions occurring within a specific period" (Kalasz et al. 1999a:72). Whereas the Apishapa phase exhibits influences primarily from Plains cultures to the east, Sopris phase groups established relationships with Rio Grande Puebloans near the end of the Developmental period (Kalasz et al. 1999b:221-239). Furthermore, the Sopris phase in Colorado is restricted to the eastern slope of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, primarily along the upper Purgatoire River in the Park Plateau region. Although both Apishapa and Sopris phase populations are likely derived from common Developmental period origins and overlap considerably in terms of overall adaptive strategy, they are perceived as geographically and culturally distinct manifestations. In general, the Diversification period is marked by the construction of multiroom architectural settlements (often referred to as hamlets or villages) that are larger and more complex, and were possibly occupied for longer durations, than those of the Developmental period.

Evidence of the Apishapa phase is widely distributed through the canyons and major watercourses exiting the Rocky Mountains between Colorado Springs and the Dry Cimarron River valley of northeastern new Mexico. Sites were initially identified by the "stone enclosure" structures recorded in the 1930s along the Apishapa River northeast of Trinidad, Colorado. The Apishapa phase is most often viewed as the westernmost representation of the Plains Village tradition. However, unlike the sedentary, horticultural settlements of the Plains Villagers, the Apishapa populations retained the decided hunter-gatherer emphasis initiated by their Archaic ancestors. Maize is commonly recovered from Apishapa components, but generally in small quantities. Substantial numbers of cobs, i.e., 200-250 specimens, were associated with only two known sites, Medina and Pyeatt rock shelters (Campbell 1969). Both were possible storage facilities located in the Purgatoire River vicinity. By far the greatest portion of the Apishapa phase subsistence base was comprised of a wide variety of faunal and wild plant resources. The notion that the Apishapa populations were more sedentary than their Developmental period antecedents is evidenced by "... unique and sometimes massive stone masonry architecture, often clustering in numbers suggestive

of settlements or hamlets" (Kalasz et al. 1999b:198). Most of the larger settlements, particularly those north of the Purgatoire River, are associated with assemblages suggestive of bison processing centers occupied by multiple households. In summarizing Apishapa adaptive strategy the authors of the most recent Arkansas River Basin research context note that, "Given past fluctuations in the context area's arid climate and the diversity of physiography, hydrology, and biotic resources, the adoption of a fluid, dynamic hunter-gatherer strategy with a variable emphasis on sedentism and mobility may have been a distinct advantage for Apishapa phase groups" (Kalasz et al. 1999b:217). Eastern influences such as cordmarked pottery and semi-subterranean houses with circular foundations are predominant attributes of the Apishapa phase. However, this taxon is believed to be a unique manifestation that developed from well-established ancestral roots in the Rocky Mountain region. There are no indications that the Apishapa phase is derived from Southern or Central Plains groups that moved into the area.

Protohistoric Stage

This particular taxon encompasses the decidedly "gray area" of archaeological research that spans the traditional concepts of prehistory and history. Significantly, some of the events that transpired during this period are elucidated by documentary evidence. These documents were generated through Spanish expeditions into Colorado that began as early as the late sixteenth century. The two research context documents applicable to this study conceive of this particular time interval very differently. Whereas a Protohistoric period serving as the terminus for the Late Prehistoric stage is defined for the Arkansas River Basin, a separate stage initially linked to the arrival of Spanish explorers is posited for the Platte River Basin (Chenault 1999a:3; Kalasz et al. 1999b:250-263). The onset of the Protohistoric period in the Arkansas River Basin, ca. A.D. 1450, is defined by the possibly overlapping dates associated with Apishapa phase abandonment and the purported arrival of Athapaskan (also referred to as "Apachean") groups from the north (Kalasz et al. 1999b:250). The A.D. 1725 date offered as the Protohistoric period terminus is based on historical accounts from Spanish expeditions that describe the withdrawal of Athapaskan bands in response to Comanche and Ute incursions (Kalasz et al. 1999b:250). In contrast, the Platte River Basin context designates a beginning Protohistoric date, A.D. 1540, that corresponds with Coronado's first expedition to the Southern Plains of North America (Clark 1999:309). The context document for the Platte River Basin promotes some confusion with regard to this particular taxon by referring to it in various chapters as both a stage and a period (Chenault 1999a:3; Clark 1999:309). This section will employ the former term, i.e., stage, to conform with the Platte River Basin context's overall taxonomic scheme (Chenault 1999a:3-4).

In eastern Colorado, the early portion of the Protohistoric stage is often thought to coincide with the Dismal River complex (Clark 1999). By A.D. 1540, for reasons still undetermined, the long-standing, indigenous hunter-gatherer population had evidently dispersed. The Dismal River complex is traditionally associated with early Athapaskan culture moving into the Colorado plains region from western Canada (Brunswig 1995; Clark 1999:310; Kalasz et al. 1999b:250-251). It is acknowledged that the timing and extent of the Southwestern Athapaskan entrada remains controversial, particularly as it applies to eastern Colorado. Research conducted by Brunswig (1995) indicates that early Protohistoric sites were affiliated with Apachean "hypothetical culture pattern variants," i.e., western Dismal River aspect and Sangre de Cristo or Jicarilla Apaches (Kalasz et al. 1999b:255-256). Whereas the western Dismal River variant was believed to be influenced by

Shoshonean groups of the western Rocky Mountains, the Sangre de Cristo or Jicarilla Apache is distinguished by significant interaction with Rio Grande Puebloans. However, these affiliations are based on assumptions derived from limited analysis of micaceous pottery. The difficulties involved in assigning micaceous pottery to specific culture groups are well-documented (Gulley 2000; Hummer 1989; Kalasz et al. 1999b:255-256). Moreover, the concept of the Dismal River aspect as strictly an Apachean manifestation has recently been questioned (Gulley 2000). Indeed, sites with Dismal River affiliations that are confirmed through the recovery of both absolute dates and diagnostic artifacts are rare in both the Platte River and Arkansas River basins. Therefore, little can be said of the adaptive strategy and settlement pattern associated with the purported Dismal River occupation of eastern Colorado.

Documents derived from Spanish explorations provide intriguing narrative pertaining to the Protohistoric period in the Arkansas River Basin (Hanson and Chirinos 1989; Jones et al. 1998; Weber 1990; Kalasz et al. 1999b:256-257). Ethnohistoric accounts, such as those of the Ulibarri expedition of 1706, attest to Penxaye and Cuartelejo Apaches living in horticultural villages along the Purgatoire and Arkansas Rivers in southeastern Colorado. Archaeological remains that demonstrate such a presence, however, are yet to be found.

Much more information is available for the post-A.D. 1725 record of aboriginal occupation in eastern Colorado. Most notably, historically identifiable tribes established a presence in the region. Historical records indicate that this particular span of time is characterized by successive incursions and withdrawals by various tribes battling for lands beyond the sphere of Spanish protection. By 1725, incursions by Comanches and their Ute allies had forced the Apache to withdraw from Colorado. The short-lived Ute/Comanche alliance that successfully pushed the Apache south disintegrated by the late 1740s (Anderson 1989a:34). The Comanche subsequently controlled southeastern Colorado until they were pushed south by the Kiowa and Kiowa Apache in the late 1780s (Jones et al. 1998). A later alliance among the Comanche, Kiowa, and Kiowa Apache was, in turn, challenged by Cheyenne and Arapaho entering the region in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. As was the case in the Arkansas River Basin, the Ute remained the primary occupants of the mountainous regions within the Platte River Basin. Nonetheless, Shoshone and various plains-oriented groups were known to have utilized the mountains, generally on a more limited basis than the Ute. During this rather turbulent period of history, however, trade networks between aboriginal and European groups became well established despite the ongoing hostility. A series of forts and trading posts was constructed along major routes throughout the west, further stimulating the distribution of mass-produced metal and textile products among aboriginal populations.

A nomadic, equestrian lifestyle emphasizing bison hunting, generally with firearms, became pervasive among tribes occupying eastern Colorado. For housing, these groups used highly portable, conical, hide-covered pole structures termed tipis. The noncontiguous, circular arrangements of rock known as stone circles, stone rings, and/or tipi rings are thought to be the remnant "footprints" of such structures; these arrangements are the result of employing rock weights to secure the lodge coverings. Although these are the principal features of sites believed to be affiliated with the Protohistoric stage, the full complement of stone circles recorded in the region likely represents a range of functionally and temporally variable structures (Clark 1999:326-327; Kalasz 1988; Kalasz et al. 1999b:258). However, a few stone circle sites have yielded absolute dates and diagnostic

artifacts indicative of Protohistoric stage encampments (Clark 1999:317, 322). Stone circles are found in both plains and mountain settings. In addition, extensive game drive systems and ceremonial sites at higher elevation attest to the continued importance of montane environments during the Protohistoric stage (Clark 1999:325-332).