Cannibalism in the Prehistoric American Southwest: Occurrence, Taphonomy, Explanation, and Suggestions for Standardized World Definition

CHRISTY G. II TURNER, JACQUELINE A. TURNER

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Intentionally-damaged human skeletal remains indicating cannibalism and/or violence have been found scattered on room floors and deposited in pits in more than 40 archeological sites in Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. Most of the bone assemblages were in Anasazi sites. Using five standardized taphonomic criteria (perimortem cut marks, intentional breakage, burning, anvil/hammerstone abrasions, and many missing vertebrae), 32 assemblages meet our minimal requirement for proposing cannibalism. In the 32 cannibalized series, the minimal number of individuals (MNI) ranges from 1 to 35. The average MNI is 9.2 per site. The total MNI is 295. All ages and both sexes are represented. The earliest grouping of sites with evidence of cannibalism date around A.D. 900; the latest single site, A.D. 1700. The average date for the 32 sites is ca. A.D. 1100. Two proximate explanations involve social pathology and/or Mesoamerican influence. Prehistoric Southwest cannibalism has been explained by starvation (3 sites), social pathology (several sites), and recently, as a violent form of institutionalized social control associated with the post-A.D. 900 rise of the highly complex Chacoan social and religious center in New Mexico, its regional road system, and the linked outlier multi-storied Great House communities that were built elsewhere in New Mexico and also in Colorado, Arizona, and Utah. There is no identifiable direct connection with cannibalism in Mexico. When considered with the sites evidencing extensive violence, Southwest cannibalism appears to be part of a socially-pathological and chaotic development that began in the Anasazi area, possibly triggered by Mesoamerican influences such as Mexican traders.
My understanding of cannibalism in the modern world is that it's mostly endocannibalism. Claims of exocannibalism are much more anecdotal. This is why I added "citation needed" to the sentence in the article's opening that reads "usually in rituals connected to tribal warfare." These range from mortuary defleshing of the body not including the actual consumption of the flesh to sacrificial cannibalistic cult activities brought into the area by Mexican elites (see Turner, Christy G., 1999 Man corn: Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press and 1995 "Cannibalism in the prehistoric American Southwest: occurrence, taphonomy, explanation, and suggestions for standardized world definition." Lekson's explanation focuses on a hypothetical religious elite that adapted to successive drought crises by moving its center of operation first directly north, and then directly south of its original cult center. David Wilcox's (1999) interpretation of the hegemonic rise and falls in the Southwest posits a system of competing polities that succeed one another rather than the adaptation of a single cultural group that moves its center of operation. He cites evidence of mass burials and cannibalism in the period just before the Chaco collapse. The nested network approach to bounding world-systems is helpful for understanding the ways in which precontact North American societies were linked to one another and the relevance of these links for processes of development.