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Henrikson: *Prehistoric Cold Storage on the Snake River Plain: Archaeological Investigations at Bobcat Cave*

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Author

Jenkins, Dennis L

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that aggregation sites have greater diversity of design styles than is found at nonaggregation sites. This is very interesting, and is a part of the research that can be tested elsewhere.

Chapter 8, *Summary and Conclusions*, restates the results of the four hypotheses and makes suggestions for future research. The appendices include recording sheet samples, a list of edible plants in the area, and a Dictionary of Design Types, with the number of occurrences. The latter points up a problem with terminology. I prefer nonjudgmental descriptions; for example, the term "beads" is used for a line with circles on it; a circle with interior divisions is called a "gunsight." "Navicular" is used to describe a boat-shaped sheep; "blob-shaped" and "ant-shaped" are other adjectives for sheep bodies. It is probably incorrect to use "Sinusoidal Line" or "Sine Wave" (a mathematical construct unknown to Amerindians) to describe a simple wavy line.

The book could have used a bit of tightening up: there are repetitions, some annoying typographical errors, and none of the drawings have scale indicated. I would have liked a detailed map, a photograph of the landscape, and a note on where the primary data are stored. In a publication concerning rock art, illustrations are particularly important. The line drawings included in the book are woefully few, considering that the material deals with more than 20,000 examples of rock art.

There is a lot of interesting material in this study of the rock art of Warner Valley. The use of systems theory to study the relationships between sites and landscapes can add an important sidelight to predictive studies. Obviously, a great deal of field work is represented here. However, I think the author would have been better served if she had rethought and reworked the Heizer and Baumhoff (1962) typology. It is like starting off on the wrong foot, and then getting tangled up in strings of verbiage.

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Prehistoric Cold Storage on the Snake River Plain: Archaeological Investigations at Bobcat Cave. Lael Suzann Henrikson. Archaeological Survey of Idaho, Monographs in Idaho Archaeology and Ethnology, No. 1, Idaho State Historical Society, 1996, v + 38 pp., 26 figs., 3 tables, \$10.00 (paper).

Reviewed by:

DENNIS L. JENKINS

Oregon State Museum of Anthropology, 1224-Univ. of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-1224.

This volume is the first in a series intended to "provide, at a reasonable cost, published peer-reviewed anthropological works that ordinarily might be . . . [lost in] the 'grey literature'" (p. iv). As such, it continues the tradition of reporting current anthropological research in Idaho

so well established in earlier years by the Idaho State University *Occasional Papers* and *Tebiwa*. Unfortunately, these series have not kept pace with either the quantity of research being conducted in Idaho nor the public and academic interest in it. The *Monographs in Idaho Archaeology and Ethnology* series promises to be a new outlet specifically designed to fill that need.

Bobcat Cave is a partially collapsed lava tube of moderate size located between Wilson Butte Cave and Owl Cave on the Snake River Plain in Idaho. Reported to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the 1970s by a spelunker, the cave's many archaeological components were mapped, surface collected, and test excavated by the Idaho State University field school during the summers of 1987 and 1989. This book reports the process and results of these investigations, illustrating the unusual array of artifacts and cultural components recorded within the cave. In the process, it illuminates the urgent need for investigation of similar sites in this and other isolated, semiarid regions. The opportunity to investigate the activities conducted in such sites, and to understand the unique prehistoric technologies involved in the exploitation of the natural resources of the region, is rapidly disappearing as these caves are systematically looted.

The monograph is a reprint of the author's Master's thesis. As is typical of most theses, this one is brief in its coverage of topics. Still, it reports an interesting site type and theoretical issues (e.g., group staging and storage), which automatically attract and maintain a certain level of interest. It begins with a very brief *Introduction* to the archaeological literature of the region. The selection of materials reviewed establish the author's interest in the concept of an "Altithermal" climatic event and proposed cultural responses to it in the Snake River Plain region. This section thus provides the context for interpreting the use and occupation of the site.

The reader's focus on the area and its archaeology is sharpened in the following section, en-

titled *Background to the Prehistory of the Eastern Snake River Plain*, which includes a short description of the natural setting, a regional cultural chronology, and a presentation of the more recent archaeological research conducted in the area and reported in the "grey literature." The natural characteristics of the site are then briefly described under the section titled *Bobcat Cave Site Description*, setting the stage for the presentation of the archaeological phenomenon found within the cave.

In the next five sections of the report (*The 1987 Field Season at Bobcat Cave, Results of the 1987 Field Work, Hypothesis Based on the 1987 Field Work, The 1989 Field Season, and Summary of Artifact and Faunal Remains from 1987 and 1989*), the investigative methods employed and the cultural materials encountered within the cave are described. These sections relate the sequence, progress, and results of the field and laboratory research, while describing the site stratigraphy, cultural components, and artifacts. The author presents these data with a nice mix of carefully selected photographs, site maps, stratigraphic illustrations, and line drawings of artifacts, artifact clusters, and petroglyph panels which assist in visually maintaining the readers' interest.

The cultural assemblage in the cave is dominated by elk antler tines exhibiting use-wear patterns suggesting that they served as ice picks, perhaps the first step in the production of drinking water and/or the construction of ice storage pits. Large pestle fragments and rounded cobbles recovered in association with the antler tines appear to have served as the hammers used to drive the tines into the ice. Unmodified bison and artiodactyl bone are common components of the cultural assemblage, providing strong evidence for use of the cave as a prehistoric walk-in freezer. Immunological protein residue analysis was performed on artifacts and a portion of a sagebrush mat, all excavated from the lower chamber of the cave, producing evidence for the

presence of bison, pronghorn, and canids.

An impressive cut sagebrush mat, situated between the ice and a layer of loess presumably brought down from the surface by the occupants, apparently served in some capacity to protect stored bison meat from theft by scavengers and spoilage by thawing. Fragments of burned sagebrush matting, recovered from near the bottom of one of the test pits, were radiocarbon dated to $4,360 \pm 70$ RCYBP and $4,110 \pm 70$ RCYBP. The flaked stone assemblage from the site is notably sparse, though the projectile point assemblage, including McKean lanceolate point/knives and large corner-notched points, is sufficient to suggest good congruence with the radiocarbon dates. Biface fragments, expedient flake tools, and debitage comprise the remainder of the flaked stone lithic assemblage. A few bone tools, basketry fragments, and beads complete the artifact assemblage from the site. The artifact assemblage and cultural features seem to support the interpretation offered by the author that this site served as a storage facility for frozen meat and possibly as a source of ice for drinking water.

There are a few problems with this report which I found distracting. First, the antiquated term "Altithermal" is used as an organizing concept for interpreting the natural and cultural contexts within which the site functioned, without adequately establishing its relevancy to this particular site. The review of the archaeological literature of the region is too brief to accomplish this connection. The citations in the *Introduction* are dated and limited to a presentation of the concept of "Altithermal" abandonment versus continued use of the region by reduced populations. Consequently, I was left feeling that I was being stampeded into believing a scenario that I and many of my colleagues have found far too simplistic to accept at face value. This perhaps best illustrates what bothered me about the report; the very brevity of its various sections left me feeling that the author was rushing to

present her interpretations rather than adequately considering alternative scenarios. In short, I was not convinced that the storage of bison in Bobcat Cave represented any kind of cultural response to changing climatically controlled (Altithermal) environmental conditions.

Perhaps more important, there is no serious analysis, description, or discussion of the artifacts recovered from the site. Consequently, it is impossible to discern in most cases where the artifacts were recovered and which ones were associated with the dated site occupation. Similarly, there is no adequate description of the testing and results of investigations on the site surface above the cave, though this is the location where activities related to the use of the cave as a walk-in freezer are presumed to have occurred. A table listing the location, size, and contents of the artifact clusters and other components of the site would have gone far toward alleviating this problem.

As I mentioned above, this is a revised Master's thesis covering the investigation of only a few key issues, e.g., what was the function of this site, and when and why was it occupied? It is not a lengthy, meticulously descriptive research report. Thus, it is limited in both scope of discussion and value as a comparative research tool.

On the positive side, this manuscript alerts the reader to the presence of a particularly unique type of site among a class of sites (food storage facilities located in isolated settings far from population centers) that were important components of many prehistoric settlement-subsistence systems operating throughout the arid and semiarid regions of the American west. In most cases, such sites, when they are recognized and recorded at all, are devoid of clues as to what was cached in them and when. In this case, there is strong evidence available to answer these questions. This makes it an interesting and potentially important report to anyone studying storage locations, contents, and tech-

niques. To me, this is the single most important contribution made by this book, and adequate justification for its publication. I found reading it to be a stimulating exercise because the very brevity of the report, which I struggled with,

raises more questions than it answers. Reading through it, I found myself wanting to know more about the archaeology and current research of the region, and wondering who will follow up on this important lead.

