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Author

Arkush, Brooke S

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Camels Back Cave

Dave N. Schmitt and David B. Madsen

Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2005, (University of Utah Anthropological Paper No. 125), xiii + 281 pp., 112 illustrations, \$40.00 (paper).

Reviewed by Brooke S. Arkush

Department of Anthropology and Sociology,
Weber State University, Ogden, UT 84408-1208

Throughout much of the Holocene era, the southern Great Salt Lake Desert was a challenging landscape for human foragers, with its broadly dispersed biotic communities and relatively few fresh water sources. The onset of warmer and drier conditions at approximately 8,300 B.P. resulted in a substantial shift in aboriginal settlement practices, from one that seems to have revolved around seasonal residential bases along the Old River Bed (which held a river connecting the Sevier and Great Salt Lake sub-basins) and in/around the paleomarshes of terminal Lake Bonneville, to a pattern involving high mobility in which people tended to focus on dune fields, shallow caves, and rock shelters for short-term camps. The archaeological record of Camels Back Cave (site 42To392) reflects this latter pattern; it most often served as a place where people consumed food, repaired gear, stayed for a few days, and then moved on to settlement hubs or higher-density resource patches.

Camels Back Cave is a small north-facing cavern situated in an isolated limestone ridge on the U.S. Army's Dugway Proving Ground; it was investigated by personnel associated with the Utah Geological Survey, Utah Division of State History, and the U.S. Department of Defense. Test excavations conducted there in 1993 revealed the presence of highly stratified, minimally disturbed deposits dating back to Early Archaic times. It was then intensively excavated from 1996 to 1998 in order to accomplish two primary research goals: (1) investigate the structure of human activities that transpired there by exposing contiguous portions of living surfaces within the cave and recording their contents in great detail, and (2) construct a high-resolution chronology of Holocene human use and occupation in the Camels Back Cave region.

Most excavation work occurred within a 2 x 4-meter block located in the southwest part of the cavern, which exposed 33 distinct stratigraphic horizons extending to



a depth of 3.9 meters, 17 of which contained artifacts, faunal remains, and features. The remaining 16 strata either lacked cultural materials entirely or contained only minimal evidence of human habitation. People used the cave intermittently over the course of some 7,600 years, and the occupational chronology is documented by 30 radiocarbon dates, most of which are derived from samples taken directly from hearths resting on or within cultural horizons. Dates associated with hearth features ranged from 7,530 to 470 B.P., and a total of 94 hearths and 5 ash lenses were documented within that part (approximately 1/3) of the cave interior that was excavated.

In terms of its organization, the publication consists of 11 chapters and 2 appendices written by 16 people, most of whom have made substantial contributions to the study of Great Basin prehistory and paleoecology. The impressive multi-faceted research record of David Madsen is well known, and within the last 20 years, Dave Schmitt has conducted a variety of notable zooarchaeological investigations in Nevada and Utah. Other accomplished contributors to this monograph are Robert Elston (lithic analysis), Richard Hughes (obsidian sourcing), Stephanie Livingston (avifauna), Karen Lupo (mammalian fauna), Charles Oviatt (geomorphic and climatic history), David Rhode (botanical analysis), and Steven Simms (ceramic analysis and interpretation vis-a-vis regional modeling). The Camels Back Cave project represents a well-planned, detailed study, and in a sense provides a new standard for the investigation of small dry cave sites in western North America. Some of the more impressive aspects of this study were the fine-grained excavation techniques that were employed and the in-depth analyses of the recovered data, as well as the diversity and collective research experience of the project collaborators.

I believe that many readers will find two chapters especially interesting. These concern the morphology, distribution, and content of hearth features (Chapter 4), and the interpretation of the structure and duration of occupational events as reflected by the eight living surfaces that were exposed within the cave (Chapter 10). As noted above, 94 hearths and several ash features were encountered at Camels Back Cave, including 17 hearths that were associated with distinct living surfaces. Based upon the amount of fill that was excavated there, the

authors estimate that there could be up to 250 hearths inside the cave, with an additional 50–100 hearths beyond the drip line. With such a large sample of hearths, the authors provide plausible interpretations regarding the spatial patterning and different functions of these features, as well as of subsistence practices and site seasonality.

Forty-four bulk soil samples were collected from hearths for laboratory processing, and these contained numerous (>5,700) animal bones, especially those of rodents and hares. Plant remains were recovered from 50 different soil samples through flotation; these consisted primarily of ricegrass, goosefoot, and pepperweed seeds, while tansy mustard, saltbush, amaranth, and dropseed comprised a minority of the botanical specimens. Pepperweed is somewhat dominant in early strata, and ricegrass tends to dominate the later strata. Both plants produce seeds primarily in late spring and early summer, suggesting that the cave was most commonly occupied at this time of year. The presence of burned goosefoot and amaranth seeds in cultural features and deposits at Camels Back Cave indicates that the site also was visited during late summer and fall.

Based on the nearly 100 hearths and hearth-related features that were encountered at Camels Back Cave, Schmitt and Madsen estimate that the site probably represents several hundred short-term occupational episodes. Therefore, the small cavern likely contains hundreds of living surfaces, and many of the activities associated with these surfaces were structured around one or more hearths. Within the relatively small 2 x 4-meter block that was intensively excavated, portions of eight living surfaces dating between about 7,500 and 800 B.P. were exposed and meticulously mapped in order to interpret food procurement/processing, tool production/maintenance, and length of stay. Because the cave had been abandoned for long periods of time over the course of some 7,500 years, a number of culturally sterile or nearly sterile strata had sealed the uppermost surfaces of various cultural deposits, leaving them more or less undisturbed by later occupations.

Variations in the artifact, ecofact, and feature content of the eight living surfaces indicated that human use of the cave had shifted significantly through time, with most intense occupational episodes occurring during Early Archaic (7,550–6,450 B.P.) and Middle Archaic (5,200–3,100 B.P.) times. Moderate use occurred

during the terminal Early Archaic (6,450–5,200 B.P.) and Fremont (1,600–800 B.P.) eras, but the site experienced minimal occupation during the Late Archaic period (3,100–1,600 B.P.). By combining the number of hearths that were encountered at Camels Back Cave with the projected number of other hearths that may be present there, the authors infer that the site received relatively infrequent use/occupation, experiencing no more than about six visits every century during periods of peak utilization. All in all, the small number of stratified hearths and the lack of fire reddening below most of them strongly suggest that most aboriginal occupants of the cave rarely stayed there for more than several days at a time. If this is true, then the site functioned primarily as a short-term camp during virtually its entire occupational history. The most intensive use of Camels Back Cave seems to have occurred during Early Archaic times, when activities there were focused on the mass collecting of jackrabbits and it served as a foraging base camp.

This monograph represents a major contribution to the study of Bonneville Basin paleoecology and prehistory, by providing an example of how future small cave sites within this region might best be investigated. The Camels Back Cave research team's fine-grained approach to exposing and documenting highly stratified deposits maximized the amount of data that was recovered, thus allowing them to accurately reconstruct the site's history and the likely role that it played within the local settlement system. The careful selection of analytic specialists is also notable, and was a major factor in the overall high quality and comprehensive nature of this volume. Both Dave Schmitt and David Madsen are to be congratulated for organizing such an impressive undertaking. Perhaps their work will motivate others to conduct similar investigations at appropriate sheltered sites within the Great Salt Lake Desert, especially in the context of regional settlement studies.



Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century

Gregory E. Smoak
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, 302 pages,
3 illustrations, \$44.95 (cloth).

REVIEWED BY RAYMOND A. BUCKO

Department of Sociology & Anthropology
Creighton University
2500 California Plaza
Omaha, NE 68178

In this engaging, lively, and readable work, assistant professor of history at Colorado State University Gregory E. Smoak provides an ethnohistorical study of the Newe people that examines issues critical to general Native American history by focusing on the ethnogenesis of the Shoshone and Bannock, the establishment of the Fort Hall reservation, and the Ghost Dance.

Mooney and others have analyzed the Ghost Dance and viewed it as a result of severe deprivation among the tribes that adopted it, but Smoak shows the Ghost Dance to be part of a creative effort by the Newe to define and maintain their social, economic, and religious integrity. His analysis provides insight into the dynamics of identity formation and the complex relationships between various native and white cultural groups. Smoak stresses the dynamic, negotiated, contingent, and constructed nature of identity, while convincingly demonstrating the broad continuities of Newe culture before, during, and after the Ghost Dance period.

In Part One, *Identity and Prophecy in the Newe World*, Smoak examines the historical and cultural background of the Newe, the group from which the Shoshone and Bannock derive. He suggests that the Shoshone and Bannock were most likely a single people in the 1600s. Each group's separate identity, along with increasingly centralized group leadership, developed in response to several historical factors: Paiutes migrated from the east; warfare broke out in the north, mainly with the Blackfeet; technological changes arrived, specifically the introduction of the horse and firearms; and disease, especially smallpox, decimated the population and inhibited expansion into Blackfeet territory. The designa-