

UC Merced

Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology

Title

Editor's Special Feature Introduction

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4qm1193q>

Journal

Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology, 37(2)

ISSN

0191-3557

Author

Whitaker, Adrian

Publication Date

2017

Peer reviewed

EDITOR'S SPECIAL FEATURE INTRODUCTION

In 1988, Philip Wilke published a paper in this *Journal* documenting bow-stave scars in juniper trees in Mineral County, Nevada, and posited a process in which native bow manufacturers may have fostered the growth of bow staves. The paper has been widely read and cited in the literature during the nearly 30 years since its publication. The authors of the commentary that follows (Millar and Smith) are forest ecologists, and therefore were unaware of the paper until they received a copy of the manuscript from a retiring Great Basin archaeologist who thought that they would be interested in Wilke's findings. This spurred them to re-examine some of these trees and to prepare the comment that follows. They are generally in agreement with Wilke's hypothesis, but they offer several corrections to the process of stave removal, based upon their expertise in the biology of the bow-stave trees in question. Since anthropology relies on so many other disciplines—geology, ecology, and chemistry, to name just a few—this type of cross-disciplinary pollination of ideas is commendable, and I hope that the contributions that follow encourage similar discussions on a myriad of other topics.

In this spirit, I decided to expand the discussion beyond the bow-stave trees, and see how these findings might provide insights into the general topic of bows in California and the Great Basin. The discussions by Greg Haverstock and Robert Bettinger make an initial

foray into the topic. Haverstock reports on a recently recovered bow from the Sierra Nevada uplands, while Bettinger explores what the location and distribution of bow-stave trees might mean for the trade of bows across the Sierra. Both include a reference to two bows reported on by Hildebrandt and Ruby (2004). Remarkably, all three bows that have been recovered archaeologically (one reported here by Haverstock, the other two by Hildebrandt and Ruby) match the scars examined by Wilke (1988) and Millar and Smith almost perfectly. I hope that the discussion that follows can catalyze a re-examination of these features.

Adrian Whitaker

Far Western Anthropological Research Group, Inc.
Davis, California

REFERENCES

- Hildebrandt, William R., and Allika Ruby
2004 Archaeological Discovery of Two Wooden Bows from the Coso Range, Inyo County, California. *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 24(2):183–92.
- Wilke, P. J.
1988 Bow Staves Harvested from Juniper Trees by Indians of Nevada. *Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology* 10:3–31.