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Janetski and Madsen, eds.: *Wetland Adaptations in the Great Basin*

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readings and artifacts at CA-NEV-194 makes it difficult to sort out separate components vertically, the data suggest that we should probably place more emphasis on the identification of horizontal stratigraphy in future studies.



*Wetland Adaptations in the Great Basin.* Joel C. Janetski and David B. Madsen, eds. Provo: Brigham Young University Museum of Peoples and Cultures *Occasional Papers* No. 1, 1990, v + 285 pp., \$17.00 (paper).

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This volume of 17 contributions provides a broad mix of topics, perspectives, and obvious differences in sense of problem and sophistication. The notion of wetland "adaptations" has long been a topical cubby hole in the Great Basin, but some of the contributors are obviously trying to transcend the most pedestrian comprehension of this well-worn label as well as the associated stereotypes about sedentary versus nomadic societies, and outdated notions about factors that "permit" sedentism.

The diversity among the papers highlights those whose work is clearly different from that done 30 years ago. Unfortunately, some of the papers would be at home in a volume dating to the 1950s.

The volume opens with a provocative introduction by Madsen and Janetski that is an appropriate lead for the remaining papers—with one significant exception. The ideological tract about evolutionary ecology implies that this perspective has been broadly

studied and that contributions in this vein are a feature of this volume. Neither is true. Their introduction also points to the extremes of discourse in the Great Basin—the problem of "either/or polemics."

The introduction is nicely followed by a historiography of culture-historical typologies by Fowler and Fowler. They too show the extremes of perspective in Great Basin archaeology. Both papers (and others as well) suggest to this reviewer that we have yet to figure out how to comprehend variability in a variable place. Has the term "variability" become mundane, employed merely as a new form of particularism? I wonder if the term "variability," employed in an atmosphere of either/or discourse, has led us to describe the world merely as continua of types (collectors or foragers, nomadic or sedentary, etc.), or as particular cases (this valley, this "culture," etc.)? Collectively, this volume implies many such broad observations about the state of our discipline.

For the working archaeologist, there is an abundance of description that cannot be ignored. A number of the papers are attempts to find wider distribution for ideas from dissertations, research in progress, and cultural resources management research. Such efforts deserve support and thanks. The papers include: C. Fowler on the ethnographic and archaeological aspects of wetland material culture; Raymond and Parks on surface archaeology in the Stillwater Marsh; Drews on an overview of shellfish occurrences; Schmitt and Sharp on mammalian remains in Stillwater Marsh; Brooks et al. on the high frequency of osteophytes and eburnation of human bone from Stillwater Marsh in comparison to other Great Basin occurrences; Tuohy on Pyramid Lake fishing; Dansie's review of carnivore (especially dog) occurrences in western Nevada; Cannon et al. and Oetting, both on recent work in Warner

Valley; and Greenspan's description of fish remains, and biogeography in three cases.

Other papers include Rhode's thoughtful attempt to transcend the problem of building regional interpretations simply by adding up site-specific interpretations. His task of relating upland to lake-edge occupation on Walker Lake is too big to handle in this paper, but there is value in his conceptual ambition and a vision of an archaeology that is different from what we have done in the past.

Janetski's contribution is a lucid, problem-oriented piece focusing on Utah Lake. He is complimented in Thomas' comments at the end of the volume on his consideration of concepts such as faunal richness and diversity, but seems less able to address the equally important influence of sample size on the analysis. His interpretations are, however, appropriately cautious. Janetski also graphs the relative distribution of Fremont vs. Late Prehistoric sites by elevation around the fluctuating Utah Lake to assess similarities and differences in settlement systems.

Kelly's contribution spawns some rather pointed comments when compared to the others. His sophistication on the subject of "sedentism" or the general issue of mobility is unmatched, and this aspect of his paper demands comprehension. In addition, Kelly is the only author who significantly employs data, method, and theory from outside the Great Basin arena.

An entertaining aspect of the volume is the interaction between the Madsen/Janetski Introduction, Thomas' Concluding Comments, and a one-paragraph "reply" by Madsen. There probably are a number of things to be learned from this, ranging from substantive points about method, theory, and intellectual history, to the finer points of interpersonal jousting.

This volume is useful for its empirical

information. The topic is obviously important and popular, and the degree of research and dedication displayed by the researchers impressive. However, the volume contains numerous examples of a series of habits, almost mantras, that should be of concern. I sense a conservative tone in many of the papers. This is not to advocate more adventurous speculation, but to advocate a greater willingness to tackle adventurous goals and be consumers of concepts available to us.

Perhaps they merely reflect the conservative present in our own culture, but a number of authors seem to be fulfilled by acts of homage to a god of cultural complexity. Is it really enough to conclude that behavior was "variable" across time and space, or to hide behind the refrain "cultural factors must be considered," or that "the explanation is multivariate" or to think the important issue is separating "cultural factors" from the influences of "environmental stress?" These usages of words and passages represent broad attitudes. If they are used in response to some perceived foe, then explicit citation of those in opposition is warranted.

Perhaps we could all become more sophisticated consumers, taking better advantage of what is new and becoming more concerned with the match between a body of terminology and a body of concepts. A good start would be a refusal to hide behind deeply internalized recitations such as "well, there are cultural factors too . . ." or "the world of human behavior is complex. . . ."

Neither archaeologists nor the reading public need our discipline to religiously affirm a world in which we are bombarded by the particular and whose complexity is patently obvious—we are supposed to make that complexity comprehensible and explained. In addition to some useful new "data," this volume conveys some general impressions about us.