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Pinto: *The Archaeology of Mitchell Caverns*

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*The Archeology of Mitchell Caverns*. Diana G. Pinto. California Department of Parks and Recreation *California Archeological Reports* No. 25, 1989, 187 pp., 42 figs., 1 appendix, \$5.00 (paper).

Reviewed by:

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Mitchell Caverns (recorded as CA-SBR-117) consists of several caverns and caves and is located on the eastern slope of the Providence Mountains in the eastern Mojave Desert. The site was excavated several times, first in 1934 by the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, then by the University of California, Berkeley, in 1958, and finally by the California Department of Parks and Recreation in 1968. A large number and variety of artifacts, including perishables, were recovered in the various excavations. In each case, only brief reports were prepared, few analyses were conducted, and no single comprehensive report on the work was written.

The purpose of Pinto's work was to bring all of the collections together, conduct specialized analyses, including radiocarbon dating, and to summarize the nature and significance of the collections and the site. The work was done as a Master's thesis completed in 1985. This publication is a revised and updated version of that thesis.

The text includes an introduction, descriptions of the natural and cultural settings, a history of research at the caverns, a description of the artifacts and features, a discussion of dating, a summary and interpretation section, and a complete bibliography. A separate appendix on the ceramics also is included.

The total assemblage of 295 archaeological specimens is described and discussed, including artifacts of stone, bone, shell, perishable materials, and ceramics. In addition, several

historic artifacts were found and are described. Unfortunately, the precise provenience of many of the artifacts was lost over the years (through no fault of Pinto), thus limiting the value of some of the information.

The flaked stone assemblage includes projectile points, bifaces, unifaces, a drill, and perforators. One hafted knife and several wooden knife handles also were found. Ground stone artifacts include a mano, a pipe, and a shaft-straightener. Eleven bone awls also were present, as was other faunal material. A complete *Haliotis* shell was found. Many of the artifacts are perishables, and include basketry, leather, sandals, chuckwalla hooks, crooked sticks, fire-drill hearths, cordage, forceps, modified sticks, and miscellaneous plant parts.

The basketry is of particular interest. In addition to the various fragments of coiled and twined basketry, a winnowing tray and two seed beaters were found. Of the known examples of these forms, very few have been recovered in archaeological contexts, almost all from the deserts of southern California. A radiocarbon assay ( $480 \pm 100$  B.P.: UCR-1878) was obtained on the winnowing tray, making it the oldest known. Radiocarbon assays on the two seed beaters are pending.

It has been suggested (by others) that seed beaters and winnowing trays are a part of a particular basketry complex characteristic of Numic groups. As this basketry complex has been viewed as a technological innovation that allowed Numic groups to outcompete "pre-Numic" groups, the distribution and dating of the complex are important questions.

Suzanne Griset wrote the appendix on the ceramic collections from the caverns and several sites in the surrounding area. Tizon Brown and Lower Colorado Buff wares are described, along with a single black-on-white piece from a nearby "campsite." The collection includes disks and vessels, namely

cooking pots and bowls. Griset concluded her section with a discussion and comparison of ceramic assemblages from other nearby sites.

The technical aspects of the monograph generally are excellent. A few typographical and editorial errors are present but do not detract from the presentation. The photography, illustrations, binding, and general appearance of the work enhance the already good quality of the text.

Pinto must be congratulated on her effort. She has produced a record of the work undertaken at the caverns and has provided a complete description of the materials recovered. *The Archeology of Mitchell Caverns* stands as a major contribution to the archaeology of the eastern Mojave Desert.



*Columbian Consequences, Vol. I: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives on the Spanish Borderlands West.* David Hurst Thomas, ed. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989, 503 pp., 21 maps, 12 tables, 35 figs., bibliography, \$49.95 (hard cover).

Reviewed by:

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Initiated by the Society of American Archaeology to anticipate the Columbian Quincentenary, Volume I is the first installment of a projected three-volume series designed to assess the impacts of human interaction in the New World. Thirty papers presented at Columbian Consequences seminars are included. The goals of the seminars and of the first volume are to emphasize the diversity of encounters and the interpretation of those encounters between native Americans and Spanish-speaking immigrants in primarily mission contexts.

The first volume is divided into three parts, each of which begins with a regional overview:

1. "The Southwestern Heartland" (Durango, Colorado, to East Texas) contains eleven papers (171 pages).
2. "Texas and Northeastern Mexico" has six papers (108 pages).
3. "The Californias" is the longest section with twelve papers (194 pages).

Charles Merbs initiates the recurring theme of health and longevity among precontact peoples. Using archaeological evidence from three precontact sites, Merbs presents a well-supported case for the state of native American health, a concise statement about the differences between European and Indian patterns of illness, and emphasizes the absence of contagious Old World infections from the inventory of New World diseases. He illustrates the high precontact rate of infant and childhood mortality (84% at Grasshopper Pueblo). The results of the introduction of European crowd infections, the effects of settlement relocation and missionization, and subsequent social, political, and demographic collapse among aborigines are addressed by Upham and Reed, and Lycett.

James Corbin reaches beyond health and settlement pattern to attribute Spanish lack of success in eastern Texas to their conservative and rigid ideology, and says that, contrary to the documents, socially the Spanish were becoming like the native *Adaesños*.

Five papers address issues of health, demography, and missionization in the Californias. It is interesting to contrast the tone of these researchers with that of the others. The Californians are alternately reasonable (Walker et al.), resigned (Johnson), militant and angry (Castillo), conciliatory (Hoover), and regretful (Mathes). The Californians address moral issues attendant to the controversial efforts to canonize Father Junipero