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Archaeological Studies at Oro Grande, Mojave Desert, California. Edited by Carol Rector, James D. Swenson, and Philip J. Wilke. Redlands: San Bernardino County Museum Association, 1983, 181 pp., 32 figs., \$10.00 (paper).

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Archaeological Studies at Oro Grande contains data of major significance for Mojave Desert prehistory. The Victor Valley Wastewater Reclamation Authority of Victorville, California, is to be commended for funding the research that led to the publication of these important archaeological data. The San Bernardino County Museum Association also deserves recognition for the high quality of this and other recent publications. Carol Rector and her associates have presented a quality descriptive report that contains an introduction, ten chapters and four appendices.

Rector wrote the Introduction, and provides information on the environment, archaeology, and ethnography in Chapter 1, and on field procedures, site structure, and dating in Chapter 2. The Oro Grande site consists of three areas, separated by arroyos, situated on the lowest terrace of the Mojave River near Victorville. The cultural materials are concentrated in a midden deposit, with lesser num-

bers of artifacts occurring in overlying aeolian and water-laid sands, and in deposits immediately below the midden. In Area 2 a second component, discovered approximately 50 cm. below the upper component, consists of a human and animal trackway with footprints preserved in a silty clay layer. A series of radiocarbon dates places the occupation of the upper component between about A.D. 840 and 1300; a single radiocarbon date for the trackway dates it at about 3700 to 4190 B.C.

Michele M. Jespersen describes the flaked stone artifacts and Recor the ground stone items in Chapters 3 and 4, respectively. The range of artifacts is interesting, especially the projectile points—67 of the 74 classified points are Cottonwood Triangular, but there were no Desert Side-notched points recovered. In Chapter 5, Chester King describes the beads and ornaments that suggest trade contacts with both the Gulf of California and the southern California coast. King treats “groupings of beads found in different loci of Oro Grande” as units and is able to order them chronologically by cross-dating with the bead sequence of the Santa Barbara channel. This bead chronology is generally in agreement with the radiocarbon dates for the Oro Grande site, but suggests bracketing dates as early as 500 B.C. and as late as about A.D. 1500.

Paul Langenwaller describes the bone tools in Chapter 6 and collaborates with Rebecca Langenwaller and Jennifer Strand in the analysis of vertebrate animal remains in Chapter 8. Chapter 8 is more analytical and less descriptive than most of the other chapters, and provides an interpretation of the subsistence pattern. The faunal data are given in terms of minimum numbers of individuals and bone counts or weights are not provided. Daniel McCarthy and Philip Wilke describe plant remains recovered by flotation in Chapter 7, but make virtually no interpretations of

these data. In the final two chapters, Rector describes the unmodified molluscan remains that include both local freshwater species and species brought from the California coast, and presents a Summary and Conclusion. The four appendices include an analysis of nonhuman coprolites from Oro Grande by Jennifer G. Strand, an interesting description and analysis of the trackway by Carol Rector, a paper on the fish remains by W. I. Follett, and a chemical analysis of residue from a stone bowl by Josephus van Balgooy.

This monograph is limited almost entirely to descriptive archaeology. Each chapter and appendix is a descriptive unit and the Summary and Conclusion chapter is little more than a brief summary of the descriptive chapters. These descriptive chapters contain data important to the archaeology of the California deserts and the Great Basin, but there is no attempt to integrate the data from the various chapters. There are no questions asked, no hypotheses tested, no threads of argument or problem orientations that tie the descriptive units together. There is not even a discussion of the artifacts as an assemblage or assemblages.

The lack of integration of the data presented in the separate chapters is perhaps the most apparent in the faunal analysis. Langenwaller and his associates order the site areas chronologically by a seriation of the faunal remains based on an increase in the number of rabbits and rodents captured. Area 1 is the earliest and Area 3 the latest. Given this chronological order, rabbits and rodents increase in number as the relative weight per capture decreases. The data suggest to this reviewer a stressed vertebrate resource base during occupation of Area 3. However, the radiocarbon dates and bead chronology do not support this chronological ordering of the areas of the site. It appears more likely that Areas 2 and 3 were occupied intermittently throughout the period of site use and that

they contain "palimpsest" deposits (Binford 1982) in which the separate occupations cannot be differentiated. A rabbit drive or two by the occupants of Area 3 would perhaps better explain the increase in rabbit bones. The relatively high frequency of *Lepus* (79%) over *Sylvilagus* (21%) supports this suggestion. A high frequency of foot bones at the site would also support this interpretation, but those data are not reported.

The Oro Grande site is of major importance to the interpretation of culture history and chronology, but Rector and her co-authors do not address these problems. Rector apparently attempts to justify this in the following statement:

Until enough information is available to permit useful statements to be made on social, political, economic, technological, and ecological patterns, and how these varied from one region to another, it would seem advisable to avoid attempting to speak in terms of culture phases or time periods. Too frequently investigators confuse phases with time periods or define time periods solely on the basis of one or two diagnostic projectile point styles [p.14].

Later in the same paragraph she concludes:

A better approach would be, for example, to simply state that the site was occupied during the time Elko series projectile points were in use.

It appears to this reviewer that her example is essentially a definition of a period, a concept she rejects at the beginning of the paragraph. Furthermore, it does not follow that because some (or most) archaeologists confuse or misuse a concept, that that concept is not a valid or useful tool.

Long ago Rogers (1945) claimed to have recognized a "non-ceramic Yuman" pattern in the Mojave Desert, but no other archaeologist has adequately identified this pattern (cf. Donnan 1964; Davis 1962; Drover 1979). Rogers claimed that the "non-ceramic Yu-

man" assemblage needed only pottery to make it Yuman II. He described this pattern as containing "the shallow-basined metate, unshaped mano, small round mortar, triangular knife, triangular arrowpoint, and bone awl" (Rogers 1945: 174), and noted that trade with the Pacific Coast was reflected in the occurrence of shell ornaments and pelican bone whistles. The Oro Grande site appears to be a local expression of Rogers' "non-ceramic Yuman" pattern. Questions might be raised regarding its relationship to the spread of the Hakataya (Patayan, if you prefer) as well as to the protohistoric remains of Takic-speaking Serrano on the Mojave River.

Rogers (1945) also claimed the Mojave Sink was a "climax area" because the people there were middle men in a trade network between the California coast and the Southwest. The quantity of beads and ornaments at Oro Grande appear to support Rogers' contention and could be used to address questions regarding the nature of the trade network.

Archaeological Studies at Oro Grande is an appropriate title—these studies rarely extend beyond the boundaries of the site. This is a descriptive report that contains a large quantity of data that are of major importance to Mojave Desert archaeology. It may be unfair to criticize this report for not being the report the reviewer would like to have seen. However, it is my opinion that it is unfortunate that the high standards applied to the descriptive archaeology in this report were not extended to analysis and/or synthesis. The data from the Oro Grande site certainly warrant it.

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In a recent overview of California prehistory, the archaeology in north-central California was characterized as follows:

much of the archaeology so far performed in northeastern California has had cataloging as its chief inspiration. There have, however, been a number of instances in which the decision to excavate a site has been preceded by the phrasing of specific questions in order to resolve identified problems in understanding. When that has happened, the results almost always have been exciting [Raven 1984: 459].