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Breschini, Haversat, and Hampson: *Archaeological Investigations at CA-SLO-99, Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo County, California*

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a site in a now extinct environmental setting seems to have escaped.

The authors and Coyote Press have brought us another contribution to the California archaeological data base. The descriptive material in the report documents an unusual and exciting find and these data will be valuable to archaeologists building a synthetic view of regional prehistory.



Archaeological Investigations at CA-SLO-99, Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo County, California. Gary S. Breschini, Trudy Haversat, and R. Paul Hampson with contributions by J. A. Bennyhoff, M. F. Rondeau, and A. L. Runnings. Salinas, CA: Coyote Press *Archives of California Prehistory* No. 26, 1988, iv + 80 pages, 11 figs., 5 tables, plus 4 appendices with tables, \$6.20 (paper).

Reviewed by:

CLAY SINGER

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This publication is a slightly modified copy of an impact mitigation report prepared by Archaeological Associates of Salinas in 1986. Although it bears a single title, it actually is three separate reports with a breakdown of midden constituents and a partial catalog of specimens. The text begins with a description of a small-scale excavation carried out in 1985 as part of a motel construction project. A very short introduction is followed by a section called "Project Location," after which is a review of previous work entitled "Project Background," and a roughly-outlined scope of work. Next come sections on field methods and laboratory procedures, and finally results of the investiga-

tions. These results are presented in a series of descriptive paragraphs, supplemented by graphs and illustrations, within sections entitled "Nature and Distribution of the Midden Deposit," "Previous Disturbance," "Artifactual Materials," "Non-Artifactual Materials," "Features," "Temporal Placement," "Cupules," and "Conclusions."

The text contains no explicit research or sampling design and no testable hypotheses, but the purposes of the work are clearly stated in the scope of work: (1) to preserve the "primary archaeological deposit" (not defined); (2) to monitor the grading and look for burials and recognizable features; and (3) to recover and analyze samples and generate a report.

The primary text is followed by four appendices. Appendix 1 is an analysis of shell artifacts by James A. Bennyhoff. Appendix 2 is an analysis of flaked stone artifacts by Michael F. Rondeau. Appendix 3 is a breakdown of midden constituents (no author), and Appendix 4 is a partial catalog of specimens, that is, a list of 33 items "judged to be artifacts" (the authors must either expand their definition of artifacts or cite references documenting when flakes ceased being artifacts).

On-site work consisted of sketch-mapping the project area, recording and mapping the distribution of cupules on a large rock outcrop, excavation of four 1 x 1-m. test units, and removal of 10-cm. square column samples from two of the excavated units. Materials excavated from the test units were dry screened with 1/8-in. mesh, whereas the column samples were processed with water and graduated screens to 1/16-in. mesh. Analyses revealed a variety of materials and artifact forms including 22 shell beads and ornaments, 3,899 pieces of flaked stone debitage, two finished bifaces and two other retouched pieces, a mortar rim fragment, a grooved net weight, two pitted stones, an angular (?) hammer, a shallow mortar, and part of a tubular glass bead. Nonartifactual materials

included shellfish, burnt rocks, carbonized material, bones, and orcherous siltstone. Thirteen different mollusk species, plus crab, are listed in Appendix 3. The shells are broken down by unit, screen size, depth (10-cm. level) and weight. Four other midden components, bones, burnt rocks, historic materials, and charcoal, are treated similarly except that none are identified in the text; the category "fish bone" is distinguished and listed but not otherwise identified.

A set of four radiocarbon dates was obtained from composite samples of *Mytilus* shell extracted from four levels in Test Unit 1. These are listed with two more dates from samples of *Tivela* and mixed shell, previously obtained by R. O. Gibson (all six dates are uncorrected). Twelve additional dates, derived from five nearby sites are also listed. Finally, a group of cupules on a sandstone boulder is the last item described in the main text. The principal authors interpret the data from CA-SLO-99 as representing "a small coastal resource exploitation site . . . utilized for a relatively short duration (or intermittently) during approximately the past 1300 years" (p. 29). Based on the data presented, alternative interpretations could easily be postulated.

Like most reports, this one has good and bad features. Its best feature is Appendix 1, Bennyhoff's thorough and worthwhile analysis of the shell beads and ornaments. Among other things, Bennyhoff notes that the radiocarbon dates do not correspond with the bead chronology for the site (cf. King 1990). The radiocarbon dates suggest a single A.D. component deposit occupied during Phase M3 of the Middle Period (ca. A.D. 300 to 700). On the other hand, the beads indicate three later components, a Middle

Period Phase M4 occupation (ca. A.D. 700 to 900), a Phase L1 Late Period occupation (ca. A.D. 1150 to 1500), and a Phase L2 Proto-historic occupation (ca. A.D. 1500 to 1700). Honors for the worst feature must be shared by the simplistic stone tool and debitage analyses, and the virtually nonexistent osteological analysis. Given the overall circumstances, the shellfish analysis is adequate. Illustrations by Anna Runnings are either very good or very otherwise. The line drawings of the chipped stone points and the shell artifacts are excellent, although enlarged three times their actual size, the beads look very strange. The bead drawings would benefit by a scale reduction of at least 50%, plus the addition of a bar scale. A modification in technique would greatly benefit the ground stone drawings (cf. the drawing of glass bead No. 499-12).

Scholars interested in the prehistory of Pismo Beach should think twice before they purchase this report. If you can be satisfied by an excellent bead analysis and do not need osteological data or details on the shellfish, flakes or stone tools, buy it. Without question, Coyote Press is performing a great service by publishing both new and old archaeological reports. However, it is high time that Coyote Press realized it needs the services of an editor who can reject poorly-analyzed data and work with authors to improve the quality of their manuscripts.

REFERENCE

- King, Chester D.
1990 The Evolution of Chumash Society: A Comparative Study of Artifacts Used for Social System Maintenance in the Santa Barbara Channel Region before A.D. 1804. New York: Garland Publishing Inc.

