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Lyneis: *The Main Ridge Community at Lost City: Virgin Anasazi Architecture, Ceramics, and Burials*

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***The Main Ridge Community at Lost City: Virgin Anasazi Architecture, Ceramics, and Burials.*** Margaret M. Lyneis. University of Utah *Anthropological Papers* No. 117, 1992, ix + 96 pp., 22 figs., 71 tables (on 3½" diskette, Microsoft Word 4.0 for Macintosh), \$25.00 (paper).

*Reviewed by:*

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We are no longer manufacturing prehistoric sites. We make new sites every day, but the finite library of old ones becomes increasingly smaller as each new arrowhead portrait of an Indian Chief goes up on a wall and each new pipeline goes into the ground. In this increasingly depauperate archaeological landscape, archaeologists are turning to extant museum collections and the field notes of earlier generations of archaeologists for data against which to test their ideas. There is, however, a less obvious reason, beyond this dramatic reduction in the archaeological site inventory, to explain the trend toward re-working previously excavated sites. Quite simply, some sites have more to tell us about the human condition than others, and, after a century of investigation, we are beginning to get some idea of which sites those are. We return to the Danger and Hidden caves of the Great Basin, not because they were poorly excavated the first or second time around, but because we think they have something more to tell us.

The complex of sites known as "Lost City" in the Moapa Valley of southeastern Nevada is just such an important set of sites. The sites were first excavated by Mark Harrington in the 1920s, and later by a Civilian Conservation Corps crew brought in to "mitigate" the impacts caused by the construction of Hoover Dam and the filling of Lake Mead. These materials were poorly reported, and it was not until Richard

Shutler, Jr. drew them together in the early 1960s that they became widely available. Since then, Shutler's Lost City publication (1961) has been widely cited because of the limited availability of data on this most western manifestation of the Anasazi. A number of questions about the sites remain, however, and Margaret Lyneis and her colleagues at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas have, for a variety of reasons, returned to Moapa Valley in the last decade to address these questions. In the process, they have combined renewed field investigations with additional analyses of curated materials and a thorough review of Harrington's original field notes and photographs.

In this monograph, Lyneis reports on Main Ridge, the major site in the complex. Though the report is primarily descriptive in nature, focusing, as the subtitle suggests, on architecture, ceramics, and burials, the work itself was directed by several ideas Lyneis wanted to explore. Principal among these was the idea of "community." Was Main Ridge simply a composite of separate family occupations, or did it function as a community of families organized in some fashion? If so, was this community reflective of surrounding communities or did it serve a special function? How did this community relate to other Anasazi outside the Moapa Valley? These are serious questions and serve to give this descriptive report meaning.

The bulk of the monograph consists of descriptions of house forms and features, pottery types, and grave goods. The tedium one might expect from this mass of data is mediated by Lyneis' actual use of those data to address her questions. Lyneis contends that Main Ridge was a contemporaneously occupied community of at least a hundred people, organized into small family units. Limited storage suggests it did not serve as a focal point for surrounding communities. Burial associations suggest that there was some limited social stratification, but nothing beyond what might be expected from that asso-

ciated with respected individuals within an egalitarian society. As one might expect from a ceramic specialist such as Lyneis, the ceramic analysis is by far the most detailed. She defines a new pottery type, Shivwits Plain, and is able to distinguish between locally made and imported wares. One of the more surprising results of her analysis is that, unlike Shutler, she could find no evidence of Southern Paiute pottery and suggests that "Main Ridge offers no support for the possibility that pottery-making Southern Paiute people were in Moapa Valley or its immediate surroundings in Pueblo II times" (p. 77). Perhaps equally surprising is her failure to discuss the presence of brownware pottery in a substantial number of nearby stratified contexts during Pueblo I and Pueblo II times.

A fairly large proportion of the pottery, including the Shivwits Plain, was manufactured at points east of Main Ridge. There is evidence that it was part of a trade network reaching from the central Southwest to the Pacific coast, but this site does not appear to have served a more important function than other sites in Moapa Valley or the Virgin Anasazi area generally. Another surprising result of Lyneis' work is the evidence for substantial amounts of wild foods, including mesquite, screwbean, yucca, agave, and pinyon nuts. It is unclear whether these were procured by special task groups or through trade, although Lyneis leans to the latter explanation. To her, the lack of local pinyon resources near their river valleys and the presence of "more mobile people to the west" led the Moapa Valley Anasazi to a "mutualistic relationship" with their mobile neighbors (p. 79).

This is more than just a site report and is an important contribution to the western Anasazi literature. Lyneis' concluding chapter provides a succinct summary of the Virgin Anasazi and integrates it with the larger Anasazi world. It alone is worth the price of the monograph. If I have a single major criticism of the text, it is the failure to discuss the large number of temporary

camps which surround the Moapa Valley Anasazi to the north and east as well as the west. While it is not yet clear whether these camps represent occupation by logistical Anasazi task groups or a "mutualistic relationship" with other peoples, they certainly should not be ignored. Either way they must have been a critical part of the socio-economic strategies of the Moapa Valley villagers.

The production of the monograph meets the usual high standards of the Utah series. There is, however, one aspect of the monograph that irritated me to a point of near-irrationality: the production of the tables on a disk formatted for a Macintosh. While I applaud the effort (endless reams of unsynthesized data push production costs way out of line), it was a frustrating failure. Those responsible for this series seem not to have noticed that not everyone in the world has a computer, and of those who do, only a small percentage have access to a Macintosh. In the Antiquities Section we have IBM compatibles, so when I read "On Table 4, it can be seen that . . ." I became slightly frustrated, because, of course, it could not be seen. I became increasingly irritated as I encountered more and more references to critical material on tables I could not reference. By the time I reached "table 44 shows the distribution," a distribution I could not see, I was in a state of complete outrage. I threw the monograph down in disgust and it was a month before I could bring myself to look at it again. Fortunately, the second time around I managed to read it with a Mac handy and my impression of Lyneis' work was not colored in quite such a negative way. Even so, I was cranky about having to get up constantly to check the disk. This was a good idea, badly executed. If information on tables is important enough to be discussed in the text, it should be displayed in the text. Other, ancillary, data can be included on a disk, but only when everyone has a computer, every computer can read every format, and magnetic

impulses last as long as the printed page. For now, if you do not have access to a computer that can read Word 4.0, the data in this monograph will not be of much use to you.

### REFERENCE

- Shutler, Richard, Jr.  
1961 Lost City: Pueblo Grande de Nevada.  
Nevada State Museum Anthropological  
Papers No. 5.

