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Arkush: The Archaeology of CA-MNO-2122, A Study of Pre-Contact and Post-Contact Lifeways Among the Mono Basin Paiute

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Author

McGuire, Kelly R

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I was a bit disappointed that Milliken did not consider more extensively aspects of the ritual spectacles offered by the Roman Catholic priestly community, including magnificent robes, dramatic statuary, and pictorial representations, and the inevitable efforts of the church to co-opt various local traditional beliefs to pave the transition from non-Christian to Christian. I do not think the story of this *conquista* can be limited to military prowess and offers of food to starving peoples. To borrow a phrase from the Vietnam war, the priests were seeking to control the hearts and minds of the native Californians. That they succeeded to some degree is indicated by the number of former mission Indians who have remained Catholic or at least stayed within the Christian fold.

To anyone who really is intrigued with the history of the Bay Area and its transition from an Indian to a Spanish cultural landscape in a few short decades, this book is a must. For those who are fascinated with what can be done with painstaking analyses of the records left behind (mainly by the colonizers) in order to bring to life the often ignored and belittled native inhabitants of California, this fine book is and will long continue to be a model.



The Archaeology of CA-MNO-2122, A Study of Pre-Contact and Post-Contact Lifeways Among the Mono Basin Paiute. Brooke S. Arkush.

University of California Anthropological Records, Vol. 31, 1995, x + 199 pp., 75 figs., 41 tables, 4 appendices, \$40.00 (paper).

Reviewed by:

KELLY R. MCGUIRE

Far Western Anthropological Research Group, Inc.,
P.O. Box 413, Davis, CA 95617.

This recent contribution to the University of California Anthropological Records series details the results of Brooke Arkush's mid-1980s field investigations at CA-MNO-2122, a remarkable prehistoric, protohistoric, and historic site complex located on the eastern shore of Mono Lake, California. Documented within the approximately 3,000,000 m.² confines of CA-MNO-2122 were three prehistoric pronghorn traps, one historic mustang trap, and 31 feature/artifact concentrations of various functions and ages. The latter include a number of base camps—some represented by the remains of wickiups, windbreaks, and other features—as well as temporary field camps, and one historic corral. Given the size and complexity of the site, field procedures focused mainly on mapping, recording, and feature documentation, with a more judicious and targeted approach to collection and excavation.

Such a welter of temporally and functionally distinct loci pose certain organizational challenges with respect to research approach and report format to which Arkush responds with distinction. Most of the background information, data, and inferences presented in this volume revolve around two major research themes: (1) patterns of aboriginal pronghorn procurement, particularly those employing large game drive traps and other facilities; and (2) Native American culture continuity and change in response to Anglo colonization of the Mono Basin.

With respect to prehistoric pronghorn procurement, Arkush is in the enviable position of having both a spectacular facility inventory and at least three associated activity loci. Each of the three pronghorn traps contains the remains of corral enclosures and wing fences fashioned mostly from wooden juniper posts. Anywhere from 500 to 1,000 of these posts were documented at each trap; wing elements range from 150 m. to almost two kilometers in length. Several of the activity loci associated with the traps manifest subsurface deposits with diverse artifact assemblages and very high concentrations of faunal remains—most of the identifiable material not surprisingly pronghorn.

These data, combined with some new thinking emanating from wildlife biology, are used to reevaluate certain propositions regarding precontact grassland productivity in the Great Basin, as well as relative pronghorn populations and their importance to aboriginal subsistence. Specifically, Arkush (pp. 24-25) takes on the Stewardian notion that pronghorn drives necessarily depleted local herds and that it took many years before such hunts could be conducted again. He believes that while pronghorn herds in the Mono Basin might not have been large enough to conduct annual drives, they were stable enough to sustain routine and systematic harvesting over the last 1,500 years. With such compelling evidence for late prehistoric communal hunting at CA-MNO-2122 and other regional game drive complexes, Arkush also challenges the hypothesis that such facilities were comparatively unimportant by the Late Archaic period (see Pendleton and Thomas 1983).

But perhaps the most interesting aspect of the monograph is Arkush's treatment of protohistoric and historic Native American culture continuity and change in the Mono Basin. And no wonder: CA-MNO-2122 encompasses upwards of 21 separate historic Native American loci that postdate circa A.D. 1800. Many of these contain substantial artifact inventories, and are in-

ferred to have functioned as base camps. Several also exhibit the remains of windbreaks and wickiups, the latter the focus of detailed recording and excavation. Traditional game drives and trap facilities persist, but now seem to have been used to target feral horses.

Two broad assemblage patterns emerge from these data. The first includes those loci which are predominately aboriginal in content but contain a smattering of Euroamerican items (e.g., glass beads); the second consists of those loci which are predominately Euroamerican in content (e.g., cans, bottles, clothing items, firearms, building materials, and other domestic debris) but contain a small number of aboriginal items (e.g., groundstone, flaked stone tools). The former are interpreted as evidence of a protohistoric occupation probably dating between circa A.D. 1800 and 1850; the latter reflect historic Native American use between A.D. 1880 and 1920.

Supplementing his data with historic accounts and archival material, Arkush outlines the transition from a relatively pristine aboriginal lifeway during the Protohistoric Period to that of a distinctive "bi-cultural" Paiute, who by the 1880s had made their accommodations with the dominant Anglo society while retaining essential aspects of native culture. Arkush concludes that, by and large, this transformation was relatively benign:

The acculturative milieu of the *kucadi:kadi* was nondirected in that the element of force or the threat of force really was not used by Anglos to modify Paiute culture, and foreign cultural elements were accepted and integrated into native culture in accordance with native cultural interests and principals of integration [p. 61 (after Spicer 1961:521)].

In this sense, the Paiute are inferred to have had a "degree of freedom" in selecting what aspects of Anglo culture in which they would choose to participate; for example, working for wages during certain parts of the year while participating

in the fall pinyon harvest. Far from coercive or deterministic, economic and social relationships between these two groups are seen as often infused with social closeness and mutual dependency.

Missing at CA-MNO-2122, however, are any components dating from A.D. 1850 to A.D. 1880. Regional documentary evidence of this period, especially the early end, is also comparatively scant. As noted elsewhere in eastern California (Delacorte and McGuire 1993:292-298), this short time span is coterminous with both the advent of the first white settlers and the final collapse of aboriginal lifeways. The very swiftness and severity of these changes may explain why this period is archaeologically invisible at CA-MNO-2122. Viewed in this context, the benign relations between Anglos and Paiutes that Arkush sees at the end of the nineteenth century may simply represent the aftermath of a much more profound and tragic encounter that occurred several decades earlier.

Given its ambitious breadth and scope, I am sure this monograph will draw the attention and perhaps scrutiny of other researchers. Aside from the above, my criticisms are generally few, but as one who has struggled with the difficulty of separating ephemeral protohistoric and historic Native American components from often more overwhelming prehistoric and/or historic Euroamerican site residues, I wish more attention had been given to issues surrounding site structure. For example, if a millstone is found among a larger scatter of cans, bottle fragments, and milled lumber, the entire locus is assumed to have been a historic Native American component. Given the abundant evidence of prehistor-

ic use across CA-MNO-2122, such associations would probably benefit from additional corroboration.

Notwithstanding these concerns, this monograph constitutes a "must read" for anyone interested in Great Basin protohistoric and historic native lifeways or late prehistoric and historic game drive strategies and facilities. It is well written and contains over 50 pages of high-quality photographs, figures, maps, and artifact illustrations that nicely supplement the text. There is no skimping on data presentation either, as manifested by 41 tables and separate appendices for Vertebrate Faunal Remains (Robert M. Yohe II), Floral Remains (Elizabeth J. Lawlor), X-ray Fluorescence (Thomas L. Jackson), and Obsidian Hydration Analysis (Matthew C. Hall). Arkush is to be commended for bringing this most crucial period of Mono Basin Paiute prehistory and history into fuller focus.

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