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Newsletter

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**T-DOORS, TRI-WALLS, AND SUB-FLOORS:
CLUNKY EVIDENCE IN THE ERA OF BIG DATA**

Stephen H. Lekson

7:30 pm Tuesday, November 17, 2020

Via Zoom

At Your Computer or Smart Phone

In Southwestern archaeology, pottery has always held pride-of-place for both quantity and quality of archaeological data. Pottery defines the basic "culture areas," and changes in pottery track much of the history we infer for those regions. Other, larger, clunkier evidence is worth a look: architecture, for example. Various "types" of buildings – as valid as "types" of pottery – are sometimes distributed across ceramic boundaries, and they seem to tell different stories. This talk will look at several patterns of larger evidence, including the iconic T-shaped doors of Mesa Verde (or of Chaco? or of the Sierra Madre?). Comparing and contrasting pottery data – increasingly, “Big Data” – with other larger evidence reveals new patterns in prehistory that either pottery or buildings alone might miss.

Stephen Lekson was Curator of Archaeology at the Museum of Natural History, University of Colorado-Boulder (CU). He received his PhD from the University of New Mexico in 1988 and held research, curatorial, or administrative positions with the University of Tennessee, Eastern New Mexico University, National Park Service, Arizona State Museum, Museum of New Mexico, and Crow Canyon Archaeological Center. Lekson directed more than 20 archaeological projects throughout the Southwest. He was Editor of the journal *Kiva* (2006-2011) and continues as Contributing Editor for *Archaeology* magazine (2003-present). Lekson's publications include a dozen books, chapters in many edited volumes, and articles in journals and magazines. His most recent books are: *A History of the Ancient Southwest* (2009), *Chaco Meridian* (2015), and *A Study of Southwestern Archaeology* (2018). He curated a dozen exhibits, most recently “A History of the Ancient Southwest” (2014) at the CU Museum of Natural History. He retired in 2018.

A day or so prior to the November meeting, an email message will be sent to members with the URL for the Zoom meeting. If you haven't joined us before – or even if you have – plan to join the meeting 10–15 minutes before the 7:30 start time to get familiar with Zoom (some procedures may have changed or differ from other Zoom productions) and say "Hi" to everybody already in the meeting. To avoid extraneous noise that has marred some previous sessions, Evan Kay, president and host, will mute all the participants except the speaker until the question and-answer session following the talk.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM PRESIDENT EVAN KAY AT THE OCTOBER 20 VIRTUAL MEETING

President Evan Kay called the Zoom meeting to order at 7:35 pm and relayed the following reports.

From Treasurer Tom Obenauf: Nothing new to report since September. Funds from the CDs maturing in September were transferred to the money market account. We received a refund of our payment for the rental fee for the meeting room at the Albuquerque Museum.

From Rock Art Recording Crew Chair Carol Chamberland: The team is working but not on BLM lands.

From Membership Chair Mary Raje: We have one new member. Membership dues for 2021 have started trickling in, which Mary appreciates, as it evens out her work load. The 2021 membership renewal application is posted on the website. Mary will mail an application to anyone requesting it at info@abqarchaeology.org.

Nominating Committee Report from Karen Armstrong and Mary Raje: All current officers and directors are willing to serve again. They are: Evan Kay, President; Gretchen Obenauf, First Vice President; Ann Braswell, Second Vice President; Susan King, Secretary; Tom Obenauf, Treasurer; John Guth and Cindy Carson, Directors at Large.

Evan reminded members that nominations from the floor can be made at the November meeting.

Vice President Gretchen Obenauf announced there would be no December holiday party but that she would welcome members volunteering short slide shows for a Zoom meeting.

SPEAKER

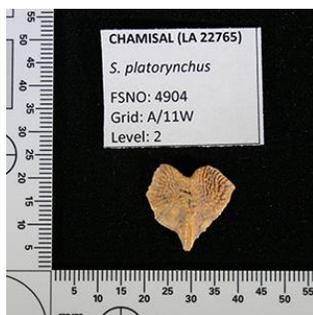
Vice President Gretchen Obenauf, substituting for Ann Braswell, introduced Jonathan Dombrosky, UNM PhD candidate, who spoke about his dissertation research on the environmental impact on Ancestral Pueblo fishing in the middle Rio Grande region. Because of time constraints, Mr. Dombrosky was unable to provide a synopsis of his presentation but suggested two recent online articles from UNM sources. Below is the report from the *Maxwell Monday Missive* of the October 26. Additional information can be found in the online references cited.

Documenting Fish Use in Ancestral Pueblo Sites



Archaeozoologists study faunal remains from archaeological sites to document ancient diets, environments, and subsistence practices. Relatively few Southwestern archaeozoologists specialize in the study of fish bones, which are notoriously challenging to identify. UNM Anthropology doctoral candidate Jon Dombrosky is one such specialist. He and his colleagues have recently published a fascinating study of fish use in Ancestral Pueblo sites in the Middle Rio Grande Basin of central New Mexico in the journal *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences*.

Through stable isotope and statistical analysis of fish remains from three major late preHispanic/early historic Middle Rio Grande Pueblos (Isleta Pueblo Mission Complex [LA724], Kuaua [LA 187], and Chamisal [LA 22765], the latter in the Maxwell's collections), Dombrosky and colleagues documented an increase in fish use compared to earlier periods. They propose that increases in precipitation in the late prehispanic period resulted in greater ecological stability that contributed to the increased consumption of fish by Ancestral Pueblo people.



In a recent article by Mary Beth King published on news.unm.edu, Dombrosky elaborated on his results:

“The start of the late pre-Hispanic period here around Albuquerque is also the end of severe drought conditions across the Southwest, a climatic anomaly known as the Medieval Warm Period. It seems that wetter river conditions provided more diverse food resources for fishes themselves to rely on, which translated to a healthier community of fishes in the past. In the paper, we argue that people would have known that fishes could have been more reliably caught during this time, making fishing a more viable way to get food.”

He added that while prior research has privileged the dominance of maize in Ancestral Puebloan diets:

“This research adds to a growing suspicion in Southwest archaeological scholarship that the eating habits and culinary practices of Ancestral Pueblo people are far more diverse than we’ve been led to believe. ... If we can step outside the colossal shadow of maize just for a second, we could find out a lot more about how people used food like fish to survive and thrive in this landscape. We could learn more about how Ancestral Pueblo people maintained their culture by making different decisions about what to eat and when to eat it.”

References:

Dombrosky, J., Besser, A.C., Elliott Smith, E.A. et al. Resource risk and stability in the zoo-archaeological record: the case of Pueblo fishing in the Middle Rio Grande, New Mexico. *Archaeol Anthropol Sci* 12, 248 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12520-020-01193-0>

King, Mary Beth. New research explores how fish became a bigger part of pueblo people’s diet. UNM Newsroom, October 15, 2020 (<http://news.unm.edu/news/new-research-explores-how-fish-became-a-bigger-part-of-pueblo-people’s-diet>)

NEWS AND NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE

Extensive Pleistocene Trackway Preserved in White Sands National Monument

Several thousand years ago, a young adult moved barefoot across a muddy landscape. A toddler was balanced on the adult’s hip. There were large animals – mammoths and ground sloths – just over the horizon. It was a perilous journey, and scientists reconstructed it by closely studying an exceptional set of human and animal footprints found recently at White Sands. “This is an amazing trackway,” said Neil Thomas Roach, an anthropologist at Harvard University, who was not involved in the research, which was published online this month in *Quaternary Science Reviews*. “We rarely get tracks as well preserved as these are.”

The journey of the prehistoric young adult and the toddler was spotted in 2017 in White Sands National Park. The sequence extends more than a mile and includes at least 427 human prints. The out-and-back journey was probably completed in no more than a few hours, the researchers suggest. (The gypsum sand that records the prints doesn’t hold water well, so the muddy conditions that captured the prints would have been short-lived.)

Most of the human footprints were made by a barefoot adolescent of either sex, or a young adult female with roughly size 6 feet, the team determined. But about every 100 yards or so, a few much smaller human prints suddenly appear within the northbound set of tracks. “We have many adult tracks, and then every now and again we have these tiny baby tracks,” Dr. Reynolds said.

A toddler-aged child was being carried and periodically placed on the muddy ground as the caregiver readjusted his or her human load, the researchers surmised, based on the three-dimensional digital models they had assembled. There are no toddler footprints within the southbound set of tracks, so the child probably wasn’t carried



on that journey. According to Dr Reynolds, “It’s likely that the child rode on the young person’s left hip. There’s a slight asymmetry between the left and right tracks on the northbound set of tracks. That’s consistent with someone carrying extra weight on that side.”

She and her collaborators estimated that the young person was moving at just shy of four miles per hour. That’s a good clip: “Imagine running for a bus,” Dr. Reynolds said. “It’s not a stroll.” The urgency of the journey might have had something to do with the toddler, Dr. Reynolds suggests. “Why else would you travel so fast but encumber yourself with a child?”

There was another reason, however, for making haste over the landscape – the presence of large and potentially dangerous animals. Both a giant sloth and a mammoth ambled across the humans’ path, the trackway reveals. Their prints appear on top of the northbound footsteps but below the southbound ones, meaning that the animals walked by sometime in between the humans’ passage. <https://nyti.ms/3or4zno> - *New York Times*, via *Southwest Archaeology Today*, a service of Archaeology Southwest. [Excerpted from original *NYT* article.]

CALENDAR CHECK

As noted in the October Newsletter, technology has come to the rescue of today’s involuntary homebodies with (almost too many) virtual meetings and lectures on Zoom or webinars, and many of these lectures have been taped for future viewing on YouTube. Most museums have made available virtual tours of exhibitions that would previously have involved travel. All one needs to do is to check out the websites. A good starting point for lectures and other online events that one might not think to look for is Mike Ruggeri’s Ancient America’s Events (mikeruggerisevents.tumblr.com), which presents a useful and constantly updated compendium of live online events for each month. Also on the site is a list of links to previous Zoom lectures now to be found on YouTube.

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