



Life beyond the Boundaries: Constructing Identity in Edge Regions of the North American Southwest

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Historically, the archaeological study of the social identities of people presumed to be living on the margins of society have been approached through the lenses of core/periphery, metropolis/frontier, and other binary constructions that imply a unidirectional flow of power and goods. This volume intends to open a new discussion into how people who inhabited less populated areas around and between known culture centers negotiated their identities in relation to, or against more densely expressed archaeological cultures in the North American Southwest. Calling these less populated areas ‘edge-regions,’ Harry and Herr describe them as joint-use territories, frontiers, uncontested areas, and contact zones that existed along a continuum defined by the presence/absence of population migration and overall area demographic features. The chapters that comprise the volume present case studies of people whose lives were characterized by less social control and greater flexibility and heterogeneity than culture centers. Throughout, the case studies reinforce the central argument of the volume; that edge-regions held opportunities for people to determine and enact unique identities in relation to landscapes, histories, and other people. The result is an interesting collection that emphasizes the concepts of practice, habitus, and memory among others in the archaeological investigation of people whose material culture demonstrates that they chose not to conform to cultural core ideologies and expectations.

Joint-use territories are characterized by high mobility and population diversity between densely population cultural core areas. Kellam Throgmorton (Chapter 6) uses pithouse architecture in the Puerco Valley to examine household identity and the transition from joint-use territory to frontier in a natural thoroughfare on the landscape. Throgmorton’s analysis reveals that the Puerco Valley residents inhabited a joint-use area characterized by mobile agriculturalists living in loose communities of dispersed households at AD 600. The next three hundred years saw a transition of the valley into a frontier comprised of permanent villages and ceremonial structures introduced and built by immigrants from Mesa Verde after AD 780. Sarah A. Herr and Jeffery J. Clark (Chapter 7) investigate enculturative traditions and active identity markers to study the relationship between household-level identity and late Pre-Classic Hohokam group identity in a joint-use territory outside the Hohokam center. They find that the Hohokam culture area is characterized by cultural variability rather than conservatism and speculate that Hohokam ideology may have been intended to bring diverse groups together.

Frontiers are sparsely populated and outside of core areas that experience one or more migrations of people who come to establish enduring settlements. The editors emphasize that frontiers need not be defined by their relationship to a cultural core as they have been in the past. Using Social Network Analysis (SNA), Matthew A. Peeples and Barbara J. Mills (Chapter 2) employ ceramic and settlement data from AD 1200–1400 sites to create an analytical method for identifying frontiers and similar edge regions from archaeological data. Peeples and Mills also use these data to explore the nature of interactions among sites and regions by identifying weak and strong ties based on proportions of ceramic wares used and discarded at settlements in the region. They conclude that weak ties typify network connections with high degrees of heterogeneity and that these connections acted as bridges between environmentally diverse areas above and below the Mogollon Rim. In another SNA study, Lewis Borck (Chapter 4) engages with ideas of social movements, memory, and forgetting to elucidate the details of what he calls an *atavistic social movement* via an analysis of archaeological sites and foreign ceramics in the Gallina region. The Gallina, Borck says, were engaged in a movement that drew upon ancient, or ancestral cultural practices and used their spatial isolation to enact a shared group identity while forgetting their various histories and networks of origin. Similarly, Severin Fowles (Chapter 3) draws linkages between pre-colonial Taos and the pueblo concept of emergence to explain that the people of pre-colonial Taos moved to the area to create a new social world and were intentionally a counter-Chacoan, rather than a non-Chacoan, society. Fowles adds another dimension to the discussion of edge-regions in his construction of a frontier as a threshold through which a society may emerge rather than a place, or location.

Uncontested areas are defined by evidence of deep history and continuity of occupation that give rise to a reproductively sustainable population with strong communities of practice. Karen G. Harry and James T. Watson (Chapter 5) use non-metric dental traits to contest the long-lived hypothesis that the lowland Virgin Branch Puebloan (VBP) people and culture in the Moapa Valley are the result of immigrants from the Kayenta/Tusayan region. They find that the lowland VBP share more heritable dental traits with Great Basin groups and propose that Moapa Valley residents are descendants of Archaic hunter-gatherers whose participation in agricultural pursuits comes not from the Kayenta/Tusayan region but from further south via the Colorado River. Though they retain dimensions of their hunter-gatherer ancestry, they intentionally incorporated material culture that would associate them with the Puebloan world and afford them the social and economic advantages of that world.

The revised model of VBP origins parallels Myles R. Miller's (Chapter 8) discussion of the Jornada region. Rather than a poor population marginalized by the cultural cores of the American Southwest, Miller marshals a case for a stable, long-term Jornada social identity that developed in situ over a millennium. Unlike the VBP, however, the development of Jornada social identity and its stability are not affected by migration, warfare, or other events that would bring populations into the Jornada region. Using iconographic representations and ritual practices, Miller traces Jornada identity via ceramic production, architectural analysis, and rock art to conclude that the stability of Jornada identity is due to connection to the landscape.

In another examination of the stability of identities, Patricia A. Gilman (Chapter 9) investigates the relationships between the Mimbres Valley Mimbres and residents of the Upper Gila and San Simon Valleys through an analysis of Mimbres black-on-white pottery, site architecture, and evidence of ritual participation. The presence of Mimbres black-on-white pottery in all three areas indicates a long-term, stable relationship among the three valleys while the architecture in the Upper Gila and San Simon populations diverges from the Mimbres Valley architecture and illustrates the presence of different communities of practice. At San Simon in particular there is reason to infer close ties with the Hohokam to the west. Gilman concludes that while the Mimbres Valley Mimbres acquiesced to outside influences that called for the incorporation of the scarlet macaw and Hero Twin saga in their ritual practice, the Upper Gila and San Simon populations did not. The Upper Gila and San Simon may have in fact remained as reservoirs of tradition in the same way Miller postulates the Jornada did for the Mimbres and the Mogollon in Chapter 8.

Perhaps most resembling the historical concept of 'frontier,' contact zones are created by migrants with strong group identities coming into contact with existing populations with equally strong group identities to create a situation with the potential for rapid and aggressive change. In a re-examination of the Pimería Alta, Lauren E. Jelinek and Dale S. Brenneman (Chapter 10) use multiple lines of evidence to illustrate the situational flexibility of social identities and call for a multi-scalar approach to the study of identity in contact zones. Jelinek and Brenneman illustrate that the definition of contact zone is not always a straightforward meeting of groups with strong identities like Spaniards and Indigenous people, homogenously defined. They convincingly argue that the Pimería Alta was diverse frontier inhabited, used, and traversed by no less than 19 indigenous groups who interacted with each other and Spanish invaders in myriad ways.

Gilman (Chapter 9) opens her discussion with the statement, "[t]here are regions that appear in archaeology textbooks—Mimbres, Chaco, Hohokam—and there are regions that do not" (p. 273). Using the concepts of practice, habitus, and memory the authors in this volume use archaeological data to investigate people historically considered marginal in the pages of Southwestern archaeology. The case studies in this volume competently demonstrate the expression of the less well known social identities in the region and the connection of those identities to landscapes, other populations, and for some, the fluidity of those identities over time and in the face of change. Chapter authors unanimously argue for the need to examine the historically defined marginal culture areas on their own terms and from a perspective that places edge regions at the center of consideration rather than on the periphery. As Borck (Chapter 8) says about people in the Gallina region, "people in (edge-regions) were active producers and not just recipients of history" (p. 110). This volume is an engaging and interesting opening to conversations about edge-regions in the archaeology of the North American Southwest that portray the region as even more dynamic than has historically been considered.