

BOOK REVIEW



Exploring Variability in Mogollon Pit Houses, edited by Barbara J. Roth and Robert Stokes. 142 pp., 47 figures, 2 plates, 20 tables. Arizona State University, Anthropological Research Paper No. 58, 2007. \$33.50 (Paper). ISBN 0-936249-38-2.

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If you question whether there is a characteristic Mogollon pit house type subject to definable changes through time, the answer is unequivocally no, as evidenced in this fact-filled volume. If you ask if Mogollon pit houses are distinctive within the Greater Southwest, the answer is, again, no. So why devote an entire volume to the issue of Mogollon pit house variability? The authors answer this by establishing that there is great variability within these pit houses that has allowed them to present new documentation on the important questions of residential mobility, reoccupation, and function of pit houses. These variations are put forth as a response to changing human needs through time, variances in the environment, and shifting resource availabilities. Such life necessities are certainly not unique to the region, but the attention given to explaining these variations in response is a commendable contribution toward understanding human activity in the Mogollon area.

Robert Stokes plays down pit house variability, stating that pit house styles are basically generalized with only minor regional differences. He looks at architectural style as a means of examining evidence for ethnicity among Mogollon pit house dwellers and basically finds none. Michael Diehl studies patterning in pit house floor assemblages to determine the population sizes of pit house villages and subsequent abandonment sequences. He concludes that pit house populations may have been more mobile than previously thought. His approach is refreshing and has possibilities for a new understanding of Mogollon mobility patterns and is one that can easily be adopted by archaeologists in the region.

Several authors focus on the meaning of the differences between shallow pit houses and those that are deeper and more formalized. These differences would seem to be intuitive, representing expedient versus long-term occupation. Raymond Mauldin looks at the variations within the Jornada Mogollon area. He relates these differences to changing agricultural dependence and presents the possibility that shallow pit houses may have been winter shelters in this mobile society. Thomas Rocek also examines the variations in the Jornada area pit houses

in terms of agricultural dependence and finds that there is a complex relationship between seasonality of resources and mobility. Patricia Gilman, in one of the most succinct chapters, argues for the smaller pit houses being temporary habitations. She also tackles the difficult question of whether some pit houses are dwellings or kivas or both.

Angela Linse examines variability through time by looking at settlement pattern changes in the Mogollon Highlands near Mogollon Village and proposes a complex sequence of village occupation through time. She comments that movement from high elevation, isolated locations to lower settings through time is widely accepted by regional archaeologists. However, this concept has more recently been shown to be based on earlier, limited data and is not necessarily true. W. H. Wills's conclusions put the shift from pit house to above-ground structures within a more social context. He believes that agricultural potential is not always a force in the placement of pit houses in the Mogollon Highlands. However, some current data show that Late Pit House period structures seem to be, in fact, oriented to the location of possible agricultural fields (Oakes and Zamora 1999).

The comparative analysis by Jason Lucas of Three Circle phase pit houses in the Mimbres area is an interesting study but would benefit from an inclusion of a concise compilation of the data, such as a table or two. Barbara Roth verifies pit house variability in pit houses at Lake Roberts in the upland Mimbres area. She concludes that upland groups were more mobile than those living in valley settlements and less dependent on agriculture. Further study is warranted as to why there were such differences between these close neighbors in the Mimbres Valley.

Robert Brooks's description of Antelope Creek phase pit houses on the High Plains presents data not usually considered as a source of comparison with Mogollon pit houses. This leads to the question of how different pit houses really are within the Greater Southwest. We know they are a basic habitational adaptation by people adjusting to their physical and social environs. To understand these changes, Roger Anyon states that we should be looking at the revolving needs of human populations through time. Considering that these needs are universal, perhaps we should look at pit houses all over the Southwest as more or less homogeneous and document the differences as responses to some localized situation or stress. The authors in this volume have done an excellent job at documenting these localized variations. The information should be incorporated into a pan-regional database in order to examine variability and its significance among all pit houses of the Southwest.

REFERENCE

- Oakes, Yvonne R., and Dorothy A. Zamora
1999 *Archaeology of the Mogollon Highlands: Settlement Systems and Adaptation*. Archaeology Notes 232. Museum of New Mexico, Office of Archaeological Studies.