

Thoughts on Utah Archaeology

Author(s): Carling Malouf

Source: *American Antiquity*, Jan., 1944, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Jan., 1944), pp. 319-328

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/275789>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Cambridge University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Antiquity*

JSTOR

## THOUGHTS ON UTAH ARCHAEOLOGY

CARLING MALOUF

UTAH is nearly bisected north-south by the Wasatch Mountains.<sup>1</sup> Between Ogden and Nephi, Utah, these mountains have undergone extensive folding and faulting and reach a maximum height of 12,000 feet at Mt. Timpanogas. South of Nephi this range branches into three great fingers with narrow valleys between. Flanking the Wasatch, east of Salt Lake City, are the lofty Uintah Mountains. These, unlike other ranges in North America, have an east-west axis forming a barrier between Pueblo-dominated lands to the south and the territory of nomads living in the Wyoming Basin to the north. Little evidence of Pueblo occupation has been observed in southeast Wyoming, though there are a number of passes through which occasional hunting parties from the plateaus to the south may have ventured north into the plains of southern Wyoming. This, of course, could only have occurred in the summer, as the area is free from snow for only three or four months of the year.

To the east of the Wasatch, and south of the Uintah range, lies the great plateau region drained by the Green River and the Colorado River, with their many tributaries, while to the west of the Wasatch lies the vast Great Basin. Numerous mountain ranges occur in the Great Basin itself, but these are not usually very high, and, because of their age, are heavily eroded. In the plateau region there are several large lacolithic structures: the Henry Mountains, the La Sal Mountains, the Abajo (or Blue) Mountains, and Navajo Peak. Great series of cliffs, deep box canyons, and plateaus characterize the topography of much of this area. It is drained by both intermittent and permanent streams, all leading toward the Colorado River. The Great Basin merely forms a large number of receptacles for the streams draining into it.

The importance of mountains to the subsistence activities of the inhabitants of Utah was paramount. As much as eighty inches of rainfall a year are recorded by Weather Bureau stations in the Wasatch Mountains. In contrast, the desert areas to the west, in the Great Basin, may have as little as 4.5 inches of rain a year. For this reason, most of the ruins of the Pueblo people of Utah are found along the base of the Wasatch Mountains where streams furnished water for the cultivation of foods and vegetation for game animals. Both Judd<sup>2</sup> and Smith<sup>3</sup> have already noted that whites, motivated by the same reasons as their In-

<sup>1</sup> The reader is referred to Malouf, 1940, for maps of Utah which may be used for locating place names mentioned here.

Judd, 1926, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, 1940.

dian predecessors, have built their villages directly upon those of the aborigines.

The earliest remains of prehistoric man in Utah are found in caves around Great Salt Lake in northern Utah. Here, too, are found the northernmost penetrations of southwestern Pueblo cultures. The pre-Puebloid sequences are as yet little known, but they may date back as far as 10,000 years. A considerable amount of work on this problem has been accomplished in recent years by the University of Utah. Present evidence indicates the following sequence in the Great Salt Lake area: Shoshone, which is the most recent; Promontory culture; Puebloid; Black Rock culture; and the Bonneville culture. There is a hiatus between the last two.

*The Shoshone*: Many artifacts in this level, fortunately, have not decomposed, so that it is possible to describe some of the more perishable objects in the culture. Among these are basketry, skin objects, cedar bark ropes, and foods. Characteristic of Shoshonean peoples were side-notched arrow points. Points that are both side-notched and end-notched are also found, but they are rarer than in the Promontory Culture.<sup>4</sup> Metal objects, such as iron arrow points, are found near the top of this level, indicating the beginning of white infiltrations. Shoshone pottery is very crude and is usually lighter in color than its predecessor, the Promontory ware. Rim designs are not found, but incised body designs are common. A few sherds from Black Rock Cave (No. 3) show that it was made by the coiled process, as the coil marks are still present.<sup>5</sup> The interior of this ware is usually striated, and the exterior is smoothed but unwashed. Tempering is coarse and consists of silicates, or other light-colored materials. The paste, likewise, is coarse. Many of the vessels were apparently fat-bottomed, with wide flaring mouths and outward-sloping sides. They are reported to have been found along the Snake River by investigators from the Museum of the American Indian, and by parties from the University of Utah working in northern Utah and Nevada. At the mouth of Weber Canyon, near Ogden, Utah, they were associated with a peculiar circle of stones which closely resembled a tipi ring. Flat-bottomed pottery of this type has been found as far north as Montana, where it appears in the uppermost levels of caves.<sup>6</sup> Steward<sup>7</sup> and other recorders have also reported it throughout Nevada and in southern California. Although pottery is no longer made by any

---

<sup>4</sup> Steward, 1937, pp. 84-85.

<sup>5</sup> Enger, 1942.

<sup>6</sup> Communication with Mr. William T. Mulloy, Billings, Montana. E. R. Smith and Charles Dibble have located similar wares near White Horse Pass, Nevada, and Logan, Utah. These will be described in a forthcoming University of Utah paper by Smith.

<sup>7</sup> Steward, 1941, p. 340.

of the Western Shoshone groups, some Indians have vague traditions of its having been manufactured in the past.

Arrow straighteners used by the Shoshone were long and narrow and possessed a longitudinal groove down the center. Coiled basketry appears to have been similar to present day Western Shoshone types in shape and method of manufacture.

*Promontory culture:* In this culture side-notched and end-notched points of obsidian are characteristic, appearing for the first time in the Great Salt Lake region. The pottery is much like that of the Shoshone, except for the greater frequency of rim designs and for its black, burned color. Moccasins and many other objects of bison skins are also characteristic. The place of the Promontory culture in the Great Basin sequences is not quite clear. Steward suggests that Athapascans on their way south might have been responsible for it.<sup>8</sup> Still another suggestion is that it might have been a "localized specialization of a more generalized Shoshone culture," but the preponderance of parallels between the Promontory culture, the Shoshone, and Canadian tribes indicates that it was otherwise. Present evidence shows that there was undoubtedly some contact between the Shoshone people and the Promontory culture, but this evidence should not be construed as indicating that the two were intimately connected. The influence of the Promontory culture on the more southern Shoshone, such as the Gosiute, was almost non-existent; it did not penetrate beyond Utah Lake on the south, nor beyond Wendover on the west. Its eastern and northern boundaries, on the other hand, are still undefined. The pottery found at Deep Creek, Utah, identified as Shoshone ware, has a flavor decidedly different from that of the Promontory culture, although the affinity is greater with the latter than with that of the Puebloans. Metates used by the Shoshone and the Promontory people are likewise similar. Those of the Puebloans are distinct, possessing a secondary depression, and are well publicized as the "Utah type" metate. Both Promontory and Shoshone metates are flat and shallow, being about one foot to 14 inches long, 6 inches wide, and 2 or 3 inches thick. These were ordinarily worked on but one side.

Three of the most outstanding and easily recognized traits of the Promontory culture are:

1. Pottery: coarse silicate temper; rim pieces, about half of which are incised, are widened toward the top. The body may also be incised. Most potsherds found in Great Salt Lake caves containing Promontory culture material are burned black from use in fires.
2. Moccasins: made of buffalo hide. They are of the one-piece, two-piece, and three-piece varieties. In appearance they are not unlike those of the northern Athapascans or Algonkians.

---

<sup>8</sup> Steward, 1938.

3. Arrow points: usually made of obsidian and in most cases are side-notched, but they may also have an end notch. These are not found in other sites in the immediate vicinity of the Great Salt Lake, except in the upper levels of Pueblo mounds and on the surface of the ground. Side-notched points, probably of Shoshonean origin, are also found in hills and in archaeological sites in eastern Nevada, Deep Creek, the Cherry Creek Mountains, Steptoe Valley, and adjoining localities.

*Puebloid*: Pueblo wares are found throughout the Northern Periphery and have frequently been described. They resemble very closely Pueblo types already known in the "classic" Southwest. There is no correlation between Pueblo archaeological areas and the domains occupied by the succeeding Shoshone bands.

*Black Rock culture*: The Black Rock culture is thus far distinguished only by a definite type of corner-notched point. These are usually made of sedimentary and metamorphic materials; the use of obsidian for tools and implements during these times was less common than during the preceding and succeeding periods. They are found in caves in the Great Salt Lake region, but not in mounds. Metates are also found on this level.

*Deadman culture*: This culture is characterized by two distinct types of points. The first type, a form of the so-called "Yuma point," is a long, narrow and triangular instrument. It is not fluted. The second type is unique in this area. It is widest in the middle and is constricted at the base to form a stem. A variation of this type is like the "Pinto Basin" points.

Metates are present, but they too are simpler than those made by Puebloan peoples. No pottery is found on this level, or in any of the others that precede the Puebloid.

Deadman points were first recognized as a distinct type when Deadman Cave, near Garfield, Utah, was excavated by a University of Utah party.<sup>9</sup> They have also been found in adjoining regions, of which Deep Creek is an example.<sup>10</sup>

*Bonneville culture*: The only known remains of this culture consist of a burial found by Julian H. Steward in Black Rock Cave (No. 1) on the south shore of Great Salt Lake.<sup>11</sup> The skeleton, that of a baby, was found in prehistoric Lake Bonneville gravels, indicating that it must have been buried some 7,000 to 10,000 years ago. A bone dagger, about six inches long, was found with the burial.

It may be noted that all the pre-Puebloid cultures were based on a hunting and gathering economy. The similarity between these and the Cochise of Arizona is very striking, and the possibility that some connection existed between them is strong. Only in the Pueblo period does

---

<sup>9</sup> Smith, 1941a.

<sup>10</sup> Malouf, 1941.

<sup>11</sup> Steward, 1937.

there seem to have been an attempt at horticulture in the Great Salt Lake region, and even then it seems to have been subsidiary to a hunting-gathering economy. Numerous bone fragments, seeds, nuts, and other foods are found much more commonly than cultivated foods, of which corn is the only known representative. Bison were particularly plentiful during Pueblo times, and especially during Promontory times, but they decreased in numbers thereafter. The increase in the size of the buffalo herds in the Great Basin was, therefore, an important factor in the breakdown of the Puebloid culture and the invasion by the Promontory culture from the north. Many of the techniques required for a horticultural existence were already present in the hunting-gathering cultures, so that when Pueblo traits were introduced into the area they were readily accepted. Even so, they seem to have been just as readily abandoned when they met with adverse conditions at the time of the invasion by Promontory culture peoples.

South of the Great Salt Lake region are the Sevier Lake area and central Utah. Here the Puebloid culture seems to have been superseded directly by Shoshoneans who were, as far as is known, without pottery, but who possessed side-notched arrow points. These replace the characteristic tanged points of Utah Puebloans in some of the later sites throughout the region. Pueblo archaeological sites west of the Wasatch can be identified with present-day white villages and towns, but those in the Plateau region to the east are scattered up and down box canyons that have not yet proved profitable for present day farmers to settle. Thus, sites in the latter region are usually named in terms of well-known landmarks such as canyons, or nearby rivers.

At the outset, we find that two great domains existed during the Puebloid era in Utah, one to the east of the Wasatch and another to the west. Resources in the Plateau area were generally different from those in the Great Basin. There were differences not only in the amount of rainfall but also in its timing during the year. A recurrence of a rainy season in the late summer is typical for the Plateau area, but it is not a common feature in the Great Basin. Materials for the manufacture of technical devices were also different. Judd<sup>12</sup> and Steward<sup>13</sup> have suggested that the Pueblo people, when they ventured into the Great Basin, could no longer build masonry houses, as the necessary stones could not be acquired in abundance; hence, they made them of dried adobe blocks, or they constructed their houses in jacal style. Basic materials for the manufacture of tools and implements were also somewhat different. Obsidian, for example, has been shown to have existed in great quantities in that part of Utah lying within the Great Basin,

<sup>12</sup> Judd, 1926, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> Steward, 1933, p. 14.

but not in the Plateau area.<sup>14</sup> Flora and fauna, however, were less diverse than were the inanimate resources.

Each of these two major divisions can in turn be subdivided. This has already been done by Steward (1933) and Malouf (1940). Certain features characterize each of these divisions, which are referred to as areas.

Not all the valleys in the state have soil that is equally good for production in both the margins, at the foot of the mountains, and the centers. Many of the valleys in the Great Basin are completely enclosed; hence, there is no proper drainage. Minerals and salts are washed down from the mountains, and are deposited in the valley bottoms. Only certain wild plants can grow in this type of soil. The cultivation of crops would, as a rule, be preferable along the bases of the mountains for reasons in addition to that of soil quality. First of all, water flowing from the mountain canyons rapidly seeps into the ground and must be diverted for cultivation as close to its source as practicable. Secondly, the period between frosts in the foothills is longer, and the climate less extreme, than in the center of the valley, even though the latter may be lower in elevation.

Some interesting conjectures concerning the supplanting of cultures and the migrations of people in the Northern Periphery can be deduced from the evidences now available, even though they are meager. A site in the Wasatch Mountains, near Hoytsville, Utah, yielded pottery with Pueblo forms but with a coarse tempering like that of Shoshone and Promontory wares.<sup>15</sup> It resembled most closely pottery found in the Uintah Basin in northeastern Utah. No black-on-grey wares have been found at either of these places. Reagan, however, has reported jacal type houses, similar to those found at Willard, in the Uintah Basin.<sup>16</sup> A Promontory, or Shoshone-like, pottery has been reported from the vicinity of Cisco, Utah, which is south of the Uintah Basin. Jacal houses and other Great Basin traits occur in Nine Mile Canyon, Utah, but not farther south in the Plateau region.<sup>17</sup> The data may be graphically presented as follows:

<i>Great Salt Lake Area</i>	<i>Hoytsville, Utah</i>	<i>Uintah Basin</i>
Shoshone ware	Promontory, or Shoshone-like pottery	Promontory, or Shoshone-like pottery with Pueblo forms.
Promontory ware		Jacal houses.
Pueblo pottery		No black-on-grey wares
Jacal houses	<i>Nine Mile Canyon</i>	Masonry houses
Figurines	Pueblo pottery	
Coffee-bean design on pottery	Figurines	
	Jacal house	
	Coffee-bean design	
	Corrugated ware	
	Masonry houses	

<sup>14</sup> Malouf, 1940, pp. 115-122.

<sup>15</sup> This site was located by E. R. Smith, who was accompanied at the time by the writer.

<sup>16</sup> Reagan, 1934.

<sup>17</sup> Gillin, 1938.

*Sevier Area*

House-walls free standing.  
Rooms never adjoin.  
Shoshone and Ute artifacts on surface or near the ground surface.

*Central Utah*

House-walls free standing.  
Rooms contiguous. Jacal type also present.  
Pottery-Sevier forms, but tempering is different.

*Cisco, Utah*

Promontory, or Shoshone-like pottery.

A series of hunting and gathering cultures existed in western Utah until about 1000 A.D., when Puebloans began to infiltrate into the region. They at first came from the region around St. George, Utah, or from the Virgin area in general, and then they passed on into western Utah as far north as the Great Salt Lake.<sup>18</sup> These people brought with them certain Basketmaker features as holdovers from earlier times. They lacked the kiva, but pit houses and semi-pit houses were present, and they introduced slab-lined storage pits, figurines, tanged arrow points, and some other traits. After this wave of Puebloism reached the Great Salt Lake area, another one began to spread in turn from southern Utah. This latter was responsible for the introduction of houses with free-standing walls of adobe, and some pottery types. A branch of this wave spread westward from central Utah into the Great Basin as far as Ibapah, Utah, or beyond. Before the second wave was implanted firmly in the Great Salt Lake area, the Promontory people began to move in from the north, introducing a Woodland-like pottery and other traits. About this time, the Shoshone peoples began to move northward from southern Nevada and southern California, and about 1300 A.D. the Puebloid period ended in the Northern Periphery. The inhabitants of the Sevier Lake area and central Utah withdrew southward toward the Colorado River. The Shoshone eventually supplanted the Promontory culture in the Great Salt Lake area; the fate of the Promontory people is unknown. The presence of certain traits in the Hoytville site and in the Uintah Basin shows that a combined Promontory and Pueblo culture might have moved eastward from the Great Salt Lake. The appearance of a jacal type house in the Uintah Basin and in Nine Mile Canyon is confirming. The Shoshone then continued northward into Montana and through the Wyoming Basin to the Great Plains, where a branch of them became the Comanche. Whether there is a connection between the Great Salt Lake material and the Dismal River artifacts in Nebraska does not come within the scope of our problem.

Elaborating on our discussion of the Pueblo culture in central Utah, we find that it may be distinguished from that farther west in the Sevier Lake area by the presence of contiguous rooms instead of single rooms, and by differences in pottery construction, particularly in the less lavish use of coarse tempering. Also, in central Utah, houses with free-standing walls are found superimposed on earlier pit houses. The Sevier Lake area, therefore, may be considered as peripheral to central Utah, having

<sup>18</sup> Colton, 1942, p. 36.



been occupied mainly after the second infiltration of Puebloism had reached the southern branches of the Wasatch Mountains. It is in these intermountain valleys, between the branches, that the central Utah culture was concentrated, whereas the Sevier Lake culture reached far out into the Great Basin.

The connection between central Utah and the Great Salt Lake area may not have been as close as is often suspected. The so-called "false corrugated ware" in the north bears thumb-nail impressions which are purported to be attempts to copy the corrugated material in the south. If this is the true significance of the impressions this would seem to be the result of pretty poor observation of the technique involved on the part of the Great Salt Lake manufacturer. One would expect a better imitation than that offered by the thumb-nail design, if the Great Salt Lake potter had observed the techniques of his southern neighbors. Instead, the thumb-nail impressions are often vertical rather than horizontal, as in true corrugated ware. The free-standing walls of a house excavated by Gillin and party at Tooele, Utah, may also have been the results of an attempt to copy a southern type of house, although the builder failed to observe all the steps necessary in its construction.<sup>19</sup> The distinction is particularly noticeable in the manner in which the walls are joined onto the floor.

The large lakes and rivers in northern Utah made it possible for fishing to become an adjunct to other economic pursuits. Contacts with Snake River civilizations, to the north, were not lacking.<sup>20</sup> Harpoons and fish bones found in ruins around Utah Lake, and other indications, show that these people did not, unlike the present-day Southwestern tribes, disdain fish as a source of food. Later investigations will indicate how important a part fishing played in the subsistence activities of these people. Pre-Puebloid evidences of fishing are known from Deadman Cave, where net sinkers have been found.<sup>21</sup> There is no evidence of any type of water conveyance having been used in fishing on the lakes or rivers.

The failure of any of the cultures in this sequence to use caves in the Wasatch Mountains as habitations is striking. The Promontory Point caves, Black Rock caves, Deadman Cave, and the Wendover caves are all in minor Great Basin ranges. Only one important cave in the Wasatch has been discovered. This was located, by a party from Brigham Young University, in American Fork Canyon, near Provo, Utah; from the data available on the artifacts it apparently had been occupied by Puebloans. Caves are not lacking in the Wasatch, so failure to occupy such shelters cannot be attributed to any deficiency.

<sup>19</sup> Gillin, 1941.

<sup>20</sup> Smith 1941*b*,

<sup>21</sup> Smith, 1941*a*.

Several archaeological finds have been made in Utah which appear entirely out of place in the general scheme of things. The skin shields and moccasins found by a Mormon bishop near Fruita, Utah, and figured by Morss in his publication on the Fremont River culture, may not have as great an antiquity as has been claimed.<sup>22</sup> The moccasins "smell" of the Promontory type, and the shields themselves may at least be post-Puebloan. In the same area, near Cainsville, Utah, there are a number of stone circles on the ground that have the appearance of tipi rings. These, however, are divided by means of stone rows into four parts, pie-cut style, and suggest a possible connection with the "medicine wheels" found in Wyoming and the Plains region. Circles of stones also appear in the Great Salt Lake region, particularly between Salt Lake City and Ogden, but they do not have the dividing lines inside; hence, they are possibly Ute, or Shoshone, tipi rings. At Wendover, Utah, there are other curious constructions which cannot be identified with any particular culture. These were observed by Elmer R. Smith near caves which he had excavated; they consist of circular walls, built of calcareous Lake Bonneville deposits, located at the bases of the cliffs in which the caves are found. The walls, as they appear at present, are about 2 feet high, and about 4 feet in diameter. No identifiable artifacts have been found in any of these structures, except in the aforementioned tipi rings at Weber Canyon, where flat-bottomed Shoshone-like pottery was found. It is claimed that Promontory pottery has been found in Pueblo mounds at Provo, Utah, but this seems to have been rather late. The pottery does not have the coarse tempering of the Promontory wares. It does, however, have a thickened rim, and sometimes even has a rim design, but this feature is not nearly as common as it is among the wares from Promontory Point itself. This suggests that the Pueblo people and the Promontory culture peoples may have lived side by side for a while, reciprocally influencing each other's ceramics.

It has been nearly a decade since Julian H. Steward last expressed his ideas on the culture history of the Northern Periphery, and, despite the efforts of a few investigators, little has been added since that time. Hundreds of square miles have not even been visited by survey parties. Idaho and northern Nevada, practically unknown archaeologically, offer real challenges. Further exploration of the Northern Periphery will be rewarding, not only because of the light it will cast on problems confronting workers in other areas, but also because it will reveal in the region a culture history which in itself fully merits the interest of the archaeologist.

---

<sup>22</sup> Morss, 1931.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- COLTON, HAROLD S.  
1942. "Archaeology and the Reconstruction of History." *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 33-40.
- ENGER, DOUGLAS  
1942. *Archaeology of Black Rock III Cave, Utah*. Archaeology and Ethnology Papers, No. 7, Museum of Anthropology, University of Utah.
- GILLIN, JOHN P.  
1938. *Archaeological Investigations in Nine Mile Canyon, Utah*. University of Utah Bulletin, Vol. 28, No. 11.  
1941. *Archaeological Investigations in Central Utah*. Peabody Museum Papers, Vol. 17, No. 2. Cambridge.
- JUDD, NEIL M.  
1926. *Archaeological Observations North of the Rio Colorado*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 82.
- MALOUF, CARLING  
1940. "Prehistoric Exchange in the Northern Periphery of the Southwest." *AMERICAN ANTIQUITY*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 115-122.  
1941. "The Archaeology of the Deep Creek Region, Utah." In a symposium edited by E. R. Smith. Archaeology and Ethnology Papers, No. 5, Museum of Anthropology, University of Utah.
- MORSS, NOEL  
1931. *The Ancient Culture of the Fremont River in Utah; Report on the Explorations under the Claflin-Emerson Fund, 1928-29*. Peabody Museum Papers, Vol. 12, No. 3. Cambridge.
- REAGAN, ALBERT B.  
1934. "Some Notes on the Earth-Lodge Peoples of the Willard Stage of Pueblo Culture in the Uintah Basin, Utah." *El Palacio*, Vol. 30, pp. 236, 241.
- SMITH, ELMER R.  
1940. *Areas of Prehistoric and Historical Settlements in Utah*. Proceedings, Utah Academy of Arts, Sciences and Letters, Vol. 17. Provo, Utah.  
1941a. *The Archaeology of Deadman Cave, Utah*. University of Utah Bulletin, Vol. 32, No. 4.  
1941b. *An Indian Burial, a Barbed Bone "Projectile Point," and Accompanying Artifacts from Bear Lake, Idaho*. Archaeology and Ethnology Papers, No. 6, Museum of Anthropology, University of Utah.
- STEWART JULIAN H.  
1933. *Archaeological Problems of the Northern Periphery of the Southwest*. Museum of Northern Arizona, Bulletin 5. Flagstaff.  
1937. *Ancient Caves of the Great Salt Lake Region*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 116.  
1938. *Basin Plateau Aboriginal Socio-Political Groups*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 120.  
1941. *Culture and Distribution XIII: Nevada Shoshone*. Anthropological Records. Berkeley.

Salt Lake City, Utah  
September, 1942