

**Changing Adaptive Strategies of the *Ĕso* and *Ogwe'pi*:
Ethnohistoric Hunters and Gatherers in the Southern Great Basin**

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Introduction

Steward's (1938) thesis on *Basin-Plateau Aboriginal Sociopolitical Groups* has been a cornerstone for theories of evolutionary change and models of prehistoric hunter - gatherer adaptations throughout the world. Although published almost six decades ago, this work continues to exert considerable influence on how archaeologists interpret the archaeological record of hunters and gatherers and apply those interpretation to questions of evolutionary change. Thomas (1996) has noted that this continued applicability of the so-called Steward's model, which he tested against the archaeological of the Reese River Valley (Thomas, 1973), is perhaps because Steward, like the ethnoarchaeologists of today, addressed those aspects of hunter-gatherer adaptations (patterns of settlement and subsistence) which were more likely to be recorded in the archaeological record and most directly applicable to archaeological theories of evolutionary processes. It is little wonder, then, why archaeologists continue to use Steward's model of Western Shoshone life ways as a direct analog of prehistoric hunters and gatherers. Catherine Fowler (1982a) has reviewed and evaluated the ethnographic base from which Steward derived his settlement and subsistence model. She concluded that although Steward's generalized model of ethnographic adaptations was certainly valid and useful for archaeological analyses, the actualized patterns of groups in any one particular setting was obviously more complex and suggested that perhaps it was time for archaeologists to pay more attention to actualized patterns. Thomas (1981) and Eggan (1980) also noted the great variability that existed between Great Basin ethnographic groups and suggested that this variability might reflect the "subtle processes of the microevolution of sociopolitical complexity" (Thomas, 1981:49; also see Thomas, Pendleton and Cappannari, 1986:278-279). But, Thomas (1982:166) also points out that "when one examines the data, it becomes clear how little we actually know about Numic archaeology." This paper examines the archaeological record of one particular group studied by Steward (1938) - the Beatty and Belted Range Shoshone. In this regard, it addresses Fowler's call for such particularistic studies. However, if the variability exhibited among Numic groups do represent different stages on a microevolutionary scale as argued by Thomas, then this particularistic study must also address the larger questions of how the ethnohistoric adaptations of the Beatty and Belted Range Shoshone reflect the processes of cultural evolution (Leonard 1993).

Steward's (1937, 1938, 1941) ethnographic work among the Western Shoshone was not conducted until well after the early 20th Century Tonopah-Goldfield-Bullfrog mining boom and by that time, changes in their lifestyles had been so substantial that he found it necessary to use a "memory" approach that focused on a synchronic slice of the lives of his informant's parents and grandparents (between 1875 and 1880). Hence, a dramatic period of change had already occurred as a result of their contact with outsiders bearing technologies that, in many cases, led or forced them away from their traditional form of hunting and gathering adaptation altogether. In addition, researchers now recognized that contact induced transformations of American Indian life ways may have actually preceded their first face-to-face encounter with these outsiders (Deetz 1991; Dunnell 1991; Ramenofsky 1987; Wilson and Rogers 1993). As a result, there continues to be a question of just how "traditional" the societies were when they were studied (Dunnell 1991; Fowler 1982a;

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Service 1962:94-99; Thomas 1973). Archaeology is poised to play a pivotal role in such cultural contact studies as it provides not only a temporal baseline that spans both prehistory and history, but also the means to study the processes of cultural change (Lightfoot 1995; Spores 1980; Trigger 1986; Wilson and Rogers 1993). Through comparing and evaluating what is known from the archaeological, ethnographic and historic records of the Beatty and Belted Range Shoshone perhaps we can gain an insight to the changes that occurred in their adaptive systems during ethnohistoric times and relate those changes to processes of cultural evolution.

Steward (1940, 1951) recognized and evaluated the acculturation of the Western Shoshone into the newly developing American society. He (Steward, 1951) argued that this sociocultural integration occurred in different levels of society rather than on the society as a whole. According to Steward (1951:133) the "Western Shoshone were spared the more crucial difficulties experienced by Indians who had a fairly tightly-woven fabric of community culture." With their hunting and gathering resources partly destroyed, acculturation consisted primarily of incorporating wage labor and some material culture (dress, housing, transportation, food, etc.) into their existing nomadic life style. However, the Western Shoshone retained many beliefs pertaining to kinship relations, child rearing, shamanism, supernatural powers and magic, and recreation. Steward (1951:134) argued that these were the components of their society that functioned on a family level and could survive apart from tribal patterns. "The individual families were quite free to adjust to changed circumstances in the most expedient way without facing conflict" (Steward, 1951:134). Euler (1966) felt that their Southern Paiute neighbors in the southern Great Basin also maintained a fairly stable culture throughout most of the historic period. "The most noticeable changes in the life way of the Southern Paiute were in their social organization and political structure and these were occasioned by stress during and after Anglo-American contact or perhaps slightly earlier during the heyday of the Spanish and Mexican merchant caravans traversing portions of Paiute territory" (Euler, 1966:116). Kelly and Fowler (1986:386-387) noted that by 1870, some Southern Paiute groups had formed larger and more stable residence units in proximity to towns where they attempted to combine aspects of aboriginal subsistence with menial labor and other pursuits (also see Fowler and Fowler, 1981). Malouf and Findlay (1986) discerned more influence with the majority of Basin Indians becoming increasingly sedentary with the loss of their ability to migrate, hunt, and gather successfully. They (Malouf and Findlay, 1986:516) noted that retention of traditional ways proceeded best in those parts of the Basin, such as Deep Creek, where the impact of Whites was least felt.

The Ethnohistoric Populations

Steward (1937) portrayed the Beatty Shoshone, called *Ogwe pi* [creek], as one band on his map of the political groups of the Great Basin Shoshone, but in his treatment of this group in his classic study (Steward, 1938:93-99), he combined them with a group, collectively called *Ēso* [little hill], based around the southern end of the Belted Range and suggested that these two populations, linked through intermarriage and cooperation, "approximated a band".

Little Ice Age). Our chronological controls for prehistoric sites on Pahute and Rainier mesas are not sufficient to detect any changes in the adaptive strategies that might have accompanied this brief period of glacial advance, but the overall shift in residential mobility to the logistic monitoring the mesa's resources from residential bases located off the mesas obviously continued as it was this pattern of residential mobility that Steward recognized during his study of the ethnohistoric *Ĕso* and *Ogwe'pi*.

Summary and Conclusions

The overall intent of this paper has been to codify the archaeological record of the *Ĕso* and *Ogwe'pi*, to examine this record for evidence of cultural change during historic contact and to relate those changes to processes of cultural evolution. The available archaeological record of the *Ĕso* and *Ogwe'pi*, at present, is confined to how they exploited the resources on Pahute and Rainier mesas in the southern Belted Range; the homeland of the *Ĕso*. Nevertheless, as argued above and as indicated by Steward's (1938:93-99) ethnography, this record reflects the activities both ethnohistoric groups. The *Ogwe'pi* exploited these resources from residential bases located in Oasis Valley, but established temporary camps in the region during the late summer and fall while they gathered pine nuts, communally hunted rabbits and attended the annual fall *fandango*. At the conclusion of these activities, the *Ogwe'pi* then returned to their winter villages in Oasis Valley, transporting enough resources to last them through most of the winter season. The *Ĕso*, on the other hand, established their winter villages directly within or immediately adjacent to the Pahute and Rainier mesa resource patch and monitored these resources from within the foraging radius of these camps. Although the sample of studied sites is limited, I have argued that the ethnohistoric archaeological record from Pahute and Rainier mesa reflect these differences in the residential mobility patterns of the *Ĕso* and *Ogwe'pi*. Sites belonging to the *Ogwe'pi* pattern are marked by temporary windbreaks, more diverse site structures, less diverse artifact assemblages and tend to be concentrated in only certain areas of the mesas. Conversely, *Ĕso* sites are more scattered across the mesas and tend to have more patterned site structures, more diverse artifact assemblages and more substantial habitation structures (gabled and conical wooden lodges).

The available chronological evidence indicates that these two contrasting settlement patterns overlapped for at least two decades and perhaps even for the last 500 to 900 years when the prehistoric archaeological record indicates a shift in settlement patterns toward more monitoring of resources within the logistical radius rather than the foraging radius of base camps. However, the latest date associated with the *Ogwe'pi* pattern of residential mobility falls only in the first decade of the 20th Century; whereas, sites belonging to the *Ĕso* pattern date well into the 1940's after this area had been withdrawn by the Federal government for a bombing and gunnery range. Based on Steward's (1938:93-99) data, during the last part of the 19th Century, there were more people following the *Ĕso* pattern than there were following the *Ogwe'pi* pattern; however, winter population densities were less in the southern Belted Range than in Oasis Valley. The *Ĕso* and *Ogwe'pi* were not in an area that attracted the early fur trappers and traders and the available evidence indicated minimal if any direct contact with outsiders during the Spanish/Mexican Period. However, miners and early ranchers did enter the territory of the *Ogwe'pi* during the American Period between 1865 and 1880 and Steward's demographic data may indicate that the increased shift toward the *Ĕso* pattern of residential mobility was initiated at that time. By the end of the

first decade of the 20th Century, miners and ranchers had throughly inhabited Oasis Valley and it was during that time that the Ogwe'pi pattern of exploiting resources on the mesas from Oasis Valley appears to have ceased, or at least become insignificant.

Based on central place foraging models (Orians and Pearson 1979), one would predict that the Ogwe'pi should have utilized the pinyon patches in the nearby Grapevine Range or Timber Mountain, rather than those on Pahute and Rainier mesas due to the high costs of transporting the bulky pinyon nuts to Oasis Valley. Steward's (1938:95-97) informants, in fact, indicate that the Ogwe'pi would occasionally exploit these nearer resource patches whenever the pinyon crops on Pahute and Rainier mesas were insufficient. With the increasing availability of wage labor and other resources, due to the presence of historic American populations in Oasis Valley, the relative costs of transporting winter stores from the mesas to Oasis Valley would have increased. Although the continuation of the Ęso pattern well into the middle of the 20th Century could be viewed as due to the Shoshone taking refuge in the Belted Range region, it instead may be due to the fact that the Ogwe'pi had to abandon their seasonal forays to the mesas; whereas, the Ęso could still follow traditional life ways due to the reduced cost of exploiting the resources on the mesas from with the foraging radius of their base camps. This interpretation is supported by the observation that, at the time of Steward's (1938:69) ethnography, at least some of the Ęso had opted to move to winter villages at Old Camp at Gold Mountain rather than remain in the Belted Range. The carrying capacity of the southern Belted Range was limited and probably had been since the extended drought between 900 and 500 years ago.