The Harris Site

The Harris Archaeological Site is a Late Pithouse period (550-1000 CE) Mimbres Mogollon occupation located in the Mimbres Valley of southwestern New Mexico. Recent excavations at the Harris Site conducted by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the Desert Archaeology, Inc., have recovered a number of fossil specimens from cultural contexts. These include individual fossils as well as pieces of fossiliferous limestone, which were used as a raw material for tool manufacture. Recovery of these items from specific archaeological contexts, combined with the presence of cultural modification and inferences from ethnohistoric analogy, suggest that fossils held symbolic value for the prehistoric inhabitants of the Harris Site and were purposely collected (Falvey 2012). The question remains: Where did the people at Harris go to collect these fossils?

Archaeological Context

The majority of fossils recovered in the course of these excavations were found in cultural fill or trash deposits that accumulated in the pithouse depressions once the houses were abandoned. A thin trash fall overlay the architectural debris, which may have been used as dedicatory offerings within the architecture of the house during construction. Fossil specimens were found in the roof fall/wall fall of pithouses at the Harris Site. Additionally, five fossil specimens were recovered from current cultural fill or trash deposits that accumulated in the floors of superimposed structures at the Harris Site. Additionally, the closest outcrops of the Lake Valley and Box members of the Lake Valley Formation are located near the historic town of Georgetown, New Mexico. These sources are located approximately 4 km west of the Harris site and represent the most likely procurement location for the fossils recovered. Two formations, including the Lake Valley Formation and Percha Member of the Lake Valley Formation, are also found on Bear Mountain, located northeast of Silver City, NM. In this area, the Lake Valley Box Member (13 m thick) rests unconformably on the Percha Member and is overlain by the carbonate-rich Alamogordo Member (Laundon and Bowsher 1949). Lake Valley outcrops encountered contain abundant calcareous laminated segments and brachiopods. Rare brachiopods, including Spiniferina and other fossils reported in this area include corals and crinoid fragments.

TAXA REPRESENTED IN THE HARRIS ASSEMBLAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxa</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brachiopoda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corynida</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inarticulata</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marginatia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Percha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Percha</em> sp.*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perchaspis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Perchaspis</em> sp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Productoid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ptychomalotoechia</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ptychomalotoechia</em> sp.*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhynchonellida</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Rhynchonellida</em> sp.*</td>
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Acknowledgements

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1049434 awarded to Lauren W. Falvey, Desert Research Institute, DEES and Brett T. McLaurin, Department of Anthropology, UNLV. Additional funding for this research was provided by the late Dr. Andrew H. Almagordo, Nunn, and Tierra Blanca Members. Fossils reported include brachiopods, corals, and abundant crinoids. In the Percha Formation, the site member thickens to ~50 m and contains a diverse assemblage of brachiopods, crinoids, and corals.
Prehistoric Paleontologists of the Mimbres Valley, New Mexico
Authors: Lauren W. Falvey and Brett T. McLaurin, Ph.D.
Contact information: falvey1@unlv.nevada.edu and bmclauri@bloomu.edu
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References
FALVEY, L. W. 2012. Fossils and their role in Mimbres Mogollon ritual behavior at a Late Pithouse period village. Poster presented at the 77th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, Memphis, TN.
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The digital topography was generated from SRTM data: http://dds.cr.usgs.gov/srtm/