

## Mountain Shoshone Technological Transitions across the Great Divide

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Rapid replacement of indigenous material culture by European-manufactured items is a long-held assumption about culture change in colonial contexts (Diamond 1997; Rodríguez-Alegría 2008). This model assumes that passive Indian peoples and cultures were immediately and ultimately absorbed into dominant European society. In this chapter, we present a case study from high-altitude hunter-gatherer campsites in the heart of the western frontier that challenges unidirectional assumptions of culture change. We hope to move beyond colonial dichotomies and an acculturation framework by emphasizing daily practice and identity construction in the context of diachronic technological change (Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff 1998).

The Rocky Mountains and northwestern Plains are steeped in historical and ethnographic traditions. This area is legendary for transformative events such as the expedition of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery in 1805 and 1806 and the Battle of the Little Bighorn seventy years later. It was the home of trappers, traders, and Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. Well-regarded early ethnographers such as Robert Lowie, Alfred Kroeber, and Clark Wissler expanded our knowledge of Native American communities in the early 1900s.

As invaluable as ethnohistory has been for the study of European colonialism in North America in general and the Plains more specifically, it has not often provided the long-term perspective afforded by archaeological research. Descriptions written by early travelers, traders, and even cultural anthropologists do not provide the kind of comparative perspectives that archaeology offers. Similarly, although archaeologists have increasingly contributed to scholarship on the worldwide

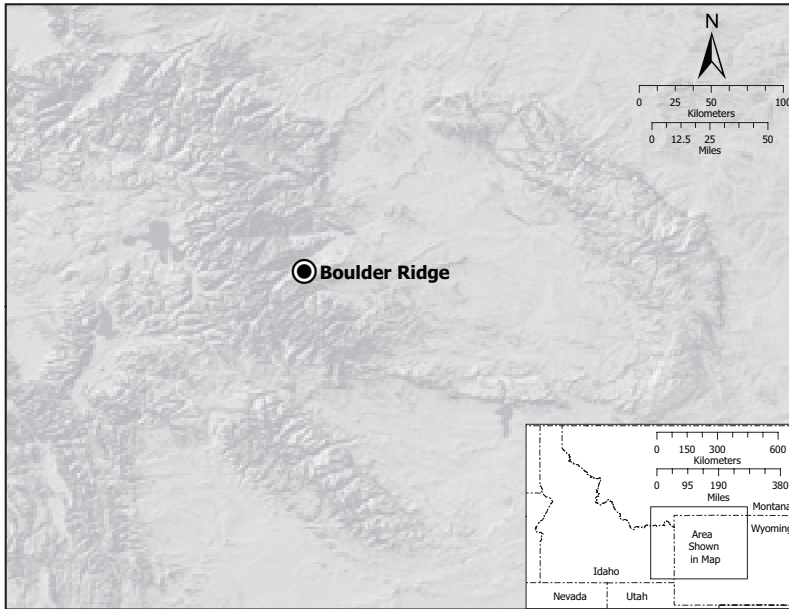
impact of European expansion (Cusick 1998; Gosden 2004; Harrison and Williamson 2004; Lightfoot 1995; Silliman 2005a), archaeological studies that trace colonial encounters among mobile hunter-gatherer societies are rare (Scheiber and Finley 2010a; Schrire 1995). We propose new narratives to explore culture change and transformation through an emphasis on technological transitions, not just replacements, within broader social contexts.

### **The Archaeology of the Western Frontier**

The American frontier is simultaneously a place, a time period, and a concept. Frontier expansion, westward migration, and pursuit of the American dream are concepts embedded with multiple layers and multiple meanings, and they have fascinated scholars from diverse disciplines for decades. As a place, the frontier is the shifting boundary at the edge of American civilization. As a period, it signifies a time between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries. As an idea, it captures the spirit of American independence and embodies American freedom.

Perhaps because the Plains historic frontier has been so well studied by researchers in other fields, archaeological contributions have until recently largely been ignored. Despite a few early studies of change and continuity (Deetz 1965; Krause 1972; Strong 1940), more widespread interest in studying contact and colonialism from an archaeological perspective is a relatively recent phenomenon on the northern Plains and is virtually absent in the mountains. Although scholars have investigated specific types of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century archaeological sites such as rock-art sites (Keyser, Sundstrom, and Poerschat 2006; Mitchell 2004; Sundstrom 2002) and battlefields (Scott et al. 2000), material studies of hunter-gatherer daily life are absent. Rather, early culture contact on the western Plains and adjacent mountains is understood primarily through ethnohistory, eyewitness artwork, American trade goods recovered from burials, and bioarchaeological discussions of health and disease (Russell [1914] 1955; Scheiber 1994; Scheiber and Gill 1997).

Diverse issues, from colonial theory to field logistics, contribute to under-theorization of colonialism and mobile hunter-gatherers in our



**FIGURE 7.1.** The Bighorn Basin and surrounding mountain ranges of north-western Wyoming.

research area. Neither ethnohistorians nor archaeologists have adequately contributed to a growing scholarship on long-term indigenous histories that span the precontact and postcontact periods. Ethnohistory lacks the needed time depth, leaving us peering into a clouded window that does not pre-date the early nineteenth century. Archaeologists are not necessarily trained to study the so-called contact period, which occupies a nebulous zone in regional chronologies, neither historic nor prehistoric, but rather consisting of theoretically under-informed descriptions of artifacts as index fossils and isolated finds (see Deagan 2004 for discussion of a similar situation in the Caribbean).

We here assert a lens of materiality as a corrective insight into transformative practices as they occur across space and time. In our research of Mountain Shoshone landscapes in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, or GYE (see fig. 7.1), we explore different material signatures of mobile hunter-gatherers, with an emphasis on nineteenth-century domestic life. We examine culture change and continuity by focusing

on resource intensification, wilderness land-use strategies, and technological organization on the far western colonial frontier. In this chapter, we emphasize technological transitions in the Absaroka Mountains of northwestern Wyoming as part of a large ongoing research project. We here present interpretations at two localities near an area known as Boulder Ridge, whose material inventories indicate a range of old and new technologies, including obsidian tools, trade beads, metal containers, and Intermountain Ware pottery.

This mixture of indigenous and introduced items could be seen as representing an increasing use of new materials coinciding with a gradual abandonment of old ones, with ratios of objects seen as proxy measures for estimating temporal placement and culture change. This older acculturation model is still generally accepted today: “In most cases foragers were understandably eager to obtain manufactured goods such as steel axes, knives, needles, metal pots, guns, and cloth that originated in the industrial core of the world system . . . because they made so many daily tasks easier” (Bodley 1999:468). Recently, Rodríguez-Alegría (2008) and others have questioned the model of quick replacement of indigenous with European technologies, calling for new narratives of change that emphasize other social, economic, and political factors. Likewise, Silliman (2010a) underscores that fact that all materials used by native peoples become indigenous even if they were originally produced for European or American consumers. These objects and the way they were used were incorporated into broader social spheres and imbued with meanings and functions by the native peoples using them.

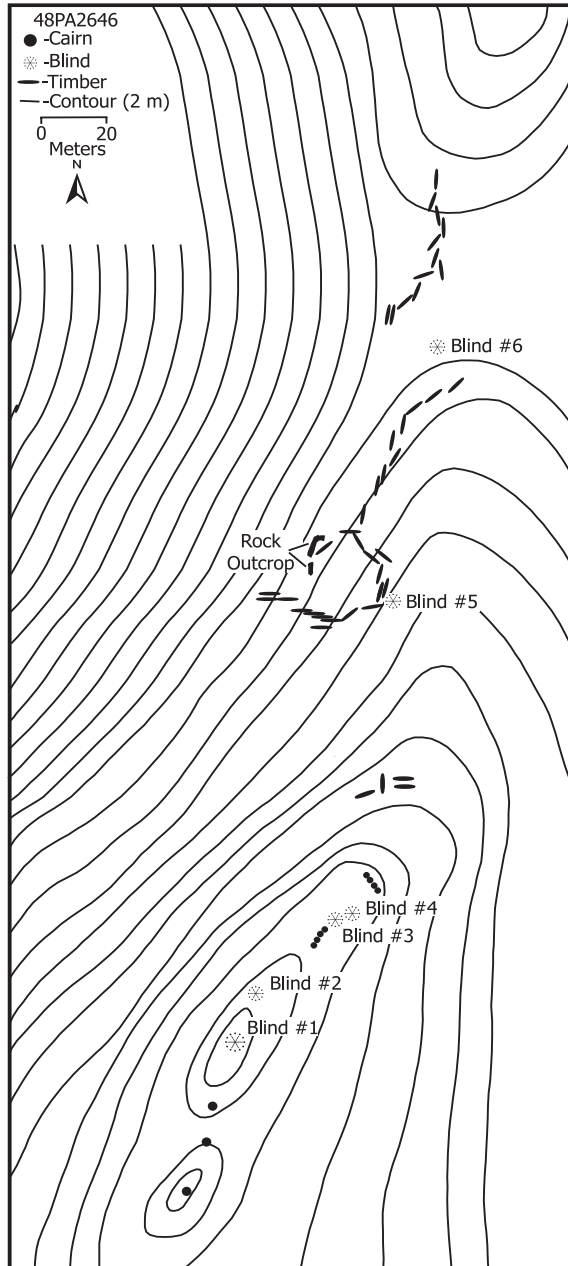
### **Intermountain Lifeways**

The central Rocky Mountains and adjacent northwestern Plains were the scene of the first contact between Americans and western native groups such as the Shoshone and the Crow, which is well documented in written historical literature of the middle-to-late nineteenth century. But who was there before those particular native groups and when did they arrive? Although native peoples certainly occupied the mountains for a long time, archaeologists do not agree on the length of mountain occupation by any specific group or groups. What we do see archaeologically is the

presence of new artifacts, materials, and technological innovations after 1300, including pottery and arrow points (Larson and Kornfeld 1994). The pottery, known as Intermountain Ware, is found throughout the Intermountain region. The arrow points, known as Desert-side notched and Cottonwood triangular points, are part of a wider Great Basin projectile point tradition dating to the last six hundred years. These changes may be due to technological transitions seen across North America, related to the introduction of the bow and arrow, ceramic containers, horticulture, and a suite of cultural changes. The presence of these new items could indicate the migration of a new group of presumably Shoshone (Central Numic) speakers from the Great Basin. This does not imply, though, that Numic speakers were not present in the mountains before 1300—just that the nature of the archaeological record changes. Our knowledge about the aboriginal occupation in the mountains between 1300 and 1700 is limited to a few well-stratified and well-dated sites (Haspel 1984; Husted and Edgar 2002; Kornfeld et al. 2001).

Sometime between 1700 and 1800, people started communally hunting and investing in the creation of bighorn sheep traps in the high elevations, rendering them archaeologically visible. Sheep traps are unique to the area, incorporating extensive wooden and stone hunting features that were used to trap and kill bighorn sheep (see fig. 7.2). The traps are designed to exploit bighorn sheep behavior, which favors exposed, grassy terrain on steep, high-elevation hillslopes. Escape routes were blocked or reinforced with walls and hunting blinds in drivelines often extending several kilometers. The drivelines opened into funnels or bottlenecks that ended in cribbed log corrals or catch pens where sheep could be easily dispatched with clubs, thrusting spears, or arrows. Sheep traps are thought to have been in use as early as 1700, although dating is problematic because of the lack of artifacts found in association with these sites. Tree-ring dates cluster around 1800 (Frison 1991; Frison, Reher, and Walker 1990).

Almost at the same time as sheep hunting intensified in the mountains, some Shoshone bands started to trade with their Comanche relatives in the southwest for the horse. The arrival of the horse, as well as nonlocal trade goods, began at least by the early 1700s, followed soon afterwards by the arrival of American and Canadian fur traders to the northern Plains (Binnema 2001; Wishart 1979). The Lewis and Clark



**FIGURE 7.2.** Planview map of the Boulder Ridge north sheep trap (48PA2646).

Corps of Discovery passed through the Rocky Mountains just north of Yellowstone in 1805 and 1806, leaving behind John Colter, whom many consider to be the first mountain man in the region (Clarke 1970). When Lewis and Clark met the Lemhi Shoshone in August of 1805, they noted that Indian people already had had long access to European trade goods, although they probably had not actually seen a white person before (Ronda 1998). The first trading post in the Rocky Mountains was established in 1807, and the first trappers were in the Yellowstone Park area by 1810 (Haines 1974). Continuous interaction between Americans and Indian peoples probably did not occur until between 1825 and 1840, during the height of the fur trade. The eighteenth century and much of the nineteenth century are relatively undocumented in historic records, and even when historic records exist, they present meager evidence of daily lives of mountain people.

Areas like the mountains in what is now northwestern Wyoming may have served as a natural geographic defense against new immigrants coming from many lands, speaking many languages, and using new materials. These newcomers included different native peoples as well as Europeans, Americans, Africans, and Chinese. The Shoshone Indian reservation at Wind River, Wyoming, was established through a series of treaties, beginning in 1863. Yellowstone National Park was established in 1872. Indian people were barred from the park and subsequently written out of historical narratives, resulting in a vision of this area as a pristine wilderness unmodified by human occupation (Nabokov and Loendorf 2004). These efforts to exclude natives from the area extended more widely to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, twenty million acres that currently encompass two national parks, seven national forests, three wildlife refuges, and part of the Wind River Indian Reservation (Wilkinson 1993). Indian people likely continued to access their traditional lands even through the early 1900s, but probably quietly and discretely. By that time, high-elevation mountain lands had largely become parts of national forests. For instance, the Yellowstone Timberland Reserve (parts of which later became the Shoshone National Forest, which today contains almost all of the known sheep traps), was established in 1891 (Clayton 1926). These areas were soon afterward used as horse pasture and as line camps for local ranches. The new residents in the valley floors also started camping and

hunting in the mountains, as well as leading pack trips for newly created dude ranches, by the turn of the twentieth century.

### **Across the Great Divide—Interlocking Narratives**

For us, the Great Divide refers to the divide between archaeology, ethnography, and history; between science and the humanities; between legacy and legend; and between culture and nature—all of which are often implicit in this area and time period. The Great Divide is an appropriate metaphor for work taking place on the physical backbone of the continent. The North American Continental Divide runs through the Rocky Mountains, separating the rivers that flow east to the Atlantic Ocean from the rivers that flow west to the Pacific Ocean. The Greater Yellowstone area is a natural corridor that links the Great Plains, the Great Basin, and the Interior Columbia Plateau, permitting travel from the tributaries of the Missouri River in Montana and Wyoming to the Snake River Plain in southeastern Idaho and on into either the Great Salt Lake in Utah or the Pacific Northwest Coast. The divide thus both separates and connects many regions of the United States. This was a key element to the settling of the west, and tied intimately to the concept of the American frontier. Although crossing the mountains was and is possible by foot, on horseback, and in some places wagon trains, timing these events around snowfall, weather, and the best routes were critical components of travel, especially for those with limited knowledge of the Rocky Mountains. For American settlers, successfully crossing the divide had tremendous consequences for survival and came to stand for conquering nature in return. Our research does not just physically cross the Divide, it metaphorically crosses it by emphasizing that the various divides inherent in this time and place may be more a product of historical interest and scholarship than reality for the native inhabitants who resided there.

We conceive of our research as interlocking spatial, theoretical, and conceptual narratives that bridge different ways of looking at the past. These interlocking threads together help us construct new narratives of continuity and transformation instead of one story rooted in an unquestioned meta-narrative of passive acculturation. These

other ways of telling consider multiple voices, story lines, and actions (Pluciennik 1999).

The spatial narrative refers to the diverse regional landscape, which includes plains grasslands, high deserts, and snow-covered mountains. People conceptualized their place in this world according to social geography and sense of place (Basso 1996; Ingold 1993; Lovell 1998). Based on spatial distributions of objects and features representing multiple occupations, we believe mountain people repeatedly occupied specific cultural landscapes in the area over several centuries. How they organized themselves in space, both at small-scale residential levels and at large-scale settlement levels, has implications for understanding colonial impacts. The presence and discard of various material items suggest different travel corridors, migration routes, and trading partners. The late-period Shoshone occupants of the Rocky Mountains may have been constrained in space, but they were not necessarily confined, thus allowing for a more complete examination of transitional life on the western frontier.

The theoretical narrative is a focus on objects, technological choices, and materiality studies in order to explore what Preucel and Meskell (2004) call “situated experiences of material life.” This approach involves more than creating artifact lists and acculturation ratios at contact-period sites, focusing instead on the social and material construction of identity in the past (Jones 1996). Our focus is not on artificially segregating native and European materials, but on enriched multi-ethnic experiences (Byrne 2003; Loren 2001). Materiality studies move beyond traditional ideas by considering how materials are used in a social context as a means of building new syncretic technologies. These studies explore personal and symbolic connections with things, not just the use of those things. This is a key concept for identity formation. Although group membership was characterized by a high degree of fluidity, by the mid-1800s the Shoshone had more or less separated into distinct bands (Nabokov and Loendorf 2004; Shimkin 1986; Stamm 1999). This process of ethnogenesis was not an overnight phenomena, but a process that probably occurred over decades. People who occupied the archaeological sites we recognize today were likely those who were or became these separate groups. How they came to be separate, in part by their contact with and against outsiders, plays out in the organization of space and daily life at these sites.

The conceptual component of the Great Divide refers to inconsistencies in basic semantics, designations, and temporalities of culture contact research. The contact period is a shifting regional designation. When we use this term in our study area, we mean approximately the early 1600s to the late 1800s. These centuries are often referred to as the Protohistoric period in the Rocky Mountains, Plains, and elsewhere, indicating a period after the introduction of European-manufactured trade goods and associated culture changes but before sustained contact with American settlers (Perkins and Baugh 2008). In Scheiber's own published works, she has previously relegated all Native American data to the Protohistoric period, reserving the term Historic for nonnative data (Scheiber and Gill 1997). In the American West, the Protohistoric (and its perceived implication of indirect contact) is sometimes tacitly extended through the Indian Wars, ending with the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890.

Some recent scholars refer to the time after first contact as the colonial period, in part to emphasize power hierarchies between natives and nonnatives (Silliman 2005a), and we acknowledge that this may also be appropriate in some contexts. We are trying to highlight continuities through time as opposed to disjunctions. Designating a separate period between prehistory and history continues to mark a contrast between the two. We feel that the terms "protohistoric" and "contact" inhibit research on recent hunter-gatherers, and they should be abandoned or used with caution. Instead of making use of these terms, we choose to present chronologies by calendric dates, whenever possible.

## Mountain Shoshone Landscapes

Until recently, the association between sheep traps, Mountain Shoshone cultural identity, and domestic lifeways remained unknown. While numerous bighorn sheep hunting traps were known from the Yellowstone area (Frison 1991, 2004; Norris 1880), their ethnic affiliation was merely assumed, with little archaeological evidence to suggest what people were doing before or after they hunted sheep. In short, we knew little of bighorn sheep hunting beyond the spatial distribution of known traps with limited chronological data. A century of forest management has contributed to the gap by obscuring the recent archaeological record of indigenous

cultures under dense layers of forest litter. The current climatic regime of drought coupled with severe parasite infestations has created conditions favoring extreme wildfires, such as the Great Yellowstone Fire of 1988. Fire provides a unique opportunity for archaeological investigation while simultaneously threatening to destroy key archaeological resources through vandalism and erosion.

Recent research in 2003 in the Boulder Ridge area was designed to re-document a known trap (48PA781) that was originally documented in 1982 (Frison 1991:248–249). During this time, a second sheep trap complex (48PA2646) was discovered fewer than two kilometers north of the original one (Finley and Finley 2004). Within two weeks of the fieldwork's completion, lightning ignited the Boulder Basin II wildfire that burned more than eleven thousand acres of forest surrounding the Boulder Ridge sheep traps. One of the more obvious results of the fire was that the overlying vegetation and forest litter were removed to reveal campsites that demonstrate rare evidence of association with sheep trapping (Finley, Finley, and Eakin 2004). A rich archaeological landscape, covering at least sixty hectares and somewhat artificially divided into five sites, includes heavy concentrations of lithics and bighorn sheep bones, as well as ceramics, steatite, metal, and glass artifacts. The association between these artifacts and features and Shoshone cultural identity is based on a combination of archaeology, ethnography, eyewitness accounts, and oral histories. Diagnostic artifacts include Desert tri-notched and Cottonwood triangular projectile points, Shoshone knives, Intermountain Ware pottery, steatite artifacts, and *teshoas* (large-flaked cobbles in use by Shoshone women as hide-working tools in the 1870s) (Adams 2006; Eyman 1968; Larson and Kornfeld 1994).

The Boulder Ridge sites are the first documented examples of campsites and butchering facilities directly associated with bighorn sheep traps that provide secure ethnic and chronological data (Eakin 2005). Euroamerican-manufactured artifacts tie Mountain Shoshone occupations and sheep hunting into a growing entanglement with nineteenth-century colonization. Some of the sites are clearly associated with sheep traps, while others are not. Some of the localities are spatially quite small and were probably areas of limited activity, while others are much larger and seem to represent longer-term occupations and multiple events. All of our interpretations to date are based on surface signatures, and we

anticipate that subsurface testing will help to answer key questions about the nature of the occupational chronologies.

## **Technological Transitions**

When we refer to technological change and technological transitions, we are really interested in social changes and social transitions, told through and mediated by objects and features that survive today. We want to know what people were doing, not just what they were using. The term technology is often used interchangeably with tools and tool making. In fact, technology is more than just tool use and manufacturing techniques; it also includes the social context of production, use, and discard. We are not just interested in relationships between people and objects, but also in relationships between people, as well as the ways in which changing access to materials and decisions about material culture may have impacted these relationships (Dobres 2000; Ingold 1999).

In the next section, we focus on technological transitions that are apparent at two of the Boulder Ridge localities. The artifacts and features that make up the archaeological landscape in the Boulder Ridge area represent a combination of different kinds of materials, often clustered together into possible activity areas—such as areas for big-game butchering, flintknapping, and lodge outlines—defined by the distribution of domestic refuse. The items range from an impressive list of diagnostic Shoshone material culture including lithics, ceramics, and groundstone to an equally impressive list of European-manufactured items such as metal objects, glass objects, and beads.

It is tempting to view these as traditional/aboriginal artifacts versus introduced artifacts, and sometimes this is a useful heuristic tool for describing the inventory. However, besides offering a somewhat limited assistance with temporal placement, separating these objects this way assumes only unidirectional change and implies a lack of choice and agency on the part of indigenous communities. For example, the difference between shooting large game with an arrow point tipped with stone and one tipped with metal may not be as important as the difference between using a bow and arrow versus a rifle. But the metal arrowhead and metal cartridge are often seen as more closely connected to one another because of their material and origins. We move beyond these simple

**Table 7.1.** Chronological expectations for Mountain Shoshone campsites in the central Rocky Mountains, 1600–1920.

Dates	Types of social interaction	Sheep traps association	Site locations	Artifact inventories	Obsidian sources
1600–1700	New uses of mountains, new contacts?	Unassociated, pre-sheep trapping	Open settings	Indigenous	Wide variety
1700–1800	Sporadic encounters with others	Clear association: sheep-butchery areas	Near sheep traps, open settings	Indigenous, some trade goods	Wide variety, evidence of shifting networks
1800–1850	Full exposure to fur trade	Clear association: sheep-butchery areas, intensive processing	Near sheep traps, remote settings	Indigenous, increased presence of trade goods	Increased evidence of range restriction
1850–1900	Permanent presence of ranchers and settlers	Unassociated, post-sheep trapping	Marginalization, remote settings, hidden locations	New inventories	Definite range restriction, only local sources
1900–1920	Cowboys, hunters, dudes	Unassociated, memory place	Various	New inventories are now traditional	Limited or none

dichotomies to examine the ways in which the materials are used and how that may relate to daily practice and identity (Bamforth 1993; Loren 2001; Silliman 2005b; Spector 1993).

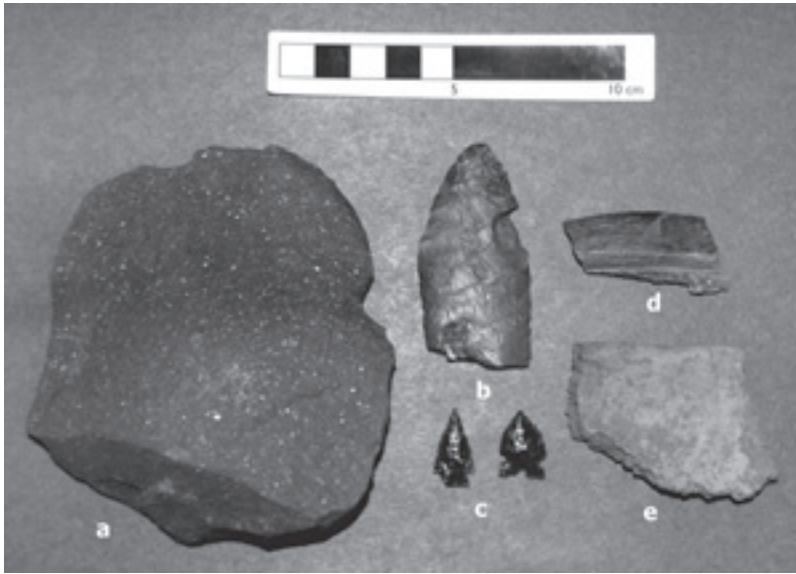
Our interpretations are guided by a set of working hypotheses of expected archaeological signatures at residential campsites (table 7.1). Although we expect to see increased access to some materials through time, there is no formula for identifying which artifacts were used, which objects were replaced, or in which ways new materials were incorporated into traditional technologies (see Vehik et al., this volume).

### **The Boulder Ridge Campsite**

The Boulder Ridge Campsite (48PA2665) is a large base camp located about three hundred meters south of the north sheep trap (48PA2646). The site boundaries extend 320 meters over a steep mountain slope and flat topographic area next to an ephemeral spring. The average elevation is 2809 meters above sea level, with a range between 2788 meters and 2849 meters.

The material inventory includes thousands of bone fragments, hundreds of flakes, lithic tools, teshoas, pieces of groundstone, ceramic sherds, trade beads, metal scraps and cans, and possibly worked bottle glass. Discernable activity areas include the remains of presumed lodge structures, flintknapping areas, and bone and tool processing locales (Scheiber et al. 2006). Based on the wide range of documented artifacts, inhabitants at this site probably camped in lodge structures, butchered and processed at least twenty bighorn sheep, cooked and ate wild meat and probably wild plants, flintknapped and maintained stone tools, worked hides, and repaired stone vessels. The obsidian was coming from as far away as southeastern Oregon. Forty-two percent of it is from nearby Yellowstone sources, and another 35 percent is from the Jackson Hole area to the south. A number of metal and glass artifacts were located in two distinct areas that may represent multiple occupational components. The majority of the site fits our archaeological expectations for 1700–1800: sporadic encounters, clear association of sheep butchery areas, sites near sheep traps, limited use of trade goods, and a wider variety of obsidian sources.

Given that the base camp is clearly associated with the sheep trap, based on their proximity to one another and the remains of butchered



**FIGURE 7.3.** Mountain Shoshone artifacts from the Boulder Ridge Campsite (48PA2665): (a) teshoa, (b) Shoshone knife, (c) side and tri-notched projectile point, (d) steatite vessel rim, (e) Intermountain Ware ceramics. (Photograph by Laura L. Scheiber)

sheep, we suggest that the earliest the site would have been occupied is between 1600 and 1700, although first occupation more likely occurred in the early 1800s. The majority of the artifacts found at the site are typical of an indigenous Shoshone occupation (Larson and Kornfeld 1994), including diagnostic projectile points, teshoa tools and Shoshone knives, Intermountain Ware ceramics, and steatite vessel rims (see fig. 7.3). Can scatters, broken bottle glass, and rifle cartridges found at the site may or may not be associated with the Shoshone domestic activities that occurred there, and we presume that the majority of the site activities occurred before continuous interactions with European people or materials, probably before 1800. So far, no metal cut marks have been noted on the faunal remains, although metal was used to shape three steatite vessel rims. This is significant because it indicates that new materials were being used to modify stone pots. Although we would expect to see more trade goods if the site was occupied during

the fur trade into the 1800s, we want to avoid these simple estimates based on the number of American-made artifacts.

Metal and glass artifacts found at the site are not precisely datable. The cans and bottles likely date to the early twentieth century and may have been left by early American ranchers and hunters in the area, but they could have been left by native groups visiting the area after the establishment of the reservation. Some metal cans may have been pounded flat and cut into metal arrowheads. We do not assume that the presence of typical Euroamerican-manufactured objects automatically indicates an American presence at the site. Some of the historic objects, including a complete bottle, appear to be associated with a possible lodge built into the side of a steep slope. The size, variability, and color of the six glass beads that have so far been found suggest a date of around 1820 (Reher and Scheiber 1993). The beads could have been dropped after the main occupation of the site and perhaps point to continued use of the site after discontinuation of the sheep trap. Several cartridges from a Winchester .38-55 could date to the late 1800s, but these items were in peak production between 1904 and 1930 (personal communication, Warren Newman, Cody Firearms Museum, 2006).

### **The Downhill Site**

The Downhill Site (48PA2706) is located another eight hundred meters east and down a steep slope from 48PA2665 in a secluded strath terrace overlooking Boulder Creek. It is slightly farther from the sheep trap compared to the Boulder Ridge Campsite, at an elevation of 2675 meters. Four discrete sub-areas have been recorded, including a residential area and a possible metal working locale (Eakin 2005). Our focus here is on what has been interpreted to be an artifact cache, a unique feature measuring 3.5 by 4.5 meters on a 10- to 15-degree hillslope. The material inventory includes hundreds of flakes, several stone and metal projectile points, a teshoa, pieces of a carved pipestone, part of a flintlock rifle, brass tacks, a metal awl, and hundreds of glass trade beads. We recorded no faunal remains and saw no evidence of sheep butchering. This area of the site is less likely to be residential, and the artifact positions suggest that the items may have been in some sort of container before spilling down the hillslope.

Although the materials are diverse and could relate to a number of activities, the combination of finished and preform arrows, beads, and metal tacks may represent the remains of both stone- and metal-tip arrows wrapped in a beaded quiver along with a rifle decorated with brass tacks. The flakes are large percussion flakes, not pressure flakes, which may have been intended for later use as opposed to indicating resharpening or final weapon manufacture. Teshoa hide-working tools and a metal awl also suggest planned hunting excursions and animal processing. More than 90 percent of all the obsidian artifacts come from Yellowstone sources.

The Downhill site seems to fulfill our archaeological expectations for 1850–1900, with apparently full exposure to the fur trade, no known association with the sheep traps, marginal location, the use of new materials, and restricted range of obsidian sources. Based on more specific artifact analyses, we estimate that the cache was deposited sometime between 1840 and 1870. The flintlock gun was likely used between 1770 and 1870, as the use of the flintlock generally declined when former Civil War soldiers brought an increasing number of percussion guns into the area (personal communication, Warren Newman, 2006). A button from another area of the site likely dates to the late eighteenth century (Eakin 2005). The glass trade beads are diverse in color and size and may come from several suppliers (Reher and Scheiber 1993). Based on the size variability and presence of red-on-white compound drawn beads (white hearts), we would tentatively date the beads to after 1840 (personal communication, William Billeck, National Museum of Natural History, 2008). Although some of the material objects found at this site were available during the late 1700s and early 1800s, we suspect that native peoples may have been using these items in some cases decades after their primary production (or at a site occupied for many years). One of our hypotheses is that Mountain Shoshone people inhabited the mountains to avoid colonial encounters. By the mid 1800s, they clearly had access to goods commonly associated with the fur trade and widely available at regional trading posts. We question whether decisions to occupy the high country would have impacted direct access to these objects and markets or whether what we see is in fact further evidence of conscious isolation.

## Comparisons

Although the Boulder Ridge Campsite and Downhill Site differ, most notably in the spatial extent under consideration, they share interesting characteristics and indicate social and technological transitions of Mountain Shoshone lifeways. What they share are certain diagnostic Shoshone cultural items, including tri-notched projectile points and teshoa hideworking tools and, by association, the activities for which they were manufactured and used. People at both sites continued to make stone tools and use indigenous technologies in manufacture and weaponry. At both sites, they may have been involved in the manufacture of metal projectile points, as evidenced by the presence of metal projectile point preforms, cut metal, and hammerstones. The sites differ in the use of space, with the first showing evidence of many domestic activities in an open valley and associated hillslope and the other one being much more constrained and specialized. The relatively open Boulder Ridge Campsite contains native-made ceramics, a stone vessel, and evidence of sheep butchering. The secluded Downhill Site has hundreds of trade beads and evidence of early firearms.

We consider transitions in technological organization within two broad categories: tools and containers. Both sites show evidence for various kinds of weaponry and tools associated with hunting, animal butchering, and animal processing. Objects include lithic projectile points, metal projectile points, gun parts, and stone hide-working tools. An assortment of stone tools representing numerous activities was also present at both sites. Stone arrow points were found at both sites, suggesting that people continued to hunt wild game with indigenous technology. The Boulder Ridge Campsite is associated with a coordinated hunting event or events at the sheep trap, but the animals hunted and methods of capture used by the occupants of the second site are unknown. There is some evidence of metal arrowhead production at both sites, although the association of this activity with the primary residential component at 48PA2665 is not clear. Regardless, sometime after the introduction of metal to the study area, people started experimenting with the manufacture of metal-tipped arrows. We found no evidence of American-formed trade arrows, but we did find evidence for

native manipulation of metal objects meant for other purposes. Part of the reason for this incomplete transition from stone to metal could be differences in hunting strategies (sheep traps versus non-sheep traps), different game (bighorn sheep versus other animals), preference for one material over another, or limited access to either metal or stone. Then again, perhaps the difference between using a stone arrow point and a metal arrow point with a sheep-horn bow and wooden arrow was not as important socially as we imagine it to have been.

Obsidian was found at both sites—flakes, tools, and projectile points. Thanks to our obsidian sourcing study (Scheiber and Finley 2010b), we have seen that while the use of obsidian did not decline, the use of particular sources did, and obsidian procurement became more localized through time. Groundstone shaft abraders found within a probable lodge structure at the first site likewise bear witness to arrow making. Tesho were found at both sites and were probably used for the purpose of working hides in both areas. Evidence for the flintlock at the later site is another indication of changes in weapons and hunting strategies that may coincide further with decline of the use of sheep traps and communal hunting practices. The use of a flintlock rifle after the availability of percussion guns may indicate less-direct access to firearms through the fur trade and possibly instead an “opting out” strategy.

Several different kinds of vessels are represented in the Boulder Ridge artifact assemblages: stone vessels, clay vessels, glass beverage and food containers, and metal food cans. Many of these objects were probably associated with cooking and food consumption. Several rim fragments of a steatite or soapstone vessel were found at 48PA2665. Steatite use is well documented in the high altitudes of northwestern Wyoming, beginning at least 1,500 years ago (Adams 2006). The steatite rim appears to be part of a repair made to the vessel based on its thin wall and evidence of repetitive incising. The vertical marks inside the rim may have been made by metal tools. Soapstone or stone bowls were recorded to have been in use by Mountain Shoshones by early Euroamerican travelers in the region, such as Osborne Russell and Francois Larocque (Russell [1914] 1955:26; Wood and Thiessen 1985:185).

Intermountain Ware pottery is found on Shoshone sites in Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado (Larson and Kornfeld 1994; Mulloy 1958). The presence of native-made ceramics is relatively rare at sites on the

northwestern Plains—especially during the nineteenth century. The presumption is that people (especially women) stopped using ceramic vessels when they started trading for metal cooking pots, but this could just as well be an issue with imprecise dating techniques and temporal invisibility. Parts of at least one broken vessel represented by 165 sherds were recorded at Boulder Ridge, adjacent to a probable lodge. Though heavily fire damaged, the Boulder Ridge pottery is clearly coarse-tempered, with little decoration. Neither ceramic nor stone vessels were located at the Downhill Site, perhaps indicating changes in cooking strategies, as well as in types of meals cooked, for whom, and by whom. Both glass bottles and metal cans found at Boulder Ridge could have been used as food containers or cooking vessels, although they could also have been primarily sought as raw materials for making other weapons and tools. They may also have been left by traveling American traders or ranchers in post-native occupations.

The overall picture that emerges from our discussion of technological transitions is one that starts to address how materials can tell us so much more about the social world in which they were used than their mere absence or presence may indicate. Clearly, more work needs to be done. How do the innovation and manipulation of new and old materials in daily lives contribute to shifts in cultural identity? How do the wider social events presented by ethnohistorians in turn change the material record? We hope we have laid a better foundation for future explorations of the rich dialectics between tradition and creativity.

## Conclusions

Through the kinds of analyses explored here, we wish to address ways in which Native American inhabitants of the Greater Yellowstone area crafted social identities, manipulated material culture, and situated themselves within the broader social landscape. The study generates a detailed examination of Native American daily life at a critical junction, which offers a counterpoint to narratives of collapse caused by disease and depopulation. It also focuses on a local and domestic scale of analysis, one in which women were primary actors. This research addresses an unknown facet of a well-known period of western history. Because native peoples were forced into remote areas and because of the bias of

written records, material culture is often the best and only evidence for including unrecorded voices in the history of the West.

This study documents fundamental cultural changes among a group of relatively isolated nomadic people about which not much is known. The sheep traps of the Yellowstone area are phenomenal complexes that bear witness to new coordinated hunting methods, probably developed just prior to colonial encounters. However, very little is known about the greater cultural context of the people who built these features. The Boulder Ridge sites add a substantial amount of information about these little-known archaeological complexes. This study also contributes a hunter-gatherer case study to complement more well-known research of sedentary hunter-gatherer entanglements with the fur trade, such as those formed by the interactions between Russians, California natives, and Alaska natives, at Fort Ross in central California (Lightfoot, Martinez, and Schiff 1998).

By engaging in issues of materiality as a foundation for interpretation, archaeologists embrace a past that is both material and social. In order to advance our interpretative negotiation with the past, we must consider writing new narratives about the western frontier that portray a more dynamic and nuanced history of the indigenous inhabitants.

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# **ACROSS A GREAT DIVIDE**

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN NATIVE  
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1400–1900

EDITED BY **LAURA L. SCHEIBER**  
AND **MARK D. MITCHELL**

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*We dedicate this book to*  
*Kent G. Lightfoot*  
*for inspiring us to cross many divides*

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