

Draft- Review comments for various Kennewick human remains cultural affiliation studies- Draft
Brooke Blades, February 17, 2000

Bio-archeology (Hackenberger), revised draft received 2-15-00

The text is well-written and few typographic errors, which have been noted on the draft. The study represents a thorough review of the extent information, particularly when the appendices are considered. The bibliography needs attention since many citations are missing.

Comments:

The report should be reorganized to more clearly address the elements within the scope of work. Such a reorganization may be done in the form of a summary that is needed. The first part of the report is not an executive summary that, in my opinion, should be two or three pages in length and emphasizes the major findings. The summary should specifically address item A2 in the scope, which calls for analysis of "continuities, discontinuities and gaps in the bio-archeological record."

For example, the period between 7000-5000 BP is described as the "most significant gap in burial and osteological studies...." The reasons for such a gap are important: sampling bias, geomorphological changes leading to site destruction, settlement pattern shifts, population reduction/shifts, and/or cultural discontinuity? In similar fashion, the period 5000-3000 BP represents "a major gap in burial and osteological data for the Middle Columbia Basin." The appearance of rock mound burial cairns covering partially cremated human remains certainly seems to signal marked cultural change and may reflect cultural discontinuity with preceding periods. Does patterning in burial types (flexed, extended, cremations, etc.) and locations occur through time? The data to address this last question are provided but should be more clearly summarized.

Recommendations:

The text pages should be paginated and a table of contents that lists headings of various sections in the text should be provided.

A summary of findings that focuses upon continuities and discontinuities in the realms of biology/anatomy and mortuary behavior should be provided.

Dates used as section headings should be designated as BP (or BC).

Traditional historical and ethnographic study (Boxberger)- draft submitted January 2000

This report is well-written with few typographical errors, an impressive achievement given the time constraints. The report represents a thorough examination of the requirements as stated in the scope of work; organization of the paper by topics as stated in the scope of work deserves particular commendation.

Comments

p. 14 archeology more well equipped to address degree of antiquity of "intergroup interaction" on the Plateau.

The report presents a good summary of material cultural, economic and settlement patterns at time of European contact and back into late prehistory. The real question is to what degree have these remained stable back in time (again an archeological concern) and the extent to which such evidence relates to the question of continuity.

p. 24 overview of prehistory: "Ethnographers have argued that archeological evidence suggests that there has been relative cultural continuity for 10,000 years" yet Ames in his study does not recognize such continuity, at least this far back in time.

Relative to projectile points, a technological sequence that may (or may not) suggest "a definite and ordered change" does not imply a cultural continuity.

p. 41 It is suggested that a traditional story may indicate time depth back to Pleistocene glaciation, yet would this area even have been inhabited at that time?

p. 53 This section is problematic, particularly the opening sentence. These issues are dealt with in the archeological study.

p. 55 The report states that oral traditions refer to the distant past but may not be successfully used to create a time line or delineate a date.

p. 56 The statements on this page are also problematic, including the reference that there is no evidence of in-migration causing cultural transformation. Ames does not directly contradict this statement but such a statement is more appropriate in the archeological study.

p. 57 The prehistoric data sentence should be eliminated, since the data do not necessarily suggest southern Plateau cultural continuity for 10,000 years.

Recommendations

All conclusions based upon archeological interpretations should be eliminated, particularly those statements that archeology suggests or indicates cultural continuity for 10,000 years.

Archeological data (Ames)- draft submitted January 15, 2000

This report is a very thorough account but is marred by a large number of typographical errors and some missing phrases and text. Consistency in text headings is needed. The quality of the reproduced figures is poor.

Comments

pp. 8-9 Period I is described as one of very high mobility based upon procurement distances for obsidian. What are the sources of the cherts and in what technological forms are these cherts introduced at Period I sites?

p. 14 A good and important discussion of homologies versus analogies in relation to continuity/discontinuity.

p. 22 The section on general and complex hunter/gatherers is missing.

p. 23 The distinction between continuity/discontinuity in terms of archaeological data and ethnolinguistic groups is also important.

p. 29 Obsidians from a mean distance of 50 km; as mention above, how about the cherts that composed a larger portion of the lithic component?

p. 46 Shift to fine-grained basalt for foliate bifaces during (early?) Cascade may reflect changing mobility patterns compared with earlier Windust (note: Kennewick remains associated with Windust or perhaps early Cascade; transition between two at c.8000 BP).

The evidence indicates considerable mobility during Period I, in addition to the emergence of exchange connections for obsidian to the south (Oregon, northern California) and east (southwestern Idaho) by later Period IB (late Cascade/Vantage, 7000-6700 BP) and even earlier for marine shells from Pacific coast at least by 9500 BP (p.60).

What implications are suggested by the gaps in the mortuary record and changing mortuary practices (rock cairn partial cremations) c.5000-3000 BP discussed by Hackenberger in the bio-archeological study? The Western Idaho Burial Complex is mentioned in the text but not discussed in any detail.

pp. 62-63 The conclusion contains important statements that change is not evidence for discontinuity. The essence of the report is summarized in the statement on p. 63 that the empirical discontinuities in the record precludes establishing cultural continuity or discontinuity, particularly before c.5000 BC (7000 BP).

Recommendations

The typographical and spelling errors should be addressed; indeed, these concerns may already have been addressed. The missing portions of text should be inserted and some attention should be devoted to eliminating duplicate references in the bibliography.

Linguistic data (Hunn)- final draft submitted January 26, 2000

The report is well-written with few typographical errors.

Comments

p. 6 The statement that it is “more than likely that Kennewick Man spoke a proto-Penutian dialect” is followed by an assumption of continuity of occupation by means of exploitation of local resources (particularly salmon and roots) and a further assumption that the Kennewick male “is most likely culturally affiliated more closely with historic Sahaptin-speaking peoples of the region than with any other known Native American group.” This argument builds upon a series of assumptions and speculations to a rather profound and far-reaching conclusion that certainly is not unequivocally supported by data from other sources. The archeological evidence, for example, suggests considerable population mobility, shifts in settlement patterns, and—according to Ames (pp. 9-10)—subsistence differences that are “significant” in Period II (5000-4400 to 1900 BC) compared with the earlier Period I, the time when the Kennewick male lived and died. While Ames does not argue for cultural continuity or discontinuity prior to c.5000 BC, these data certainly do not support the presumption of “continuity of occupation” made by Hunn.

p. 7 The interpretation that *Laliik* reflects late Pleistocene floods is introduced here and repeated on pages 18-19 and on page 20. While the speculation is very interesting, it remains speculation. Hunn says on page 12 that it is “not possible to state with certainty that these place names demonstrate local occupation of the area beyond several hundred years past.”

p. 14 Greenberg’s method is, to cite Hunn, “highly controversial” and (p. 15) evidently does not enjoy wide-spread acceptance since “many historical linguists remain skeptical of Greenberg’s claims.” I strongly disagree with the comparison of the technique as comparable to utilizing the concept of a half-life in radiometric (C14) dating. Greenberg’s method does not seem to be independently verifiable and should not be compared in any to an absolute radiometric dating technique that may be replicated and that is grounded within the principles of physics.

p. 20 The statement that the culture core of historic Sahaptian speakers might have been inherited from the group to which Kennewick Man belonged even if he spoke a non-Penutian language represents further speculation. The burden of proof does not lie with archeological evidence of cultural discontinuity to “suggest otherwise.”

The fundamental problem that I see with the analysis is the contrast between relative dating—i.e., stating that a language structure or vocabulary has been in place for some time or a long time—and absolute dating, or the actual age of that structure or vocabulary. I appreciate that such absolute chronology apparently lies beyond the reach of linguistic studies, but it is precisely on such absolute chronologies that the fate of Kennewick Man depends.