

ASHLEY LEMKE. 2022. *The architecture of hunting. The built environment of Hunter-Gatherers and its impact on mobility, property, leadership, and labor*. Texas: A&M University Press; 978-1-62349-922-8 hardback \$65.

Complexity of hunter-gatherer societies is an open issue in current anthropological debates. Indeed, as ethnographic and archaeological studies improve our understanding of present and past foraging groups, the usual dichotomous categorisation into ‘simple’ and ‘complex’ (based on mobility patterns, resource management, socio-spatial organisation...) blurs. “It is time to ask what complexity in a simple foraging society really looks like; what does it mean and how does it emerge?” (p. 1).

This book aims to contribute to this endeavour by drawing on a usually underexplored source of empirical evidence in prehistoric archaeology, namely hunting architecture. Hunting architecture can be defined as “(...) any form of permanent or semipermanent built structure used to aid hunting activities” (p. 2). These types of structures present two characteristics that make them especially appealing here: They are ubiquitous, and constitute an interesting (and yet not well studied) example of niche construction. Concerning the former, hunting architecture has been reported worldwide, as is shown in this volume (see below). This is not surprising, as they are “a common solution to a common problem” (p. 2), that is, a way to increase the predictability of wild resources that tend to vary in concentration in time and space. Regarding the latter characteristic—niche construction—beyond direct niche engineering (understood as alteration of the landscape by excavating holes and building up walls, for instance), the construction, operation and maintenance of hunting architectures imply: a) the collection and social transmission of ecological information (both on behaviour of prey and landscape features) and technical knowledge (on materials, dimensions, orientations...); and b) the organisation of collective efforts (eventually under some sort of leadership).

To illustrate the potential of hunting architecture, Lemke unfolds a work structured into four main parts, resembling the structure of a scientific article. First, Chapter 2 presents the theoretical foundations of the work. Starting from a thorough review of hunting architecture sites and ethnographic references worldwide, it builds a middle-range theory bridging the construction and operation of these infrastructures with their

material imprint in the archaeological record. The second part of the book introduces the case study: caribou hunting sites from the Early Archaic Period at the Alpena-Amberley Ridge, currently submerged under Lake Huron (North American Great Lakes). Chapters 3 and 4 provide a multifaceted perspective on caribou hunting and a complete archaeological and paleoenvironmental overview on the ancient Great Lakes by the end of the last Ice Age. Then, Chapter 5 presents the previous research conducted at the Alpena-Amberley Ridge, combining underwater archaeology and computer-based modelling of the prehistoric landscape. Once the case study and the state of the art have been properly presented, we reach the key part of this volume. Here, the author demonstrates how the proposed middle-range theory can be applied to shed new light on the already obtained results (Chapter 6), and to produce hypotheses testable through new archaeological works (Chapter 7). In both cases, the focus is set on what hunting architecture attributes (e.g. orientation, type, density) can tell us about socio-economic aspects such as seasonality and social organisation. Finally, the book widens the scope by stressing the potential of the presented methodology to provide archaeological interpretation and expectations beyond the regional case study addressed.

Overall, the multidisciplinary approach developed throughout the eight chapters of this book confers on it an interesting characteristic: it can provide useful insights to readers with different research interests. Beyond the obvious focus on the potential of hunting architecture to better understand hunter-gatherers' lifeways, this book showcases several innovative features of the research conducted at the Alpena-Amberley Ridge. Specifically, the use of autonomous underwater vehicles for meso-scale mapping of submerged landscapes and the simulation of prehistoric landscapes (integrating paleoenvironmental reconstruction and agent-based modelling of prey migration dynamics) to generate archaeological expectations will certainly direct the attention of scholars towards submerged landscape archaeology.

Interestingly, the findings for this case study suggest that human groups using the analysed hunting infrastructures presented some characteristics incompatible with the usual characterisation of 'simple' hunter-gatherers (such as low mobility, social aggregation, labour organisation and, to some extent, leadership). This output enriches our understanding of Paleoindian groups and motivates the replication of this method to other prehistoric case studies. As stated by Lemke in the concluding remarks, instead of

labelling a forager group as “simple” or “complex”, “(...) a more fruitful approach considers which aspect of the society is termed complex. For example, aspects of economy or kinship may be complex without the society as a whole adopting the set of characteristics of a complex society.” (p. 158).

To summarise, this well-written academic volume convincingly portrays hunting architecture (and its active landscape modification system) as a relevant element to integrate into future research on niche construction and complexity of hunter-gatherers.

SERGI LOZANO PÉREZ

Department of Economic History, Institutions, Politics and World Economy

Universitat de Barcelona

E-mail: slozanop@ub.edu