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# Territorial perspective on lithic caching: Insights from Garza Protohistoric (1450–1650 CE) caching strategies on the Southern Plains, USA

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## ABSTRACT

Lithic caching was a common strategy to provide a surplus of flaked stone in areas devoid of high quality lithic sources. A territorial perspective was used to investigate the Southern Plains Garza Protohistoric-age (1450–1650 CE) Post Wallace lithic cache. Garza hunter-gatherers placed the 575 piece cache along the Southern High Plains eastern escarpment near Post, Texas. Based on ethnohistorical accounts and the archaeological record, this region was a persistently occupied Garza core territory area. Results indicated that Post Wallace was a continuance cache used and replenished several times. Garza hunter-gatherers carried large pieces of flaked stone rather than minimize transportation cost. A territorial perspective provided new insights into Garza hunter-gatherer landscape-use strategies and lithic caching.

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## 1. Introduction

Caching flaked stone is a common hunter-gatherer approach in prehistory, and noted in many places around the world (e.g., Peresani, 2009; Barkai and Gopher, 2011; Franco et al., 2011; Julig and Long, 2013; Tabarev et al., 2013; Huckell and Kilby, 2014). Researchers typically define flaked stone caches as “an accumulation of useful material that is hidden away for future recovery and utilization” (Tunnell, 1978:1). The study of lithic caches often provides significant insights into landscape-use strategies (e.g., Hurst, 2006; Bement, 2014) and culturally specific lithic reduction signatures (e.g., Wyckoff, 1992; Bamforth, 2013; Jennings, 2013).

On the Southern Plains short-grass prairie of North America, lithic caches are commonly found — over 100 are documented (Hurst, 2002, 2006; Lintz and Dockall, 2009). Most are isolated finds. A small percentage are within hunter-gatherer campsites, Plains Villages, or at lithic material source locations (Hurst, 2002:14–16). The cultural affiliation of most caches is unknown because culturally diagnostic projectile points rarely are included (Hurst, 2006; LaBelle, 2015). Also, contextual information often is missing due to many caches being unearched from construction work or reported by non-archaeologists. Caches that contain diagnostic objects indicate lithic caching was practiced for most of

the region's prehistory (Hurst, 2006). Clovis-age caches (~11,500–10,800 BP) frequently are identified (e.g., Kilby, 2008; Huckell and Kilby, 2014).

The Southern Plains has been a vast grassland over the last ~2 million years, and the short-grass ecosystem arose ~8000 BP (Johnson, 2007). Native trees and shrubs such as hackberry, black walnut, mesquite, and cottonwood are an important part of the landscape, but limited in distribution along draws, rivers, escarpment edges, and reentrant canyons (Marcy, 1850; Hall and Valastro, 1995; Johnson, 2007). Bison is the only large mammal to survive climate change at the end of the Late Pleistocene ~11,000 BP. Large grassland animals such as camels, horses, and mammoths disappear from the landscape. Modern bison (*Bison bison*) along with pronghorn and deer have adapted to the early Holocene expansion of short-grasses and an emergence of the continental climate ~4500 BP (Johnson, 1987, 2007, 2008; Lewis et al., 2010; Johnson and Lewis, 2016).

Resources have a patchy distribution on this landscape and hunter-gatherers were mobile with a focus on bison hunting after 11,000 BP (Johnson, 2008). Several high quality sources of flakeable stone exist, but their spatial occurrence is restricted (Holliday and Welty, 1981; Banks, 1990; Wyckoff, 2005). Caching lithic material is likely essential for solving spatial incongruities between the region's resources.

Researchers typically classify lithic caches into the following four types: insurance, passive, load-exchange, or afterlife (Hurst,

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2002; LaBelle, 2015). Insurance gear caches were composed of items used for a variety of anticipated and unknown tasks (Binford, 1979:257). These caches were left to mediate the risks of unknown future resource processing activities. Hunter-gatherers often placed insurance caches in landscape areas not persistently occupied. In contrast, passive caches consisted of specialized gear designed for processing specific resources that are temporally and spatially predictable (Binford, 1979:256). Passive gear was employed seasonally and cached for the rest of the year. Passive gear typically was stored so that tools are available to process resources at regularly occupied places. Hunter-gatherers may create a load-exchange cache when new items are acquired, and it is too costly to carry both loads of material (Thomas, 1985:30–36). In this case, a cache was created to deposit the extra flaked stone, and a return visit was not predictable. Finally, flaked stone may be bundled with the dead for use in the afterlife, or left at special spiritual places on the landscape as an offering (Thomas, 1985:30–36). These types of caches were not meant for recovery and future use and are not comparable to utilitarian caches (Kornfeld et al., 1990:301; Bamforth, 2013:73).

Several challenges present themselves in lithic cache research. Caches are often a combination of finished tools and minimally reduced cores and tool blanks (Hurst, 2002, 2006), making it difficult to determine a cache type or function (e.g., Vehik, 2007:99). The flaked stone in caches are typically larger pieces set aside earlier in the reduction process and are from non-local sources (LaBelle, 2015:10). Because lithic caches contain exotic lithic material, it is often difficult to determine the role of caches in landscape-use strategies. Researchers in most cases assume flaked stone in caches were deposited only once and then forgotten. Some caches, however, were likely opened and replenished several times and were an active part of provisioning the landscape with flaked stone (Lintz and Dockall, 2009; Backhouse et al., 2010; Bement, 2014).

A territorial perspective was used to examine the previously undocumented Garza Protohistoric-age (1450–1650 CE) Post Wallace lithic cache found along the Southern High Plains eastern escarpment near Post, Texas (Figs. 1 and 2). The objectives of this study were to describe the cache and its contents, and to determine this cache's role within a Garza territorial landscape-use strategy. The goal of this research was to elucidate how the study of lithic caches can benefit from a territorial perspective.

Dicky Wallace of Post, Texas discovered the Post Wallace cache in 1990 while hiking near the headwaters of the South Fork of the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos River along the Southern High Plains eastern escarpment (Fig. 2). Wallace noticed some of the cache's implements eroding from the base of intertwined mesquite and juniper trees ~80 m west of the South Fork. The cache's locality was near an eroding slope with an abrupt ~1.2 m (4 ft) elevation change. About 40% of the cache's implements were exposed and piled together. Wallace used a knife to scrape the surface to reveal the rest of the cache. The cache consisted of 574 pieces of flakeable stone, and one sandstone abrader (Fig. 3).

A Garza projectile point preform (WC-1; Fig. 4) was identified within the cache. Garza complex sites (1450–1650 CE) were concentrated along the upper Brazos River drainage area, and along the southern portion of the Southern High Plains (Runkles, 1964; Johnson et al., 1977; Hughes, 1991; Habicht-Mauche, 1992). This cache discovery provided an opportunity to examine lithic caching from a territorial perspective.

## 2. Territorial perspective on lithic caching

In this research, a territory is the accumulative actions of hunter-gatherers that share an identity through their movements across

the landscape (Hurst et al., 2010; Zedeño and Anderson, 2015). In this approach, mobility is equivalent to territory formation and identity (Zedeño and Anderson, 2015:13). Identity is the construction and maintenance of shared cultural knowledge about the landscape that defines a society in contrast to other groups (Zedeño, 1997, 2000, 2008). Hunter-gatherers infuse the landscape with multiple layers of socially constructed meaning through daily interactions (Ingold, 2000:52–58). For example, place names that provide important geographical knowledge and sacred knowledge are given to distinct landforms (Basso, 1996; Sundstrom, 1996).

Three structural components comprise territories that of cores, perimeters, and pathways (Zedeño and Anderson, 2015). Cores are places on the landscape essential to the survival of hunter-gatherer groups (Zedeño and Anderson, 2015:14). They are places where resources are consistently procured, and socially imbued with social and spiritual importance. As Zedeño and Anderson state (2015:14): “cores are physical repositories of historical memory and territorial identity even after a group has permanently relocated.” Outside of cores are perimeter areas not consistently encountered. Knowledge of perimeter areas is less than within core areas. Knowledge of perimeter areas are maintained through traveling or exploration and passed on by story-telling (Zedeño and Anderson, 2015). Pathways are trails established through regular movements between core areas. Pathways organize and structure the landscape between core areas. They denote how core areas are sequentially and hierarchically defined (Zedeño and Anderson, 2015).

Two types of caches are predicted based on this territorial perspective. Continuance caches are deposited in areas of the landscape persistently occupied and a return is predictable. In contrast, discontinuance caches are left in landscape areas that are not persistently occupied, therefore, a return is unpredictable. Continuance caches are expected along pathways and core territorial areas while discontinuance caches occur in infrequently used peripheral territory areas. Discontinuance caches may often be the equivalent of load-exchange caches that were left when carrying a surplus of flaked stone that was no longer necessary. Hunter-gatherers likely used and replenished continuance caches. In contrast, discontinuance caches often were not encountered again.

The composition of lithic caches is based upon a series of decisions (Hurst, 2006) that are made throughout a territory from the lithic source to where caches are left at core, pathway, and perimeter areas. Insurance or passive gear may be left in either a continuance or discontinuance cache based on the range of anticipated needs whether predictable or not that the cache location will be visited again. Based on a territorial perspective the function of lithic caches is investigated based on their landscape position rather than only relying upon the cache's implements.

## 3. Garza of Cona: a protohistoric-age (1450–1650) core territorial area

The Protohistoric is a culturally dynamic period marked by the migration of the Apache into the region (Gunnerson, 1969; Johnson et al., 1977), and the development of an intensive Southwestern Puebloan trade network (Spielmann, 1983). Most Garza assemblages consist of material culture indicating a focus on bison hunting and trade with New Mexico Puebloan agricultural groups (Johnson et al., 1977; Boyd and Peck, 1992; Habicht-Mauche, 1992; Boyd, 2001; Leonard, 2006). Possible Garza site types include residential and base camps, bison kills, rock shelters, and internments (Boyd, 2001). Comprehensive lithic analysis of most Garza sites has not been conducted with the majority of research focused on trade systems inferred from ceramics (e.g., Habicht-Mauche, 1987; Leonard, 2006) or obsidian (e.g., Baugh and Terrell, 1982).

An exception is the Lubbock Lake Landmark in which a faunal

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