Field investigations in the Absaroka Mountains of northwestern Wyoming during the 2004 and 2005 field seasons have identified numerous sets of dry-laid stone structures. These structures occur in a variety of landscape settings in the tributary valleys near the headwaters of the Greybull River and include valley floors, steep slopes, and upland ridges within an elevation range of ~2500-3200 m. Structure types include walls, alignments, bluffs, platforms, and an enclosure that the local residents refer to as an eagle trap. Although the precise function of these structures is unknown, a wealth of information is contained within the attributes of structures themselves. One goal of this research involves the production of a baseline index of energy in the form of "labor-hours" invested during construction of high altitude stone structures. To this end, field investigations collected size and frequency data on the individual lithic elements incorporated into each structure. A comparative data set will be drawn from replicative construction activities performed in settings that approximate those of the stone structures identified in the Greybull project area. Proximally, these data allow individual walls and sets of walls to be compared at the inter- and intra-site level. Additionally, inferential relationships can be identified with respect to structure types and time invested in construction activities. Ultimately these relationships can be used to compare similar structures and sites throughout the region.

**Methods and Results**

**Why Count Rocks:**

- Previous investigations of high altitude structures have yielded a wealth of information (see Cassells 2000, Benedict 1996, Friesen 2004). These investigations have focused on dating techniques such as lichenometry, and 14C. Often these investigations have produced highly detailed maps that are useful for identifying the relationships among structure types and locations with respect to the surrounding landscape.
- However, very little time and energy have been invested in the quantification of construction labor investment in the form of physical labor.
- Some sites with these labor investments are less tangible but no less important investments made in the form of cultural capital.
- The concept of cultural capital suggests that human behaviors with respect to subsistence activities, while changing through time, are not constantly reevaluated anew. Instead these behaviors are influenced by a long history of trial and error. Successful subsistence strategies accrue through time and are exhibited as cultural capital.
- While cultural capital is difficult to assess directly it may be possible to begin the inferential process by investigating the patterns of landscape use through the quantification of construction labor investment as related to construction location.

**Figure 17. Digital Elevation Model of the Pickett Creek Site (48PA2820).**

**Discussion and Future Directions**

- The quantification of labor-hours invested in the construction of stone structures may be used to infer strategies on the roles of specific wall sections in the overall landscape. The walls may represent several phases of construction labor investment.
- The quantification of labor-hours invested in the construction of stone structures may be used to infer strategies on the roles of specific wall sections in the overall landscape. The walls may represent several phases of construction labor investment.
- Successful subsistence strategies are likely to be closely tied to cultural capital and may be exhibited as cultural capital.
- Successful subsistence strategies are likely to be closely tied to cultural capital and may be exhibited as cultural capital.

**References**


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