Spatial patterning and site occupation at a repeatedly occupied hunter-gatherer campsite in Lesotho’s Highlands

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Why space is important

- Hunter-gatherer archaeology in southern Africa has moved from ‘people-to-nature’ to ‘people-to-people’ questions.
- To investigate past social relations an understanding of how people structured their living space is essential.
- Open-air sites are well-known near the coast. 

What of the interior?

Introducing Likoaeng

- On banks of Senqu (Orange) River, Lesotho
Why Likoaeng?

- Multi-component occupation (≥ 9 phases)
- Well preserved organics
- Comparisons possible with local rockshelters (e.g. Sehonghong)
- Focus possible on the use of space across multiple occupations

Multiple dark occupation Layers, Likoaeng 1992

Partially articulated fish skeleton, Layer III
Digging Likoaeng

Stratigraphic profile and excavation area looking north (upstream)

800 CAL AD
- top occupation
Layer III
230 CAL AD

1000 CAL BC
- basal occupation
Likoaeng probably evolved from a rock-shelter to a purely open-air site
Layer III: features

- Layer III is the uppermost occupation with well-defined spatial patterning and high quality organic preservation. It has minimal traces of post-depositional disturbance.
- Four hearths are aligned broadly north/south parallel to the Senqu and to the rock face to the rear.
- Hearths 1 and 2 are especially rich in stone artefacts and bone.
- Hearth 2 is accompanied by a set of grindstones.

Layer III radiocarbon dates

- Pta-7097 1850 ± 15 bp =
  CAL AD 218 (228) 236
- Pta-7865 1830 ± 15 bp =
  CAL AD 231 (238) 245
Layer III: artefact patterning

- Overall débitage $\leq 10$ mm
- Cores/chunks/flakes
- Scrapers (Hearth 3?)
- Adzes (toward river)
- Backed microliths (Hearths 2 + 4)
- OES beads (one item?)
- Grindstones (Hearths 1 and 2)
Interpreting Layer III

- Ring model (Yellen 1977) OR linear model (Bartram et al. 1991)

- Likoaeng has a built-in linear structure because of the combination of the Senqu River and the rear rock face

This description of the housing of Bushmen living in western Lesotho in the early nineteenth century is taken from T. Arbousset & F. Daumas 1968. *Narrative of an exploratory tour to the northeast of the Cape of Good Hope.* Cape Town: C. Struik.
Layer III: some further questions

- Are there activity areas?
- How much of the site is missing?
- Do Hearths 3 + 4 differ from Hearths 1 + 2?
- Site occupation: tooling-up/limited provisioning are likely before fishing started
- A multi-site ‘site’, including several other shelters up to 800 m downstream?
Layer III: future research

- Refitting stone artefacts
- More detailed look at faunal patterning
- Residue analyses
- Comparisons with Layers V and VII below

Likoaeng
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