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Review of *The Grant Oneota Village* by Marshall McKusick

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The Grant Oneota Village. Marshall McKusick. Iowa City: Office of the State Archaeologist of Iowa, 1973. 181 pp., maps, tables, figures, diagrams, photographs, appendix, bibliography, commentary section, author's reply. \$5.00 (cloth), \$3.00 (paper).

Reviewed by Carol Raish

Marshall McKusick's monograph, The Grant Oneota Village, reports the results of excavations at the Grant Village site (13AM201). Grant Village is a multicomponent site located on the Hartley Terrace of the Upper Iowa River, Allamakee County, Iowa. The main focus of the report is the description and interpretation of house remains found on the terrace. The site is a very important one for Oneota specialists as it offers the possibility of much new information on house form and community patterning. Other topics covered include a discussion of Oneota taxonomy, a cultural chronology of the Hartley Terrace, and ethnohistoric parallels for the excavated houses. Descriptive sections covering bone, stone, and ceramic artifacts are also included. The monograph follows Current Anthropology with commentary and author's reply sections.

McKusick presents nine conclusions from his study of Grant Village; a summary of the original nine gives the four major areas of concentration of the report. They are as follows:

1. description of the houses uncovered at the Grant site, their method of excavation, and their variance from the expected form
2. ethnohistoric description and reconstruction of longhouse use in the area, methods of longhouse construction, and patterns of summer residence
3. calculation of a population estimate and presentation of a community plan based on inter-site comparison of the excavated houses
4. definition of the Grant Pottery Type

This review does not attempt a full summary or critique of the Grant monograph. Discussions of most aspects of the report can be found in the commentary section and in a review by Gibbon in the Plains Anthropologist (Gibbon 1976:78-80). Certain summary comments and criticisms by the reviewers are given here, but the main purpose of this review is to comment on research design and ceramic analysis. Since I am a student of Oneota ceramics, this aspect of the report has particular interest for me.

The commentary section of the monograph offers many valid criticisms of the monograph as does Gibbon's review. McKusick receives the most criticism for his excavation techniques and artifact descriptions. Henning gives a critique of excavation techniques in the commentary section (Commentary:159-162). His criticisms

have merit as the excavation appears to have been conducted with considerable haste and in a manner that was not designed to recover a representative sample of the artifacts from the site. Information that could have been vital to McKusick's own particular research interests was not sought. On the basis of ethnohistoric information he infers a summer residence pattern at Grant Village. Floral and faunal evidence from the site might also shed light on the season of occupation yet only one storage pit was water-screened through 1/8" mesh and none was floated. Only the material from the storage pits was screened through 1/4" mesh. It seems that excavation techniques have led to an over-reliance on ethnographic analogy in interpreting the information from Grant. Though the ethnographic sections are valuable inclusions, the report suffers from the lack of corroborating archeological evidence (Gibbon 1976:80).

It appears that the project is hampered by an absence of clearly defined research goals. Recovering new house form information is certainly important but a more specific set of goals is needed to guide that recovery. Prior knowledge of the questions to be asked of the data determines the sort of information needed from the site. Obviously, excavation techniques must be tailored to recover the desired information. In his review, Gibbon suggests the use of ethnographic analogy to form problems to be tested by the archeological material (Gibbon 1976:80). It seems that this approach would have been beneficial for the Grant project. However, the reverse appears to have occurred at Grant. The houses were uncovered as quickly as possible and then the ethnohistorical data were studied for similarities. If more care had been given to determining the archeological materials required for study of the house forms, a much stronger, more meaningful report would have been produced.

Both Brose (Commentary:154) and Gibbon (1976:79-80) complain that artifacts from the site are not fully described. McKusick has included few basic descriptive statistics and insufficient descriptive information for the Grant material to be used for comparative purposes. Lithic and bone tools are presented in very general groups with only the minimum and maximum measurements given for each group. The section dealing with ceramics is equally vague and perhaps one of the most disappointing aspects of the monograph. In all fairness to McKusick, settlement information, not ceramics, is his prime concern. However, the majority of Oneota research has focused on ceramics; therefore, the bases for intersite comparison are primarily ceramic. Since McKusick includes ceramic information in his report and uses it in his assessment of Grant, he has the responsibility to make his descriptions as precise and useful as possible. They do not meet these criteria. Gibbon comments that "...design and shape parameters of the ceramic sample are impossible to reconstruct, and the range of variability among other important traits remains unrecorded"

(1976:79). Brose complains of the lack of descriptive statistics and states that "While punctate size appears to be a major criterion of ceramic decoration we have neither the mean nor the standard deviation for punctate size. In addition, although a plate of rim profiles is given, there is no frequency for any particular rim profile occurrence" (Commentary:154). Other important information is missing: for example, location of decorative attributes within the lip/rim area, shoulder design patterns, and attribute associations.

The Grant Type consists of 91 rims and handles, 296 decorated bodysherds, and 787 plain bodysherds. The type is formed on the basis of punctate size and design pattern, rim height, and trailed line width in comparison to a sample of 200 rimsherds from the adjacent Lane Enclosure site. Certain problems are apparent concerning the formation of the new type. On what basis was the comparative sample chosen? Why wasn't the detailed, published information on the Allamakee Trailed Type (Lane Enclosure) also included (Mott Wedel 1959:77-91, Henning 1961:10-17, 28-30)? Comparisons with other Oneota ceramic groupings should also be included to point up the similarities and differences between Grant and Allamakee Trailed. Statistical tests of significance, chi square, for example, could help to clarify the degree of difference between the two sites. In my opinion, the three attributes chosen cannot be used to define a new pottery type by themselves. Many other attributes and attribute combinations must be taken into consideration before any meaningful group can be distinguished.

The idea of a meaningful group brings up the most important problem with McKusick's treatment of the Grant ceramics. This is his attempt to define a formal type in the first place. With many Oneota ceramic groupings, Grant included, the concept of traditional typology is not applicable. Oneota pottery simply does not "type" well. The usual type identifiers of temper, shape, rim form, and rim or lip decoration are virtually the same throughout Oneota ceramics. There is a great deal of variability, however, with respect to decorative element choice and size, rim height, rim and lip thickness, and other traditional measures within what could be considered a single grouping (Henning 1970:31-32). Attempting a formal, typological classification on the basis of the above finer measures leaves the archeologist with either a proliferation of minutely defined types such as those from Carcajou Point (Hall 1962) or with one large, extremely varied type. Neither alternative is desirable. Such types are forced, extremely hard to work with, and actually obscure rather than clarify. Recent Oneota ceramic studies have moved away from traditional typological classifications in favor of various forms of attribute combination comparisons among the sites under consideration (Henning 1970:31-32, Straffin 1971:22-29, Hurley 1976). This approach would be a much more useful way of dealing with the Grant Material.

The Grant site is a contribution to Oneota studies; it could

be even more valuable if handled in a different way; Certainly there are positive aspects to the monograph: the commentary format, the extensive ethnographic review, and the detailed population estimate, to name a few. But by and large, the Grant report offers what we do not need - research which is inadequately planned and reported. Oneota studies need a coordinated effort to attack specific problems tested throughout the area and reported in a standardized manner. (An example of this sort of organized effort is the Southwestern Anthropological Research Group (SARG) discussed by Gumerman (1973:291-295). At the very least, well planned research designs and comparability of artifact descriptions must become major goals of Oneota research. Unfortunately, the Grant site report does not move in this direction.

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