

CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Michael A. Glassow
Department of Anthropology
University of California
Santa Barbara, CA 93106-3210

ABSTRACT

California archaeology has much to gain from expanding its intellectual horizons to include an awareness of Pacific Rim archaeology, if not some amount of specialization in research spanning two or more Pacific Rim nations. Many environmental similarities and parallel cultural developments throughout the Pacific Rim provide opportunities for comparative studies, which are an important foundation for development of cultural theory. Although there has been some interest in Pacific Rim research at least since the 1950s, opportunities have never been better than they are today.

Introduction

As California archaeologists, we tend to interact primarily with each other, and the knowledge we control is largely that of particular regions of our state. Regional specialization is inevitable, of course, as the archaeological literature and other forms of archaeological information grow in size, but it has its dangers in the form of a narrowed intellectual vision and unquestioning adherence to idiosyncratic methods and techniques. Even those of us whose specialization is not based on geography, but instead on a particular class of data -- lithics or faunal remains, for example — may have difficulty perceiving California archaeology in a larger context. Certainly California archaeologists are not alone in their restricted visions; most regionally oriented archaeologists around the world suffer at least to some degree from provincialism.

To counteract these inevitable trends in regional archaeology, we might take cues from the globalizing processes currently prevailing in the economies of California and the United States. Just as there are certain advantages to economic globalization, so, too, there are advantages to globalizing archaeology. In recent years, California, along with other Pacific coast states, has defined a sphere of economic and

social interaction that embraces all nations bordering on the Pacific Ocean, that is, all *Pacific Rim* nations. California archaeology stands to benefit in a number of ways from developing an articulation with the archaeology of other Pacific Rim nations, and it is my task in this paper to explore what some of these articulations might be.

A Rationale for a Pacific Rim Archaeology

The coastal and adjacent interior zones of essentially all Pacific Rim nations witnessed a relatively long evolution of hunter-gatherer societies, and in some parts of the western Pacific these societies eventually adopted agriculture. Furthermore, many of these prehistoric societies, even in the absence of agriculture, eventually developed complex forms of social and political organization. In short, there are a number of commonalities in the regional prehistories of coastal and pericoastal societies of the Pacific Rim, and there are some intriguing differences as well. Considering that much of archaeological knowledge is derived from comparative analysis, that is, from the explanation of differences and similarities among distinct cultural developments, there is a basis for developing higher-level theory that is all too lacking in archaeology today.

Why should we promote an archaeology of the Pacific Rim as opposed to simply a more worldly perspective toward comparative analysis and interactions among archaeologists? Without wanting to discourage the latter, I propose that the Pacific Rim as a geographic realm of interaction makes sense for a variety of quite disparate reasons. First, as I mentioned earlier, there is great potential for the kind of comparative analysis important to generating and testing archaeological theory, as a result of both general and specific similarities in cultural development among the different regions of the Pacific Rim.

Second, as Erlandson points out in his contribution to this volume, environmental contexts of cultural development often are similar, providing a basis for understanding the role of environment in cultural development. For instance, very similar flora and fauna are found in marine and coastal environments around the Pacific Rim; indeed, some of the same species of fish inhabit both the eastern and western Pacific. Regional adaptations entailing exploitation of analogous or identical resources may be quite similar, but there are likely to be dramatic differences as well. Consequently, analysis entailing comparison of independent cultural developments in similar environmental contexts can lead to deeper understanding of the importance of environmental conditions in explanations of cultural development, as well as the importance of other determining factors unrelated to environment.

Third, the prehistories of Pacific Rim regions form an unbroken chain of linkages: Japan with mainland China and Russia, Siberia with the Alaskan Arctic, the Northwest Coast with California, Central America with Andean South America, and the like. Some archaeologists have proposed that very long-distance geographic links exist between the prehistories of Pacific Rim regions, although most archaeologists have viewed such links with a good deal of skepticism. Regardless, many of the fairly well documented links between the prehistories of Pacific Rim regions are still poorly understood, largely because few archaeologists

have expanded their geographic perspective to embrace regions with linked prehistories. Indeed, many interregional links probably remain to be discovered.

The final reason for promoting Pacific Rim archaeology has nothing to do with generation of useful knowledge, but instead is related to sources of research funding. Economic relations among Pacific Rim nations have fostered a variety of initiatives aimed at increasing cultural understanding and cooperative research. At the University of California, for instance, the Pacific Rim Research Program exists to focus the university's "intellectual resources toward the study of the Pacific Rim as a distinctive region." The program encompasses all nine campuses of the university, and it awards grants to University of California faculty for research on Pacific Rim topics in a variety of disciplines. Other sources of funding in California and the U.S. also focus on Pacific Rim research, and comparable funding sources exist in other Pacific Rim nations for their citizens. As a consequence, funding opportunities are available to California archaeologists interested in working in other Pacific Rim nations and collaborating with archaeologists in these nations, who also may have access to funding earmarked for Pacific Rim research.

The Emergence of Pacific Rim Archaeological Research

Having succeeded, I hope, in justifying why California archaeologists should be interested in becoming involved in Pacific Rim research, it seems appropriate at this juncture to review the notable aspects of the history of archaeological research that has looked beyond the borders of the U.S. and Canada to the archaeology of regions on the western side of the Pacific. For the most part, these efforts have focused on the North Pacific, but we should recognize that archaeologists in the U.S. and in California particularly have had a long-standing interest in the archaeology of the southwestern Pacific, particularly of Australia and New Zealand. For instance, methods and techniques for the study

of coastal adaptations used in New Zealand and Australia have been influenced by, and in turn have influenced, archaeologists in California (e.g., Shawcross 1967; Terrell 1967; Bailey 1975). Moreover, the ethnography of Australian Aborigines carried out by both Australian and U.S. anthropologists has influenced theory many of us in California use that is concerned with prehistoric hunter-gatherer technology, subsistence, and settlement (e.g., Gould 1980).

A perennial issue of interest to both American and Russian archaeologists has been the timing of initial migrations of people into the Americas and the nature of the culture at that time or times, particularly as it relates to Clovis (see Moss and Erlandson 1995:15-17 for a concise summary of the current status of this research). Interest in tracing the Siberian roots of New World populations goes back at least to the 1950s, when Chester Chard (1956a, 1956b) attempted to identify the nature of early Siberian lithic industries that might relate to Paleoindian tools of the Americas. In this same era, the work of the Russian archaeologist A. P. Okladnikov was of interest to Americans interested in Siberian antecedents to Paleoindians (Wormington 1957:252). Since the journal *Arctic Anthropology* began to be published in 1962, a number of Russian and a few Japanese archaeologists have contributed English-language articles that have kept American archaeologists abreast of progress in understanding northeast Siberian prehistory and implications for the peopling of the New World (e.g., Dikov 1968; issue 1 of vol. 3; issue 2 of vol. 6; Dikov and Titov 1984; see also Powers 1973; Dikov 1994). As well, conferences attended by Russian and American archaeologists concerned with expansions of New World populations in the New World have yielded published progress reports (Bryan 1978; Michael 1979; Fitzhugh and Chaussonnet 1994b).

Another issue that has attracted the attention of at least some archaeologists is the prospect of migrations over very long distances, particularly by boat (e.g., Ekholm 1964). None of these putative long-distance migrations has

been widely accepted by archaeologists, but over the years they have attracted a good deal of attention because they are so controversial. Meggers, Evans, and Estrada (1965) are the authors of perhaps the most provocative of these long-distance migration hypotheses. In the mid-1960s they proposed that a boatload of Jomon fishermen from southern Japan inadvertently floated across the Pacific to the coast of Ecuador. According to Betty Meggers and her colleagues, these fishermen brought knowledge of pottery making, which they introduced to the native Ecuadoreans. Their hypothesis was based on the similarities of incised designs on Jomon pottery and Ecuadorean pottery dated to the Valdevia phase. Indeed, the pottery designs are quite similar, although one finds a good deal of similarity in design among all pottery traditions entailing rich decoration by incising and punctation of the plastic surface of vessels.

The cultural similarities among ethnographically documented traditional peoples of eastern Siberia and the tribes of southeast Alaska and coastal British Columbia also has induced anthropologists to wonder about the prospect of migrations, although not over such long distances as proposed by Meggers and her colleagues. As a result of the rich body of ethnographic information collected by the Jesup North Pacific Expedition at the turn of the 20th century, Franz Boas proposed that populations from the Northwest Coast of North America migrated back across the Bering Strait some considerable time after the New World was first populated and after Northwest Coast culture developed its classic form. As a result, he felt that these eastern Siberian groups actually were offshoots of American populations (Freed et al. 1988). I am not aware of any archaeologist offering data in support for Boas' hypothesis, and indeed there are many reasons for rejecting it. Nonetheless, the fact remains that many cultural similarities do exist among traditional peoples on either side of the Bering Strait. Those of us who had a chance to see the Smithsonian's "Crossroads of Continents" exhibit several years ago had an excellent chance to appreciate this (see Fitzhugh and

Crowell 1988; Fitzhugh and Chaussonnet 1994b).

Migration hypotheses of these sorts, and there are many others that have been proposed over the years (e.g., Harrison and Harrison 1966:68-69; Erlandson 1993:28-29), have forced archaeologists to recognize that there are some amazingly close commonalities among the cultures of the Pacific Rim despite separation by thousands of miles of open water or land. At times during prehistory, transmission of culture undoubtedly did take place over relatively long distances, although the mechanisms for such transmission remain elusive. As I have pointed out, however, the environmental and social contexts of cultural development appear to have been very similar in different parts of the Pacific Rim, and we would expect, therefore, cases of parallel evolution to have taken place (Fitzhugh and Chaussonnet 1994a:5). Of course, questions concerned with diffusion vs. independent cultural development go back to the very beginnings of archaeology as a discipline. Their continuing importance today seems related to the immature state of archaeological and anthropological theory.

The closest archaeologists have come to the form of comparative analysis necessary to discover common determinants operating in widely disparate areas of the Pacific Rim was a symposium organized in 1979 by Shuzo Koyama and David H. Thomas (1981). The stated purpose of this symposium was "to compare the foraging economies of prehistoric Japan and California, two areas with rather similar natural environmental characteristics." Considering that only one of the 13 papers, presented by Martin Baumhoff, explicitly concerned California, the symposium fell far short of its goal. Indeed, few papers in the symposium volume concern comparisons of any sort, although their strong ecological emphasis does provide much food for thought.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the potential for specialization in Pacific Rim prehistory certainly is

evident from the anthropological contributions to Pacific Rim studies over the past 40 years. Furthermore, it is obvious that California archaeology will benefit from the intellectual exchanges that Pacific Rim research would entail. Clearly, however, not every California archaeologist should feel obliged to become involved in Pacific Rim research outside of California, given the investments of time and energy that would be required. Yet all California archaeologists should support increased intellectual exchanges among archaeologists working around the Pacific Rim and should remain generally aware of the archaeology of the Pacific Rim as it develops. Erlandson also makes this point in his contribution to this volume.

Pacific Rim specialists in California probably will come largely from the students entering or currently enrolled in graduate programs. In the course of becoming Pacific Rim specialists, many of these students will have to learn the language of the Pacific Rim nation or nations in which they desire to work—such languages as Russian, Japanese, and Chinese. Aside from the difficulties associated with learning a foreign language and becoming familiar with a foreign archaeological literature, a Pacific Rim specialist does not face many of the obstacles that prevented such a specialization in the past. Research funding is available from a number of sources, transportation has never been easier, and the Internet has facilitated rapid and relatively inexpensive communication.

As a final statement, I would like to emphasize that conferences and symposia such as this one at the Annual Meeting of our society should become commonplace. They are an effective means of intellectual exchange, and they provide a forum for open-ended discussions of research interests and goals. In the future, such symposia might focus on particular topics that recognize the benefits of comparative analysis in the development of higher-level theory or foster the development of methods and techniques appropriate to the archaeology of many different Pacific Rim regions.

REFERENCES CITED

- Bailey, G. N.
1975 The Role of Molluscs in Coastal Economies: The Results of Midden Analysis in Australia. *Journal of Archaeological Science* 2:45-62.
- Bryan, Alan L. (ed.)
1978 *Early Man in America from a Circum-Pacific Perspective*. Department of Anthropology, University of Alberta, Occasional Papers 1. Archaeological Researches International, Edmonton.
- Chard, Chester S.
1956 The Oldest Sites of Northeastern Siberia. *American Antiquity* 21:405-409.
1958 An Outline of the Prehistory of Siberia, Part 1. The Pre-Metal Periods. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 14:1-33.
- Dikov, N. N.
1968 The Discovery of the Paleolithic in Kamchatka and the Problem of Initial Occupation of America. *Arctic Anthropology* 5:191-203.
1994 The Paleolithic of Kamchatka and Chukotka and the Problem of the Peopling of America. In *Anthropology of the North Pacific Rim*, edited by W. W. Fitzhugh and V. Chaussonnet, pp. 87-95. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.
- Dikov, N. N., and E. E. Titov
1984 Problems of the Stratification and Periodization of the Uski Sites. *Arctic Anthropology* 21:69-80.
- Ekholm, Gordon F.
1964 Transpacific Contacts. In *Prehistoric Man in the New World*, edited by J. D. Jennings and E. Norbeck, pp. 489-510. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Erlandson, Jon M.
1993 California's Coastal Prehistory: A Circum-Pacific Perspective. *Proceedings of the Society for California Archaeology* 6:23-36.
- Fitzhugh, William W., and Aron Crowell (eds.)
1988 *Crossroads of Continents, Cultures of Siberia and Alaska*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.
- Fitzhugh, William W., and Valérie Chaussonnet
1994a Introduction. In *Anthropology of the North Pacific Rim*, edited by W. W. Fitzhugh and V. Chaussonnet, pp. 1-24. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.
- Fitzhugh, William W., and Valérie Chaussonnet (eds.)
1994b *Anthropology of the North Pacific Rim*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.
- Freed, Stanley A., Ruth S. Freed, and Laila Williamson
1988 The American Museum's Jesup North Pacific Expedition. In *Crossroads of Continents, Cultures of Siberia and Alaska*, edited by W. W. Fitzhugh and A. Crowell, pp. 97-103. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington.
- Harrison, William M., and Edith S. Harrison
1966 An Archaeological Sequence for the Hunting People of Santa Barbara, California. *UCLA Archaeological Survey Annual Report, 1965-1966* Vol.8:1-89. Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Gould, R. A.
1980 *Living Archaeology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Koyama, Shuzo, and David H. Thomas (eds.)
1981 *Affluent Foragers, Pacific Coasts East and West*. Senri Ethnological Studies 9. National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka.
- Meggars, B. J., C. Evans, and E. Estrada
1965 *Early Formative Period of Coastal Ecuador*. Smithsonian Institution Contributions to Anthropology 1. Washington, D.C.
- Michael, Henry N. (ed.)
1979 A U.S.-U.S.S.R. Symposium on the Peopling of the New World. *Arctic Anthropology* 16(1).

Moss, Madonna L., and Jon M. Erlandson
1995 Reflections on North American Pacific
Coast Prehistory. *Journal of World Prehistory*
9:1-45.

Powers, William R.
1973 Paleolithic Man in Northeast Asia.
Arctic Anthropology 10(2) (whole issue).

Shawcross, Wilfred
1967 Prehistoric Diet and Economy on a
Coastal Site at Galatea Bay, New Zealand.
Proceeding of the Prehistoric Society 33:125-
130.

Terrell, John
1967 Galatea Bay—The Excavation of a
Beach-Stream Midden Site on Ponui Island in
the Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand. *Transactions of
the Royal Society of New Zealand, General* 2:31-
70.

Wormington, H. M.
1957 *Ancient Man in North America, 4th
edition*. Denver Museum of Natural History,
Denver.