

Mark Kowta was honored at the symposium "History, Process, and Tradition: a Symposium for Makoto Kowta."



CELEBRATING ARCHAEOLOGY WITH MAKOTO KOWTA

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Throughout his lengthy and productive career, Makoto Kowta has set a standard for excellence in education, scholarship, research, and humanism. He has conducted fieldwork on several continents and has contributed substantially to his profession of archaeology in the service of anthropology. In so doing, he has touched the lives and careers of many colleagues and students. Mark's high standards are reflected in a symposium convened at the 2002 SCA meetings in San Diego to celebrate his distinguished career and to honor the past.

THE EARLY YEARS

Makoto Kowta was born a Californian in the City by the Bay. After several years in Japan, the family moved to rural Orange County, where his father was pastor of a Japanese Christian church, and where at an early age Mark discovered the public library. During World War II, Mark, his sister Hiroko and brother Tadashi, and their parents were interned at Camp Poston, Arizona. Mark later noted that if he had heroes, they would be his forebears and contemporaries who through hard times kept their faith in the best that America has to offer.

After receiving his BA in anthropology from UCLA (1953), he began graduate studies there and spent a summer studying for his German-language exam and recovering from valley fever. He then attended the University of Michigan for three semesters at the Center for Japanese Studies, where he learned Japanese prehistory from Richard Beardsley and worked in the Museum of Anthropology for James Griffin and Albert Spaulding. His experiences and studies in history, language, art, and archaeology helped him to understand his own thinking and attitudes, and reinforced his interest in anthropology, which was its global and holistic perspective.

Returning to UCLA, Mark worked in the museum, a position later held by his friend Keith Johnson and future wife Mary Elizabeth Mulroy, an anthropology graduate student who worked on Jesse Jennings's Glen Canyon project in Utah. Mark made full use of the resources available there: Joseph Birdsell, a demographer; Harry Hoijer, a linguist; William Lessa, an expert on Oceania; Ralph Beals, an expert on California

Indians with an interest in economic anthropology; Walter Goldschmidt, a California Indian ethnologist exploring cultural evolution and ecology; Wendell Oswalt, an Alaska specialist and expert on pre-industrial technologies; and George Brainerd, a Mayan archaeologist. The influence of archaeologist Clement W. Meighan was critical in Mark's choice of archaeology as a profession. Fieldwork in Alaska led to his doctoral dissertation and earned him a Ph.D. (Kowta 1963); his committee consisted of Meighan (Chair), Birdsell, Lessa, Richard Logan (Geography), and Robert Wilson (Far Eastern History).

FAMILY, FACULTY, AND RESEARCH

In 1961, Mark joined the faculty at UC Riverside, where he developed lecture, lab, and field courses in archaeology. While there, his work at the Sayles Site highlighted his interests in cultural ecology and adaptation (Kowta 1969). By this time he and Mary were married, and their sons, Patrick, Matthew, and Daniel had joined them. The boys would experience travel to exotic places starting from an early age. One of their first expeditions was a survey in the La Paz area of Baja California. The boys did not follow in Mark's footsteps—two are geographers and one is a computer graphic designer—but Mary says they acquired many life skills from their father.

The family relocated to Chico in 1969, where former UCLA colleague Keith Johnson had initiated an archaeology program at the University. Mary says that the years since are a blur of raising the boys, work, field classes, and sabbaticals. Both are fully involved with the University, where Mary is International Student

Adviser and Coordinator of Overseas Recruitment. Along with his full teaching load and field-class and contract project responsibilities, as well as assisting in the expansion of the anthropology program (where he served as Chair), Mark also coordinated the Northeast Information Center after its transformation from the SCA Northeast Clearinghouse.

Mark has conducted fieldwork on several continents on sites dating from the early Holocene to the historic Gold Rush period. His research in several areas in California has been pivotal to contemporary thought, as witnessed by papers in this symposium. To gain first-hand experience with complex societies to compliment his work with hunter-gatherers, he teamed with Fritz Riddell's California Institute for Peruvian Studies, which took them to Peru for several seasons. And, not to be overlooked, Mark has further distinguished himself by his *tour de force* study of an historic-period container opener commonly known as the "church key." Wide interests, indeed!

The combination of field and lab work, research, and teaching offered by a career in archaeology was an attractive calling. Mark appreciates the close relationship between archaeology and anthropology, and he respects the work of Julian Steward, Lewis Binford, and others who share his global view in linking big questions to methodology and theory construction. Fred Plog called this "diachronic anthropology," noting that archaeology is uniquely equipped to address issues of global scale with the benefit of time depth (Plog 1973). Mark's humanistic side shares the value eloquently expressed by the British scholar Grahame Clark (1964), who noted that the study of prehistory can inform the world about the rich heritage we all share as members of a global society. Archaeology provides abundant opportunities to promote greater awareness of world history to enable humanity to live as heirs of all ages and brothers to one another.

TEACHING

Mark's commitment to teaching is well known. His colleagues have noted his patience with and high regard for students, and many hundreds have experienced his characteristic teaching style. Mary Maniery writes a picture of

Mark that many will recognize:

For years, students had to climb up a narrow circular stairway to Mark's office located in the tower in Ayers Hall. He seemed like a California equivalent of a Margaret Mead figure, up in the tower, waiting for us to be grilled. He always seemed to answer questions with a question to lead you in the right direction to figure out things for yourself. This may be a great teaching method, but I would always break out in a sweat about halfway up those stairs, knowing that I would be put on the spot. But he had incredible patience and was a true gentleman. I haven't met many people in my life that I respect more than Doc Kowta. [personal communication, 2002]

A common remark by students is that he "made me think," which highlights a remarkable consistency of character over his four decades of teaching. An important lesson I learned from Mark — and one that I cannot over-emphasize — is that he taught me HOW to think: how to go about framing an interesting problem, how to ask the right questions, and, of equal importance, how to go about answering those questions. His teaching style provided these opportunities yet revealed no clear biases or agenda, as he preferred to allow students to develop their own thoughts and conclusions.

Mark is "not sure what his teaching style is" and defers to his students to decipher what it might be, perhaps a version of the Socratic method. Nonetheless, many students, myself included, have emulated his style and are better for it. When queried about his teaching objectives, he replied that he encouraged students to:

- Acquire the skills and information necessary to think productively;
- Appreciate the history of archaeology;
- Understand the nature of theory and its role in the world of experience;
- Comprehend the global and holistic breadth of anthropological inquiry;
- Appreciate the complementary roles of humanistic and scientific approaches to knowledge and understanding;
- Recognize the broader social ramifications of archaeological research; and

- Engage in a continuous quest for knowledge in finding one's own niche in life.

In addition, I believe the following characteristics have contributed to his success: a command of a vast array of information sources; the mental discipline to maintain a sustained focus on a topic or problem; his superb skills and abilities in languages, illustration, and technology; his ability and vision to think globally; his respect for people from all cultures and backgrounds; his emphasis on objectivism, collegiality, and community; and, not to be overlooked, his endless curiosity about the nature of the universe.

The success of his many students is a source of pride that underscores Mark's accomplishments as a teacher. When asked what his most significant contribution(s) to archaeology might be, he noted:

At the top would be the part that I played in the preparation of students who went on to successful professional careers in academia, the private consulting sector, and government agencies, and then next the more general impact that I may have had on the community at large in promoting an appreciation of the role that different peoples have played in the history of this nation. [personal communication, 2002]

When Mark arrived in Chico, I was considering their new Master's Degree program in anthropology. Keith Johnson, who taught me field archaeology and introduced me to museum interpretation, and to whom I remain indebted, suggested that I talk to Mark. But learning what Dr. K. was about was a challenge. By nature, he is a quiet man, and his superb credentials, command of facts and theories, and enormous personal library were intimidating. But I took the bait. He schooled me in North American archaeology, method, theory, and analysis, and reinforced my interests in cultural ecology (Doyel 1972). As his first graduate student there, I found him demanding, occasionally inscrutable, but always helpful. The Chico experience was worth the effort, as the foundation that Mark, Keith, and other faculty provided has served me well. Later, at the University of Arizona, I was fully prepared for my studies with the late cultural ecologist Robert Netting (1990, 1993). Earning a Master's Degree from Makoto Kowta was only slightly less difficult than my Ph.D. from Emil (Doc) Haury!

At Chico I joined the Society for California Archaeology, where I had opportunities to meet, among others, Emma Lou Davis, Dave Fredrickson, Margaret Lyneis, R. G. Matson, Dave Thomas, and Francis Riddell. They were interesting people doing fascinating work, which likely helped me gravitate towards archaeology as a profession. With the encouragement of Mark, Keith, and physical anthropologist John Dewey, I presented my first professional paper at an SCA meeting, more years ago than I really want to remember (Doyel 1969).

One memory I share with Mark and Co-Director Don Miller is the summer of 1970 when Chico co-sponsored a field school with Queens College, New York, that may still hold a record of 103 participants. It was an impressive operation, with groups of 10 to 20 students working in four or five loci across the large site; features included habitation and processing areas and a rock shelter. After surviving on-going battles with poison oak, later in the season we were hit by the disease known as Valley Fever or "coccy" that incapacitated most of us (Werner 1974). Mark's worst nightmare was realized, as the disease had followed him north many years after his own battle with this demon. I subsequently lobbied to have the Richardson's Springs site (4-BUT-7) officially named the "Queen's Fever" site, but I don't think the name stuck. Jerry Johnson, who also had encounters with "coccy," remembers a visit to the project:

We saw this huge cloud of dust through the trees [and as] we approached Mark emerged from the cloud covered in dirt, but with his trademark smile that I have never seen him without. He welcomed and made (us feel) at home, the point being that Mark is genuinely a nice person who goes the extra mile to help people. [personal communication, 2002]

Mark also has a lighter side. Mary Maniery remembers digging by the Bidwell Mansion near the campus in Chico. One of Mark's sons was on a soccer team that played just across the street, and Mark would schedule breaks to watch them play. Mary remembers students trooping along with him to cheer for Danny and his teammates before returning to the dig!

Jack Broughton remembers being impressed by Mark's field-tough side, when one day Mark dined on uncooked chili - right out of the can!

Other students have never let him forget about the can of SPAM he had for lunch on another occasion. Then there was the time after beers at "Moon's" in Quincy, when Mark played an impressive "air guitar" for the surprised onlookers.

CELEBRATING A CAREER

In 1999, when the SCA presented Mark with a Life-Time Achievement Award, my friend and colleague, Frank Bayham, noted that this honor confers recognition not for some single, notable accomplishment, like the discovery of "Lucy" or setting foot on the moon. Rather, it is a result of sustained effort over a long period. His colleagues had much to say in this regard. In addition to the impressive line-up assembled for this special event, other individuals were disappointed that they could not participate. Pat Martz expressed dismay that her excavations precluded her presence to honor this "exceptional researcher, teacher, and human being." Jerry Johnson, who could not attend but had a paper presented, notes Mark's significant influence on his own research, and "looks forward to many years of sharing information and ideas with him."

Fritz Riddell was more succinct when he told me, and I quote, "Mark is my hero." Mark's good friend Fritz was scheduled to participate in the symposium but passed away shortly before the meeting. The evening before the program, Mark showed me a slide, within which all I could detect was a coat and hat stacked on a large suitcase. I squinted as I held the slide up to a light, and said "Mark "I don't see Fritz in this picture," to which he answered "That is the point." This slide was shown at the end of the symposium as Mark opened the microphone to anyone who wanted to say something about Fritz.

To keep this testimonial from sounding like a eulogy, we take comfort from the fact that Mark isn't done yet. Mary notes that archaeology remains his work, his hobby, and his community. With a reduced teaching and administrative load, his current research focuses on how evolutionary psychology and evolutionary ecology might assist in integrating archaeological data and Maidu mythology into a dynamic, cosmological-ecological model of their prehistory. He is contemplating writing more, which I sincerely hope he does, to

share his vast experience and wisdom. And he looks forward to sharing more time with their five grandchildren, having fun with photography, and taking a trip or two.

When asked about possible topics for this symposium, Mark suggested "culture history in its broadest sense; how different historical contexts and theoretical approaches inform on and explain prehistory; and processes of culture change and evolution." There were papers on cultural and environmental interaction, museum interpretation, and applications of refined analytical techniques to diverse landscapes from the ocean to the desert to the mountains. The papers were of uniformly high quality, as were the excellent discussions by Joe Chartkoff and Bob Bettinger. We explored many topics as we celebrated the rich heritage of the Golden State and recognized the achievements of our friend, mentor, and colleague.

Mark suggested that the program be "fun and stress-free," but, in actuality, he was somewhat uncomfortable about all the attention the crowd focused on him. Mary Kowta wrote: "this is the biggest thing that has ever happened to him - and he is quite amazed. He was thinking in terms of twenty people in a little room!" It is entirely possible that Mark has not paused long enough to consider the many lives he has touched. To ease his apprehension, Mary Maniery provided advice that he put to good use: he would sit in the front row and not look back! If Mark did happen to glance over his shoulder, he would have seen a cavernous hall filled with admirers and interested archaeologists there to share in the celebration.

Note

My thanks to Mark and Mary Kowta and many other people, cited herein and otherwise, for sharing their thoughts and experiences. Thanks also to 2002 SCA Program Chair Mark Allen for his enthusiastic support and assistance in arranging the symposium. Thanks also to symposium participants unable to submit a paper here, including Frank E. Bayham, Robert L. Bettinger, Paul Chace, Mary Maniery, and Eric Wohlgenuth.

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