

COMMENTS ON PAPERS PRESENTED IN HISTORY, PROCESS, AND TRADITION  
A SYMPOSIUM FOR MAKOTO KOWTA

MARK KOWTA

First, I'd like to express heart-felt thanks to Dave, to Frank, and to Nette, who put so much effort into organizing this session, and to Program Chair Mark Allen for making room for it in this annual meeting. A word of special appreciation goes also to all the others who make up this symposium, and to all of you who have judged it worth your while to be here today. If the Lifetime Achievement Award that I was privileged to receive in 1999 was a three-layered chocolate cake, this is surely an extra layer of frosting!

I want to thank also Joe and Bob for the splendid job they did in discussing the various papers presented today. Their insightful remarks on the wonderfully wide diversity of contributions eliminate any necessity on my part to comment on the papers individually and free me to attempt some broad observations on archaeology in California.

Before we proceed further, permit me to say just a few words regarding Fritz. As you know, he was slated to be a member of this symposium, and I felt very honored by that prospect and feel saddened by his passing. The newspaper headline described Francis A. Riddell as the first archaeologist to be hired by the State of California, and that is a point certainly worthy of comment. But of course he was much more than that to those who knew him over the years. There will be other occasions when we can pay our respects to Fritz more fully; for now I'd just like to say that Francis A. Riddell, Fritz, was gentle in manner, generous in spirit, and gallant in life; and his commitment to cultural resources was thorough and genuine. We will miss his smile and that twinkle in his eyes as he promoted his latest project. We know you're up there, Fritz, doing another survey. May all your sites be stratified and all your artifacts diagnostic.

This year marks the thirty-fifth year since the founding of the Society for California Archaeology

and the hundred-year anniversary of the beginning of formal archaeology in California at the University of California, Berkeley. It would be fitting, therefore, that we consider this session today as a general celebration of California archaeology, whatever else it may purport to be.

As I look back on the history of California archaeology from the vantage point of 2002 C.E., I picture it as a robust cord having a central core made up of two inter-twined strands, two strands that stretch back to, and are firmly anchored in, two of its founding contributors. The one, A.L. Kroeber, is familiar to everyone here. The other, Max Uhle, the first excavator of the Emeryville Shell Mound, is less well-known, but was referred to by Jack Broughton in his paper this morning.

Kroeber, for me, represents that strand or element of California archaeology which takes as its starting point the diverse indigenous and immigrant peoples of the state and holds as that which is to be elucidated and explained their culture and their history. This element asks such questions as, Where did these people originate, what were the circumstances of their arrival here, what accounts for the variations in their subsistence activities, their social organization, and their world views? In brief, the focus here is the culture history of the many groups that make up the ethnographic and historic mosaic, and the archaeological task is to help unravel and reconstruct this complex chapter in human history.

The second strand I trace to the German archaeologist, Max Uhle, who was diverted just long enough from his primary task of assembling a Peruvian collection for Mrs. Phoebe Hearst (surely the "Mother of California Archaeology") to undertake to excavate and report upon the Emeryville Shell Mound in what was once described as the first scientific excavation of an

archaeological site in California. In contrast to Kroeber, for whom the ethnographic peoples of California were the touchstone of his research, Uhle held that it was the archaeological record which was to be explicated and explained. For Uhle, it was the details of the archaeological findings, no matter how subtle, that had to be accounted for: stratigraphic distinctions, typological minutiae, quantitative changes in shellfish remains - these were what mattered to Uhle.

These two complementary strands anchored in the very beginnings of archaeology in this state - the ethnographic culture history, on the one hand, and the explanation of the archaeological record, on the other - have continued to inform and guide California archaeology to this day, as so well illustrated by the diversity of papers presented here today. Intertwined one on the other, the two strands have given California archaeology its distinctive character and special strength.

However, as I look over the faces of the panel members and the composition of the audience today, I am reminded that many other strands have been added to that central two-strand core. Over the years, many new faces and many new ideas have been woven into this enterprise we call California archaeology. It has been broadened and strengthened by many new participants - successive generations of academics and students, avocationalists, Native Americans, private consultants, agency personnel, even a few stray geographers, linguists and the like, representing a diversity of backgrounds, gender, and interests. California archaeology has responded well to changing social and legislative conditions. And it has been enlivened and enriched by a succession of new theoretical perspectives. California archaeology is today much more robust and variegated than it was in the beginning, much more vital and much more socially responsive. California archaeology reflects the face of California - progressive and inclusive; the archaeology of California is truly of California.

If I might make another general observation: I remember a lament that Mike Glassow expressed a few, perhaps five, years, ago: That for all of the significance we ourselves attach to our archaeology, it did not have, at that time, a commensurate degree of national or international

recognition. Certainly it is true that from its early years, California has sent on to other parts of this nation California-trained individuals who achieved well-deserved acclaim elsewhere, without, however, bringing to national awareness the uniqueness and significance of archaeology in California. We have only to remind ourselves of early pioneers such as Nels C. Nelson, Duncan Strong, Gordon Hewes, Frederica de Laguna (who was mentioned by Nette this afternoon), and a number of more familiar recent examples to appreciate Mike's lament. But we need not be concerned any longer. Thanks in no small measure to Mike's own program at Santa Barbara, and of course, to other institutions and individuals as well, California archaeology has recently been brought into the limelight of global awareness through publications that have appeared in high-profile periodicals and series with broad national and international distributions. This I take to be a sign of maturity for California archaeology, a coming of age at the century mark - perhaps belated, but no less welcome.

With respect to the future, I'm sure that Claude, and Joe, and Dave, and Mike, and Jerry, Rob, and Bill, and the many others of the mentoring generation, will join me in expressing confidence that California archaeology is today in good hands, and that prospects for the future are bright. We salute the good works of current and past officers of the Society and wish the newly elected officers-to-be the best for the years ahead. (I used the phrase, mentoring generation, advisedly; we were once referred to as the "Old Graybeards" and Sylvia, and Ruth, and Vera Mae objected - as only Vera Mae can when aroused by a just cause).

If you will permit a digression, Vera Mae and Dave have been part and parcel of the Society for California Archaeology from its inception; they are what California archaeology is all about. It is more than appropriate that they are here on this occasion when we celebrate California archaeology, and I am personally indebted to Dave for the effort he made to take part in this symposium, for his and Vera Mae's friendship, and for the inspiration of his distinguished career.

Who can tell what California archaeology will be like at its 200th anniversary, but 15 years from now, at the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Society for California Archaeology, we will

have an opportunity to take its pulse. In the meanwhile, I would like to say in conclusion that this symposium is certainly special to me and to members of my family here today, but it is proper that it is not a unique event but one of many occasions when we celebrate our collective achievements and honor the multitude of individuals in our Society who are deserving of recognition and our appreciation. Together we have much to be proud of, and I can't thank you enough – friends, family, colleagues, students – for the opportunities, privilege, and support given me over the years to play a small role in furthering our common goals. Thank you again.