



Sacramento Archeological Society, Inc.

Newsletter

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May/June - 2011



“DNA Studies, Stable Isotopes and Archaeology at SCA”

John Foster
SAS President
3-14-11

I'm just back from the 2011 SCA Annual Meeting in Rohnert Park. It was really great with many highlights. I thought I'd give a few thoughts on what I saw and heard about.

First, I was glad to attend after missing the last 3 due to schedule conflicts or health issues. I know I went to at least 25 consecutive annual meetings and I always look forward to it. In my Parks job I had contracts with many of the university programs in archaeology to provide assistance in doing studies on state park property. I also dealt with many of the contract archaeology providers to do specialized studies or provide expertise. So, I know many of the attendees. It was so great to see old friends and hear about all the exciting projects being done in California and how they are setting the standard for archaeology everywhere. Everyone's getting older, but there's still a tremendous energy at SCA.

A particularly exciting session was held on DNA research in archaeology. Once an experimental approach, DNA is now being used more and more to study the humans who left their trace on an ancient landscape. It's baffling in its complexity, and I certainly have only a rudimentary understanding of it, but some real progress is being made with California groups. A day-long session chaired by John Johnson of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History provided many examples of individual DNA studies on California Indians – both ancient and modern. In addition to bringing clarity to the origin of the first people to arrive in North America, DNA can examine patterns within a group to determine blood relationships, lineages, moieties, and contacts with outsiders. Much of this research is focused on ancient Channel Island populations. New information was presented on human remains collected in the 19th century and stored in Paris and London. Science has now advanced to the point that these remains can provide important genetic details on origin, identity and interactions with other islanders and mainland groups.

It's clear from these papers that Native California people are full partners and participants in these studies. In fact, some Native people were authors or co-authors – a great example given the many difficulties we've faced over the years. I was delighted to see this partnership. John Johnson and the Santa Barbara Chumash people are setting the right example for others to follow.

Stable Isotope studies are also a relatively new application of science to archaeology. Basically, the body absorbs isotopes of carbon and nitrogen with food consumed. These imprint on bones and teeth in patterns that are particular to each region. Where preserved in archaeological contexts, the bones and teeth can reveal the kind of diet a person had and how far up the food chain they were operating. Marine diets are different from terrestrial ones and fish eaters are distinguishable from marine mammal eaters.

Again, these studies allow us to look more closely at the individual within a group – their homeland, dietary focus and changes over a lifetime.

Unfortunately, my knee was a bit uncomfortable, so I left before hearing Dennis Jenkins' talk at the banquet. I'm glad Carolyn and Gordon were there to represent SAS and say hello to "Dr. Poop" (as he refers to himself).

"Perspectives on California Archaeology" **March 27, 2011**

Approximately 40 people attended the Society's sponsored symposium on March 27th. Four prominent California archaeologists gave informative talks on varied aspects of California Archaeology. **Gerrit Fenega**, an expert on ancient humans in California in his talk on "Clovis Blade Technology" instructed attendees in the characteristics of Clovis blade technology and made a very strong case for California's participation in Clovis era. By comparing the structure of specimen Clovis blades with artifacts found near Tulare Lake he asserted that the finding of core material, flakes and blades at the Paleo-Indian site at the edge of a Pleistocene Lake matched the characteristics of a Clovis technology center. He asserted that California needs to be included in the map of Clovis sites.

Shannon Tushingham, Tribal Preservation Officer for the Elk Valley Tolowa, in "Smith River Archeology" discussed her dissertation research at Jedediah Smith State Park near the Smith River in northwestern California. Plank house villages that were common in the Northwest (Oregon, Washington) were also found in northwestern California in areas inhabited by Yurok tribes. The California settlements differed from Northwest villages in that they included sweat houses that were used and inhabited by men and boys. The women and girls lived in the plank houses. In Shannon's research she explored the question: Did the villages develop rapidly in accordance with the Migration Model starting 1100 BP or gradually according to the Pilot Ridge Model beginning 3000 BP? She found site inhabitation as early as 8875 cal BP. Obsidian sourcing identified that foragers obtained obsidian from distant sources in California and Oregon. Plank houses in the excavated site were constructed in a late period, ~1267 BP. Her research seemed to support gradual development, the Pilot Ridge Model.

Glenn Farris recently retired from California State Parks is an expert on the Russians in North America and has worked on a number of Russian colonial sites of the 19th century. Glenn's talk on "Archeology at Fort Ross" highlighted the history and archaeological finds at Fort Ross. Ivan Kuskov was in charge of constructing the fort between 1812 and 1821. Multiple excavations have been made in the area of the fort. In 1981 the Fur Warehouse (aka "old Magazin") was excavated. Finds included finger grip from a candle holder and as one might have expected, trade beads. Another ongoing archaeological project has been "seeking the old windmill". A windmill that was depicted in an 1841 watercolor of the village of Fort Ross has disappeared over the years. Attempts to of no avail have been made to find its location.

Mary Maniery owner of PAR Environmental in "Walking Through Time: A view from the Sierra Crest" described the firm's findings from recent surveys. She took us through 4500 years of archaeological sites in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and foothills elevation 435' to 7820'. These included 29 reservoirs, 103 miles of canals, 225 sites, 137 isolated artifacts, 96 miles of roads, and 150 environmental resources. She organized the presentation of sites into pre historical sites (petroglyphs, lithic sites, milling sites, and settlement sites), and historic sites (mining, transportation, water conveyance systems, logging, ranching/grazing, recreation, settlement, hydroelectric, refuse and other). For example rock art primarily found on horizontal surfaces between 5000' and 7000' elevation depict abstract figures, bear paws, suns, concentric circles, snakes, and mountains. These will be the subject of the Society's tour in August.

Society for American Archaeology Annual Meeting

The 76th annual meeting of SCC was held in Sacramento March 30-April 3, 2011. The scope of archaeological information was impressive. Over 3000 attendees attended 267 symposiums, general sessions or poster sessions. The sessions included four to 16 presenters each giving a 15 minute talk. Our president, John Foster was co-author of two papers. One on the recovery of sloth bones and artifacts from an underwater cave in DR and the other was on 14c dates from rock art pigments in DR caves.

Pre-Clovis Archaeology

For those of you interested in Pre-Clovis archeology, Dennis Fenwick found an article from the 3/25/2011 issue of Science magazine that discusses the results of the excavations at the Debra L. Friedkin site by Buttermilk Creek near Buttermilk, Texas known as the **Buttermilk Creek Complex**. The Clovis-first theory concluded that the Clovis people arrived in North America about 13,200 years before the present (BP). Dennis Jenkins found human coprolites at **Paisley Caves** in Oregon dated to **14,320 BP**. The results of the Buttermilk Creek Complex goes back to **15,500 BP** and continues up to, and through, the Clovis tool kit.

Maya of Chiapas & Tabasco and Annual Maya Meetings

By Roger Peake

Re our trip to Mexico: The tour was sponsored by the Archaeological Conservancy headquartered in Albuquerque, N.M. Their logistical support was first-rate and the various tour visits came off without a hitch. The sites we saw were in both Chiapas and Tabasco states in southern Mexico. We visited an Olmec site at La Venta (known for the giant heads) in the city of Villahermosa. A debate continues whether the Olmec were the mother culture for the rest of Mesoamerica or a sister culture. Big-name experts weigh in on each side. John Henderson of Cornell University was the technical expert. John was very knowledgeable about the Maya world and the sites we visited in particular.

Classic Maya sites visited included Comalcalco (with fired brick construction of monuments and other architecture rather than stones), Palenque (some of the finest Maya buildings including the Palace, and the Temple of the Inscriptions-the tomb of Haanab Pacal-likely the greatest of the rulers of Palenque who ruled for 68 years), Bonampak (known for exquisite painted murals), Yaxchilan (Lydia's favorite site and known for lintels covered with glyphs), and Tonina (dominated by its Acropolis rising more than 230 feet in terraces and buildings up a steep hill. These represent some of the best Classic Maya period architecture, monuments, temples, stela, glyphs, etc. and represented well the Maya world of the time and so was a wonderful trip. The Classic period lasted from approximately a.d. 300 to a.d. 900 with much of the well-known and visually stunning large architecture, monuments and temples built in the latter part of the period. There are many other Classic Maya sites also so worthy of greatness -- and we hope to visit some of them in the future.

We also visited a Spanish colonial city, San Cristobal de las Casas, in the highlands and including a wonderful cathedral built starting in 1528! To top off the tour, we visited two current-day Tzotzil Maya villages of San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan (both towns have wonderful textiles) and also Zinacantan known for a large number of greenhouses for growing flowers.

I could blab on and on but both Lydia and I would recommend this tour without any reservations whatsoever. Simply, the Conservancy did a most noteworthy job and we definitely "got our money's worth!" The Conservancy offers numerous tours each year. The Archaeological Institute of America also has tours and Bruce Love will lead a tour early next year for the AIA to about the same Classic Maya city states we visited. From January 10-19, 2012 Bruce will also lead a tour of seven northern Yucatan sites. (Bruce taught a workshop at the UT Austin Maya meetings on interpreting Maya glyphs

that Lydia and I attended and it was a very useful workshop). There are so many worthwhile sites; and many tours are available through different purveyors.

A couple we met on this tour to Mexico lives in Austin, TX; we met them in Austin recently for the occasion of the annual Maya meetings at UT Austin. We spent a very nice evening with them just before they came to the de Young Museum in San Francisco to attend the Olmec exhibit. It continues through May 8. The theme of the Maya meetings this year was **2012: Time and Prophecy in the Mesoamerican World**. I would like to simply say that whatever trips you have planned AFTER December 21, 2012 should be just fine. The Maya did not say the world would end On December 21, 2012, and the Maya experts at the Austin meeting concurred!! Next year, the Maya meetings will return to Antigua, Guatemala.

MEMBERS CORNER

New Members: Welcome Tammy, Edward, Brian and Brandon Swanson, edntam@hotmail.com and Cassidy Debaker, cdebaker@garciaandassociates.com

Renewals:

Michael Barham, Marion Tuttle, Diane Sangster, and Glendeen Curtis

Society's Board Members have been on the archeological move. Join them at the next meeting on April 21st and hear their stories as casual conversation.

- **Dennis Fenwick and Marty Lewis** – Maya of Chiapas & Tabasco
- **John Foster** – SCA, SAA, and Yucatan, Mexico April 28th – May 4
- **Jan Johansen** – SAA
- **Carolyn and Gordon McGregor** – SCA and SAA
- **Ruth McElhenny** – SAA
- **Roger and Lydia Peake** – Maya of Chiapas & Tabasco and Annual Maya Meetings

Have you been traveling and found archeological information to share? Send your information to janjohansen@sbcglobal.net

California State Indian Museum presents

Book signing & Lecture

Saturday, April 30, 2011

11:00 am – 1:00 pm

By **Dr. Alan P. Garfinkel, PhD**, author

2618 K Street. Sacramento, CA 95815

The new Handbook on the Kawaiisu is out and author, **Alan Garfinkel** is promoting it through the State Indian Museum. Please call 916-324-0971 for reservation.

Kawaiisu territory centers around Tehachapi and includes Red Rock canyon

Upcoming Society's Events

AMERICA FROM 55000 BP TO 1491 AD

By
Dennis Fenwick

Thursday April 21, 2011

7:00 – 9:30 p.m.

at

Roger and Lydia Peake's home

2951, Redwood Ave

West Sacramento, CA 95691

Following an open board meeting **Dennis Fenwick** will present cultural developments from Clovis to 1491 AD using photos of 18 Mexican sites visited last February and over 10 sites visited last year in Peru. In 2010 Dennis and his wife, Marty participated in a tour that highlighted archaeology of Peru. The tour included visits to the golden tombs of Moche on Peru's coastal plain to the splendor of Cuzco and the magic of Machu Picchu. Dr. John Henderson, an expert in the region's archaeology provided commentary on the sites. In 2011 the focus was Mexico with a tour of Maya of Chiapas & Tabasco. Don't miss this presentation that will also highlight 55,000 BP from Paisley Cave, Oregon.

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF FLINTKNAPPING

July, 2011



Lithic advocate, **Gary Alexander** who was a 2010 scholarship winner has agreed to show Society Members techniques in flintknapping. The event is being targeted for the latter part of July. Enjoy hands on time with obsidian.

SIERRA ROCK ART TOUR

Saturday, August 20, 2011



Society's sponsored Sierra/Rock Art Field Trip is scheduled for Saturday, August 20. **Dan Foster** and **John Betts** have agreed to lead a field trip to spectacular rock art sites within the high country in the Northern Sierra Nevada. One of the sites will be Meadow Lake – a world-class petroglyph site with hundreds of ancient carvings found on ground-level granite outcroppings extending over an area of about 5 acres in size.

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Mark Your Calendars

April 21, 2011, Thursday – 7:00 – 9:30 p.m. **SAS Board meeting** (all members welcome) and “America from 55000 BP to 1491 ad “ presentation by **Dennis Fenwick** at Roger and Lydia Peake’s home in West Sacramento

April 30, 2011, Saturday, - 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., **Book Signing & Lecture by Dr. Alan P. Garfinkel, PhD**, at CA State Indian Museum

May 1, 2011 – Scholarship applications due

July, 2011 – **Flintkapping Workshop** by Gary Alexander

August 20, 2011 – **Northern Sierra Nevada Rock Art Tour**, led by Dan Foster and John Betts



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