74. THE HISTORY OF CULTURE CLASSIFICATION IN CALIFORNIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the significant descriptive work published on the California Indians, from the early "preprofessional" travelers and journalists, such as Stephen Powers and H. H. Bancroft, to ethnographers, led by A. L. Kroeber, and archaeologists who have been primarily interested in establishing exact culture classifications of the prehistoric and historic native groups of California.

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Even sophisticated travelers often come away from foreign lands with an impression of cultural sameness throughout an entire large region. In the 16th century Alarcón, Cabrillo and Drake saw only limited segments of the native Californian population, hence had little or no opportunity to draw meaningful comparisons between discrete groups. On the other hand, many subsequent visitors to California did not merely touch briefly at one or two places, and they too leave the impression in their writings not only of cultural uniformity throughout parts of the state, but uniformity at an extremely low level.

The Franciscan missionaries were faced with the fact and problem of linguistic diversity among the native groups, but with few exceptions, for example the work of Father Boscana on the Juaneño (1846), we must assume that in their zeal for converts little objective consideration was given to what must have been looked upon as the heathenish or unclean customs of the natives. Apparently any areal variations in native customs were lumped together, and all subjected to the same forces of modification or abrupt change.

Subsequent to the Mission Period and to the time of the Gold Rush in California, a growing number of accounts of the Indians appeared. Hugo Reid published, in 1852, much valuable information on the Gabrielino. A. S. Taylor (1860-63), in a vast collection of diverse notes on Indians throughout the state, called The Indianology of California, reprinted both Boscana's Chinigchinich and Reid's The Indians of Los Angeles County.

Beyond question, the high point of what has been called the preprofessional period (Baumhoff, 1958) in the description of natives of California was the

work of Stephen Powers, which appeared serially from 1872 to 1875 and was published as The Tribes of California in 1877. For the first time, in this volume, appeared an appreciation of noticeable cultural differences in various Indian groups over a wide area in California, mostly north of the Tehachapi mountains.

Following Powers, Bancroft, in volume I of The Native Races (1883), included a long chapter on the so-called wild tribes of California. Although Bancroft's description is too diverse and eclectic, perhaps, to measure up to Powers' work, it seems to be the first formal attempt to classify the different cultures according to area. Three geographical areas, designated north, central, and southern California, and one linguistic area, that of the "Shoshone Family," indicated as occupying the eastern border of California, were utilized. These were primarily a descriptive convenience, however, and little specific comment was made on cultural similarities or dissimilarities between any of the areas.

During the latter half of the 19th century, a great majority of the accounts of the native Californians concerned the living Indians. Some reports, such as those of Schumacher and Putnam, in 1875 and 1879, respectively, dealt with the remains of the prehistoric peoples. Putnam's work (with others in the same volume) was probably the most important of the early publications on archaeological description. In both types of account, that is, of living and dead Indians, there was not enough data at hand during this period to allow the drawing of fine distinctions between groups separated in either space or time.

In the first decade of the 20th century, a number of formal ethnographic works on California were published. Goddard's Life and Culture of the Hupa, in 1903, was the first monograph to be offered in the University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology. In the same series, in 1904, Kroeber's Types of Indian Culture in California appeared. This was the first of a long sequence of articles dealing with the classification of California Indians according to discrete cultural units.

While Bancroft's subdivision was made primarily for facilitating the presentation of quantities of second-hand data, there is a general similarity between his system and Kroeber's classification. It is clear, however, that Kroeber's original rough classification was meant to characterize and to compare the cultures of different geographical areas. Further, it was only the beginning of a series of increasing refinements. For example, his Elements of Culture in Native California (1922) amply demonstrated how much significant, detailed ethnographic data had been collected since 1904.

A list of Kroeber's publications indicates that his interests leaned toward ethnology and linguistics rather than archaeology in California. That he was not deliberately avoiding the problems of archaeology is shown by his Archaeology of California (1909). In this work he stated the value of archaeology in giving ethnological results historical reality and in the consideration of the factor of (cultural) development. If it were only after extremely rigorous efforts that certain culture areas in California, based upon ethnographic evidence, could be set off as distinct from each other, what difficulties would be encountered in identifying discrete cultures perhaps succeeding each other, or in detecting meaningful changes through time within the same basic culture? It was, accordingly, recognized that before archaeology could establish or confirm any meaningful culture classifications, the accumulation of a large mass of material would be necessary.

At this point we may assume that Kroeber was faced with the problem of surveying the rapidly diminishing numbers of Indian groups in the state. He evidently felt that the gathering of the ethnological and linguistic data was more urgent, not to say scientifically profitable, than the excavation of prehistoric village sites. Unfortunately, with the great influx of population in California, ever since 1940, the archaeological sites have also been destroyed or vandalized at an alarming rate. At any rate, during the early years of the century no specific archaeological cultures had been identified, much less classified, on the basis of stratigraphic or geographic differences. It was known, for example, that certain artifacts, such as charmstones or steatite bowls, occurred more frequently in one part of the state than another, but certainly not enough of this kind of information was available to define a culture even of the simplest kind.

Max Uhle, in 1902, was not unaware of the possibility of disclosing developmental stages by archaeology when he excavated at the Emeryville shellmound on San Francisco Bay. He noted that the cultural characteristics left by the people who occupied the mound when it was a low knoll differed from those of the occupants of the site during a later period, when the mound was larger and deeper. Unfortunately, the standards of archaeological classification at that time were involved with such broad concepts as paleolithic versus neolithic culture, hence Uhle was unsuccessful in identifying different, realistic culture horizons at Emeryville.

If Kroeber actually did not ever conduct extensive excavation in California, he nevertheless laid the foundation for the classifying of cultures according to specific content, that is, he employed lists of culture elements for each group encountered, and by comparing distributions of traits could

determine significant relationships between separate groups. The trait list is one of the most important tools for delineating prehistoric cultures. Its use in ethnography is similar, that is, it not only provides a basis for classification, but is also a tool for historic reconstruction. The establishment of an ethnographic culture area by the use of culture element lists has been questioned by Steward (1953), at least, as perhaps being symptomatic of the historical rather than the scientific orientation of cultural studies. Whatever this might signify today, it is apparent that thirty-five years ago, when Kroeber had practically no solid or orderly archaeological data to aid him, he was able to produce, in The History of Native Culture in California, a remarkably consistent account of the development of the various cultures of California, on the basis that "every natural classification contains within itself, so far as it is sound, genetic indications" (1923, p. 126).

By 1925, Kroeber's most comprehensive work, the Handbook of the Indians of California, had been published. Contributions by Dixon, Gifford, and Barrett, for example, in addition to Kroeber's research and synthesizing, had, at about this time, made California one of the most thoroughly investigated ethnographic areas of the world. Culture hearths or foci had been determined and confirmed, and the lines of linguistic demarcation had been drawn. By and large, no major changes have been made either on ethnographic culture or linguistic classifications since that date, although gaps in both studies have been filled in and restatement or refinement of concepts has continued to add to our knowledge of California.

Certainly the most far-reaching of these late refinements concerned with culture classification in California, apart from contributions by archaeology, was in the development of methods of gathering, tabulating, and applying statistical treatment to the individual elements of distinct culture or linguistic areas. Kroeber evidently was interested in the statistical or objective approach long before it was applied in California. Clements, Schenck and Brown, after a seminar led by Kroeber, published, in 1926, A New Objective Method for Showing Special Relationships. Although this article referred to Polynesia, its rationale might easily be applied to California. I paraphase a passage which is relevant to the problem of culture classification in California as well as Polynesia: "No one doubts that the groups considered here belong to the general type of culture called Californian. What our method does is to show the little mountain peaks of agreement and disagreement rising above the level plain of California culture, in other words it shows the special relationships within the area."

Driver and Kroeber, in 1932, in Quantitative Expression of Cultural Relationships, were the first thus to employ data from California, although in this case they were limited to Northwestern California. From 1935 to 1950, twenty-six articles, dealing specifically with culture element distributions in California and adjoining regions, appeared in the two University of California anthropological publication series. The first of these, by Stanislaw Klimek, titled The Structure of California Indian Culture, was based on the ethnological work of Kroeber and Czekanowski. Czekanowski was a Polish ethnologist and linguist who employed the objective or quantitative method in ethnology as early as 1911. Kroeber has pointed out, however, that this approach rests on the recognition and use of culture elements or traits, and that these had previously been used by Boas, before the turn of the century, and subsequently by Wissler and Nordenskiöld. Kroeber had in fact been working with the Californian culture elements in some detail before Klimek arrived in the United States.

It seems undeniable that the statistical handling of the culture elements, all employing some sort of association coefficient (Kluckhohn, 1939), has served to sharpen definition of cultural groupings in California, and to facilitate historical reconstruction. Whatever the ultimate value of the statistical method, however, we may observe that its general results have not essentially negated results obtained by non-statistical or "subjective" methods.

If we designate arbitrarily the year 1929 as the date by which the major outlines of ethnographic culture classification had been drawn in California, it is only to accentuate the initiation of formal archaeological classification. It has already been noted that professional cognizance had been taken since about 1875 of the prehistoric culture of California. Since Putnam in 1879, Uhle, Nelson, Gifford, Loud, and Schenck, for example, had all made significant contributions in the field. While all of these investigators observed certain slight evidences of cultural change, reflected in simple stratification or in regional differences, in 1926 the same situation obtained as in 1902, that is, not enough evidence was at hand to distinguish prehistoric cultures worthy of the name. The absence of pottery in all but the upper levels of excavations and the lack of ruins of living or ceremonial structures of a type designed originally with any idea of survival beyond but a few years, coupled with the inability to recognize distinctive assemblages of artifacts with similar associations inhibited precise interpretations of all the data which had been gathered. In other regions of the western United States, significant stratigraphic or seriational essays had already been made (cf. Kroeber's [1916] seriation of Zuñi potsherds, and Nelson's stratigraphic results in the Tano Basin [1916]).

In 1929, Harrington's stratigraphic pit excavation at Lovelock Cave was reported upon (Loud and Harrington, 1929). D. B. Rogers, in 1929, and R. L. Olson, in 1930, published separately the results of their investigations in the Santa Barbara Coast region. The two latter works represent the beginning of detailed demonstration of prehistoric culture development in California. Olson's Chumash Prehistory especially is a model of clear documentation of excavated material and, even though limited in scope, may be said to have set the tone for future stratigraphic work in California.

In 1939, in An Introduction to the Archeology of Central California, Lillard, Heizer and Fenenga presented a detailed sequence of three distinct cultures, represented most clearly in the environs of the delta region of the Sacramento-San Joaquin river system. Heizer, in 1941, outlined a distinct phase of the late culture of the sequence in The Direct Historical Approach in California Archaeology. An outline of the early culture of the three identified was subsequently published by the same author (1949). Beardsley (1948) extended the range of the Lillard, Heizer and Fenenga classification and identified the coastal variants of the two latter periods of the Central California sequence.

Since 1948, local prehistoric sequences have been established for such places as the Central Sierra region, the North Coast Ranges, Yosemite National Park area, and the Southern Cascade region in Northern California. Although none of these local sequences is of great importance by itself, it is hoped that ultimately classifications will be refined enough to tie them all together in units which will in turn be positively correlated with sequences from all parts of North America. This may be possible by the constant recasting of available data and the utilization of realistic integrational classification schema, such as that proposed by Willey and Phillips (1955).

It is apparent that a sort of correlation could be established between prehistoric cultures from a mere listing, in parallel lines, of Carbon 14 dates, or any other types of absolute dates, obtained from a great number of sites in different regions. This would of course have value, but it should be stressed that the determination of culture contexts through the handling of all objective data available is the really important goal of archaeologists. It is only through painstaking classification that the materials of archaeology can be ordered and projected in terms of culture wholes. Similarly, in ethnology it has been argued that exact classification is necessary for the solutions of important interpretational problems, such as those concerned with that part of historic reconstruction which archaeology is unable to supply. A concrete example of the use of the

atomistic classification in ethnography may be seen in the neat demonstration of the continuity between the prehistoric and historic cultures in certain parts of Central California.

I have attempted, in summary, to show that for almost sixty years in California culture classification has been a live problem. Although the cultures in general are not spectacular, apprehending what Kroeber calls civilizational events has not been simple. In any case, investigations have been made always with the intention of discovering among other things relationships of both the prehistoric and historic native cultures of California to each other, and ultimately to the main stream of civilization in the New World.

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AAnt	American Antiquity
UC	University of California
-AS-R	Archaeological Survey Report
-PAAE	Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology

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