

5. Investigating the Rise of the North Pacific Maritime Tradition (archaeology and history)

6140 - Wood, a key resource in the development of Bering Sea maritime adaptation

Presentation type: Oral presentation

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People along the fringe of the North Pacific from Japan to the Northwest coast of North America are well-known wood experts and the quality of their craftsmanship can be seen in the fineness and diversity of their production. In the more northern regions of the North Pacific (Aleutians archipelago and Bering Sea), access to wood was more challenging than in the South, but among the best-known elements of Aleut, Alutiiq and Yup'ik material culture are finely carved wooden masks made from wood that appear to have been carefully selected to enhance the expression of the mask or the natural aesthetic contribution of the raw material. In fact, wood was part of most activities, house and boat building, hunting and processing food (i.e. smoking fish), and wooden implements and structural elements show high levels of woodworking skills, especially when considering the nature of the wood available, i.e. driftwood. Sea mammal resources - walrus, whales and pinnipeds – and more so, the ability to hunt and process these prey from the coast or in open water while making use of all the resources they provide, played a key role in the development of maritime cultures. However, success in these activities was dependent on access to wood resources, which follows on the notion that “to hunt one must carve”. Assuming that wood was as important in the past as in the present, it can be argued that wood procurement and woodworking skills were a key factor in any group’s ability to exploit fully their surrounding maritime environment. Based on interviews conducted with Yup'ik wood carvers and analyses of remarkably well-preserved wooden remains from archaeological sites of the region, this paper presents the interconnected systems of wood use and the technology of wood working in Bering Sea region. From the sources of wood and means of exploitation to woodworking skills to exchange values and ritual significance, wood was implicated in every aspect of the maritime adaptation

16132 - Kodiak and the Kurils: A comparative approach to the sustainability of North Pacific maritime hunter-gatherers

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Fitzhugh, Ben (University of Washington, Seattle, USA)*

This talk compares the late Holocene archaeological histories of maritime hunter-gatherer societies of the Kuril and Kodiak Archipelagos from the perspective of socio-ecological resilience. While maritime hunting, fishing, and gathering adaptations around the North Pacific Rim share many similarities, the archaeological history of remote Kuril Archipelago is notable for its late settlement (ca. 4000 BP) and "boom and bust" fluctuations in population intensity in the past two thousand years. This is contrasted by a more than 7000 year archaeological history of settlement in the Kodiak Archipelago that is notable for its relative continuity and sustained late Holocene population growth. The talk explores a model of nested scales of socio-economic inter-dependence to help understand the differences in historical trajectory between the two regions. The talk concludes with suggestions for considering the greater North Pacific Rim as an instructive "culture area" for comparative anthropological inquiry.

16035 - The Role of the Maritime Adaptation for the Formation Process of Ethnicities: Perspectives from Southwest coast of the sea of Okhotsk.

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Kato, Hirofumi (Hokkaido University, Sapporo, Japan)*

A developed maritime Hunter-Gatherer culture, known as the Okhotsk, was distributed from Sakhalin Island, Hokkaido Island and Kuril Island from the 6th to 12th centuries AD. Many scholars have thought that this maritime HG culture originally came from continental Northeast Asian. However, recent studies suggest that the roots of this maritime HG culture developed from previous local prehistoric culture. This perspective is supported by studies on pottery and the management of obsidian raw materials. While locally-based, this maritime HG population innovated new cultural and technological adaptation strategies such as dog and pig domestication, and a new settlement system and social structure. Considering this cultural and technological turning point, we have to pursue complex research to better understand relevant human-environmental relationships. Maritime adaptation include the use of marine resources, but also an extension of human activities. By expanding resource procurement areas, maritime HG can gain broader geographical spatial information, beyond those of inland activities. The contact with outside groups can provide an important catalyst for the formation of stronger internal collective and cultural identity. We can trace the major stimulus to the formation of ethnicity, in the process of cultural contact between regional populations.

In this presentation, I will focus on the formation process of Okhotsk culture (500-1100 CE) and try to trace the cultural dynamism and adaptation strategies in this cultural tradition.

15987 - The Ex Nihilo Rise of Social Complexity in the Bering Strait Region: Whence Came Old Bering Sea?

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Mason, Owen (University of Colorado, Boise, USA)*

As early as 400 to 250 BCE, a radical conceptual and socio-economic breakthrough occurs in the Bering Strait region as virtually every artifact, especially employed in hunting, was overlain with formalized motifs. Figural and transformative representations were crafted, both of animals and humans, termed Old Bering Sea (OBS) by archaeologists in the 1920s. The origins of this style and its culture remain uncertain; with its florescence 400-800 CE and its persistence to 1300 CE that is contentious. This aesthetic breakthrough is either illusory, due to taphonomic factors of differential site preservation or the result of internal societal dynamics at the time. The elaboration of art is linked with walrus hunting, bowhead whaling, sedentism, and developed within a polarity of everyday and specialized funerary art. Differential grave goods imply that a small cultic elite of shamans and highly successful hunters, either families or organized into clans, gained preeminent influence and power. Some human figures represent submission and warfare is documented from the later phases of OBS that are linked with Alaskan societies such as Ipiutak. As long ago as 1940, pioneering archaeologist Henry Collins postulated that the procurement of the walrus was a precondition for the origin of complex societies. Lithic technology, distinctive bifacial tools, often ignored by archaeologists in the area, offers the only means of inferring the origin of the culture in a previous Northern Archaic population distributed from southern Alaska along the migration route of the Pacific walrus.

15900 - Ancient Maritime Societies of Northern Bristol Bay, Alaska: The Togiak Archaeological and Paleoecological Project

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Prentiss, Anna (The University of Montana, Missoula, USA); Barnett, Kristen (The University of Montana, Missoula, USA)*

Bristol Bay is located in Southwest Alaska, within the eastern Bering Sea region and is widely recognized for its highly productive maritime ecosystems. With seasonally abundant marine and anadromous fisheries supporting diverse and extensive sea mammal populations, the Bristol Bay coast line was an attractive place for maritime adapted indigenous hunting, gathering, and fishing groups for many millennia. It is no surprise that the Bristol Bay coastline features frequent well-preserved villages such as Osviak Creek, Hagemeister Island, Old Togiak, Nushagak River, and Round Island to name a few. Given this substantial archaeological record and the thriving descendant communities, and despite minimal archaeological research, north Bristol Bay presents significant opportunities for addressing fundamental questions regarding the ancient history of Yup'ik societies and their relationships to other groups in the wider North Pacific region. Data from archaeological research in this region also offer an excellent opportunity to investigate paleoecological change, human ecology, and the evolution of maritime adaptations. We have developed the Togiak Archaeological and Paleoecological Project as a long-term collaboration with the Togiak Community and the Bristol Bay Native Corporation and its subsidiaries with the goal of exploring these questions. In this paper we review current knowledge regarding the archaeology and history of maritime peoples of the eastern Bering Sea region with a particular focus on Bristol Bay. We then introduce the Togiak Archaeological and Paleoecological Project and its potential contribution to anthropological archaeology, history, and paleoecology.

15893 - Introduction: the rise of the maritime tradition in the North Pacific

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): *Jordan, Peter (Arctic Centre, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands / Niederlande); Fitzhugh, Ben (Dept of Anthropology, University of Washington, Seattle, USA); Kato, Hirofumi (Center for Ainu & Indigenous Studies,, Sapporo, Japan)*

This opening paper will provide a long-range overview of the maritime tradition in the North Pacific, identifying central themes and major new research questions. Updates on current research also provide a general point of departure for the following papers, which bring together archaeological and historical perspectives to understand the emergence, development and intensification of these maritime-focused cultural traditions. and cherished in the present (though under threat).

15803 - North Pacific Hunter-Gatherers Living on the Ring of Fire: Interdisciplinary Research in the Islands of the Four Mountains, Alaska.

Presentation type: Oral presentation

Author(s): Hatfield, Virginia (University of Kansas, Biodiversity Institute, Lubbock, USA); West, Dixie (University of Kansas, Biodiversity Institute, Manhattan, USA); Nicolaysen, Kirsten (Whitman College, Department of Geology, Walla Walla, USA); McInnes, Breanyn (Central Washington University, Department of Geological Science, Ellensburg, USA)

The Aleutian Islands extend 1800 km between North America and Asia, separating the Bering Sea from the North Pacific. This region is a complex coastal ecosystem with diverse sea mammal, bird, and fish populations--providing maritime resources upon which hunter/gatherers depended. By 10,000 years ago (ya), the glaciers receded and the archipelago was habitable. The Unangan (Aleuts) are most closely related genetically to Chukchi and other Chukotka populations. Most likely, Unangan ancestors crossed the Bering Land Bridge and then migrated across the Aleutian chain from east to west. Radiocarbon dates indicate humans colonized the eastern Aleutians 9000 ya, the central Aleutians 7000 ya, and the western Aleutians by 3300 ya. These hunter/gatherers used kayaks and umiaks for hunting and transportation. Adapting to the cold, rainy, and very windy environment, Unangan built semi-subterranean houses of stone, driftwood, and whalebone covered with turf. Because no trees grow in the Aleutians, they relied on driftwood, marine mammal fat, stone tools, and bone tools. Stone tools were mostly made of landsites with obsidian and jaspers used less often. Obsidian sources have only been identified in the eastern Aleutians but occur in sites in the central and western Aleutians, suggesting some type of trade network. The Unangan adapted and thrived for millennia in the North Pacific despite periodic, abrupt volcanic eruptions and tsunamis, along with long-term climatic shifts. Their life-ways were dramatically changed during the 18th century when Russian explorers discovered the Aleutians. Subsequent massacres, disease, and population relocations diminished Native populations. Currently, an interdisciplinary team of archaeologists, geologists, and paleobiologist are conducting research in the Aleutians to reveal the natural and human systems involved in the human settlement of the Aleutians. This research seeks to identify and understand interactions among North Pacific human groups, environmental and ecological changes through the Holocene, and human response to catastrophic climatic and geological influences.