

BOOK REVIEWS

Archaeology of Coastal British Columbia: Essays in Honour of Professor Philip M. Hobler

Edited by Roy L. Carlson

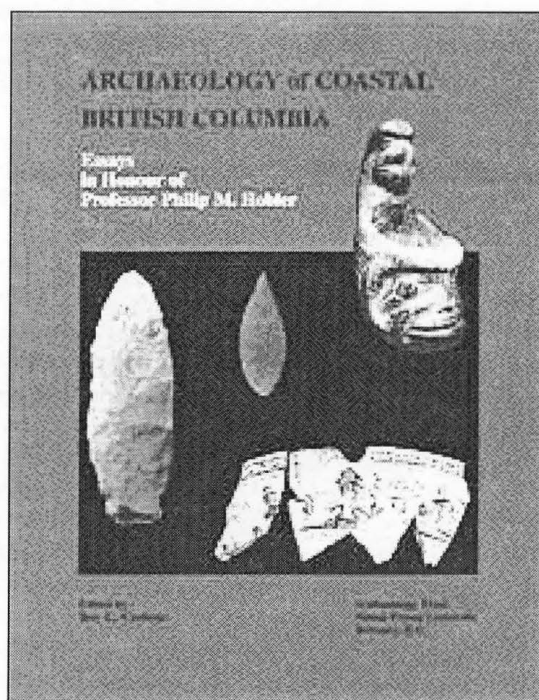
Publication No. 30, Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. x+299 pp., illus. ISBN 0-86491-270-6 (paper). CDN\$ 35.00. 2003.

This volume offers a diverse collection of chapters knit together ostensibly by a common theme — the recognition and appreciation of Phil Hobler's career of contributions to the archaeology of British Columbia. As is often the case with such honorary volumes, the papers are not so much discussions of Phil Hobler's work, but rather presentations of the work of students and colleagues that Phil trained, supervised, and inspired over his more than three decades in BC archaeology, all of which was spent at Simon Fraser University (SFU).

The volume stems from a symposium of papers presented in honour of Phil at the BC Archaeology Forum held at SFU in October 2001. The session was informative and warm, and it certainly stands as a testament to Phil's character and impact that so many archaeologists of various stripes, generations, and academic affiliations came out to present and hear the papers. The highlight of the day was in fact Roy Carlson's "roasting" of Phil at the evening banquet. Some of the historical moments of Phil's career recounted there are captured in Roy Carlson's preface to the volume, though without quite the élan, comedic interjections, or supporting slides.

Despite some very positive aspects of this volume (detailed below), the genesis of the volume in some ways contributes to its weaknesses. The volume has no overt thematic coherence beyond being concerned with British Columbia coastal archaeology in the broadest sense. The eighteen papers that follow Carlson's preface take us from discussion of the ancient landscapes of Haida Gwaii (Daryl Fedje) to the use of historical materials amongst the Heiltsuk (Alex Maas). Eclecticism is not itself a drawback, as it presents something for everyone, but the eclecticism here appears to have prevented the development of an emergent comment on the main directions in which Phil Hobler pushed BC archaeology.

The eclecticism of the subject range is amplified by the fact that the papers themselves are quite variable in style, form and length. It is clear that some papers were neither expanded



nor substantively rewritten after their presentation. Others are substantial, and obviously were written prior to the symposium and distilled for the presentation, but are presented in full in the volume without much tailoring to the specific publication context. For example, David Johnstone's discussion of "Early Architecture from the Southern Georgia Strait Region" is a grand total of three pages in length, while David Schaepe's discussion of "validating the Maurer House" runs for forty pages. Both are interesting papers, yet present a markedly different depth of discussion and analysis.

A few mechanical and editorial issues get in the way of the delivery of the papers as well. On the whole, the figures are of quite variable and occasionally poor quality. The volume does include a few colour figures, which definitely add to the papers in which they appear, but the colour appears unbalanced. One sheet of errata is provided in the form of a replacement sticker for a table of radiocarbon dates; one must place the provided sticker over the original table. This might be more of a drawback for those spending CDN\$65 on the hardcover rather than the \$35 on the soft cover. Coupled with the occasional spelling issue (including one author's name) and variability in the format of

the end of volume references, the volume seems to have received a somewhat light editorial touch overall.

The mechanical issues with the volume raised above are, however, offset to a great degree by a number of interesting contributions, and an overall “whole exceeds the sum of the parts” feel to the volume. The volume starts with a relatively strong contribution by Aubrey Cannon, who has spent much time thinking about settlement patterns lately, and in this particular instance ruminates upon what we do know and cannot assume concerning the duration of occupation of Northwest coast archaeological sites.

The next three chapters, by Dave Hall, Daryl Fedje, and Al McMillan respectively, address the “early” period in various areas of coastal BC. As McMillan points out, “early” on the outer coast of Vancouver Island is no earlier than 5000 years ago, whereas human occupation elsewhere appears quite quickly after deglaciation. The three chapters nicely illuminate the temporal and environmental contrasts in human occupations in select areas of the BC Coast. Addressing such variability has been, and will continue to be, a particular challenge for BC archaeologists.

This continued grappling with such variability comes crisply into view in Catherine Carlson’s paper, where she reiterates her long-held position that the Bear Cove site on northeastern Vancouver Island reflects a strong marine adaptation relatively early in Coastal BC prehistory. This stands in opposition to RG Matson’s interpretation that early BC coastal cultures were initially terrestrial based and Clovis-derived. Unfortunately the debate remains a little one-sided in the volume — RG Matson was the discussant in the original session, but his commentary (and chance to argue his position) does not appear in the published volume. That aside, the debate itself remains unresolved in the bigger picture, with more variability in early period adaptations than any existing theory can reasonably explain.

A number of papers focused on materials studies appear at various points in the volume. Collectively, they emphasize the necessity for careful analyses of organic and inorganic materials, which constitute the basic foundation upon which we reconstruct the lives of ancient peoples. David Maxwell revisits his work on shellfish seasonality through growth ring analysis, an approach of great utility in addressing site seasonality when, as he argues, it is approached at the population level. Farid Rahemtulla provides some cogent observations on the prehistoric use of bone from large terrestrial animals, arguing that large mammals must be seen as key raw material packages, not just as food sources. The consumption of bone and other raw materials requires an integrated approach to faunal analysis incorporating quantification (to the degree possible) of bone tools and other formal bone artifacts in taxa representation estimates. Terry Spurgeon’s study of Fraser Delta wapato offers a thorough investigation of the nature and importance of this starchy tuber in Northwest Coast diets — something worthy of note in a region impoverished (at least until recently) in the study of the role of plants in the diverse diets of prehistoric and recent First Nations. As he points out, the study of the use of plants in prehistory is best approached with a two pronged strategy: the critical and careful consumption of the relevant history of aboriginal use coupled with the development of methodologies for identifying these most fragile and subtle of remains.

Substantive synthetic treatments are provided for two sites along the Lower Fraser River. Mike Rousseau et al. provide a discussion of their mitigation-based work at the Port Hammond site, while Dave Schaepe tackles the Maurer site, which was the subject of his Masters Thesis. These discussions address “later” (post-5000 BP) south coast and riverine adaptations with a focus on locales of village habitation. These data-rich presentations are welcome, since the initial development of villages, long house dwellings, and “settled life” represents a fundamental carination point between the lifeways of early period peoples and historic period societies. This point is aptly made by David Johnstone in his paper addressing house-size changes over time in the Gulf of Georgia. An insightful perspective on southern BC coast burials, another key component of the post-5000 BP record, is offered by Doug Brown. He takes as a point of departure his work on the Somenos Creek site, bringing into the discussion isotopic bone chemistry data that raise some interesting issues with respect to what constituted a “typical” coastal diet.

A useful point of connection between the “early” and “late” periods is made in Rudy Reimer’s discussion of use of the alpine in Squamish Territory. In his chapter he productively combines the view of the Squamish themselves and the information that can be gleaned from archaeological materials documenting use of the alpine in prehistory. Reimer’s paper introduces a theme that emerges in other papers in the volume — that the interpretation of archaeological data is enhanced by viewing these data in their ethnographic context, particularly if the two records are given comparable footing.

Also headed in this direction is Duncan McLaren’s correlation of historical Coast Salish narratives with archaeological sequences in Coast Salish territory. Approaching the task from a “meta-narrative perspective,” he reveals uncanny similarities between indigenous histories and the general “objectified” chronology of environmental and cultural events and change that archaeologists have generated.

Grant Keddie’s examination of Northwest Coast stone bowls, Lisa Seip’s discussion of “early” Nuxalk masks, Alex Maas’s discussion of the incorporation of ceramics into traditional contexts, and Paul Prince’s study of European culture contact at Kimsquit all draw heavily on the non-archaeological record to supplement, drive, or otherwise enhance the study of material culture generated through archaeological excavations. While the same could be said in relation to many studies generated over the history of BC archaeology, these papers effectively, though perhaps unintentionally, highlight the growing interest in the various roles that ethnographic and historical data can play in archaeologically-based interpretations of past cultures.

Indeed, the ethnographic record has always had an allure for BC archaeologists. In the past this has been manifested as the straightforward use of ethnographic data in service of archaeological explanations and interpretations. Yet, the use of ethnography now seems to be morphing into attempts to do more than simply incorporate ethnographic data as analogy or explanation. There seems to be a willingness to explore the recent record of First Nations peoples, including their own oral histories and interpretations, to generate new questions to be asked. This may be reflective of both a generational change and growing pragmatic need to incorporate aboriginal perspectives and objectives into BC

archaeology. To the extent that the papers in this volume touch on these subjects, the volume both looks to the past and points to a direction forward at a time in which BC archaeology is emerging from a decade of rapid change, particularly when seen in light of the situation that obtained in Phil Hobler's early years.

On that note, one final point is in order. With the retirement of Phil Hobler in 2001 and, subsequently, RG Matson in 2004, the last of the second generation of pioneers in BC archaeology leaves the stage. Roy Carlson and Phil Hobler (SFU), Donald Mitchell (UVic) and RG Matson (UBC) all left an indelible stamp on the trajectory of BC archaeology. They held their theories and views of BC archaeology strongly, and often debated them fiercely, and this guided BC archaeology in some productive directions. Yet with this volume there seems to be, even amongst archaeologists trained primarily in the SFU school, an expanding range of questions that are considered worthy of asking. While likely, in part, a product of there being more archaeologists and more foundational knowledge

to move forward with new questions, a concerted effort appears to be mounting to expand the range of archaeological practice to newly defined areas of inquiry. Despite the limitations of the volume, it documents a particular juncture in what will hopefully be a continued press forward into new domains. As such, it warrants the price and the space on one's bookshelf.

Colin Grier

Colin Grier earned a Ph.D. in Anthropology in 2001 from Arizona State University. Since then he has taught at UBC and engaged in archaeological field research in southern coastal BC as part of the Coast Research group. He currently is involved in applied research for Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada. He is the primary editor of the recently published volume *Beyond 'Affluent-Foragers': Rethinking Hunter-Gatherer Complexity* (with Jangsuk Kim and Junzo Uchiyama; Oxbow Books, 2006).

The Great Journey: The Peopling of Ancient America

By Brian M. Fagan.

Updated paperback edition. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL, 2004. xxiv + 288 pp., further readings, illus., maps, index. ISBN: 0-8130-2756-X. US\$24.95.

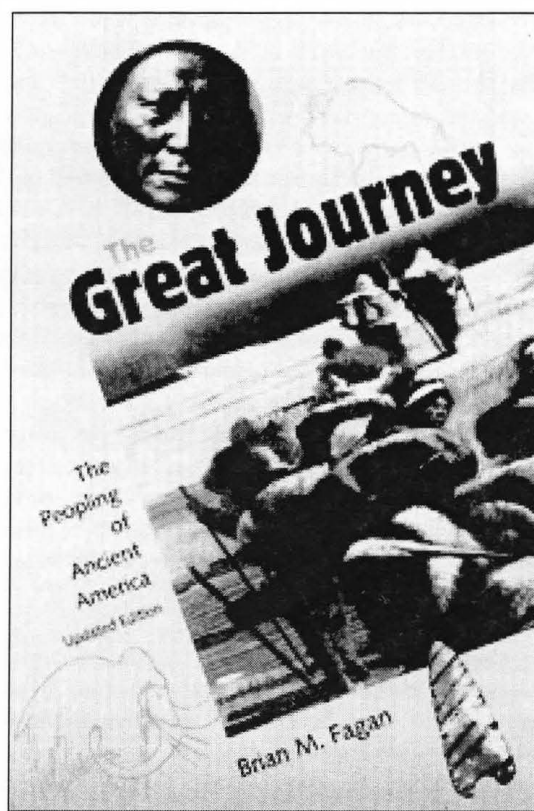
A Journey to a New Land

Barbara J. Winter, Janice Graf, and M. Craig Rust, editors.

SFU Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Burnaby, BC, 2005. Publication No. 32, Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University. viii + 72 pp., quality colour illus., glossary. ISBN: 0-86491-276-5. Cdn\$45.00. Companion website at: <http://www.sfu.museum/>.

It has become popular to refer to the dispersal of anatomically modern humans from our African place of origin as a "journey." This implies a purposeful and active undertaking resulting in the peopling of the world's other continents. The two books presently reviewed are similar in that they use this "journey" metaphor to present the current state of knowledge about the first settlement of the Americas to a mainly senior secondary and junior post-secondary audience. However, this is no easy task considering the almost daily new discoveries in the field, and the two books are, in fact, very different in their specifics.

Let us start with Brian Fagan's updated edition of *The Great Journey: The Peopling of Ancient America*, a book that originally appeared in 1987. Professor Fagan is possibly the most prolific writer of archaeology textbooks today, and most students of Anglophone archaeology will likely recognise his name. I read two of his textbooks during my undergraduate studies, and I have to admit that my expectations of *The Great Journey* were high. Therefore, it was a little disappointing to find out that we're dealing here with



an exact reprint of the 1987 first edition, complete with original typographical errors; only a short, preface-like "Update of the 2004 Edition" is new.

Fagan's book is divided into five parts consisting of two or three chapters each, preceded by the already mentioned Update and by the introduction to the original edition. The Update makes an ambitious recap of everything that has gone on since 1987, while the introduction explains the "archaeological drama" metaphor that Fagan employs in organising the main body of *The Great Journey* into a series of acts (parts) and scenes (chapters). Part One reviews the history of (Euro-American) scholarly interest in the origins of the Native Americans, from the racist and