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THE MIDDEN

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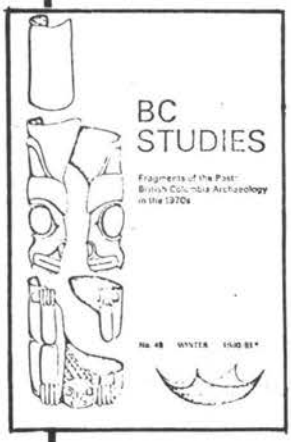
comment

B.C. ARCHAEOLOGY: THE STATE OF THE ART

If you are reading this, then you should read the Winter issue of B.C.Studies!

It's rare to find anyone with time and vision to write an overview of the status of archaeology in British Columbia. But Knut Fladmark does it in this special issue of B.C.Studies, and the result is must reading.

The volume is subtitled "Fragments of the Past: British Columbia Archaeology in the 1970s," and Fladmark disarmingly admits in his Preface that it took him five years to put together (two of the seven articles are his; the others by a variety of other contributors). But the material is strongly valid in 1981, and is all put into perspective with an incisive and highly critical 10-page overview by the editor, using the book's subtitle as its theme.



Among Fladmark's points:

+ Archaeology has exploded in B.C. in the last decade, so where Carl Borden was the only practising professional in the province, there are now more than 25;
+ The resulting work has identified 13,000 sites in B.C.;
+ The SFU Department of Archaeology now is one of the largest on the continent;
+ Despite all this growth, knowledge of B.C. prehistory has not substantively increased.

"Without doubt, suggests Fladmark, "the last ten years have been a decadeof tremendous growth and change in B.C. archaeology --change which has profoundly affected the amount, type and results of archaeological research, and which in itself may not have been uniformly productive in furthering the fundamental goals of the discipline."

One problem, says the SFU associate professor, is that vast amounts of dollars have suddenly become available to archaeologists for impact assessment and salvage work --"inherently relatively unproductive

/over

Comment, cont.

of new information useful in the analysis and intepretation of past cultures, compared to the staggering amounts of data that would be generated by equivalently funded projects geared to specific research goals."

His conclusion is that university archaeologists should return to academic or "pure" research, leaving "applied" studies to others. And future impact studies, he urges, must go beyond mere site location and description.

In addition, many people have espoused "New Archaeology" in various forms, particularly statistics, to the detriment of other aspects of archaeological research.

Fladmark concludes with a criticism of archaeologists for poor communication with the public, and urges far more publication of material in lay language. The 70s have been exciting and tumultuous in B.C. archaeology, he says, predicting that the 80s may bring "a period of greater stability with an increase in and renewal of productive research."

NR

ARCHIVES RELEASES MAP INDEX

Public Archives Canada

Archives Branch

The National Map Collection - a department of the federal Archives - has produced an index of its old maps of Indian Reserves and Settlements.

The first volume, available free, covers B.C., and can be obtained from:

Information Services,
Public Archives of Canada,
395 Wellington Street,
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N3

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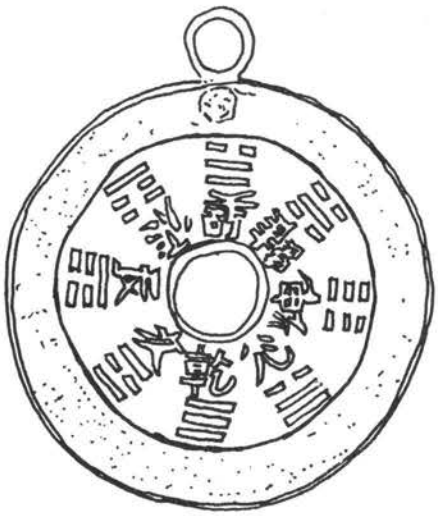
EVIDENCE OF EARLY CHINESE ARTIFACTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA?

Part II*

by Grant Keddie, Archaeology Division
British Columbia Provincial Museum

Obverse view of Cassiar "talisman." Approximate appearance based on old newspaper photos.



Reverse view of Cassiar "talisman." Approx. actual size.

Numerous articles in British Columbia newspapers and magazines have made reference to the finding of early Chinese coins, charms or talismen that are claimed to constitute proof of contact or settlement by Chinese in the province several thousand years ago (see Keddie 1980). Most of these stories appear to originate from a single incident in the late 19th century in the northern interior. Several versions of the original story have become interwoven as writer after writer has changed the story over the last 100 years.

The Cassiar Discovery

In 1952 a Vancouver Sun article stated that:

> "In 1882 A.D., while the Cariboo gold rush was on, ...one party working in the Cassiar district, some 200 miles north and a little east of Vancouver, came upon a small cache of Chinese coins, 30 in number, which at one time had been strung on an iron wire.
>
> These coins lay below 30 feet of undisturbed gravel and, though the wire had perished, appeared as if newly minted. ...the coins eventually reached Victoria, as curiosities. Here they were handed to the leading Chinese citizens who all agreed that from the inscriptions on them, they had been minted 3,000 years previously." (Gulliver 1952:1)

This description obviously has the same origin as the unreferenced comments by Larson (1966:44) who stated that:

> "In 1882 a cache of Chinese brass coins said to have been dated 1200 B.C. was dug up by miners at a place called Cassiar in British Columbia, along with a bronze fan bearing Chinese characters."

I have not yet found what is probably the first published version of this find. However, an interesting article appears in an early edition of the Colonist which speaks of its existence:

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* Part I appeared in The Midden, Dec. 1980.

> "In speaking of the alleged discovery of ancient Chinese coins in Cariboo during the gold excitement, an account of which is going the rounds of the press, W.A. Cumyow, of Vancouver, who was born in this province 29 years ago (1871), says he remembers distinctly his father telling that a Chinaman named Chu Fook brought from Alaska, after the gold excitement of 1878, some very ancient Chinese coins and trinkets, that he had found while prospecting for gold on one of the creeks. The coins and trinkets were sold to a white trader up north near Fort Simpson, where Mr. Cumyow's parents then lived, for $5.00." (Colonist 1900:1)

By piecing together information from various sources written over the last 100 years, it appears that the many stories of coin caches have the same origin as stories about "old charms" and "talismen." (see Colonist 1933:5; McKelvie 1944:5)

The Original Discovery?

What may be (at least in part) the original story was recorded by Judge Eli Harrison and later published (posthumously) by his wife, Eunice M.L. Harrison, in 1952, as part of a 15-part series entitled "Pioneer Judge's Wife."

In part five of the series there is a description of the judge looting the Indian burial ground across from Lytton. He came back to continue "excavating" at the site two years later only to find that the "Smithsonian Institute" had been there since his last visit. "It was on that same trip to Lillooet, however, with a Chinese interpreter, that I learned of the very strange, ancient Oriental disks." (Harrison 1952a:8) Since Harlan Smith was there for the Smithsonian in July, 1897 (Smith 1899:130) it can be deduced that the story was first told to the judge in 1898 (or possibly 1899).

The story as told by Eunice Harrison is presented as the account given verbatim to Judge Harrison by "Ah Quan", a Chinese court interpreter. The story is told in dialogue form, the essential parts of which are quoted here:

> "May I now give you the full particulars you desired of the ancient disk I told you about in Lillooet on your last circuit. ... my cousin of the Chew Kung Tong (Chinese Freemasons) was near Hazelton prospecting for gold." They travelled beyond Kispiox. "Although the Indians warned my cousin that he must not go into that land, he, with a few friends, decided to do so. ...one day, after long aimless wandering my cousins came to a branch of the Skeena or of the Peace River; they could not, of course, be sure."
>
> While panning for gold they noticed "a bit beyond the high water mark of the stream" ...a... "basin caused by the fall of an exceptionally large tree. Making a fire in the space left by the main roots in the fall, they dug a bit to clear the spot. Then it was that they hit something hard... the cover of a stone jar... first its lid, covered with hieroglyphs and then the full jar, equally

marked in the same way." It was "full... of ancient disks-- sixty-four of them. Ancient Chinese-- seemed the wording; so ancient that none of my cousins could even identify the ideographs, although some of the design was suggestive." (Harrison 1952:8)

While they were looking at their find an Indian appeared that was "different than any my cousins had seen." ... "One of my cousins held up a disk 'you sabbe?' he asked, trying several dialects." The Indian said, " 'You and me--blood brothers. You and me had the same ancient ones. They come from over there-- way far-- big canoe.' And he stretched to his limit towards my flowery land." The Indian is then reported to have said, " 'Our fathers bring this and this along, blood brothers' and as sure proof to my cousin he brought forth from a blanket pack some of the bright religious vessels of northern Buddhism. My cousins are not Buddhists but one of them knew something of that. He saw the bell and dorje, censers for incense and similar things." (Harrison 1952:8).

Quan's cousins took the stone jar with the coins to Barkerville and showed them to people who did not believe their story. They then went back to Victoria with the stone jar and distributed the disks "among our people; no one could read them or be sure how old they were, but they were held to be precious." (Harrison 1952:9)

Quan gave one of the disks to Judge Eli Harrison. Some of the others were sent to China and others "had been secretly shown among Chinatown cousins and as virtues were ascribed by some to the possession of the disks, they were actually copied by local Chinese jewelers." (Harrison 1952:8)

Eunice Harrison states that "the disk of which I now have clear photographs, did come from the ancient stone jar." Both sides of the original are shown and she mentions that "the photographs show a metal band around the disk. This was added to strengthen the disk as it was aged and had a crack running through the centre." (Harrison 1952:9) (However, at least one other early version exists: See "The Judge's Strange Disk," Hall c. 1920's.)

What is the "Strange Disk"?

Hall describes the talisman as:

"much larger than the American dollar, made of copper, bronze, or some such metal. In the centre a round hole. It was evidently of great age, and a strip of more modern copper had been molded around it to strengthen the disk, weakened by the cracks left by the passing of time." (Hall 1920:67)

Judge Harrison told Hall that he had the talisman:

"shown to those supposed to be experts in subjects of this kind have had photographic copies sent to the authorities of famous museums, and to other places of the sort; they all agree as to the

antiquity of the talisman, placing the period of its creation anywhere from 1,500 to 4,000 years ago, and even farther back. I have several attempts at deciphering contained in letters here." (Hall 1920:67)

One of the four specialists indicated that:
"It is a charm of the Taoists. One side gives the eight diagrams from the Book of Changes, with the names in ancient Chinese characters." (Hall 1920:14)

The eight "trigrams" or "diagrams" referred to are known as the basic components of the I Ching, a Chinese system of divination that likely began as early as the 8th century B.C. as a collection of peasant omen-texts (Gardner 1974:108). By 1100 B.C. the diagrams, made up of combinations of straight and broken lines, were used as categories of prediction (Liu 1979:19). In the second century B.C. near the end of the Chou dynasty the I Ching acquired its present form and became one of the five great classics of the Confucian canon (Gardner 1974:108).

There are traditionally two common ways of displaying the eight trigrams in a circle: The oldest, known as the Fu Hsi arrangement after the mythical founder of China's first dynasty (the Hsia dynasty, 2205 - 1766 B.C.); and the King Wen arrangement, called after the legendary father of the Chou dynasty which began in the 11th century B.C. (see Gardner or Liu). One of the translators notes that, in regard to the trigrams on the coin, "the arrangement as a whole is not orthodox." (Harrison 1952:10) This statement is true as the diagrams are basically of the later King Wen arrangement, except for the fact that they are in the opposite position in relation to the centre of the coin.

A coin with the identical reverse side to the Cassiar find is shown in Powell (1979:5). The coin has the same unorthodox arrangement of the trigrams, but no information on its age or association is provided and my inquiries have not been answered.

The unusual arrangement of these coins may have some relevance to their eventual dating. I have in my possession a small brass coin dating to the late 19th century that has the earlier Fu Hsi arrangement but (as is the case with the Cassiar find) with the trigrams in an opposite position in relation to the centre of the circle.

The obverse side of the Cassiar coin has two large "secret ideograms" located on each side of four rows of regular Chinese characters. The secret ideograms are Chinese characters written in talismanic form. Talismanic writing is a sacred form of script undertaken by Taoist priests and used mostly on ceremonial paper. They served as commands directed at evil spirits.

Based on my own observations the secret ideograms resemble the style of those written on paper after the beginning of the 12th century A.D. (see Legeza 1974:26-27).

I have recently obtained a full translation courtesy of Dr. James C.H. Hsu, Associate Curator in charge of the Far Eastern Department

of the Royal Ontario Museum. According to Dr. Hsu the inscriptions on the obverse side of the charm may read as:

> "The mighty spell says: (In the universe where) the heaven is round and the earth is square, wherever the spirit of the charm who enforced the law of the Six Regulations and the Nine Chapters arrives, all the evil spirits will be destroyed as speedily as the law commanded." (Hsu 1980:1)

The translation of the characters does not directly solve the problem of dating the coins. We can, however, narrow down the probable date of manufacture. As Hsu reports, such coins have "never been reported as being found in early tombs in Chinese archaeological journals. I presume that this type of artifact is not very old." (Hsu 1980:1) Hsu points out that, although the eight diagrams were earlier used for divination purposes, "they acquired magic powers to chase away evil spirits after 10th century A.D. Some people still believe in their magic power." (Hsu 1980:1).

The first round coins with a central round hole were issued in China between 660 B.C. and 336 B.C. These were never popular and round coins only superseded other types after they were introduced as official currency in the 2nd century B.C. These earliest round coins did not bear an inscription according to Chinese records (Coole 1965:1). Long inscriptions such as that on the Cassiar coin do not appear on coins until the production of what are called "temple coins." The one Cassiar coin of which there is a photo is the same size as the common temple coin and it is likely that it is in fact a temple coin. According to Dr. Titus Yu of the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at Simon Fraser University (per. comm. Jan. 12, 1981) these temple coins achieved popularity in the Sung Dynasty (960 A.D. to 1279 A.D.) and later in the Ming Dynasty (1368 A.D. to 1644 A.D.). They were part of the popular movement known as Neo Taoism.

The temple coins have been used as eye pieces on a few 19th century Northwest Coast masks. One set of these with a dragon motif is on a Tlingit hawk mask (Feder 1965: Pl. 35; and Harner and Elsasser 1965:85). It was collected at Chilkat, Alaska between 1883 and 1885 and now is depicted on a 1980 American stamp.

Associated with the Cassiar coin were lamaic ritual objects. The "dorje" mentioned by Sun Ming Shu is a "type of the Tunder bolt of Indra, the Indian Jupiter, used in most Lamaic rituals" (Evans-Wentz 1960:xxxiii,37). This and other objects mentioned could not date earlier than the eighth century A.D. since Lamaism, or Tantric Buddhism as it is also called, did not take firm root in Tibet until this period (Evans-Wentz 1960:74).

Conclusions

The over-all circumstantial evidence from the coins themselves would indicate that they date to a time period after approximately 1000 A.D. The great antiquity initially ascribed to the coins was probably

based on an overly simplified association of the I Ching symbolism on the one photographed coin with the time period of Lao-Tse (c. 500 B.C.) whose Taoist followers became the leading exponents of the use of the I Ching for numerology, predictions, and meditation.

A speculative but more probably dating of the coins would place their use, if not their manufacture, in a late 19th century context. The use of temple coins may follow the same pattern as I have outlined for regular Chinese coinage (see Keddie 1978; 1980a). As with the regular coins it is likely that temple coins several hundred years old were brought over from China by traders in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and were also brought over and used by some of the thousands of Chinese who populated British Columbia in the last half of the 19th century.

As Lai has outlined, Chinese were actively involved in placer mining in the Cassiar district between 1874 and 1877 (Lai 1978:24). The Ministry of Mines' report for these years shows that several thousand men were working in the area and that approximately one-third were Chinese. The 1877 report indicates that "the majority of claims" were "transferred to the Chinese." (Ministry 1877:400-1)

Precisely how many coins were in the jar is uncertain. Even if any of the originals are still around, it is unlikely we can connect them to the Cassiar find with the exception of the single one which was photographed. Locating this coin may help to solve the question of how old it is.

The latter coin was given to Judge Eli Harrison during or after 1898. In 1933 the "talisman" was in the possession of John Forsyth (Colonist 1933:5). McKelvie in his 1944 article reported that the "charm" passed from Harrison to Chief Justice Archer Martin (who died Sept. 3, 1941). In 1944 Martin's collection of B.C. historical material, which supposedly included the "charm," was sold to a Portland collector (McKelvie 1944:5).

The present location of the coin remains unknown. Further research is necessary to arrive at a more precise dating, but at present it appears that the original hypothesis that the coin is in excess of 3,000 years old is false and that a more recent origin somewhere between the 10th and 19th centuries A.D. is more probable.

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ROCK ART SPECIALISTS JOIN FORCES

Westerners interested in Rock Art have banded together to form a Northwest chapter of the Canadian Rock Art Researchers Association.

The group was formed in Victoria this Spring, during the B.C.Archaeologists' conference.

One of the prime movers, Daniel Leen, described the group's intended functions as including the creation and maintenance of a rock art archives and a information clearing-house for rock art research in the northwest coast and Columbia-Fraser Plateau culture areas.

Discussion at the first meeting also touched on the importance of a grassroots network to coordinate pressure on elected officials when rock art sites are threatened by economic development. A proposal was also made to produce a cooperative publication for the general public on plateau rock art, a reviews of recent research were also presented.

The group is expected to meet annually, in conjunction with the B.C.Archaeologists' meeting or the Northwest Anthropological Conference.

More information on CRARA-Northwest may be obtained from Doris Lundy, Exhibits Division, B.C. Provincial Museum, Victoria.

EVIDENCE FOR A BIPOLAR TECHNOLOGY AT THE SOUTH YALE SITE, B.C.

By

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1981

INTRODUCTION

A re-analysis of the artifactual material from the South Yale site, located across the Fraser River from Yale in southwestern British Columbia, is now underway as part of the author's Ph.D. dissertation research. During the preliminary investigation of the materials, a class of artifacts was recognized which led the author to believe that a technology based on the bipolar technique for flaking stone was present at the site. This paper describes the evidence for the presence of the bipolar technology and introduces the uses for that technology.

The South Yale site was located and subsequently excavated by Dr. C.E. Borden of U.B.C. (Borden 1968, 1975; Mitchell 1965). Its artifact assemblage consisted of choppers and other tools made from water-worn cobbles of varying shape, size and raw material. The artifacts were predominantly unifacial and crude. This observation led Borden to consider the site to be older than any known site in the area. He assigned the site, and the assemblage which he called the "Pasika Complex," to the period between 9,000 and 12,000 years B.P. (Borden 1965, 1968). He described the technology which produced the artifacts as a hard hammer direct percussion process. In the author's view, that is true for the majority of the lithic tools manufactured at the site. However, Borden makes no mention of bipolar percussion being employed in the manufacture of stone tools at South Yale.

THE EVIDENCE

The difference between the two techniques mentioned above is as follows: Direct percussion involves "... holding the material to be flaked in the unsupported hand and directing the percussion ... implement with the other hand to detach flakes ..." (Crabtree 1972:59) while the bipolar technique involves the "... resting (of the) ... lithic implement on (an) anvil and striking the core with a percussor" (Crabtree 1972:42). The distinction seems fundamental, and the artifacts produced with the

bipolar technique are markedly different from those produced using freehand percussion (Hayden 1980: personal communication).

The tools required to produce items using a bipolar technique are similar to those used in freehand percussion, with one addition. Bipolar flaking requires an anvil. We have found several cobbles and cobble choppers in the collection that exhibit heavy pitting on one or both faces similar to that illustrated in Ahler (1979:315). This pitting is characteristic of the use of the artifact as an anvil. Hammerstones, large cylindrical cobbles with battering or crushing near the end(s), are also present in the collection.

Ironically, it was a study of the hammerstones (as classified by Borden) that first brought our attention to the presence of a bipolar industry. Many of the artifacts described by Borden as hammerstones (i.e. 38% of those examined to date) were in fact something other than hammerstones. They lacked the battering at the ends typical of that tool class. Instead, they shared the following attributes:

1) In outline, they tended to be discoidal (unlike the hammerstones which tended to be cylindrical).

2) Each had bifacial flake scars at both ends with the scars originating from the same platform(s).

3) All platforms exhibited heavy crushing indicating blows having been delivered straight down onto the platform rather than at an angle.

4) All platforms were ridges or single points rather than flat surfaces.

5) The platform ridges were ogive-shaped in cross section.

The last four characteristics are the major ones listed by Hayden (1980: personal communication) as being indicators of bipolar flaking. These cobbles were not used as hammerstones. Instead, they had been modified using the bipolar technique.

Having established the existence of bipolar flaking as part of the Pasika technology, the question one might ask is: "What was it used for?". The research being conducted by the author at South Yale and other sites (Haley 1980, 1981a, 1981b) has resulted in the following hypotheses.

It has been shown that the thicker the original cobble was, the more difficult it was to flake and the more quickly the tool was exhausted and discarded (Haley 1980). By using the bipolar technique, it is possible to split the cobble. This would result in two usable chopper blanks, each of the blanks roughly half the thickness of the original. These would be easier to flake and would last longer. It should be noted that in addition to the artifacts already discussed, there were many choppers showing evidence of bipolar flaking and no less than 11% of all of the choppers studied were made from SPLIT cobbles.

In addition to splitting, the bipolar technique could have been used to produce large cortical spalls with relatively flat ventral faces or to remove the initial flake(s) from the working edge of a chopper. (These last two actions may have been synonymous as the initial flakes removed from a chopper may have been used as spall tools.) Failing that, bipolar percussion could have been used to weaken an edge thereby facilitating freehand percussion.

Borden (1970 field notes) points out that a fair number of choppers seem to have been "accidentally" bifacially retouched. The presence of a bipolar industry, which tends by definition to be a bifacial technique, helps to explain these. The bifacial retouch is simply the result of attempts to remove flakes from a cobble with a hammer and anvil.

The classic bipolar cobbles, originally called hammerstones, were rejects from which the manufacturer failed to remove the required flakes.

SUMMARY

In summary, at the South Yale site, in addition to direct freehand percussion, bipolar percussion was used on water-worn cobbles as a primary modification technique. Using this technique, split cobble blanks were produced which retain the desirable characteristics of a cobble while eliminatung several of the undesirable ones.

If Borden's chronology (1975) is to be accepted, we now have documentable evidence that a bipolar technology was present in the Fraser Canyon region of British Columbia as early as 12,000 years ago.

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* indicates illustrated article

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[Many thanks to Sharon Russell for preparing this Index. Ed.]

MIDDEN WINS SUPPORT

The B.C. Heritage Trust has generously agreed to make a significant grant to the Archaeological Society of B.C., to support The Midden.

The grant comes in response to a request from the Society, due to rapidly increasing production and distribution costs. The grant will underwrite one year's publication.

THE MIDDEN is produced by the Publications Committee of the Archaeological Society of British Columbia. Editor: Nick Russell. Funded in part by a grant from the B.C. Heritage Trust.

Submissions and exchange publications should be addressed to the Editor, P.O. Box 29, Whonnock, B.C., V0M 1S0. Contributions on subjects germane to B.C. Archaeology are welcomed. They should be relatively brief, with no footnotes and only a brief bibliography (if necessary at all).

Subscriptions ($5.00 a year) should be addressed to the Manager, Ms. H. Braches, 1020 Lillooet Road, North Vancouver, B.C., V7J 2H8. The next issue of THE MIDDEN will appear June 1981.

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