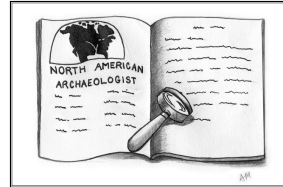


BOOK REVIEWS

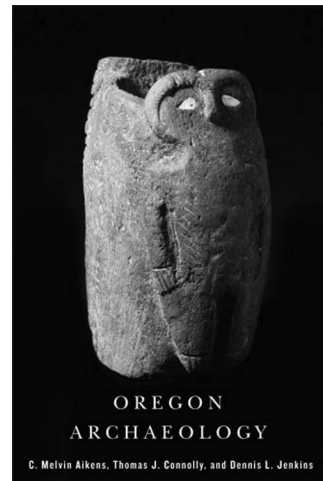


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North American Archaeologist solicits reviews of new books in the field of archaeology. If you wish to submit a review, submit to the Book Review Editor at the above address. The Editor reserves the right of final decision on publication.

Oregon Archaeology, by C. Melvin Aikens, Thomas J. Connolly, and Dennis L. Jenkins, Oregon State University Press, 2011, 512 pp., black & white photographs, line drawings, color maps, index, bibliography. ISBN: 978-0-87071-606-5 (soft-cover), \$29.95, paperback.

This book's basic goal is to reconstruct the dynamics of human settlement and economic mastery of the Oregon landscape. It begins with the first people more than 14,000 years ago and continues up to the 19th and early 20th centuries. The presentation, analysis, and interpretation of materials are defined by ecological and ethnoarchaeological approaches, at present some of the leading emphases in American and European archaeology. Widely used in the investigation are geomorphological, palynological, and paleobotanical analysis, serial radiocarbon dating, and obsidian toolstone analysis for identifying raw material sources and dating sites by obsidian



hydration. Owing to the modern methodological level, rich base of interpretive data, and broad circle of questions being examined, the scientific significance of *Oregon Archaeology* goes far beyond the regional value implied in the title.

Within Oregon are five archaeological zones or landscapes. Oregon's northern portion of the Great Basin—which also overspreads parts of Nevada, California, Idaho, and Utah—is an arid mountain-plain region of many closed basins holding shallow lakes, which become swamps and playas during warm spells, and it has a sharply continental climate. Oregon's portion of the Columbia Plateau is the southern reach of the vast and branched basin of the Columbia River, the lower course of which separates the states of Washington and Oregon. The Willamette Valley contains the largest river in western Oregon, which flows into the Columbia at modern Portland. About 20 miles wide and 100 miles long, the Willamette Valley passes from south to north between the high Cascade Mountains and lower Coast Range, and is home to most of Oregon's modern population. The Pacific Coast of Oregon is a very narrow zone between the ocean and the steep slopes of the Coast Range that is extremely rich in biotic resources. The Southwestern Mountains and Valleys, running inland from Oregon's Pacific edge and bordering northern California, is a zone set apart by its very complex, indented relief and many small isolated valleys. The cultural history and ecology of each of these distinctive archaeological landscapes are examined in individual chapters, with attention to the dynamics of climatic and societal change across final Pleistocene and early, middle, and late Holocene times.

Effective use of the ethnoarchaeological approach is made possible by the broad range of materials available on Oregon's native people. The Indian population is characterized by numerous ethnic groups, economic traditions, and patterns of daily life and material culture that by the 19th century had already become the object of historical accounts and ethnographic investigations. Throughout the book the authors turn to these rich sources of ethnohistory and ethnography and to the interpretive constructs of ethnology.

Oregon Archaeology includes seven chapters. Chapter 1, "Archaeology, Ethnology, Ecology, and Human History on the Millennial Scale," surveys the primary methodological approaches, investigative means and methods, and problems of the appearance of people in North America. Chapters 2-6, each dedicated to a particular archaeological landscape, are basically identical in structure, treating the characteristic natural conditions and key features of the ethnographically known native cultures and examining archaeological data from the earliest stages up to the 19th and early 20th centuries. Chapter 7 concludes the book with a summation of "Oregon Native American Cultural Diversity and Integration," and ends in an "Epilogue on Cultural Resource Management in Oregon."

This brief review must focus on just a few selected subjects. First, archaeological materials from Oregon bear importantly on the question of earliest human settlement in America. The Paisley Period $\geq 15,700$ -12,900 cal. BP is known from a group of Great Basin caves first excavated in the 1930s and intensively re-studied by modern means from 2002 to 2010 by specialists from the University of Oregon and collaborating institutions. A date of 14,500 cal. BP on human coprolites identified by DNA evidence is today the earliest reliable radiocarbon age for early human presence in Oregon and perhaps the New World as a whole. Even earlier dates have been obtained by obsidian hydration analysis, reaching 16,500 cal. BP. The Paisley cultural inventory contains numerous unmistakable tools of distinctive technical-typological characteristics, and the bones of now-extinct camel and horse. Stemmed dart and spear points assignable to the widespread Western Stemmed Point complex appear in early Paisley Period deposits and continue through the time of Clovis. No Clovis fluted points were found in the Paisley Caves, but open sites with such points are widely found throughout Oregon, representing a pattern that spread rapidly across North America between 13,200 and 12,800 years ago from Alaska to Costa Rica on a north/south axis and from Nova Scotia to California in the east/west dimension.

The Oregon population during the final Pleistocene–early Holocene (about 14,500-7,600 years ago) was oriented toward hunting, gathering, and fishing in a regime of frequent changes of habitation and movement from one productive region to another. From DNA and physical analysis of human coprolites at the Paisley Caves were identified grass seeds, roots, and the meat of mammals and birds, while bones from the cultural layers represented various mammals and birds. The broad spectrum of gathered foods had much in common with the inventory of wild plants observed in use by Oregon Indians during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Elsewhere in Oregon, materials from Pacific Coast occupation sites dated to the final Pleistocene–early Holocene show that by this time regular human use of marine resources had also begun. Long-term settlements are absent among the earliest archaeological sites, but Columbia Plateau researchers find episodic base camps there in resource-rich places that provided the means for living during various seasons. A very important find was made at the Paulina Lake site, in the caldera of Newberry Volcano near the Great Basin-Columbia Plateau divide. The remains there of a pole-framed house with a hearth at the center, dated to 9,500 cal. BP, attest one of the earliest living structures known today in North America.

Archaeological sites of the subsequent Middle Holocene (7,600 to 3,000 years ago) reflect growth of the population in effectively all landscape zones, and the appearance of new life-support technologies and settlement strategies. Annual cycles of procuring various food resources in certain localities made expedient the creation of residential base settlements. As a rule, these were winter camps

where people could live during several months of the year and then set off on a long warm-season period of travel between various temporary hunting/gathering locations. The clearest early archaeological evidence for growing residential sedentism is from sites in Oregon's interior zones east of the Cascade Range. Shallow pithouse dwellings floored by basin-shaped depressions are known on the Plateau a little after 7,000 years ago and in the Great Basin from about 6,000 years ago. In these regions can also be traced such important features as underground pits in residential settlements, reflecting a strategy of targeted storage of large volumes of food, to a certain degree buffering the vagaries of environmental productivity.

On Oregon's Pacific Coast an economic system based on the rich and varied resources of the offshore and littoral zones developed during the Middle Holocene. Shell middens, sometimes of substantial thickness, are a clear component of many coastal sites. Marine procurement was an important adaptive characteristic developed by Middle Holocene populations all around the North Pacific: in Northwestern America, the Japanese Archipelago, the Korean Peninsula, and the Russian Far East.

The Middle Holocene is seen in general to be a time of growing sophistication in the structure of social relations, with the activation of inter-territorial connections and long distance trade-exchange activity. Researchers consider the basic proofs of this position to be in the wide range of decorative items present in sites all across the North Pacific, for example objects of leisure such as musical instruments and exotic imported artifacts made of rare kinds of stone and mollusk shell. A key interpretation is that these artifacts were exchanged in the process of negotiating and reinforcing such social relations as intertribal and intergroup agreements on the joint use of highly productive places for procuring food resources. Such practices are widely documented historically among North American Indians, including those of Oregon, where residents of a certain territory in which this or that resource is abundant would permit outsiders from more distant regions to harvest it in return for material compensation such as valuable and rare artifacts or food products difficult to obtain in that locality.

Such arrangements were not of course only coastal. Oregon's Middle Holocene also gives much evidence of long distance trade-exchange relations based on the procurement of obsidian from the caldera of Newberry Volcano in Central Oregon. Geochemical analysis demonstrates that Newberry obsidian was spread rather long distances—northward to the great annual salmon fishery and trading center at The Dalles of the Columbia River, and even as far beyond as the lower reaches of the Fraser River in British Columbia. Indeed The Dalles was a great entrepot that attracted people from hundreds of miles in all directions, who came with goods to trade and returned home with dried salmon and exotica from other areas.

Oregon's Late Holocene (3,000-200 years ago) was a time when economic and social processes established earlier attained their fullest development. The number and size of long-term settlements grew substantially, most notably in places of high resource productivity. In life support, the leading role was played by preserving and storing large volumes of the most abundant and nutritious resources (fish, roots, and so on), which were sequenced and targeted by the seasons of the year. The models of life support archaeologically documented for the late Holocene are in many ways analogous to those recorded among Oregon's Indian population in the contact-historic period. Characteristic is the diversity of tools and technical means, and adaptations that served the procurement and modification of food products. A notable datum of the period 3,000-2,000 years ago was the rapid spread of the bow and arrow across North America, including Oregon. Certainly important to the subsistence economy, it was also important to growing and changing social relations.

Significant evidence for a growing complexity of residential and social arrangements is seen in sites all over Oregon. In its Great Basin zone, systematized there in the framework of the Boulder Village Period (3,000 years ago to historical times), permanent settlements and sites regularly visited for a portion of a seasonal round then consisted of substantial living and economic structures that were rounded in design and enclosed by thick wall bases made of basalt boulders.

In Oregon's Columbia Plateau zone during the Plateau Period (3,000-200 years ago), communities around The Dalles of the Columbia River became increasingly large and powerful. Thousands of visitors were attracted each summer by exceptionally favorable conditions for catching the annually migrating Pacific Salmon. They passed there in the millions along a stretch of several miles where the current narrows to form chutes, rapids, and waterfalls accessible to many people at one time. Travelers came from hundreds of miles away, both for the fishing and for the optimal trading and social opportunities afforded by the occasion. Moreover, The Dalles had abundant fresh-water fish that were available the year-round, which along with other non-riverine resources provided an economic base that could support a concentrated zone of large permanent settlements and ritual complexes.

In archaeological sites of The Dalles region have been found many artifacts of prestige and symbolic significance, often items of trade and exchange with remote territories in all directions, especially with similarly advanced cultures of southwestern Canada's Fraser River region. All down the Columbia and southward along Oregon's Pacific Coast, permanent Late Holocene settlements with rectangular houses of cedar and fir boards sunken into the earth are also numerous, concentrated primarily in productive estuary zones and surrounded by temporary satellite camps.

The authors of *Oregon Archaeology* emphasize that the Late Holocene was also a time when violent conflicts and clashes became part of intergroup social relations. This is shown by the presence of fortified villages, and the location of villages in places difficult to access and easy to defend. Contributing very much to the militarization of society was the above-mentioned spread of the bow and arrow—the most important weapon of the aboriginal Indians whom the European pioneers met when moving into the American West. An important aspect of the social processes seen in Oregon during the 19th and early 20th century contact-historic period was the exceptionally large number of different language communities involved in the territorial structure of Oregon's native settlement, especially in the western interior valleys and coastal zones. There, strong parallels in economy, material culture, and art unite many individual communities despite a remarkable degree of ethnic/linguistic diversity. Thus by the late Holocene we see the basic characteristics of life support, social relations, and spirituality that made western Oregon of a piece with the ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous and interactive population of the Pacific Northwest Coast over hundreds of miles north and south.

Many additional themes addressed by *Oregon Archaeology* cannot be described within the compass of a brief review and are simply itemized here: richly expressive engraved and painted rock art, including some that strongly resemble North Pacific art from as far away as the Amur Basin; carved bone fish hooks, harpoons, and other items held in common up and down the Northwest Coast; sophisticated plastic arts expressed in bone, stone, and clay; containers and carrying artifacts twined, carved, and (rarely) made of pottery; the community and inter-community social roles of women as multilingual communicators and as practitioners of fire management carried out to harvest and sustain productive landscapes; and archaeological reflections of settler life in the contact-historic period that convey perspectives rarely if ever documented in the written record.

Translator's note: This review is condensed from a much longer one written for *Rossiiskaya arkhologiiya* [Russian Archaeology] by a prominent archaeologist of the Russian Far East because she thought her colleagues would find interesting the degree to which culture-historical and ecological patterns have developed similarly within distant but environmentally comparable regions on the eastern and western sides of the North Pacific. It is translated here in the belief that American colleagues might find interesting the aspects of this North American archaeological scene that a colleague working in the Russian context considered worthy of note. *Richard L. Bland*

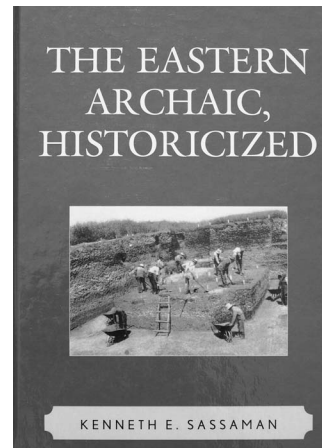
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The Eastern Archaic Historicized, by Kenneth E. Sassaman, Issues in Eastern Woodlands Archaeology, AltaMira Press/Rowman and Littlefield, 2010, xx + 275 pp., 27 figures, bibliography, index. ISBN 978-0-7591-0679-6 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7591-1990-1 (ebook). \$70.00 (cloth), \$69.99 (ebook).

The Eastern Archaic Historicized is one of several volumes in the “Issues in Eastern Woodlands Archaeology” series edited by Timothy Pauketat and Thomas Emerson and offered by AltaMira Press. The previous titles in the series include potentially controversial topics and perspectives, whereby the content is rather thought provoking. Ken Sassaman’s contribution maintains this trend, with the author’s assertion that he “wrote this book for the next generation of Archaic specialists, to encourage them to think creatively and openly about alternative Archaic histories” (p. xx).

The choice of Sassaman to author this volume is a wise one; he knows the data on the Eastern Archaic, has published widely on a range of Archaic period topics as well as for other time periods, and often approaches problems from interesting directions and perspectives. He also espouses interpretations foregrounding power, agency, identity, and meaning, all in historical context, much like the editors of this series. The current project, with its self-avowed humanistic perspective, is no exception to this trend. It is clear from the outset that Sassaman begins painting his canvas with bold strokes on the peopling of the Americas (Chapter 2—“A Continental Vista”). This sets the stage for discussion of Paleoindian in Eastern North America coupled with his broad views of Archaic ethnogenesis. Pre-Clovis, Pacific maritime coastal, and transatlantic Solutrean migration all figure prominently in the long chronological foundation for multiple northern hemisphere occupation episodes, movement, replacement, and entrenchment. The strength of the author’s weddedness to each of these origin scenarios is variable, and I suspect few readers will accept all of Sassaman’s historical premises for the roots of the Archaic.

Prospective readers who take this title at face value and who hope for a comprehensive historicized overview of the Archaic stage in Eastern North America may be somewhat dismayed. The Eastern Archaic Historicized is hardly an overview of the entire Eastern Archaic, as the title might suggest. Sassaman readily admits that he plays to his regional strengths (p. xix). But as Figure 1.1 clearly indicates, most of the Archaic-stage sites from the Ohio River Valley, Northeast, and Great Lakes are omitted from his discussion, and



other large regional voids remain evident. Beyond the heartland of his focus many of the scattered individual sites are human burials and caches central to discussion of mortuary behaviors and identity (see Chapter 3, “Landscapes of Historical Practice”). Rather, this book is better approached as a volume centered on a larger historicist theoretical polemic rooted in the Midsouth and Southeast, and I doubt whether readers will be neutral in their response to this perspective. My guess is that most will either like the book very much, or find it unfavorable. For readers who are not especially attracted to “. . . -i-t-y” words, such as alterity, historicity, and monumentality, etc., and for those who do not believe that everyone feasted their way through prehistory while happily integrating at a sub-continental scale whilst simultaneously symboling identity, jockeying for power, engaging in resistance, and reproducing social hierarchy, this book may hold little value. In fairness, however, I enjoy reading Sassaman's perspectives, and this volume not only synthesizes many of them in one location, but offers some intriguing questions and views to consider, regardless of which theoretical or interpretive pole one gravitates toward.

In his Introduction, Sassaman addresses the issue of why the presentation is unconventional; he also posts a brief methodological primer on radiocarbon dating illustrating where both error and variation might lie. These he follows by laying a foundation for the Archaic through a discussion of the peopling of the Eastern North America, followed sequentially by discussions of mound and earthwork construction (including regional burial traditions), identity, status, and exchange artifacts, and key components of Archaic subsistence economies. These treatments are followed by a more synthetic chapter titled “Structure Transformed.” While arguably logical, I think that taking such a perspective is shallow and diminishes the book's actual contribution.

In terms of its organization, the volume is arranged as a series of macro-level case studies, some of which possess degrees of complexity that defy easy summarization. The larger polemic presented in Chapter 1, “Prehistory Reloaded,” deconstructs the entire notion of prehistory as a hegemonic construct rooted in Western colonial dominant interpretations. Such notions are designed to foreground progress and create scalar hierarchies of cultural/behavioral sophistication and complexity. Sassaman's self-avowed goal is to “liberate ‘primitives’ from the conceptual straitjacket that is prehistory” (p. 3), and historicize them through frameworks that reveal “the ongoing process of making culture through social interactions” (p. 5, italics in the original). This perspective is fully bared in the section on “Archaic Culture History” (p. 20 *passim*), and summarized in “Archaic Historical Process” in which implications of time/space mechanisms of integrative and interactive institutions are given explanatory primacy.

Chapter 2, as noted earlier, frames a multi-lineal ancestral ethno-genesis for the Archaic populations of Eastern North America. Overall, the goal of various social institutions, site structures and landscape organization (for example, at

Poverty Point) is for such behavior to have integrated a multiethnic population—a landscape with numerous potential “others.”

This argument forms the heart of Chapter 3, whereas the ensuing Chapter 4 engages with the opposite end of the scalar spectrum, to the notion of craft mobiliere, portable and often uniquely crafted objects with so-called “biographies” dynamic across multiple dimensions and contexts. Here, we engage with a restricted range of high-visibility Archaic objects overly familiar to us (including large bifaces, zoomorphic carvings, and various groundstone objects), and explore ranges of variation and contextual phenomena marking the changing social relations of individuals and groups. Whereas Chapter 4 rarifies the aforementioned social relations, Chapter 5, “Cultures of Daily Practice,” attempts to ground us in the notion of Archaic people as people, engaging in a broad range of behaviors, often redundant, but patterned in a fashion that frames independent identities.

Sassaman’s arguments are consistent throughout, and are brought to bear on the explanations for change at the end of the Archaic in his concluding Chapter 6, “Structure Transformed.” Among other alternative hypotheses brought forth for this exploration are the roles of climate change and catastrophe as catalysts for terminal Archaic changes. This is surprising, given that the author does not favor climate or environment as either causal variables or as having much theoretical standing. Climate change can be temporally associated with any range of cultural phenomena and requires due caution when placed as primary causation. Are we surprised, then, that a series of local-level interactions and changes are primarily responsible for subcontinent-wide alterations at the end of the Archaic? It is unexpected that resurrected memory of the Archaic results in later cultures using plummets, or mimicking Poverty Point earthworks and the complex geometries that structured them? It is also here, however, that we learn that the “Archaic Cultures of Daily Practice” also included violence at different magnitudes, frequencies, and spatial locations and scales.

The Eastern Archaic Historicized is the kind of volume that could result from informal discussions between graduate students and a faculty member, perhaps at a coffee shop or over a beer, a venue where “have you ever thought about this possibility” questions might arise. Such discussions might draw on the broader anthropologist within us, and result in surprising reactions to the “possibilities.” This volume is in some respects the reader’s chance for such a comfortable chat with Ken Sassaman. As with any such chats, one may either agree or disagree, whole or in part. One can take issue with components of Sassaman’s critique, whereas one may come away thinking other parts might warrant more serious consideration. Perhaps closest to my own work is the notion that somehow researchers of the Eastern Archaic have little notion of hunter-gatherer complexity or spatial scope, and just firmly root themselves in neo-Stewardian ecological explanations, the latter which is a common theme both here and in other of Sassaman’s writings.

Alternatively, the concept of nested scalar (e.g., site level, local, sub-regional, and regional) spatial geometries organizing the structuring and marking of social spaces certainly warrants more concerted thought. Finally, I concur wholeheartedly with a perspective that includes high levels of individual mobility and social exchange and interaction, and both the needs for, and consequences of, such behavior by hunter-gatherers. At the same time, other questions linger. How does one demonstrate “resistance,” as in the case of Sassaman’s interpretation of Morrow Mountain, its contemporaries and successors? Should one see all sets of artifacts with unique characteristics, such as Dalton caches or hypertrophic bannerstone forms, as expressions of identity? Alternatively, were they cultural capital in contexts of emerging hierarchy and multiethnic boundedness and expression—hyper Practice Theory?

The Eastern Archaic Historicized encapsulates much of Sassaman’s prior work in a synthetic, well-written, and even entertaining book. His book tells a good story. For some, the latter is what anthropology should do. Sassaman also practices what he preaches, reproducing interpretive perspectives paralleling those of the series editors, and thereby reifying theoretical power hierarchies.

I end with the last prose line of the book: “I trust the somewhat detailed accounts of Archaic experiences outlined in this book, incomplete and speculative as they may be, contain enough empirical weight to encourage the next generation of specialists to give humanistic voice to Archaic histories yet to be written” (p. 213).

You be the judge.

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