

A PERSPECTIVE ON TRADITIONAL SITES

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DISCUSSION

In the '90s we will see Native American people take more and more public control of their own history. As repatriation gets underway, groups will make efforts to plan for their future generations by taking control over cultural data within their own facilities (curation facilities, tribal museums, and centers). Cultural resource managers will need to plan to assist Native peoples in seeking support for tribal grant programs to implement methods for managing resources on the local/tribal level. This will require planning for facilities which will meet federal/state standards and for training of Native personnel to manage the facilities. Coupled with this will be artifact/burial/curation agreements between developers/agencies and tribes for future projects and education programs (e.g., videos, brochures, and exhibits).

Historic preservation grants to Indian tribes have been increased in funding amounts, and more monies are available to tribes through other granting procedures. Numerous tribes in northern California have such grants for developing preservation policies, regulations for resource management, and library/archival repositories for the management of the resources in which their groups are involved. Ethnographers are a regular resource for data on the past and advice for future preservation. Funding for administrative buildings can now include museum or curation facilities as part of such a building (through HUD as well as other sources). Such facilities are in process with the assistance of anthropological professionals with museum experience. Our views on what makes up a site, an area, a group, and a culture will now have more impact than ever and if we are not careful may come back to haunt us in the future.

Are we providing (in both archaeology and ethnography) the most accurate and far-reaching portrayal of a site or sites? Can we meet the challenge?

As we are planning for the future we must not make the mistakes of the past. We have tended to examine cultural resources with a segmented view. Cultural resource legislation has given us the opportunity to amass larger amounts of data than we might ever have thought possible without it; however, perhaps because of funding, time constraints, and differential expertise, we have sometimes passed over deeper meaning that could provide all of us with a broader perspective of culture.

To gain this broader, perhaps more configurational view, I would like us to explore cultural resources more in terms of a cultural geography. This would mean that we would explore Native American concepts of meaning (if it's not too late). Thus, in addition to studying sites as cultural artifacts (itemized property surveys) we would investigate them, particularly traditional sites, as parts of ethnographic localities in the context of a complex whole (beyond the National Register nomination districts and multiple listings). This means exploring a locality beyond what is physically visible. I am interested in the meaning of topographical features and the connections people make as they distinguish, yet interconnect, their living areas and daily cultural adaptations with their non-ordinary universe. This goes beyond the "cultural inventories" of federal lands we have compiled to meet legislative requirements (e.g., P.L. 95-341), and asks for exploration of meaning and interpretations of the Native universe. Some examples of different levels of meaning in the California Native universe follow.

My concern over a total landscape under cultural resource management emerged during my work on the Gasquet-Orleans (G-O) Road study (Yurok, Karuk, and Tolowa groups in northwest California) when I asked people about their concept of sacred sites (i.e., "describe this place to me"). I learned the depth of meaning beyond a site as a cultural artifact and, particularly, I learned about fine points of meaning beyond topographical features for sacred sites (ambiance such as sight, sound, and smell, as well as concepts of distance between inter-connecting topographical features were important).

The G-O Road issue involved spiritual qualities; however, I have found comparable qualities for archaeological sites of the ordinary world as well. For example, during the examination of a Central Sierra Me-Wuk village site destined for a housing development I asked a consultant who had lived there as a child to describe his former home -- now an archaeological site. His description included the village itself but also included as part of his home, areas of particular meaning separate from the archaeological site (e.g., food collecting and processing areas, and trails with connections to other villages). In another case, during a discussion with a Me-Wuk friend about another archaeological site, she began to tell me about the meaning of the red-tailed hawk in the particular area and its relationship to the sites there. Her concept of the site added more dimensions to my questions of site meaning and how much we may have overlooked. These complexities haunt me; can the questions still be asked and the data replicated for verifiable answers?

On another level of meaning, Coso Hot Springs holds qualities for healing illness and for general well-being for Paiute-Shoshone people in the Owens Valley, California. This locality, once a small but pivotal village, is rich in mythology (all other western hot springs are but fragments of Sun's demise here and are thus connected to Coso). Coso holds meaning for life before there were people -- when animals and Sun held the worldly balance of life. Some creatures (bear and frog) remained there after people came, and the locality holds

strong in the minds of Owens Valley people for its physical and mental health potential and the camaraderie experienced when present there. Historical development of a health spa and other non-Indian uses had not curtailed Native activity at the spring; however, after the China Lake Naval Weapons Center was established and encompassed the locality, Native use was unattainable for many years. A long series of studies and negotiations was facilitated by the Paiute-Shoshone Band, the State of California, and the Weapons Center in the 1970s and these resulted in short-term use by permit only. The 1980s saw development of geothermal energy in one area of Coso, but Native people view this as jeopardizing the life of the spring as well as harming essential mud, water, and spiritual qualities (Frog may not have survived?). Getting to Coso is unwieldy and bureaucratic at best from the Indian point of view; however, Owens Valley people continue to dream of open access and future tribal trips are planned. Can we not see this place beyond simply the physical qualities of an archaeological site?

In another case, in Plumas County, a hydroelectric project would inundate a creek bed which contained important mnemonics of the travels of Earth Maker as he created the Northern Maidu world. Would it make a difference to anyone's contemporary life if, for example, outlines of Monster Women, remnants of the inner goo of Snake, or a dangerously evil monster pool, the only remaining elements of a larger configuration (already obliterated by water projects), were inundated by the County? These mnemonics are only perceptible if a person has prior knowledge of their existence, yet to those who have that knowledge the mnemonics are the major remaining physical evidence of this Maidu creation myth. Are these not sites?

The question of the veracity of such esoteric knowledge has been at issue in the courts. A present-day case in northern California is under litigation at this time. The upper Panther Meadow Spring on the south side of Mt. Shasta has no visual archaeological characteristics, yet it holds crucial value for Wintu people who come to the spring annually to make a connection with the non-

ordinary world. Today the spring is destined to be flanked a second time by a ski lift, the first lift having been destroyed by an avalanche which was brought on, according to Wintu people, by the tears of the mountain as it faced its own desecration. In this case, the sacred value of the mountain had been itemized in a list of sites prepared for the Forest Service under the requirements of AIRFA (American Indian Religious Freedom Act). In addition, Wintu claim to have informed Forest personnel of their concerns, but since on-ground evidence was not found, preparation for a second ski bowl proceeded until put on hold by court action. Several attorneys are now involved, and all sides are anxiously awaiting the next step.

The ski lift is but one of the concerns here; the Wintu are also troubled by nudists and New Age religious practitioners who stuff their sacred spring with crystals, plant flowers, and otherwise destroy the natural habitat with their activities. Further, Mt. Shasta houses "little people" whose residence undergoes constant disturbance. On another level of meaning it is even more difficult for non-Natives to comprehend that Native concepts extend to the mountain even when it is not being visited physically. Since it is the most supreme figure in the non-ordinary world, it embodies the peak level of every aspect of Wintu life and the point at death which moves a Wintu into the afterworld. Other mountains form a part of Shasta's complex whole, and being at various levels of applicability, call upon the main mountain for benefit in their specific endeavors. Many parts of this complexity have been altered and sometimes rendered un-serviceable because of non-Indian use. Neighboring Shasta and Pit River peoples hold the mountain in similar regard and have expressed similar concerns regarding its development. Had the government been open to a broader concept of site the present action might have been minimized.

I have studied California ethnography for over 30 years and have been an active ethnographer for at least 25 years. My long interest in geography has drawn me to Native concepts of land and their interpretations of the natural universe which translates into a coherent world. I am interested

in the way they conceptualize their geography -- from villages and home life to sacred domain apart from the ordinary world -- and how that geography gives meaning and distinction to people and place. The ethnogeography thus forms a complex unit of the Native cultural domain. Places and regions are integral to Native identity and are essential for identity maintenance and cultural continuity. Those of us working in cultural resources are well aware of the loss when locales are altered, destroyed, or placed off-limits. Our federal and state land management policies are often burdensome and ethnocentric in their interpretations. In other words, mainstream perceptions of places, attitudes, and actions often do not reveal the qualities of place. The question is, how can we convert Native American site realities into "understandable" non-Indian categories? Can we get beyond sites as discrete elements or cultural shards? Contiguous landscapes and districts are but a step toward understanding. We need a clearer conception of ethnogeography, and we must devote greater effort toward developing a methodology for examining the landscape. We need to integrate our methodologies. I would like to see the siblings, archaeology and ethnography, get back to the parent, anthropology.

Identification and management of the traditional cultural properties is important to us. We also stress the importance of consultation in a "culturally sensitive manner" that concerns the sensitivities and inner workings of the Native groups. As we continue to develop and perfect our guidelines we can expand and sharpen our concepts so we can seriously consider impacts on both sacred and profane geography in a more meaningful way. This would enable us to evaluate and thus manage properties in a sensitive manner. My hope is that we broaden and strengthen our view of Native American culture and explore concepts of meaning coupled with a configurational geography. I would like to view Native American life in terms of complex totalities rather than as individual artifacts, as some have done in the past.