

COMMENTS ON PAPERS GIVEN IN THE “STATE OF JEFFERSON” SYMPOSIUM

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As described by Joanne Mack of the University of Notre Dame, the “State of Jefferson” symposium was not about evaluating the concept of the State of Jefferson itself, but instead was using this historic definition of a land area as a geographical boundary to discuss what has been getting accomplished by archaeological research in a region that has received comparatively little attention in the profession.

Joanne informed me about the focus of the symposium in her following statement:

The symposium goal is to highlight current research in the area, as basically it is ignored by most California researchers in Anthropology, Archaeology, History, even as related to environmental issues. It is an attempt at a “wake-up call.” Trudy’s paper will highlight the history of the problem as well as the origin of the name. I and many of us who research questions in the area are sick and tired of the region called the “State of Jefferson” being left out of “California research surveys.” Just recently an interesting study was made available, which purported to show Native American perspectives on important food fish in the major rivers of California. It totally left out the Klamath and Shasta Rivers. That is just one recent example.

The session’s abstract also defines this approach. It says:

The “State of Jefferson” is a cultural region, which maps onto today’s political boundaries: northern California and southern Oregon west of the Great Basin, roughly from Roseburg to Redding and the Pacific to the Warner Mountains. It includes narrow coastal plains, highly dissected mountains, volcanic mountains and highlands, the Klamath Basin, Lake, and Marsh, the Modoc Plateau, and many valleys and rivers. The intra-relationships between plants, animals, geology, and cultures and the interactions with neighboring areas span thousands of years. Research in the area requires knowledge of the archaeology, ethnography, history, and environment beyond political, environmental, and cultural boundaries.

Let me begin with some comments about the “State of Jefferson” concept. The term is the name for this symposium, and it defines the region being discussed. Some of the presentations in this session refer to the “State of Jefferson” idea, though most of them refer to research that has been done in the region which is not connected to the concept of the “State of Jefferson.” One of the ideas leading to the formation of this symposium, however, is that the geographical area has been comparatively understudied and underemphasized by the archaeological communities in California and Oregon, so the session brought good attention to the archaeological significance of the region.

In my view, the comparatively low level of archaeological attention given to the “State of Jefferson” area is not quite the same as ethnographic attention. When one reviews the ethnographic literature of the West Coast, much of what is being called the “State of Jefferson” was regarded as quite prominent and attracted a good deal of ethnographic fieldwork. The Klamath River, in particular, was studied substantially, and was regarded as highly significant, with its prominent use of salmon fishing, which in turn supported significant population and community sizes and sedentism, with substantial housing and storage, and extensive exchange relationships. Kroeber (1925), for example, had substantial chapters covering the Yurok, Karok, Wiyot, Chilula, Hupa, Shastans, and Modoc cultures, for example (see Chapters 1-6, 8, and 19-22). Heizer (1978) had equally complete coverage (see the sections on pp. 137-154, 155-163, 164-179, 180-189, 211-224, 225-235, 236-248, with each section written by an

ethnographic specialist in that area). By comparison, in the regional archaeological overviews, the “State of Jefferson” region is not covered with comparative equality. Brian Fagan (2003), for example, discussed the coastal region of northwestern California, and did briefly cover the Karok area, but did not discuss the regions associated with the Shastans and Modoc. Michael Moratto (2004) did cover the “State of Jefferson” part of northern and northeastern California, but it is the shortest regional section in his book.

My own field experience has included work within this area being called the State of Jefferson. Although it has not been recent work, it has still remained a strong shaper of my perspectives. In 1967, for example, I did a CRM survey along the New River, a tributary of the Trinity River, near the village of Denny. In 1972, I did a training and survey program for the U.S. Forest Service along the Klamath River near Happy Camp. In 1978, I did a CRM survey project across the Siskiyou Mountains between Orleans on the Klamath River and Gasquet on the Smith River. The work involved a good deal of exposure to the region’s ecology and archaeological remains, both prehistoric and historic, with a lot of contacts with people and communities in the region, both Euro-American and Native American. The ethnographic studies done in the region have, in many cases, received a great deal of continuing examination in the field of ethnography, but as Joanne has noted, archaeological attention to the region’s evidence has been rather scant.

The comparatively low levels of archaeological research in this region may be related to the relatively low levels of modern population. The area has comparatively small-sized communities and comparatively few communities, in contrast with the coastal region, or the Sacramento Valley region. This difference produces less growth, fewer changes in land use, and fewer construction projects that have cultural resource management elements to them. The concept of the State of Jefferson has been an organizing focus for regional archaeologists for nearly four decades, but the 2015 session at the SCA conference made some very productive and valuable efforts to widen the scope of awareness.

COMMENTS ON PAPERS PRESENTED IN THE SESSION

Although all of the 13 papers presented in this session were related to the “State of Jefferson” region, they fall into several different patterns. The opening paper, by Trudy Vaughan, was called “The State of Jefferson: The Political and Cultural State of Mind.” This paper defined the concept of the “State of Jefferson” and provided good insights into its history and significance. One particularly valuable point she made is that today’s political boundaries cut through past regional patterns, and would do so similarly even if present-day state and county boundaries were in different places. Because archaeological research is heavily shaped by the institutions associated with political boundaries, archaeologists from one state tend not to pay a great deal of attention to the archaeological remains found on the other side of the border. This session crossed that line, however, and Trudy Vaughan’s perspective indicated it.

The other papers presented in the session can be grouped into several sets. One set is in the area of archaeo-botany. The paper by Susan Gleason, for example, was “Geophytic Use along the Upper Klamath River Canyon.” This paper concerned the use of geophytic plants as a food base in the upper Klamath River region. It fit in with the widespread interest in regional subsistence strategies over time and space. On one hand, it is consistent with many present-day interpretations of cultural ecology found in literature that covers the geographic region of the “State of Jefferson.” On another, it presented some truly innovative contributions to the literature of North American archaeology precisely because it brought to light an important subsistence strategy that was little-appreciated before now, with an excellent example of local adaptation based on differences in biomes.

The paper by Donn Todt and Susan Gleason, called “Living Artifacts: Home Garden Remnants along the Upper Klamath River of Oregon and California,” also contributed to the focus on archaeo-botany. It was about the botanical effects of historic farming and landscaping in the upper Klamath River basin. It added another significant contribution to the archaeological study of the “State of Jefferson” region. Botanical archaeology is an important specialization in many parts of the world, including this

one. Paleo-zoology has made larger impacts than paleo-botany, but botanical studies still have made many significant contributions. Its application to the upper Klamath River region has not yet been substantial, so their paper made an important contribution to learning more about the nature and impact of historical practices in subsistence and habitat management. Ornamental landscape history in particular has been less emphasized, so this study should have wide impacts.

Three other papers shared a quite different theme: the searches for lost sites. Brian Walsh, Joanne Mack, Mary Carpelan, and Elaine Sundahl co-authored a paper called “The Chaney Site: Does It Still Exist or Was It Destroyed?” The paper focused on the history of an archaeological study done nearly a half-century ago in the “State of Jefferson” region, more specifically in southern Siskiyou County. The project was done on a house pit in a prehistoric site that was being studied because of expected damage from planned construction of the Interstate 5 freeway which was to cross the site. Such cultural resource management projects are hardly unique to the “State of Jefferson” region. Also not unique was the fact that the excavation was done as an archaeological field school, and the results of that fieldwork did not get published, so the archaeological community was not informed about the site’s details. The excavator reported that the site had been destroyed by subsequent freeway construction, something also not locally unique. However, a more recent survey determined that the site had not been destroyed, so it was eligible for future study. The sharing of such information helps to integrate the “State of Jefferson” region with the much wider archaeological community.

This Chaney Site project is a classic example of tracking down a previously known but subsequently lost archaeological site. The Chaney Site is in Siskiyou County, which puts it in the “State of Jefferson” region. History of the study of the area, and of the site, was very well-presented in this paper, even though its significance to the concept of the “State of Jefferson” was not emphasized. Its importance, however, in understanding the significance of its environment, particularly in regard to obsidian, is important on a much larger geographical scale for understanding how and why cultural activities developed as they did, and that this region played an important role over a much larger area.

Another paper that took a similar theme was presented by Julie Cassidy. It is called “Gelsie’s Grotto Prehistoric: A ‘Ghost in the Closet’ Excavation Project.” This paper reported on a recent study of site locations in the McCloud Ranger District of the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Site distribution analyses are hardly unique to the “State of Jefferson” region or to any other particular region. While the local factors affecting site location and distribution vary, the studies themselves occur widely, so the topic is widely shared. This paper was therefore a very traditional-style report on a local research project, so it helps to illuminate the region’s archaeological record in ways that allow it to be compared and contrasted with the records in other regions. In this case, the study provided a good discussion of the application of new data and analytic methods to explain patterns. Local features always vary, which coincides with the view of the “State of Jefferson” area being underrepresented. The use of new approaches to answer widely occurring questions makes this study more broadly significant. The fact that the McCloud District area was a major source for obsidian, which served as a major trade commodity as well as an important material for local craft production, emphasizes both some of the unique features of the area and the significance of connecting this area with the much larger surrounding region.

A third paper that focused on searches for lost sites was “Looking for Shasta Villages on the Upper Klamath River,” by Joanne Mack and Mary Capelan. This paper was not connected topically to the “State of Jefferson” subject, but it did provide an interesting review of fieldwork, both ethnographic and archaeological, in the region. The archaeological fieldwork, which had been conducted by several different researchers, focused on identifying village sites that had been reported by earlier ethnographic studies in the Shastan traditional region, and with good success. One point of relevance is that the traditional Shasta territory was *not* ignored or overlooked by ethnographers and archaeologists, as is the suggested characteristic of the “State of Jefferson” region. The quantity of fieldwork done there has not been high, but that pattern is common for many rural areas, both because they are not near college campuses and because low population levels today generate relatively few cultural resource management

activities. Research is going on, however, and several scholars, such as Joanne Mack, have focused their research activities on this region. The idea that Shasta territory may have been larger than previously appreciated is itself an important contribution.

Another pair of papers focused more specifically on obsidian source locations and the distribution of that obsidian around Shasta territory. One of the papers, by Jeanne Goetz, was “One of Many: The Red Switchback Obsidian Source.” This paper drew attention to a research achievement that is centered in the southeastern part of the “State of Jefferson” region, but has far wider significance. It dealt with clarifying obsidian sources more precisely. Especially in the later part of the prehistoric period, obsidian was a very widely traded commodity, so it raises the significance of the “State of Jefferson” area to a far wider region. Improvements in research methods and analyses are themselves very praiseworthy, but they can also raise intellectual interactions, productivity, and appreciation. This project is a notable example.

The other paper in this set was “A Comparison of Two Shasta Villages’ Obsidian Use,” by Joanne Mack and Richard Hughes. The paper, as clearly indicated by its title, concerned determining the sources of obsidian found at two Shasta villages. It combined the use of excavated data with increasingly strengthening analytic technology to bring out greater knowledge about past patterns of behavior, economics, and interactions. As already noted, obsidian extraction and subsequent trading or exchange not only shaped local cultures and communities, but spread the impact much farther through regional interaction. This is another example of the “State of Jefferson” region not being quite as isolated and ignored as it has seemed.

Four more of the session’s papers dealt with the historic period and looked at things unrelated to the Shasta or to obsidian. One example is the paper presented by Jonathan Swartz and Marielle Black, called “The Snowman’s Hill Jump Site, McCloud, California: Using Technology to Recover History and Explore Anthropology.” This paper provided an exceptional archaeological example of an unusual historic ski recreation and training site located not far from Mt. Shasta. One thing that makes this study unique is that ski sites are not a common category in historical archaeology research, so it is contributing to a new area of study that has real cultural dimensions. Another factor is that the site is less than 100 years old, so the study is also expanding into a time period that is not yet widely explored archaeologically. This can make the “State of Jefferson” area rather distinctive in another dimension. The topic should lead to more expansion elsewhere in California and Oregon.

Another paper in this group was “Where’s Waldo? Archaeological Investigations at the Two Historical Waldo Cemeteries, Josephine County, Oregon,” by Chelsea Rose. This paper focused on some recent archaeological studies of a nineteenth-century mining community called Waldo. Waldo is located in southern Oregon in the Illinois River valley of Josephine County. The paper’s focus was on archaeological studies of two cemeteries at Waldo. The village of Waldo no longer exists, so the cemeteries are its primary remnants. One cemetery was for the Euro-American population, while the other was for immigrant workers from China. Chelsea did an excellent job of characterizing the community at Waldo in the 1850s, based mainly on historical research. She also noted an archaeological examination of back dirt from a grave site in the Chinese cemetery. The amount of artifacts recovered from that back dirt was very limited, so it is open to interpretation but only to limited analysis. The ability to compare Waldo’s cemeteries with cemeteries from other Gold Rush-period sites is therefore limited. Yet the paper might have done a bit more discussion of historic comparisons of Waldo with other Gold Rush-period communities in California and Oregon, in order to help overcome the “State of Jefferson” feeling of isolation and of being ignored in contrast to places in better-studied regions. This could help to strengthen archaeological interest in a region that has not yet received a great deal of attention.

Also part of this historic group was a paper by Heidi Shaw and Eric Ritter called “Ailments and Cures in Early Shasta County History.” Their paper approached the subject of early medical approaches in the nineteenth century in Shasta County. It was a very innovative study, in that this is a subject only mildly discussed in most archaeological studies. This particular study covered some innovative

excavations of medical sites, as well as the study of relevant historical documents. Historical archaeologists, of course, make the study of historical documents an important element of their research approach, but also link the historical statements with physical evidence gathered through archaeological fieldwork. This paper was very innovative in drawing attention to matters that had strong impacts on the lives of people and communities, so it made a very important contribution. The fact that it was centered in the region of the “State of Jefferson” makes it a very valuable contribution to the significance of this effort. It can lead to new insights about what was happening in nineteenth-century Shasta County relative to the rest of the Pacific Coast at that time.

The fourth paper in this group was by Mark Tveskov and was called “The Battle of Hungry Hill: History and Archaeology.” This paper focused on a very important event in the early history of the Grants Pass region in southwestern Oregon, which lies within the “State of Jefferson” region. The fact that the Battle of Hungry Hill involved major conflicts between Native Americans and Euro-Americans, and that it brought on a major defeat of the U.S. Army’s forces by Native American warriors makes it a particularly unusual and historically significant event. Also of major significance is the fact that several forms of research by archaeologists, from reconnaissance to archival studies, led to success in the research that traditional historical studies were unable to achieve. This is another example, not only of bringing to light more understanding of the past of the “State of Jefferson” region, but also of creating more innovative methods of study that can be applied more widely.

The session’s other paper provided a summary of goals that have been set up to guide research directions for the Modoc National Forest of northeastern California, which lies within the “State of Jefferson” region. This paper was also historic in that it followed the record of research activities to see what advances have resulted. The paper, by Gerry Gates, was entitled “Research Opportunities on the Modoc National Forest—Redux.” It reviewed the goals that have been defined to guide research directions in the Modoc National Forest region over the past 29 years. He first reported on those goals at the SCA annual conference in 1986. In that presentation, he listed 10 categories of topics of anthropological significance: six involving prehistoric archaeology, three involving historical archaeology, and one involving ethnography. In the present paper, he reviewed what has been done in each of these three categories in order to make advances. His review drew attention to the fact that much of the progress made in these areas involved graduate master’s thesis research and doctoral dissertation projects. Also contributing was fieldwork done by volunteers, along with Forest Service management projects. Not emphasized, but still significant, is the minimal effects of cultural resource management projects, which itself is a reflection of the “State of Jefferson” orientation and the comparatively minimal attention paid to the region by other archaeologists. Although Modoc National Forest is on the California side, its approaches have significant application throughout the “State of Jefferson” region and far beyond.

As a final comment, let me say that I thought the theme of this session turned out to be a great deal more productive than I had expected. Every one of the session’s papers has made some very productive contributions. It should go a long way toward spreading greater appreciation of the significance of the “State of Jefferson’s” archaeology.

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- Jonathan Swartz and Marielle Black: “The Snowman’s Hill Ski Jump Site, McCloud, CA: Using Technology to Recover History and Explore Anthropology”
- Chelsea Rose: “Where’s Waldo? Archaeological Investigations at the Two Historic Waldo Cemeteries, Josephine County, Oregon”
- Donn Todt and Susan Gleason: “Living Artifacts: Home Garden Remnants along the Upper Klamath River of Oregon and California”

- Heidi A. Shaw and Eric Ritter: “Ailments and Cures in Early Shasta County History”
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- Gerry Gates: “Research Opportunities on the Modoc National Forest Redux”
- Joanne M. Mack and Mary Carpelan: “Looking for Shasta Villages on the Upper Klamath River”
- Jeanne Goetz: “One of Many: The Red Switchback Obsidian Source”
- Joanne M. Mack and Richard E. Hughes: “A Comparison of Two Shasta Villages’ Obsidian Use”
- Susan Gleason: “Geophytic Use along the Upper Klamath River Canyon”
- Brian Walsh, Joanne M. Mack, Mary Carpelan, and Elaine Sundahl: “The Chaney Site: Does It Still Exist or Was It Destroyed?”
- Julie Cassidy: “Gelsie’s Grotto Prehistoric: A ‘Ghost in the Closet’ Excavation Project”

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