

OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FOUNDATION OF THE SOCIETY FOR CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY IN 1966

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The year 2016 is the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Society for California Archaeology. This paper summarizes contributions made by Kerry and Joe Chartkoff toward the creation and launching of the Society for California Archaeology. The idea began with us in 1966 after a regional conference in Las Vegas in which California archaeology was treated with little respect or service within the larger pool of Southwestern archaeology. A meeting held later that year at UCLA among several California archaeologists led to the idea of creating a society devoted specifically to California archaeology. The Society for California Archaeology was thus launched, and quickly became the primary form of interaction among California archaeologists.

The Society for California Archaeology (SCA) has been with us now for a half-century, and has been growing and becoming ever more productive and significant over time. My wife, Kerry Chartkoff, and I are among the founding members of the Society. Now that the Society has reached its 50th year, its formation, growth and development reflect many fascinating changes, developments and accomplishments over that half-century period. One element of appreciation for its decades of accomplishment is an understanding of the factors that led to its creation and progress that was made against wide-ranging problems after the Society got underway.

CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY PRIOR TO THE START OF THE SCA

When the SCA was created in 1966, California archaeology, as a field of study, had been active for many decades, but was not a unified or integrated concept in many respects. Archaeology research had been going on in many parts of the state, and a number of noted researchers were involved, but it was not done by an integrated group that was pursuing the study of California as an entity through archaeology as a perspective. Archaeologists worked in Anthropology departments at several universities, such as the University of California at Berkeley and UCLA. For example, at UCLA, where we were graduate students, Clement Meighan was the senior California archaeologist, while at Berkeley, Robert Heizer still held the top position for California archaeology. Meighan and Heizer were not hostile to each other at all, but they were not close collaborators, either, so they reflected how the different campuses stood more apart than unified in many respects.

Both the Federal government and the State of California had already put in place a series of laws and rules to protect sites and antiquities from destruction and permanent loss through construction projects. Today, this perspective is known as Cultural Resource Management, or CRM. Fifty years ago, it was more commonly called salvage archaeology. The field of salvage archaeology was already underway in the 1950s as both a protective activity and as a professional career area outside of government agencies and higher education. In addition, there was a great deal of interest in archaeology among individuals in the general society who were neither academically involved nor involved in government management. This area was known as avocational archaeology, or amateur archaeology. It referred to groups of individuals who pursued their interests in archaeology together because of their personal fascination and commitment. There also were several regional archaeological societies in different parts of the state which included avocational archaeologists as well as professionals. Fascination with California archaeology was widespread, but not unified or coordinated.

THE STATUS OF CALIFORNIA ARCHAEOLOGY PRIOR TO 1966

As noted, by the 1950s and early 1960s, archaeology in California had already become quite large in terms of the number of individuals and institutions involved. It was widespread around the state and showed a good deal of dynamism in its activities and discoveries. Archaeology in California was being taught and pursued at a number of state university and college campuses, as well as at a number of private colleges and universities, and community colleges. Administrative and management positions involved with archaeology had been established in a number of government programs, at many levels, ranging from city and county to state and federal, involving management bureaus as well as parks and museums.

As a particularly significant element of leadership in California archaeological research, most of the present-day campuses of the University of California system had been established by then, and most of those campuses had Anthropology programs which included archaeology. The California archaeologists who taught at the University of California campuses in general had particularly strong status levels in the research community (Chartkoff 1972).

What had not emerged, however, was a unified community of California archaeology, either as a collaborating community of researchers, or as a unified, comprehensive field of interest which saw the archaeology of California as the central subject. Instead, there were a number of divisions separating the population of California archaeologists into a number of interest groups that tended to do fairly limited communication, cooperation, and development of larger and more integrated perspectives based on the interweaving of the research findings made by different groups in different parts of the state. In some cases it involved limited communication for data sharing and development of perspectives at higher levels of integration. In other cases, there were actual conflicts between groups and refusals to collaborate or cooperate.

This pattern was not one that was occurring throughout the United States at that time, although it was not unique to California. Several other parts of the continent had archaeological communities that were more truly integrated and had developed larger-scale regional perspectives. Examples included the Southwest, the Northwest Coast, the Great Plains, the Mississippi River region, the Great Lakes, and the Atlantic Coast as some productive cases.

Scholars doing research in California archaeology participated in regional and national scholarly organizations where their findings could be shared and each could learn from colleagues. A number of California archaeologists typically attended annual conferences of national organizations, such as the Society for American Archaeology. California was involved with an active regional society that covered several states: the Southwestern Anthropological Association. A good deal of archaeological research was published, sometimes in national journals, and sometimes in university-based publications, in addition to reports that were prepared as part of cultural resource management projects, though those reports themselves tended to be held by the funding or licensing agencies. Meetings of archaeologists in a region were fairly common, but the linkages between different regions were much less active. Archeologists who came together in San Diego, for example, were not often involved in meetings held by archaeologists in the Los Angeles area, and vice versa.

There had emerged a number of divisions, often serious, among archaeologists from different parts of the state. Archaeologists from other parts of the United States and Canada seldom perceived California archaeology as a unified general subject, in contrast with the archaeology of the Southwest, or the Great Plains, or the Mississippi region, or the Arctic and Sub-Arctic. Within California, there was a good deal of division between Northern California and Southern California, and more regional divisions of smaller parts of the state, without very much sense of larger-scale, shared patterns. Relationships between academic archaeologists and avocational archaeologists were often at difficult levels, as were linkages between government archaeologists at different levels of government and different kinds of institutions.

A MOVEMENT TOWARD UNIFICATION

A number of California archaeologists in different parts of the state were aware of these problems, and by the mid-1960s were thinking about different possible ways to approach them. My wife, Kerry, and I were graduate students at UCLA at that time, and we both became particularly impressed by these problems when we attended the 1966 annual conference of the Southwestern Anthropological Association, which was held in Las Vegas, Nevada, in the spring of that year. At that time, a number of California archaeologists attended the SWAA annual conferences. In those days, a number of California archaeologists would attend the SWAA conferences, where it was possible to organize a few lecture sessions for archaeologists who did their research in California. However, at that time the SWAA gave comparatively little attention to California archaeology as a general subject. Recognition was primarily at the level of region and topic, not about California as a whole. Also, California archaeology took up a relatively small part of the conference agenda, given the number of researchers who worked in California compared with the other parts of the Southwest. As a side note, when we arrived at the conference hall in Las Vegas, we happened to witness a hostile confrontation between a California avocational archaeologist and a government archaeologist who worked in California. This was another sign of dis-unity and non-productivity.

My wife, Kerry, and I were both already active in California archaeology, since we had been involved in a number of fieldwork projects while undergraduates and had begun graduate school at UCLA. In February of 1966, we had attended a meeting in Petaluma of the Northwestern California Archaeological Society which was focused on scientific methods in archaeology. The meeting reflected the general lack of interaction among archaeologists from different parts of the state over research methodology as well as relationships between local archaeological data from different regions. But some of the attendees at this meeting had spoken about their concerns over the lack of unity among California archaeologists and effects both on the intellectual comprehension of a unified subject of California archaeology and the barriers between interaction and cooperation among researchers from different parts of the state and hoped to find some way to overcome those problems.

After the SWAA conference at Las Vegas, when back in Los Angeles, Kerry and I were having a dinner at a coffee shop on Santa Monica Boulevard in eastern Santa Monica. We were talking about problems with salvage archaeology, and we also discussed our experience at the SWAA conference. Kerry was particularly aware of the lack of recognition of California archaeology as an entity, and suggested that it would be good to create a statewide organization that could both unify the field of California archaeology and provide more communication among its many sectors. It would then be more possible to develop a shared perspective of California archaeology as a whole, and also to develop a political strategy to lobby government agencies more successfully for needed reforms.

Not too long later, a meeting was held at the University of California campus at Davis. It was set up by other archaeologists who had concerns similar to ours. Kerry and I attended that meeting. The idea of forming a focal analytical group to study the problems and come up with possible solutions was strongly supported.

By that time, I had become Chief Archaeologist of the UCLA Archaeological Survey, because the prior Chief Archaeologist, Donald S. Miller, was leaving in order to go to graduate school in New York State. As I was moving into the Chief Archaeologist position, I used the opportunity to call together a meeting of a number of archaeologists from around the state, both academic and governmental, to discuss the idea of creating a state-wide archaeological organization. Eighteen people attended, including academic archaeologists such as Tom King and Rob Edwards, government archaeologists such as Paul Schumacher and Fritz Riddell, museum archaeologists such as Charles Rozaire, and amateur archaeologists such as Corrine Coles.

The meeting had been expected to be difficult, but turned out to be much more productive. It was held at the UCLA Student Union Conference Room later in 1966, which was a good deal more formal and decorative than the meeting room at the Archaeological Survey building next door. We also were able

to get guest rooms for all the attendees at a good-quality nearby motel, so they did not have to do fieldwork-style camping, and that also seemed to have made the atmosphere more positive. The idea of creating a statewide organization to unify California archaeology from perspectives of research, intellectual interaction, administration, political effort, and social cohesion became widely accepted.

The group came to a unified decision about the good value of establishing a statewide organization of all kinds of California archaeologists, and of strengthening the concept of California archaeology. The Society for California Archaeology was created. David Fredrickson was selected to be the Society's interim president until a formal election method was established.

The Society for California Archaeology quickly became a dynamic creator of many kinds of relationships as well as a truly valuable engine to power the growth of research, scholarship, relationships among many groups and organizations, and the growth and transmission of knowledge. For example, the SCA began annual conferences which have generated thousands of thoughtful and valuable reports and perspectives, and have made them widely circulated through publication and web sites. Publication of diverse research reports also has been strongly promoted. The enrichment of knowledge and the strengthening of a complete California perspective has resulted. One outcome has been the publication of several books about California archaeology, which we really did not have prior to the formation of the Society for California Archaeology (e.g., Chartkoff and Chartkoff 1984; Fagan 2003; Jones and Perry 2012; Moratto 1984).

The evolution of archaeology in California over the past 50 years has been remarkably valuable, thanks to the vast amount of productivity of the Society. So now we can recognize and appreciate a half-century of development and accomplishments by a great many California archaeologists to make our state-wide archaeological community be warm, interactive and very productive. Thanks to you all!

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