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Madsen and Rhode: *Across the West: Human Population Movement and the Expansion of the Numa*

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Author

Wilde, James D

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times in a discussion of games today, with both current expressions of traditional games and participation in the repertoire of Euroamerican games played on regional and national levels.

Gendar's book is well researched and handsomely produced. The front cover presents a marvelous painting by L. Frank entitled "This is Yo Luck," depicting Bear with various game equipment scattered about her feet. This book is a welcome reminder to anthropologists that California Indian people were not always involved in making "optimal choices" but, indeed, enjoyed themselves immensely on many occasions. Scholars will find this volume delightful, but it will be the interested laymen and teachers who will find it most valuable; it is an ideal complement to anthropological/historical materials for classes addressing California Indian culture—I suspect that many children, and even adults, will try to play and consequently enjoy some of these games that they read about here.



Across the West: Human Population Movement and the Expansion of the Numa. David B. Madsen and David Rhode, eds. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994, xi + 255 pp., 37 figs., 15 tables, 18 maps, \$51.95 (paper).

Reviewed by:

JAMES D. WILDE

7923 Moon Walk, San Antonio, TX 78250.

How do people come to occupy their current and past "homelands"? This is the fundamental question asked during a few days in May 1992,

at Lake Tahoe, California, at a meeting called the Numic Roundtable. *Across the West* grew out of that roundtable, and the editors and authors are to be commended for the fine volume they have produced.

The work explores what has come to be known as the "Numic Problem," which in essence concerns when and how the ancestors of various speakers of Numic languages came to occupy most of the Intermountain West. Numic is a language family that includes Ute, Paiute, Shoshone, and other Uto-Aztecan groups. Peoples speaking these languages were encountered by early Euroamericans throughout the southern Colorado River drainage, Great Basin, northern Colorado Plateau, and Snake River Plain. The idea that Numic groups were relatively new to the region can be traced to some of the first chroniclers of the Euroamerican expansion in the middle nineteenth century. Naturally the questions arose, "Where did they come from?" and "When did they get here?" Answers were only generally addressed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A picture of Numic peoples spreading across their historic range in a vast fan-shaped wave from an ancestral homeland somewhere in southwestern North America became dominant after linguist Sydney Lamb proposed it in 1958. Since then, the idea of the "Numic Expansion" has gained nearly the status of an old saw.

However, as Madsen and Rhode observe in their introduction, the apparent consensus around this issue among archaeologists and linguists is now broken. Why? They note four important reasons. The first is that local culture histories have not been well developed in the Intermountain West. This means that models of Numic prehistory cannot be rigorously tested using local cultural sequences. Secondly, the mechanics or processes that account for past migrations in the region have only recently begun to be formulated. Thirdly, the problems associated with explaining Numic prehistory are part and parcel of

larger problems common to all of anthropology, namely, what are the relations between material culture and ethnicity? And what are the relations between biological affinity and language? Finally, the questions regarding Numic prehistory have not been “framed appropriately and tested against a wide array of existing information” (p. 4), which is what one could say regarding any current debate about understanding the past.

What to do? Start with an assessment of current knowledge and ideas about Numic prehistory, and then provide the framework for future work on the problem. This is exactly what this book does, in 23 papers by prominent regional archaeologists. The papers are grouped in three sections: background, theoretical and methodological issues, and regional perspectives. The editors present the problem and an overview in the Introduction, then summarize all the papers in a final chapter titled *Where Are We?*. The volume is comprised of a comprehensive assessment of the current thinking on Numic prehistory. It attempts, mostly in passing, to extend that assessment into a framework for understanding past migrations in other parts of the world.

No volume like this could succeed without first establishing a context for the current debate. This is done well in the first few papers. Mark Q. Sutton and David Rhode outline the history of the “Numic Debate.” Donald Grayson focuses the historic discussion on glottochronology, the method of extracting time from degrees of linguistic diversion, that formed the basis of the idea that Numic groups spread rapidly across the Intermountain West about 1,000 years ago. Although glottochronology has been largely discredited by linguists, archaeologists have yet to rigorously test alternate models of just when Numic peoples spread throughout the area. Because of this, Grayson says we must stop acting as if we know when the ancestors of the modern Numa came to occupy their historic homelands. David Madsen seems to contradict Grayson, arguing that the linguistic model has

usually been bent to fit the archaeological data, rather than the other way around. He proposes that, at least for the Colorado Plateau, Numic movement into the region around 1,000 years ago seems a highly plausible event. Madsen argues that rather than continuing to debate the “if” and “when” of the migration/diffusion of new languages into the region, we should instead focus our attention on the “why” and “how” of such processes.

One very practical reason why we *do* need to continue to ask the “when” questions is discussed in Chapter 2. Recent Federal legislation, specifically the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), brings to the forefront questions of “who was where when” in prehistory. Implications of the Numic Problem with regard to such legislation are laid out in this interesting chapter by Pat Barker and Cynthia Pinto. Both are Bureau of Land Management archaeologists and, therefore, entrusted with management of the thousands of archaeological sites in the Great Basin. They discuss the Numic Debate in terms of another debate in modern American culture: “Who owns the past?” In an age when more and more control of intellectual and real “property” is taken from scientists and given to nonscientists, it is critical for archaeologists and land managers to exercise great care in associating ethnic groups with archaeological cultures. In large part, the continued ability to study the material of the past relies on us, as archaeologists, being able to tell a good story, backed up with solid evidence and grounded in tight theory. Barker and Pinto advise that we all must be aware that native traditionalist culture history—which is always a good story, and which often contradicts the archaeological record—might, in fact, have more merit in the nation’s courts than all of our evidence and interpretations. I agree, and maintain that rather than accept this bleak assessment as prophesy, we need to begin to work with Native Americans and the public at large to tell the

stories of the land we all share. It is critical that we archaeologists actually have some competing, highly plausible, and generally coherent stories to tell, rather than squabbling among ourselves about esoterica and jargon. *Across the West* is an important step in this direction, because it lays out most of the squabbles, as well as the data behind them.

The next sections deal with theories, methods, and regional perspectives to come to grips with the "Numic Expansion." C. Melvin Aikens reviews a good deal of relevant linguistic and archaeological data. He argues that Numic ancestors established themselves in the central Great Basin by around 3,500 B.P. These mobile hunter-gatherers were well-adapted to the prevailing aridity of the region, and were little affected during moister times that were conducive to the establishment of relatively sedentary and populous groups of marsh dwellers and corn farmers in areas to the north, east, and south. Around 1,000 B.P., as the regional climate became more arid, Numic hunter-gatherers spread out east and west from the central Basin, filling areas formerly occupied by marsh dwellers and farmers. The Numa expanded because, in essence, their arid-adapted strategies of mobility were the most viable adaptations for living in the now drier, more variable Intermountain West. Aikens suggests that environmentally based patterns of expansion out of and retraction back into the arid portions of the Great Basin were probably cyclical in the past, rather than unique to the Numa. Aikens' view is called a "Basinist" perspective by the editors, and it is shared to varying degrees by Richard Holmer and Donald Grayson in other chapters in the book.

Another perspective, called "Traditionalist" by Madsen and Rhode, is championed by Robert Bettinger. Bettinger throws a stone or two at Aikens and other "Basinists." He argues that the patterns of language tell much of the story. The most divergent of the Numic languages occupy a relatively small area in the southernmost

Great Basin. These must have been the first to split from a common tongue. The least divergent, hence the most recently isolated, occupy three broad "fans" extending away from the southern Basin toward the north, northeast, and east. These "fans" generally show the dispersal of Paiute, Shoshone, and Ute speakers across the Intermountain West. The fact that the "ancestral" languages are confined to a small area, and the descendent languages are widespread, yet relatively homogeneous, suggests a rapid and recent radiation away from the "heartland." This is precisely the idea described by Lamb in 1958. Bettinger says it represents the linguistic data better than any other story.

In addressing the "why" question, Bettinger elaborates on his and Baumhoff's earlier proposal that Numic folks were simply more efficient in processing and storing natural resources than were earlier peoples in the region. The Numic "processors" essentially outcompeted other hunter-gatherers, eventually including the foraging modes of Anasazi and Fremont farmers to the east. What about the archaeological data? This is where things get thorny. Bettinger acknowledges that the model he proposes is relatively simple, but the archaeological evidence is complex, and much of it cannot be evaluated "given the kind of data presently available" (p. 46). Other "Traditionalist" chapters include those by James Adovasio and David Pedlar, Catherine Fowler, Joseph Jorgensen, and Mark Q. Sutton.

The third perspective is that of the "Peripheralists." This view is from the edges looking inward, and it is at the edges of the Numic region where most of the action was. Each author in this camp focuses on the archaeology of a specific area on the margins of the Numic Expansion: Joel Janetski on the easternmost Great Basin, Margaret Lyneis on the lower Colorado River drainage, David Madsen on the Mesa Verde Anasazi region, and Alan Reed on the middle Colorado River drainage. Steve Simms fits in

the peripheralist camp, but he focuses primarily on important social and biological issues as they might have played out in the eastern Basin and northern Southwest. Simms, I think, captures the essence of the answer to the "Numic Problem":

Perhaps neither migration nor spread is the best term . . . because for archaeologists and non-specialists alike, migration seems to connote mass movement. This [the Numic Expansion] is a case involving mid-latitude, cold desert foragers with low population density, large home ranges, and high adaptive diversity. Numic spreadings over the scale of time we are dealing with were likely the most common form of migration in history, the movement of individuals and small, functionally-linked groups in a pluralistic context with fluid ethnic and linguistic affiliations [p. 83].

How does one find archaeological evidence of this kind of "migration"? What exactly are the kinds of data one would look for to "see" evidence of the Numic Expansion in the archaeological record? Catherine Fowler points out that a transition from pre-Numic to Numic throughout the region cannot be seen in the archaeological record without first defining what specifically, if anything, constitutes Numic and Proto-Numic material culture. One also must know what comprises the material culture of groups occupying the regions prior to and possibly coincident with the arrival of the Numic newcomers. The fact that material culture does not readily equate to ethnic identity complicates the situation. Fowler sets out to define an ethnographic material culture to identify the Northern and Southern Paiute and the Western Shoshone, as well as some of their close neighbors. She finds what Adovasio and Pedlar also find: the only clear and consistent ethnic marker for Numic peoples is a basketry technology comprising "plain and diagonal open and close twined basketry in an up-to-the-right direction of twists" (p. 112). Unfortunately, basketry is preserved (and found) almost exclusively in dry cave sites in the Intermountain West. These kinds of sites

are extremely rare in the southern half of the Great Basin, precisely where we think the Proto-Numic came from. Even so, better dating of basketry already collected from northern and eastern dry caves probably will provide some definitive answers about the Numic Expansion outside the "homeland."

Another class of artifacts related to later Numic groups is brownware ceramics, although no one claims formally that brownwares are ethnic markers similar to twined basketry. Brownware sherds are considered "diagnostic" of the Late Prehistoric Period (read Numic Period) in Utah and Nevada. David Rhode explores the dating of these ceramics using thermoluminescence. His preliminary results show that southeastern Great Basin brownwares are earliest, dating to around A.D. 800. They are coeval and coexistent with Anasazi and Fremont ceramics for about 500 years in this area. What does this mean? Rhode cautions that we really do not know if the spread of brownware ceramics in the Late Prehistoric Period has anything to do with the Numic Expansion. He calls for more kinds of direct dating, such as thermoluminescence on ceramics and accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) radiocarbon dating of basketry and other artifacts, to refine chronologies and begin to test whether certain artifact classes, and changes in artifact classes, might be spatially and temporally associated with population movements in the region.

Many other fine chapters are found in *Across the West*. Some I have not mentioned are by Robert Elston, Richard Hughes, Kevin Jones, Martha Knack, Mary Lou Larson and Marcel Kornfeld, the late Christopher Raven, and David Thomas. Should you buy this book? Yes, for at least two reasons. First, it represents a comprehensive crosscut of many major players on the Great Basin scene today. It is not as lively as the arm-waving, spit-flying, finger-pointing arguments you might see between some of the authors at an archaeological conference, but you

will be able to find subtler versions of barbs and stings in several of its chapters. Hence, it is not merely a reading and quoting circle. Secondly, it focuses on issues we *should* be able to resolve: the how, when, where, and why of the expansion of related language groups, over a large area, in relatively recent times. The book shows you why we cannot resolve the "Numic Problem" right now. It also will give you hope that resolution is coming. Resolution in increments, but resolution nonetheless.



Central California Coastal Prehistory: A View from Little Pico Creek. Terry L. Jones and Georgie Waugh. University of California, Los Angeles, Perspectives in California Archaeology, Vol. 3, 1995, 186 pp., 68 figs., 120 tables, 3 appendices, bibliography, index, \$22.00 (paper).

Reviewed by:

WILLIAM R. HILDEBRANDT

Far Western Anthropological Research Group, Inc.,
P.O. Box 413, Davis, CA 95617.

This monograph reports on the excavation of two sites located on the north coast of San Luis Obispo County, California (CA-SLO-175 and CA-SLO-1259). The sites are situated on either side of Little Pico Creek, and were investigated on multiple occasions during the 1960s and 1980s. Site CA-SLO-175 was originally excavated in 1965 and 1966 by David Abrams during his undergraduate days at the University of California, Los Angeles; both sites were later inves-

tigated by a team of Caltrans archaeologists in 1989, under the direction of the authors. Based on an integrative analysis of materials from both the Abrams and Caltrans excavations, Jones and Waugh organize their findings into discrete time periods and use this information to address outstanding research issues of the region. It is an attractive volume with excellent graphics work by Tammara Ekness, Peter Mundwiller, Rusty van Rossmann, Betsy Bertrando, and Scotty Thompson, and will be an important reference for future studies along the central coast of California.

The report is divided into 11 chapters. Chapter 1 provides a brief introduction to the study, followed by a review of the environmental, ethnographic, and prehistoric contexts of the region (Chapter 2, *Research Context*). This chapter is highlighted by a comprehensive review of previous archaeological studies in the region, focusing largely on explanatory models of population replacement, subsistence intensification, social intensification, and settlement organization. Chapter 3 provides a basic review of field and laboratory methods, while Chapters 4 and 5 deal with site structure and chronology. Chronological organization of the findings is based on eight radiocarbon dates, 62 source-specific obsidian hydration readings, and 855 temporally sensitive beads and ornaments. All marine shell dates are corrected for isotopic fractionation and marine reservoir effects. Beads and ornaments are carefully described and discussed with respect to their temporal placement within other sites in the region. Spatial analysis of these data revealed two major periods of occupation at the sites: Little Pico Creek I (Early Period, 3,500 to 600 B.C.) and Little Pico Creek II (Middle Period, 600 B.C. to A.D. 1250). After a possible hiatus in the use of the Little Pico Creek site complex between A.D. 1250 and 1500, Jones and Waugh also found evidence for a small ephemeral occupation dating from A.D. 1500 to contact.