
Arthur S. Iberall

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol40/iss40/9
copper datings back from seven kya to nine or ten kya at Cayonu. The Soviet authors are confident that their explorations exhibit findings of copper ornaments and tools from perhaps 8-8.5 kya to 6-6.6 kya (1981 report).

Chapter 13 is a 1984 recapitulation of what the Soviet findings achieved in clarifying a history of Northern Mesopotamia.

Chapter 14, written by the American editor, Yoffee, is his 1983 paper on Mesopotamian Interaction Spheres. It was because of that paper, given at a USA-USSR symposium on the archaeology of the Near East, that the editor began to plan to get the Soviets to help interpret their work, e.g. in this volume.

A bibliography covering material of some relevance to both Soviet and non Soviet work referred to by the Soviets from 1936 to 1992 is included.

The nonspecialist reader will find it useful to review the modern background in the UNESCO series, especially Mellaart's chapter, for the overall panorama against which the Soviet contributions to Northern Mesopotamia history from nine kya to about six kya were made. We will also remind the civilizationist reader that the trend to urban civilizations has its startup in the late Natufian, according to us (Iberall, White, Wilkinson, Foundations) and that it will pay to know what came before.

Arthur S. Iberall

A TEXTBOOK ON PREHISTORIC MESOAMERICA


The reviewer, as a physical generalist, is undertaking the review of a specialist textbook; the reader is thus forewarned.
The problem of the prehistory of the Americas is complicated by the need to resolve its relatively specialized startup process (ten-forty kya, thousands of years ago), and then to segue into its specialized regional decompositions.


Chapter 1 (Introduction) briefly characterizes the history under study as consisting of:

- a "Lithic" phase (27-9 kya) with people possibly there as early as 42 kya;
- an "Archaic" phase (9-3.5 kya), transition from hunter-gatherer to agricultural village society;
- "Formative" phase (3.5-1.8 kya = 150 A.D.), development of early civilizations;
- "Classic" phase (150-300 to 650-900 A.D.), population growth and elaboration of classic forms;
- "Early Postclassic" (650-900 to 1250), reformulation of new cultures;
- "Late Postclassic" (1250-1519), a culmination of the reformulated cultures.

This history has itself a further history of study, in five periods: (a) Spanish conquest and immediate aftermath—1519-70; (b) use of material assembled by Europeans—1570-1790, earliest 1579-1580, second set from dying days of Spanish empire, 1742-1792; (c) a broadened scholarly study and period of awakened national interest, 1787-1890; (d) a remarkable group of pre-Columbian historians, 1890-1910; (e) modern American anthropology, in its integrated form, 1910 - , currently a quite heterogeneous group.
The Lithic phase gets five pages of discussion in Chapter 2 on the first immigrants into the region and how they lived. The author throws out too many numbers for early datings prior to 16 kya; e.g., possibly to N. Chile 17 kya; central Andes 24 kya; Meadowcroft 17 kya; perhaps 100 kya into the Americas; 30 kya; projectile points after 16 kya; Valsequillo 20-24 kya; southern basin of Mexico 22-27 kya; 20-40 kya; 24 kya as quite likely; Stark's Paleoindian I. Presence after 16 kya, i.e., 11-16 kya, of hunters using less than big hunting techniques, seems possible. Secure stone points, e.g., Clovis-like, are dated 9-7 kya, and lend some security to a median earliest date of about 13 kya for human hunters.

This reviewer would like to suggest to the author and to ISCSC readers a discussion more like the following to introduce the Prehistoric phase, in Mesoamerica and the Americas in general:

It seems perfectly clear that humans did not originate, by any genetic transformation, from any earlier hominid species in the Americas. Thus they came from elsewhere, i.e., Asia. As a fairly authoritative recent source, (De Laet, *History of Humanity*, UNESCO, 1994, Map 27, p. 292, from the Origin of humanity in America), shows about 17 possible "oldest" sites from north (Old Crow) to southernmost (Cueva Fall). The dates range from 43 to 11 kya. If their ages are plotted in rank order, their moderately straight line has a median value of about 20 kya. The ordering thus produced, loosely speaking, diminishes in age from north to south. Again, this is consistent with entry from the north via Asia. Thus, if the data were reliable, they might suggest entry at perhaps the 40 kya time frame and reaching the southern end at perhaps 10-11 kya. The problem is that the data are not all reliable. The subeditor, in six chapters on the Americas, offers a fair overview in stating that passage over the land bridge from Asia, in the far north, was open in the periods from 65-45 kya and from 35-10 kya.

If one winnows out all the uncertain data, say, per the opposite extreme of Paul Martin who 'votes' for perhaps a 15 kya entrance to the north and an 11 kya end to the south (with the Folsom industry the major one that took), and with the Monte Verde 13 kya story now almost at the general point of acceptance,
and then one also accepts early entrance of some initial wave such as Old Crow as far back as penetration by a 40-45 kya start, but that did not "take," and also grasps the physical idea that the diffusive scale which took was at a diffusion rate of about 1-1.5 mi per yr., this could cover a 9,000 mi diffusive journey in about 7 ky.

This says, bringing all the stories together, that the diffusion that took began northerly from about 18 kya, and reached the southern tip by about 11 kya. If one examines the Patagonia story in Chapter 33, it seems clear that humans settled there about 12 kya. Thus, there is a clean story for early starts in the Americas in a first 35-40 kya wave, which really got nowhere; perhaps a number of others, and finally, the ones that "took" at perhaps 18 kya or so, that ultimately diffused to the southern tip at a feasible diffusion of people by 11 kya, just as agriculture, and pottery, and metallurgy diffused through Eurasia (see, van Doren Sterne, Ancient Europe, 1969). Such a story would result in an arrival in Mesoamerica and thus represent a lithic period beginning at perhaps 12-10 kya, perhaps with 'Archaeolithic' forms appearing at an earlier horizon of 20 kya (per Chapters 21, Maps 29,30, but severely winnowed). At least, that is the way that this reviewer would have written a textbook introduction, "Prehistoric Development."

After Folsom point technology, 10-12 kya, as one moves into the Archaic phase in a transition to agricultural village societies 9-3.5 kya or so, one can sit down with the other four books mentioned, particularly Coe et al., and trace the more detailed history. This reviewer, for one, per his college training (in the 30s) would skim through these five books, including Adams', to gain an idea of how the transformation to horticulture-agriculture and pastoralism took place.

A greater pleasure would have been that of simultaneously grasping the comparability of the Near Eastern, the Mesopotamian, the American, the Far Eastern, and the African social evolutions (not to neglect the Australian and the Oceanian). A most wonderful book that connects up with the civilizational evolution of cities, very much in Jane Jacobs' style, is J. Hardoy, Pre-Columbian Cities, 1973. Stereotypically to separate those comparable stories of urbanization is absolutely foolish. An
introduction, for the student, to the time scale for the Mesoamerican development, has to be very close to the time scale for the Near East story. In *Foundations*, we have been able to write some reasonably proper stories for their respective social evolutions, at perhaps 2,000 year intervals, for the period from 22 kya to the present, not by typology but by dynamics.

Arthur S. Iberall


We have entered a new stage in civilizational studies, if recent research and thinking by such as Frank and Gills, Chase-Dunn and Hall, and Sanderson are as eye-opening as appears to me to be the case. Apparently I am not alone in this opinion, as Albert Bergesen thinks we are experiencing a Kuhnian paradigm crisis.

The "Big Picture" is what has always held great attraction for me. I pursued graduate training in geography because it provided a comprehensive and comprehensible approach to the entire planet Earth. I looked to Marxism to provide a broad understanding of human society, but gradually became appreciative of its several serious shortcomings. I supplemented my geographic interests by tapping into sociology, anthropology, and history, while seeking a more realistic (and sufficiently broad and comprehensive) conceptual frame of reference replacing Marxism and its antiquated competitors. In this search, I was drawn to the ISCSC with its breadth of concerns, topical and temporal. Consequently, recent scholarly approaches which focus on societal evolution and world systems have come to my attention. These seem to me to lay the foundation, or provide the framework, for significant progress in our understanding of the human experience all the way from Sumer and Egypt and their first cities and states to the present.

As an unabashed generalist gathering insights and information from diverse sources, I am quite dependent on the specialists.