



Islanders and Mainlanders

*Prehistoric Context for
the Southern California Bight*

edited by Jeffrey H. Altschul and Donn R. Grenda



SRI Press • Tucson, Arizona

Politics, Intern marriage, and Trade on the Islands	47
Interaction with the Chumash Mainland	49
Cross-Channel Migrations and Kinship Ties	49
Cross-Channel Travel and Exchange	51
Interaction with the Gabrieliño Mainland	55
Cross-Channel Migrations	56
Cross-Channel Exchange	56
Cross-Channel Exchange as an Adaptive Strategy	59
A Comparison of Mainland and Island Adaptations	61
Subsistence Strategies	62
Economic Exchange	62
Ritual Patterns	63
Concluding Thoughts	64

4. Paradise or Purgatory: Environments, Past and Present,

by *René L. Vellanoweth and Donn R. Grenda* 67

Human Adaptation and the Environments of the Bight	68
Environments of the Coast	68
The Northern Coast	68
The Los Angeles Basin	69
The Southern Coast	71
The Channel Islands	72
Key Environmental Characteristics of the Bight	73
A Selected Review of Paleoenvironmental Studies	75
Paleoceanographic Studies	75
Palynology	77
Dendroclimatology	79
Stratigraphy	81
The Use of Paleoenvironmental Interpretations in Archaeological Arguments	82

5. Antiquarians, Culture Historians, and Scientists:

The Archaeology of the Bight,

by *René L. Vellanoweth and Jeffrey H. Altschul* 85

A Brief History of Archaeology

in the Southern California Bight 86

Early Investigations 86

Chronology Building 89

Scientific Approaches to Archaeology	94
The Late Pleistocene and the Early Holocene	96
The Middle Holocene	100
Demographic Trends	101
The Shoshonean Incursion	102
The Late Holocene	105
Conclusion	111

6. A Moveable Feast: Isolation and Mobility among

Southern California Hunter-Gatherers,

by *Donn R. Grenda and Jeffrey H. Altschul* 113

Terminology	114
Island Settlement	117
The Early Holocene	118
The Middle Holocene	119
The Late Holocene	121
Summary	123
Coastal Settlement	124
The Northern Coast	124
The Los Angeles Basin	127
The Southern Coast	130
Desert Settlement	131
The Regional Adaptive System	137
The Early Adaptive System	138
Regional Diversification during the Late Holocene	141
Conclusions	145

7. Complex Cultures, Complex Arguments:

Sociopolitical Organization in the Bight,

by *Donn R. Grenda and Jeffrey H. Altschul* 147

The Evolution of Sociopolitical Organization

in the Bight 148

Early Holocene Sociopolitical Organization 148

Middle and Late Holocene Sociopolitical Organization 149

Explaining Complexity 151

The Tools of Explanation: Theoretical Constructs

Used in the Study of Complexity 151

Scale 152

Context 153

Social Theory	155
Substantivism	155
Formalism	156
Marxist Social Theory	156
Cultural Complexity	157
Basic Goods	158
Luxury Items	159
Explaining Complexity in the Bight: Case Studies	161
Modeling the Rise of Complexity in the Northern Bight	161
Life on the Edge of Chaos: Social Organization in the Los Angeles Basin	164
An Interpretive Framework for the Bight	168
Classification of Regions	169
Regional Interaction	170
The Bight as a Cultural System	172
Scenario 1: A North-to-South Cultural Cline	173
Scenario 2: A Synergistic Path to Complexity	175
Conclusion	177
8. Scales and Axes: The Cultural Geography of Southern California, by Jeffrey H. Altschul	179
References Cited	187
Index	241
Contributors	257

Figures

Figure 1. San Nicolas Island	2
Figure 2. Excavation of a midden site on San Nicolas Island	3
Figure 3. The Southern California Bight	6
Figure 4. The Pacific Rim and cultures discussed in text	17
Figure 5. Armshells brought from Kitava	20
Figure 6. Seri domestic activities	22
Figure 7. Seri medicine man singing to the whale, chief of the fishes	23
Figure 8. Nootka dugout canoe	26
Figure 9. Makah whaler	27
Figure 10. Gwayasdums, Kwakiutl village, Gilford Island	28
Figure 11. Eskimo winter hut, Plover Bay, Siberia, ca. 1899	31
Figure 12. North coast of Santa Rosa Island	43
Figure 13. Little Harbor, Santa Catalina Island	44
Figure 14. North coast of Anacapa Island	45
Figure 15. Replica of a Chumash <i>tomol</i>	47
Figure 16. <i>Olivella</i> shell beads in an abalone shell	53
Figure 17. Raphael Solares, Chumash <i>'antap</i> , 1877	54
Figure 18. Soapstone bowls	59
Figure 19. The environmental regions of the Southern California Bight	69
Figure 20. Aerial view of the Ballona Lagoon in flood, 1938	70
Figure 21. Elephant seals resting during molting season on the beaches of San Nicolas Island	74
Figure 22. Seawater paleotemperature record for the Santa Barbara Channel, reconstructed by Nicolas Ptsias	76
Figure 23. Reconstruction of changes in the Ballona wetlands during the Holocene	83

prehistory proposed some 70 years ago "remain valid" (Moratto 1984:126). Agreement about the temporal sequence, however, does not mean that the interpretations of cultural events and dynamics have gone unchallenged.

In this chapter, we outline the prehistoric cultural development of the Southern California Bight. To avoid the often confusing terminology associated with the various cultural chronologies, we use the geologic time scale to organize our discussion of culture history. The Holocene began at about 10,000 B.P. and can be divided into three parts: the early Holocene (10,000–6650 B.P.), the middle Holocene (6650–3350 B.P.), and the late Holocene (3350 B.P.–present). In addition to describing the various cultural traits and developments that occurred during each segment of the Holocene, we highlight some of the major chronological problems associated with each period. To help the reader follow the discussion, we correlate the general culture histories for each part of the region in Figure 24.

A Brief History of Archaeology in the Southern California Bight

Archaeology in the bight has a history extending back more than 100 years (Baldwin 1996; Moratto 1984). At the end of the nineteenth century, archaeologists were mainly interested in acquiring museum pieces. The period that followed was characterized by extensive excavations conducted primarily to develop cultural chronologies. Current research efforts have taken form over the last 25 years and have focused on questions concerning cultural ecology, changes in sociopolitical organization, and ethnohistory (Arnold 1992a; Bleitz-Sanburg 1987; Glassow 1980; Johnson 1988a; Martz 1994b; Meighan 1959; Raab and Yatsko 1992; Raab et al. 1995; Salls 1988).

Early Investigations

Archaeology in the Southern California bight ostensibly began during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Paul Schumacher (1877) of the Smithsonian Institution was one of the first

RADIO-CARBON YEARS B.P.	YEAR A.D. B.C.	GEOLOGICAL TIME SCALE	NORTHERN COAST & NORTHERN CHANNEL ISLANDS	LOS ANGELES BASIN & SOUTHERN CHANNEL ISLANDS	SOUTHERN COAST	MOJAVE DESERT
190 –	1782 –	Late Holocene	Late Period	Late Prehistoric	Late Prehistoric	Late Prehistoric
400 –	1500 –					
1020 –	1000 –	Middle Holocene	Middle Period	Intermediate	Intermediate	Gypsum
1610 –	500 –					
2000 –	A.D. 0 B.C.					
2425 –	500 –	Middle Holocene	Early Period	Millingstone	Millingstone or La Jolla	Pinto
2825 –	1000 –					
3225 –	1500 –					
3625 –	2000 –					
4000 –	2500 –	Early Holocene	Paleocoastal	Paleocoastal	San Dieguito	Lake Mojave
4370 –	3000 –					
5000 –	4000 –	Early Holocene	Paleocoastal	Paleocoastal	San Dieguito	Lake Mojave
6000 –	5000 –					
6000 –	5000 –	Early Holocene	Paleocoastal	Paleocoastal	San Dieguito	Lake Mojave
7100 –	6000 –					
7500 –	6500 –	Early Holocene	Paleocoastal	Paleocoastal	San Dieguito	Lake Mojave

Figure 24. Culture history sequences for southern California.



Figure 25. Ralph Glidden (historical photograph, courtesy of the Catalina Island Museum, Glidden Collection).

of a series of collectors, often referred to as antiquarians, to conduct extensive, but casual, archaeological projects. Other investigators included Bowers (1878, 1883), Dall (1874), de Cessac (1882), Eisen (1904), Henshaw (1887), Palmer (1906), Putnam (1879), Rau (1876), Rust (1898, 1907), and Yates (1891). These early projects, sponsored by institutions around the world, began largely as efforts to collect museum-quality artifacts. Rare artifacts and items of high artistic quality that were collected during this time are now scattered in museums throughout the world. Meighan and Eberhart (1953), for example, listed 14 institutions housing collections from San Nicolas Island, including the Musée de l'Homme in Paris.

Following the early collectors was Ralph Glidden (Figure 25). Under sponsorship by various institutions, including the Field Museum of Natural History and the Heye Foundation, Glidden spent several years in the early part of the twentieth century excavating sites and collecting artifacts on the Channel Islands. These studies were never published, although they received local newspaper coverage (Glidden 1920). Much of the material Glidden collected is

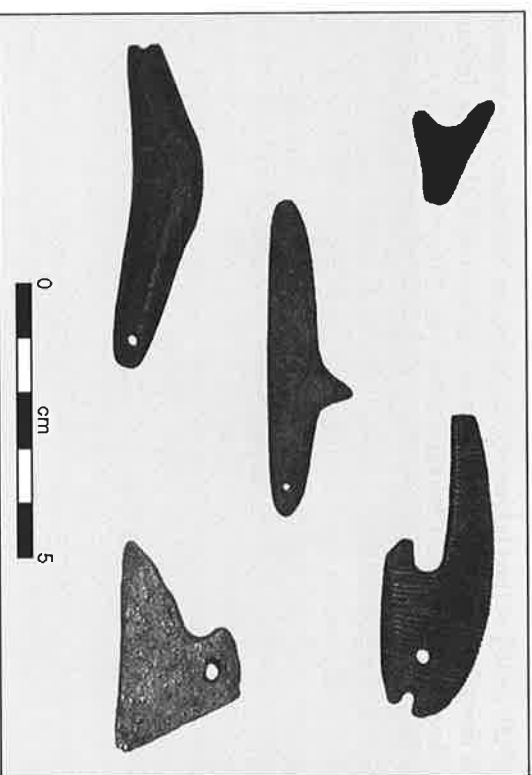


Figure 26. Steatite (soapstone) effigies from the Glidden Collection (courtesy of the Catalina Island Museum, Accession Nos. 105, 107.1, 107.2, 107.3, and 107.4).

housed at the Catalina Island Museum on Santa Catalina (Figures 26–29).

In terms of the amount collected, these early efforts pale in comparison to later studies using modern methods of investigation. Yet, because Schumacher visited the islands only 60 years after indigenous abandonment, some perishable artifacts were recovered and remain preserved. Moreover, despite the treasure hunter mentality that characterized most of these early investigations, some observations formed the basis of later inquiry (Warren 1973). Again, Schumacher (1875) must be credited: his description and interpretation of shell fishhook manufacturing has stood the test of time.

Chronology Building

During the first half of the twentieth century, interest in archaeology shifted from relic hunting to chronology building. The interest in developing regional chronologies began with anthropologists, especially Putnam (1879, 1906), Merriam (1906), and Kroeber