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# A Shell Midden in the Upper Gulf of California: Challenging the Paradigms of Isolation and Marginalization?

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*The archaeological site known as “El Faro” is located in the upper Gulf of California region of the Baja California peninsula. Archaeological work within this area of Baja California has been limited, and the investigation presented in this article is the most extensive to date in the region. This research, combining surface reconnaissance with three field seasons of excavation, has yielded data that allow for the reconstruction of the subsistence patterns of the site’s inhabitants through time. Additionally, we have been able to establish that the late occupation inhabitants of the El Faro site had a system of exchange with neighboring Yuman regions. The subsistence and trade evidence together allows us to comment on the proposed isolation and marginalization of the prehistoric groups in Baja California.*

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**R**ECORDED IN 2006, site ASU 14-178 El Faro (hereafter referred to as El Faro) was excavated as part of an Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) project entitled “Registro y Rescate de Sitios Arqueológicos de Baja California—Fase Municipio de Mexicali” (“Recordation and Salvage of Baja California Archaeological Sites—Municipality of Mexicali Phase”). The 6,400 m.<sup>2</sup> site is located in the southern part of San Felipe Bay, at Punta Estrella (Figs. 1 and 2). The official site code, ASU 14-178 El Faro, was given to it due to its proximity to the remains of a metal beacon that illuminated the southern part of San Felipe Bay. The Kiliwa Indians, who lit it with petroleum every night, managed the *faro*, or beacon. It was, however, abandoned at the onset of the twentieth century, and the remains of the metal beacon are no longer present at the site.

Another archaeological site, known as ASU 14-179 El Faro II, was recorded to the north of El Faro. El Faro II is located next to a beacon that is currently in use. This site was excavated during the winter of 2009 with the help of students from the National School of Anthropology and History (ENAH). It is similar in size to El Faro; however, the archaeological materials are more abundant at El Faro II. Artifacts such as granite and quartz grinding stones and manos are numerous, suggesting a more permanent human occupation at El Faro II than at El Faro.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

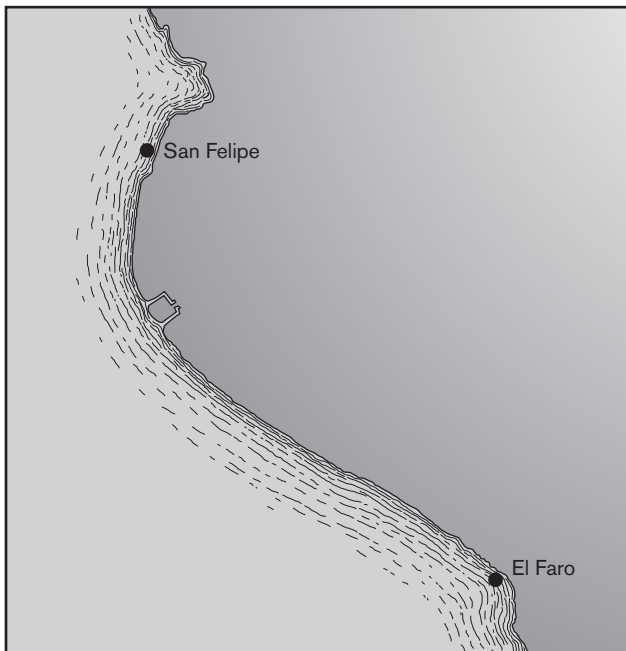
The main purpose of the research at the El Faro archaeological site, as well as at other sites recorded in the San Felipe area and in the Mexicali Municipality, is to establish a cultural chronology and reconstruct land-use patterns, at both the diachronic and synchronic levels, for the ancient inhabitants of these lands. This is the most extensive research of its kind in the upper Gulf of California portion of the Baja California peninsula (for previous studies see Schenck and Gifford 1952), and it will allow us to analyze the El Faro site data and compare it with data from other sites in the upper Gulf region, as well as from sites in more distant regions, in order to evaluate the amount of interaction that the site inhabitants were involved in. By considering the amount of interaction between various prehistoric Baja Californian groups, we can comment on the degree of isolation, or lack thereof, that characterized the inhabitants of the Baja California peninsula.

## SURFACE RECONNAISSANCE AND EXCAVATION: A SUMMARY

Three field seasons of work have been carried out at the El Faro site. The first season involved site identification and recordation, as well as the systematic collection of most of the representative surface materials



**Figure 1. General research region.**



**Figure 2. Specific region where El Faro is located.**

(Porcayo 2007). During the second season, which took place in the winter of 2007, the first excavations were carried out specifically at the El Faro site. These excavations consisted of two units, Pit 1 and Trench 1. Some materials from these excavations were submitted for radiocarbon dating, and a malacological analysis was conducted on the invertebrate faunal material found during site excavations (Fig. 3) (Porcayo 2008a).

The third season in the San Felipe area again involved only the El Faro site (Porcayo 2009a). During the winter of 2008, a deeper excavation was made at Trench 1, and excavation began at Trench 2 (Fig. 4). The radiocarbon samples from this season have been submitted, and the remaining archaeological materials are currently being analyzed. All research conducted at the site up to this point will form part of the dissertation work of Fátima Camacho Araiza, a student at ENAH, who was invited to participate in the site excavations during the second and third field seasons.



Figure 3. Trench 1 at the El Faro excavation.

### Radiocarbon Dating

The initial radiocarbon dating of various archaeological and archaeozoological materials, taken from the best-defined features within each occupational stratum, has provided a chronological sequence for the site. To date, twelve radiocarbon dates, using both shell and charcoal, have been obtained from samples from the three excavation units that have been analyzed. The dates suggest that the site had approximately 2,000 years of practically uninterrupted occupation (Table 1). These samples were processed and analyzed at the Underdirectorship of Laboratories and Academic Support of INAH in Mexico City by Magdalena de los Ríos Paredes, Chemical Engineer.

### Artifactual Materials

The archaeological materials representing the latest occupation at the site are abundant and diverse. Among the finds are ceramic sherds and lithic artifacts made from

Table 1

#### RADIOCARBON DATES FOR EL FARO SITE

| Sample   | Layer       | Uncorrected Date B.P. | Calibrated A.D./B.C | Material   |
|----------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--|
| Trench 1 | I-2 (1)     | 1314 ± 73             | 1464–1805 cal A.D.  | <i>Ostrea cf. angelica</i>                           |
| Trench 1 | I-2 (2)     | 1318 ± 74             | 1460–1805 cal A.D.  | <i>Cardita affinis</i>                               |
| Trench 1 | I-2 (3)     | 1316 ± 57             | 1465–1801 cal A.D.  | <i>Ostrea cf. angelica</i><br><i>Cardita affinis</i> |
| Trench 1 | III-7       | 2677 ± 73             | 130–532 cal A.D.    | <i>Glycymeris gigantea</i>                           |
| Trench 2 | I-4         | 55 ± 21               | 1820–1960 cal A.D.  | charcoal   |
| Trench 2 | II-7        | 171 ± 31              | 1658–1953 cal A.D.  | charcoal   |
| Trench 2 | III-11      | 1109 ± 73             | 1689–1951 cal A.D.  | <i>Glycymeris gigantea</i>                           |
| Trench 2 | III-12      | 1414 ± 73             | 1410–1676 cal A.D.  | <i>Glycymeris gigantea</i>                           |
| Pit 1    | I-1         | 1735 ± 72             | 1117–1423 cal A.D.  | <i>Glycymeris gigantea</i>                           |
| Pit 1    | III-3.4 (1) | 2350 ± 75             | 476–846 cal A.D.    | <i>Glycymeris gigantea</i>                           |
| Pit 1    | III-3.4 (2) | 789 ± 72              | 1899–1955 cal A.D.  | <i>Hexaplex nigrinus</i>                             |



**Figure 4. Trench 2 at the El Faro excavation.**

obsidian, jasper, quartz, granite, and felsite. In the lower levels, the artifactual materials diminished substantially, with the exception of some small flaked andesite pieces.

The analysis of these ceramic and lithic artifacts focused mainly on sourcing the material, in order to establish land-use patterns and to provide an indication of possible trade routes between the various groups within present-day northern Baja California and the southwestern United States. A total of 55 samples of obsidian and 60 sherds from northern Baja California, including San Felipe, were studied at the Geochemical Research Laboratory (Hughes 2008) and at the Geoarchaeological XRF Laboratory at the University of California, Berkeley (Shackley 2009a, 2009b; Shackley and Panich 2009a, 2009b). The results of these analyses are discussed below.

#### *Archaeozoological Materials*

Some 47,293 faunal elements were recovered during the two field seasons of excavation at the El Faro site, and 72 taxonomic groups were recognized; 79% percent of these specimens were bivalves, 15% were gastropods, and the remaining 6% were other faunal species (Guía 2008a). Although the largest percentage of specimens were bivalves, gastropods accounted for the highest number of different species in the assemblage. The most abundant bivalves within the site assemblage are *Glycymeris gigantea*, *Ostrea angelica*, *Ostrea* sp., and *Cardita affinis*, while the most abundant gastropods are *Turbo fluctuosus*, *Cerithium stercusmuscarum*, *Crepidula* sp., *Anachis* sp., *Acanthina angelica*, and members of the Muricidae family (Guía 2008a). The habitat for the species found at the site shifted through time, from those

species found in a sandy beach environment to species found in more rocky environments (Guía 2008a).

As has been mentioned previously, comparisons between the shell recovered during the excavations of the second and third seasons are currently in progress and will form part of a master's thesis, which will analyze the results with respect to the diet, exploitation, and consumption patterns of the early inhabitants of El Faro. However, it is already evident that there was a very notable preference for the consumption of bivalves throughout the occupation of the site.

Various alterations were observed on the shellfish remains recovered from El Faro, the most evident being exposure to fire. Specimens of *Glycymeris gigantea* presented the highest occurrence of fire alteration. Overall, however, most shells did not show evidence of fire alteration, suggesting that the use of fire in mollusk processing was not a common practice at El Faro.

Another alteration present on some valves of the *Glycymeris gigantea* and *Modiolus capax* species was notching on the posterior edge of the valves. In a previous study, Guía (2007, 2008b) observed this same notching on *Chione cortezi* valves at other sites in the Municipality of Mexicali. However, unlike those reported by Guía (2008a), the identified notching on the *Modiolus capax* valves involved three notches placed close together, forming an ending of the "Dentated Serrated" type.

Lastly, some of the *Dosinia ponderosa* valves showed evidence of flaking, possibly with the goal of obtaining a cutting edge (Guía 2008a; Tyree 1998), while shells from the Muricidae family, *Hexaplex nigrinus*, and *Oliva incrassata* species had shells fractured by pounding. This suggests that shell breakage was intentionally carried out, possibly in order to obtain a cutting edge to assist in processing the mollusk meat (Camacho 2009).

In addition to the shellfish found at the site, 178 pieces of animal bone were recovered. Some 95% of these were fish bones assigned to the Teleostei, specifically the Epinephelinae subfamily, Sciaenidae family, *Totoaba* sp., Labridae family, *Halichoeres* sp., and Scombridae family (*Scomber japonicus* and *Scomberomorus sierra*). Some recovered elements present clear evidence of exposure to fire, indicating the use of fire in food processing (Guía 2008a). The remaining 5% of the specimens corresponded to organisms such as marine turtles and terrestrial mammals (Leporidae, Sciuridae, and Rodentia); however,

no alterations of any kind were present on these remains. It is therefore impossible to determine the function of these animals at the site with certainty (Guía 2008a).

## CHALLENGING PARADIGMS OF ISOLATION AND MARGINALITY

Considering all the information gathered to date at the El Faro site, some comments can be made regarding the paradigms of isolation and marginalization of the inhabitants of the Baja California peninsula. Characterizations of prehistoric Baja California have often discussed the peninsula in terms of its relative isolation from cultural developments elsewhere in North America and of the relative impoverishment of its inhabitants and their cultures, although those descriptions have not gone unchallenged. These problems are also discussed in other articles within this issue (cf. Laylander and Moore 2006). However, in order to address this question it is necessary to analyze the archaeological evidence from El Faro in conjunction with that from other archaeological sites to the north of the Baja California peninsula in southern California, as well as in the upper Gulf of California region within the Mexican state of Sonora.

### *Within the Península*

Most ceramic sherds found at the El Faro site are made from residual clays; however, there were some sherds collected at the site that were made from sedimentary clay. The discovery of sherds made from sedimentary clays is intriguing, as these clays are not found in the San Felipe area, and evidence of this type of clay at the site indicates that the site inhabitants may have interacted with other Yuman groups of the Colorado River delta, such as the Cocopa.

Although the raw clay material indicates interaction with surrounding groups, the ceramic vessel shapes do not reflect any outside cultural influences. There is no distinctive form that differentiates the vessels made from the local residual clays from those made from the more distant sedimentary clays (cf. Rogers 1936). Indeed, the shapes of the vessels that were manufactured with the local residual clays are similar to those found at archaeological sites in the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir and in the Sierra Juárez. Therefore, we cannot confidently identify a system of foreign interaction or influence

by analyzing vessel shape alone. The same is true for the decorative techniques used on the vessels; there is no evidence of outside cultural influences. Because the raw material for the ceramic vessels was procured from a nonlocal source, which suggests some form of foreign interaction or trade network, although the actual manufacturing techniques show no signs of foreign interaction, it is essential to the research to considerably increase the ceramic sample from the entire San Felipe area. Further data on both the origins of the clay material and on the vessel shapes and design techniques may be able to clarify the extent of foreign influences on ceramic manufacturing in the San Felipe zone.

In contrast to the distant source for sedimentary clay, all of the obsidian found at the San Felipe archaeological sites originated from either local deposits or from deposits within the southern Puertecitos zone, located about 70 km. to the south (Shackley 2009a). There is no evidence to suggest that any raw material was traded or procured from a source outside of the San Felipe-Puertecitos zone, where the El Faro site is located (Shackley 2009a). At this point, we cannot even determine if the groups in San Felipe developed trade relations with those groups in the Puertecitos zone, or if the San Felipe groups travelled south to collect the raw material themselves and then carried it back to the El Faro site. Current research at the Lágrimas de Apache site, located in the Sierra de Las Pintas north of San Felipe, has also yielded abundant evidence of obsidian use; however, further analysis is needed to determine if the obsidian is from local sources.

Although the obsidian at the San Felipe sites is from local sources, it is interesting to note that obsidian samples collected from sites on the Pacific side of the Baja California peninsula, Ignacio Zaragoza (north of Ensenada and south of Tecate), and K-57 and Vallecitos (in the La Rumorosa zone of the Sierra Juárez), originate from a source outside of Baja California, namely Obsidian Butte in Imperial County, California (Hughes 2008; Porcayo 2008a, 2009a, 2010; Shackley 2009a). Most interesting, however, are the sources for the obsidian discovered at Álamo Mocho in the Mexicali desert. Samples collected from that site originated from both Obsidian Butte and the Coso Volcanic Field, far to the north in Inyo County, California (Porcayo 2010; Shackley 2009a).

Similarly, obsidian from the San Felipe source has been discovered at sites in Alta California (Steven Shackley, personal communication), including the Indian Hill Rockshelter in the eastern foothills of the Jacumba Mountains (McDonald 1992:373–387; McDougall et al. 2001). The obsidian evidence from these sites may indicate long-distance exchange or procurement, although we still need to understand the dynamics and the extent of any such actions.

Turning to the subsistence patterns seen within the Baja California peninsula, the “El Vallecito” archaeological site, in the Sierra Juárez (1,300 m. a.s.l.), yielded mollusk shells and sea urchin remains. Clam species (*Glycymeris gigantea* and *Cardita affinis*) and snails (*Oliva incrassata*) originating in the Gulf of California were also identified at this mountain site (Guía 2008a). The presence of these marine species at this mountain rock-art site suggests a coast-to-mountain flow of goods.

Marine shell (*Conus regularis*) from the Gulf of California was found in excavations carried out in the Bajamar area along the Pacific coastline, between the present cities of Ensenada and Rosarito. This preliminary finding suggests a flow of materials across the peninsula from the Gulf coast to the Pacific coast; however, it is important to mention that no species from the Pacific coast have yet been found at the archaeological sites that have been studied along the entire coastline of the upper Gulf, including the San Felipe locality and the Puertecitos area (Porcayo 2007, 2008b, 2009b, 2009c, 2010).

Marine fish remains have been found at the ANW8-Las Dunas site, which is located on the western shore of prehistoric Lake Cahuilla, and at other sites in Los Algodones in the northeastern part of Baja California. Among them were fish from the Epinephelinae subfamily and the Scaridae family, along with a snail shell of the genus *Olivella* and the remains of a *Laevicardium elatum* (Porcayo 2009a). The Laguna Salada sites, also in the Algodones zone, yielded marine bivalve and gastropod remains that presented clear evidence of exposure to fire (Porcayo 2009a), a processing method also seen at the El Faro site.

Although the discovery of marine resources at inland mountain sites is intriguing, more research is needed to provide an explanation as to why these marine species appear in places so distant from their habitats,

and how integral these marine resources were to the diet of the inland groups. There are current studies focused on this topic that will provide us with further information on the matter.

### *Outside the Peninsula*

In order to understand the potential isolation and marginalization of the ancient Kiliwa settlers of the El Faro site, it is important that we consider the extent to which these groups had contact with groups outside the peninsula, either in Upper California or on the mainland of Mexico. The region occupied by the Kiliwa Indians, and the presumed late prehistoric site inhabitants, was restricted by the geographic and hydrographic conformation of the ancient Lower Delta of the Colorado River (the present Mexicali Valley). This river may have had a considerable influence on the amount of isolation the groups in the peninsula experienced, due to both the natural barrier the river created and to the annual floods that occurred in the Lower Delta region. This proposed isolation can be inferred from the lack of foreign or exotic materials found at the sites in the San Felipe region (Porcayo 2007, 2008a, 2009a, 2009d). The presence of a delta, and the annual flooding, may have prevented the Kiliwa from frequent travel to the northern Yuman region. The only evidence that there was any kind of contact between the Kiliwa and other Yumans that lived to the north consists of the obsidian found at the Alta California sites and the buffware ceramics from the Colorado Desert found at San Felipe. However, this evidence requires further analysis and a better understanding of the time period during which the transfer of these materials took place.

In addition to the geographic and hydrological barriers that likely increased isolation in the Lower Delta region, Yuman warfare and intertribal hostility may also have prevented the exchange of goods during certain time periods. Military conflicts of this type during the historic period have been documented by several missionaries, travelers, and military personnel (Kelly 1977:129–131). The continued warfare that increased isolation in the Lower Delta region was unique, as groups living in other regions of Alta California, northwestern Mexico, and the southwestern United States had frequent exchanges and dissemination of materials between cultural groups. It is important to note that the system of interethnic military alliances centered on the lower Colorado River was also

a force operating in the opposite direction, promoting closer interethnic contacts between Yuman allies.

The frequent warfare and intertribal hostility between the groups of the Lower Delta region was extensively documented by Franciscan friar Francisco Garcés. While seeking a land route that would link the province of Sonora and the Colorado River territory with Monterey, Garcés was in extended contact with the Yuman Indians of the Lower Delta, and he noted that they were engaged in unending wars that decimated the Indian population:

At mid day I heard screaming and shouting, and people running around, so I went out and found out that a Jalliquamay Indian had shot an arrow into a Cajuenche in a way such that he was touching his Flint near the heart, whereby the arrow had penetrated by the backside, and part of it had remained inside. They decided to open him up from the front side, which brought about even further suffering to him. The sorcerer then began to perform his usual running, blowing, and spinning around. I tried to calm them down since they wanted to kill the young lad they brought to my presence; once I found out what the motive was, I told them to cut him loose, and on his way back to their rancharía, others were heading his way to defend him, and a crowd skirmish ensued [Garcés 1996:28].

I continued along my pathway and after having walked for about four leagues along the same pathway, I arrived at the Cocopah crop site, which was abandoned and destroyed, since at that very spot not long ago the Yumans, Cajuenches, and Jalliquamais had waged war against the Cocopah [Garcés 1996:30].

...I talked to them about making peace, and that nations above were now dealing in friendly terms, and they were not coming down to do them any harm; and that they [the Cocopah] should not go up to wage war. This proposal sounded quite good to them since they told that with all these wars they were lagging behind, and were in need of finding a place to dwell in, since they had scarce water and no firewood whatsoever [Garcés 1996:31].

Amidst the intertribal wars that Garcés noted, the Yumans destroyed the mission of La Concepción, in present day Yuma, Arizona, and the mission of San Pedro y San Pablo Bicuñer in the Algodones region of Baja California. Destroying these missions ended the ephemeral presence of the Spaniards in the region and returned control of the only “safe pass” to both sides of the Colorado River in Alta and Baja California to the Yumans. The Lower Delta region remained in Yuman control, and their intertribal conflicts continued



in this region until the middle of the nineteenth century. That continued warfare was documented by English Lieutenant R. W. Hardy, while exploring the Lower Delta of the Colorado River:

...The Great Chief had just informed me that a neighboring Indian People had attacked the Axua tribe the previous night, and aside from killing a large number of men, they had also taken several women and children; to avenge such outrage, the Great Chief had decided to attack the aggressor with all of his warriors. Through his interpreter, I told the Great Chief that I wished him the best of luck and success in his expedition against the Yumas [Hardy 1997:257–58].

The constant warfare between tribal groups, coupled with the annual floods of the Colorado River, likely exacerbated the confinement and isolation of the Lower Delta Yuman groups. Indeed, there appears to have been minimal trade or foreign cultural exchanges of any kind involving the groups in our study region, at least during late prehistory. It is therefore no surprise that we found little evidence for cultural interaction between the Kiliwa Indians, who occupied our study area in the upper Gulf of California, and other distant groups.

#### *Puerto Peñasco and El Faro*

To illustrate the aforementioned presumed isolation, we can compare cultural evidence found at sites from two different regions: the El Faro site, located on the Baja California peninsula, and several shell middens in the Puerto Peñasco area of Sonora, located across the Gulf of California on the mainland of Mexico. The ceramics, tool materials, and subsistence remains recovered from these sites can all provide insights into the extent of isolation assumed for the late prehistoric/early historic groups living on the Gulf side of the Baja California peninsula. Ceramics found at the Puerto Peñasco shell middens (see Fig. 1) point to a period of occupation from A.D. 300 to 1450 (Mitchell and Foster 2000). This makes it mostly contemporaneous with the El Faro site, except that the latter site was occupied by the Kiliwa Indians (and their presumed ancestors) until the onset of the twentieth century. Although the El Faro and Puerto Peñasco sites are relatively contemporaneous, ceramics found at the Puerto Peñasco sites are from various occupations by different cultures. Indeed, Hohokam, Trincheras, and Yuman ceramics have all been discovered at Puerto Peñasco (Mitchell and Foster 2000).

Conversely, the only ceramics present at the El Faro site are Yuman in origin. The presence of only one type of ceramics raises a key question: was this site continually occupied by only one culture, and one that was isolated, with no trade or dissemination of cultural attributes? Further excavations at the site are necessary to confirm the isolation which the ceramic evidence suggests. If there was indeed only one cultural group that had little interaction with outsiders, what were the reasons for their insular lifestyle?

The obsidian found at the Puerto Peñasco site indicates that the site inhabitants used obsidian from a local source at the Sierra del Pinacate volcanic field (Mitchell and Foster 2000). This pattern of the local collection of raw material is also evident at the El Faro site, where much of the obsidian found originated from the local San Felipe volcanic field. Although there is little evidence of foreign materials at the El Faro site, the obsidian from the San Felipe source has been identified as far north as southern California, although still within Yuman territory. Whether this material was traded with distant groups, or those groups travelled to the San Felipe region to collect that material, is unknown. Either scenario would seem to provide the inhabitants of the El Faro site with opportunities to interact with outside groups. Further excavations and larger sample sizes from the region are necessary to determine if there may have been a trade network developed around the obsidian source.

Interestingly, all evidence regarding processing and consumption patterns identified from the mollusk remains are identical between the Puerto Peñasco and El Faro sites. Direct fire exposure, probably for meat extraction and processing, was identified involving the same species (*Muricanthus nigrinus* and *Hexaplex nigrinus*) at both sites (Fig. 5). Additionally, samples collected from both El Faro and Puerto Peñasco show that *Dosinia ponderosa* was used in shell tool production. Intentional flaking to create a cutting edge was identified on samples from this species at both sites. Although this shows that a uniformity existed between groups in the northeastern region of Baja California and in northwestern Sonora in patterns of processing and consuming mollusks, it cannot be considered unequivocal evidence for interaction between these groups. Further evidence that includes specific diagnostic tool types, raw material exchanges, similar ceramics types, and other similarities in cultural



**Figure 5. *Hexaplex nigritus* with evidence of meat extraction.**

markers is needed to confidently show that sustained interaction occurred between the Baja Californian and the mainland Sonoran groups. At this point, the evidence suggests that the Kiliwa Indians and the earlier occupants at the El Faro site did not interact with groups across the Gulf on the western coast of mainland Mexico, once again hinting at the isolation of the Baja California settlers in the upper Gulf region.

### DISCUSSION

As more studies become available from the upper Gulf of California region, it can be tentatively proposed that isolation and marginalization will be found to have been constant factors for groups living in this area of the Baja California peninsula. Recent archaeological research at Puertecitos has uncovered a new local lithic industry consisting of huge, bifacially-flaked artifacts that seemingly have no resemblance to industries to the north or in the Lower Delta region (Porcayo 2008b, 2009c). This illustrates the point that even groups located

in relatively close proximity to one another within this region may not show signs of cultural interaction. The degree of isolation seemingly characterizing the Yuman groups may have been heavily influenced by the geographic circumscription caused by the annual floods of the Lower Delta zone of the Colorado River.

The continual intertribal warfare also undoubtedly affected the regional isolation. Accounts of wars, skirmishes, and intertribal vengeance are frequent during the entire historic period in this zone, and occur as late as the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the Cocopa mentioned to Garcés (1996:31) that the constant wars continued to keep them “..lagging behind and in need of living wherever there was scarce water and no firewood...” Under such marginal conditions, the exchange of ideas, cultural traits, and material goods with outside groups would have been very difficult during contact times, if not before.

However, exchange or long distance procurement at the El Faro site is evident, although at this point it seems the interaction was restricted only to other Yuman

groups, such as the Kamia and Cocopa of northern Baja California, within the region and within relatively close proximity to the El Faro site. Although the groups in the San Felipe region did exhibit a high degree of isolation from foreign influences, they were able to interact on a relatively local level.

Interestingly, ceramic evidence from Puerto Peñasco indicates that some sort of long-distance interaction took place between inhabitants at this site and northern groups; however, the raw material for tool production was collected only from local obsidian sources. This pattern of local source use is evident at all the sites within the San Felipe-Puertecitos coastal zone, as well as in the northwestern coastal zone of mainland Mexico. There is, however, evidence of obsidian from the San Felipe source being found at distant sites in Alta California. The extent of the interaction between these two distant regions has not yet been determined.

### CONCLUSION

Dating at the El Faro site indicates that it was most heavily occupied from A.D. 1000 to 1900. It is from the strata that date to this time period that we draw most of the conclusions detailed in this paper. The lower strata at the site become increasingly less dense with depth and offer much less material to analyze. What we have discerned from these lower strata indicates that there was no interaction with peoples more distant than the upper Gulf of California. This is the same patterning that we see in the upper strata at the site.

Currently, newly identified sites located in San Felipe, Puertecitos, El Huerfanito, Bahía de San Luis Gonzága, and Laguna Chapala are under study (Porcayo 2009a, 2009c). Additional new and relevant information is expected to materialize from these sites in forthcoming years, but from what has been observed up to the present, a pattern of isolation and marginalization seems to prevail in this part of Baja California.

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