
British Columbia Prehistory. By Knut R. Fladmark. Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1986. 150 pp. \$12.95 Paper.

Fladmark has succeeded in writing a clear, comprehensive review of northwest coast archaeology, focusing on its elaboration on the coast and the plateau of British Columbia. This isn't an easy task or one which can be undertaken by someone who is insensitive to prehistory as witnessed by archaeological material.

Beyond Fladmark's obvious feeling for northwest coast prehistory, and his encyclopedic knowledge of archaeological material, his common sense interpretations of artifacts, and his reasonable chronologies, is his obvious skill in translating archaeological data into cultural prehistory for a general audience.

Archaeologists have been studying and writing about British Columbia's prehistory for over ninety years, but so far few of their findings have been made available to the general public (ix).

Fladmark has succeeded. Principle strengths of this book are its simplicity and clarity. Fladmark's maps and plates are skillfully simple, and his writing is precise.

Fragments of tool (artifacts) . . . sites (places where there is physical evidence of past human activities) . . . vertical layering (stratigraphy) . . . In popular thought, the word *prehistoric* is often synonymous with great age. . . . In fact, *prehistoric* simply means "before written records" (p. 2-3).

Clarity in defining terms is especially important for a non-professional audience. For more than a decade, I have taught northwest coast cultures and languages to upper-division undergraduates, to graduate students, and to Elderhostel students every summer. Every time I do it, I re-encounter the problems of making anthropological (including archaeological) jargon not only simple to understand, but meaningful in its appropriate context. Fladmark's book will save me time and effort, and, if you teach students like mine, it will save you time and effort, too.

Fladmark provides students with a necessary time perspective, which they'll need to appreciate the growing complexities of northwest coast cultures and languages, over the past 11,000 to 12,000 years. In joining archaeological data to cultural prehistory, Fladmark doesn't overstep the boundary of sensible inference drawn from archaeological data. Too often (for my taste), an-

thropological archaeologists build entire sociocultural systems, including language, from chips of stone, fragments of bone, and a great deal of wish-fulfilling fantasies (about data they will never obtain). I was more than glad to find that Fladmark's feet, and thinking, are firmly implanted in his excavations. Fladmark cautions that

A prehistoric archaeological culture is really just a collection of artifacts and other material remains thought to have been used at about the same time by people sharing some kind of socio-cultural relationship . . . the relationship between archaeological collections of surviving material fragments and former whole societies is far from clear, and it is seldom possible to state confidently that a specific archaeological culture is the predecessor of any particular tribe of the historic period . . . we cannot "dig up" languages spoken prehistorically . . . [and identifying] real people in the past is difficult, and the farther back we go in time the more it becomes necessary to talk in abstractions . . . (p. 4-5).

Using common sense in making anthropological interpretations from material objects is vital in conveying a sense of prehistory to a general audience. Fladmark has done this, all through this book.

Beyond the lesson of common sense, Fladmark hasn't forgotten about the key element in all anthropological interpretations: cultural relativism. Here we have an essential pedagogical issue for any audience. In my experience with general audiences, and with professional audiences who aren't anthropologists (lawyers, government officials, psychologists), cultural relativism is often a "new" concept to be mulled over and marveled at.

Before the arrival of the white man the Indians of British Columbia had their own ways of knowing and understanding the past. . . . These traditions formed an important part of a coherent world-view distinctly different from modern Western perspectives, but no less complex and encompassing. Traditional native histories emphasized mutability, transformation, and metaphoric relationships among animals, humans and supernatural beings in an indefinite past (p. 10).

I don't think that anthropology has a more important lesson to teach to general audiences that this, especially in today's world.

I think Fladmark's brief, but thoughtful, introduction of mythic thinking (*When Raven Ruled: Native Perceptions of the Past*) is necessary for general audiences to appreciate the complexity of northwest symbolism in art and ritual.

These traditions explain why some Indians object to archaeologists claiming that they have been in British Columbia only 11,000 to 12,000 years, when their own lore teaches that they have always been here, or at least since the present world was created (p. 11).

This caught my attention. I recall from field work among the Clallam in 1975, sitting with an elderly, Lower Elwha woman and discussing the migration of native American people into the New World. (I showed her a long article from a Sunday issue of the *Seattle Times* that focused on northwest archaeology, and, in that context, its author talked of the migration.) My Clallam friend became no less than furious when I talked about a migration. She said such an idea was absolute nonsense. Clallam folklore, she asserted, described the Clallam people coming out of a hole in the ground, next to the Lower Elwha River, not far from today's Lower Elwha reservation.

"The First Pioneers" brings in northwest coast and plateau peoples, some 11,000 to 12,000 years ago, and disclaims archaeological dates earlier than 40,000 for a New World occupation. Again, common sense prevails. But what was the social mechanism of the initial occupation? How do people migrate into an otherwise unoccupied territory? Fladmark doesn't discuss this, and I don't criticize him for it. However, Grover Krantz, physical anthropologist at Washington State University, presented a detailed analysis of the "mechanics" of social migration into western North America, which is worth reading (*The Populating of Western North America*, 1979).

Fladmark's time and spatial correlations among archaeological cultures are summarized, succinctly and clearly in one chronological picture, and is also a nice pedagogical device.

In "Coyote's World: Early Prehistory of the Interior (11,000-8,000 Years Ago)," Fladmark uses the first of many "novelistic" renditions of prehistoric life styles.

Crouched in the crevices of a tumbled sandstone slope, a small band of hunters awaits a herd of bison. . . . A cool west wind carries the animal scent and twists the branches of some stunted pines . . . (p. 18).

I think these are terrific additions to what could be a rather dry subject. These scenarios also illustrate Fladmark's feeling for his subject.

Now he takes on another popular misconception: the "cave-man" image of early native people.

Physically and mentally they would have been modern people, and one would make a grave mistake to assume that their material and intellectual existence was anything like the image of simple savagery fostered by popular conceptions of "cavemen" (p. 23).

Those of us who face freshman audiences know, firsthand, that the "caveman" image of early native people is ensconced in general audiences.

In "Pebble Tools and Cobble Beaches: The Lithic Stage of Coastal Prehistory (12,000?—5,500)," Fladmark teaches us something about the geology of shorelines as it affects archaeology, and he introduces early stone technology.

Pebble tools were one of the first example of "disposable" culture in British Columbia, ancestors of today's plastic razors and polyethylene raincoats (p. 30).

Well, at least he's trying to make it interesting. Fladmark uses this early prehistory to introduce the idea that even as early as 10,000 to 8,000 years ago, cultural variation on coastal British Columbia was already established. Here, too, he introduces cultural practices which were instrumental in the development of later coastal cultures.

By 6,200 years ago, people . . . were obtaining surpluses of fish, which they stored in pits. Dried salmon could be kept edible this way for at least a year, and these first small prehistoric cellars represent a very important cultural development (p. 36)

He also introduces long-distance trading in obsidian, giving the reader a clear idea that northwest people had an expansive range of contact outside of their immediate environment.

Whaling, Fladmark suggests, has its origin some 10,000 to 9,000 years ago, and attributes special significance to the central coastal area around Namu, British Columbia, pointing to a cultural continuity between Namu and the historic Kwakiutl and Nootka peoples. He notes, too, that the west coast of Vancouver Island lacks excavated Lithic Stage sites; perhaps Dr. James Haggarty of the British Columbia Provincial Museum, and his colleagues, can fill this gap.

Key material features become increasingly important in the sociocultural development of coastal people. As he moves from the early stage of prehistory to European contact, Fladmark introduces new styles of artifacts and explains their economic importance, as he does for the atlatl, for example. He nicely describes, for example, the advantages and implications of toggling harpoons. And so it continues, as he gradually displays and links hallmark features of northwest coast material culture and to their characteristic social features such as complex sociopolitical hierarchies, warfare, subsistence patterns, village fortresses, and so on.

Of course, Fladmark also summarizes interior archaeology and prehistory, but for my taste, it's dry compared to his coast discussion. In later chapters, discussion of particular topics, such as warfare, tobacco and the bow and arrow, become too repetitive. I would have preferred reading everything about the bow and arrow, warfare, and so on, in one place, rather than a little here and a little more there. But that's minor, and doesn't detract from the overall coherence, clarity and usefulness of this book.

The next literary step should be an edited volume, presenting key features of Northwest Coast archaeology/prehistory and sociocultural anthropology, designed for undergraduate audiences and the reading pleasure of the general public. Fladmark's book is worth using in undergraduate classes, and should be stocked on the shelves of every anthropology museum on the Northwest Coast and the Plateau.

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