

Core Cultures of the Pacific Rim: Japan and the Western Hemisphere

I. Archaeological Dating Techniques

A. Relative (= relatively inaccurate)

1. Stratigraphy

- a. can be done in the field
- b. based on principle that each era produces its own unique trash
- c. assumes that the deeper the trash the earlier the date
- d. problem of contamination between layers

2. Historical Linguistics

- a. attempts to construct history of each language and dialectic
- b. example in SW United States:
 - (1) similarity of Navajo language with Apache language
 - (2) called South Athapaskan
 - (3) similarity of South Athapaskan with languages in Alaska and NW Canada (called North Athapaskan)
 - (4) no similarity of South Athapaskan with Pueblo, Pima, or other languages of SW
 - (5) therefore, Navajo-Apache came to SW later than others

B. Absolute (= absolutely inaccurate)

1. Radiocarbon—dates organic matter

- a. invented by Willard Libby in 1949
- b. once an organism is dead, no C-14 can enter or leave it
- c. C-14 has a half-life of 5,730 years

2. Thermoluminescence—dates pottery, glass, etc.

- a. used for dating crystallized material like pottery
- b. measures time by amount of light given off when reheated
- c. can date material up to 35,000 years old

3. Other Techniques

- a. potassium-argon dating
- b. uranium disequilibrium
- c. fission tracks

C. Written Texts

II. Origins of the Japanese Culture

A. Earliest Absolute Dates

1. February 11, 660 B.C.—traditional date for beginning of Japan
2. A.D. 57—first mention of Japan in Chinese histories

B. Archaeological Periods

1. Jōmon (rope pattern), 8000–300 B.C.
2. Yayoi, 300 B.C.–A.D. 300

III. The Populating of Turtle Island

A. Stages and Cultures of Settlement in North America

1. Earliest Sites

- a. Sandia—named after Sandia (“Watermelon”) Mountains near Albuquerque (discovered in 1936)
- b. Meadowcroft—site in western Pennsylvania (occupied as early as 16,000 to 22,000 years ago)

2. Great Plains Culture

- a. Clovis (Llano)—first discovered near Clovis NM
- b. Folsom—first discovered in Folsom NM
- c. Plainview—remains of 1000 big-horned bison near Plainview TX
- d. Plano—Yuma County CO and Eden Valley WY

3. Desert Culture—9500 B.P. (Danger Cave UT)

- a. oriented toward plants as primary food source
- b. characterized by baskets for transporting and storing grain
- c. cave dwellers in Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, and Utah

4. Eastern Archaic—more than 10,000 sites

- a. trade networks (bordered by Florida, Lake Superior, New England)
- b. Modoc (IL) Rock Shelter (9000 B.P.)—oldest site
- c. oriented toward small animals as primary food source, including deer, elk, raccoon, opossum, fish, turtles, snails, mussels, ducks, geese
- d. “primary forest efficiency”
 - 275 species of plants used for medicine
 - 130 species of plants used for food
 - 31 species of plants used as magical charms
 - 27 species of plants used for smoking
 - 25 species of plants used as dyes
 - 18 species of plants used in beverages
 - 52 species of plants used for miscellaneous purposes
- e. Adena Culture—mound builders

B. Cultures of Ancient Mesoamerica

1. Zapotec (Formative Oaxaca) (2300–600 B.C.)
2. Olmec (1200–400 B.C.)—contact with Africa?
 - a. irrigated agriculture
 - b. towns—handicraft industries
 - c. elaborate religion
 - d. calendar
 - e. written language
3. Preclassic Maya (2300 B.C.–A.D. 300)

C. Andes Mountains

1. Chincharro (ca. 5000 B.C.)—mummies before those in Egypt
2. Chavin (850–250 B.C.)—contact with Japanese?
3. Nazca (100 A.D.–800 A.D.)

Recommended Reading:

- Peter Farb, *Man's Rise to Civilization: The Cultural Ascent of the Indians of North America*, 2nd ed., New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978.
- Eric Lurio, *A Fractured History of the Discovery of America*, New York: Dell, 1992.
- Thurston Shaw, “Archaeology and the Dating of the African Past,” in *Africa Discovers Her Past*, ed. J. D. Fage, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 26–31.
- Robert Silverberg, *The Mound Builders*, Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1970.
- H. Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture*, 3rd ed., Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984, pp. 1–13.