
REVIEWS

First People: A Revised Chronology for San Diego County

Dennis R. Gallegos

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Topical and regional syntheses are critically important to the collective effort of scientific archaeology. Historically, syntheses were often the responsibility of academics, who incorporated them into Ph.D. dissertations. Dave Fredrickson's dissertation, for example, provided a critical review of cultural chronological issues for the San Francisco Bay Area, Central Valley, and North Coast Ranges through 1973 (Fredrickson 1973). Warren's (1964) dissertation accomplished much the same for the San Diego County coast. However, the days when such synthetic studies were done solely by academics have long since passed, due largely to the explosion of cultural resource management (CRM) archaeology in California in the last 30 to 40 years. Moratto's (1984) statewide synthesis integrated findings from early CRM projects with academic research. Since then, San Diego County has seen more than three decades of new CRM-based research.

Owing to strict enforcement of federal, state, county, and local ordinances, an enormous amount of CRM is done each year in San Diego County such that the data that have accumulated since 1984 are substantial but have not been comprehensively synthesized in any one place. Instead, the region has been subject to a series of partial syntheses that consider either selected time periods only (early [e.g., Gallegos 1991], middle [e.g., Masters and Gallegos 1997], and late [e.g., Byrd and Reddy 2002] Holocene), or certain portions of the county (e.g., Gallegos 1992; Raab and Byrd 2007).

Dennis Gallegos's current contribution is a much-needed update on all of San Diego County archaeology and prehistory. This book presents his synthesis of a significant amount of data, emphasizing projects in which he was personally involved, along with other seminal research completed up to ca. 2007. One of the downsides of the massive influx of CRM data is that there is often no way of knowing all of what has been done in any given region. With this book, I have no real way of determining how much of the regional literature Gallegos has been able to capture—but it seems substantial. There may be no single individual who currently has intellectual control of all of the findings from San

Diego County, but Gallegos appears to have a handle on as much of it (if not more) than anyone, which makes this book a highly valuable contribution.

For decades, San Diego County has been defined by a series of thorny, polarized issues on basic culture history. Gallegos's goal in this monograph is to propose a revised chronological framework that can potentially help local researchers get beyond these wicked problems. The biggest controversy that has so long plagued San Diego involves the legitimacy/relationship of San Dieguito relative to La Jollan. Not surprisingly, a considerable number of pages in the current book are devoted to this issue. Gallegos himself has long been a critic of San Dieguito, and there is much about the complex that is problematic—not the least of which is the lack of substantial, well-dated assemblages from single component contexts. Gallegos favors what he refers to as a “non-transition” or “non-abandonment” model for San Dieguito-La Jollan, but to his credit, does not dismiss other opinions entirely.

The most significant accomplishment of this book is the development of a new cultural chronology that attempts to sidestep the longstanding arguments about San Dieguito. Specifically, Gallegos imposes a temporal structure that breaks the regional prehistory into four major periods: Early Archaic (12,000–9000 cal BP), Middle Archaic (9000–3500 cal BP), Late Archaic (3500–1300 cal BP), and Late Period (1300 BP–Present). Much like Fredrickson's (1974) chronology for northern California (which employs nearly identical labels), this system allows Gallegos, and others who are willing to embrace it, the ability to discuss alternative economic, climatic, cultural, and/or adaptive explanations for periods without immediately bogging down into the San Dieguito-La Jollan debate.

This is potentially a big step forward for the San Diego area, depending upon whether the local research/CRM community is willing to buy into it. Fredrickson's attempt 40 years ago for northern California was met largely with ambivalence; his chronological system is used today mostly by his students but is eschewed by others. California archaeology is known worldwide for contentious, convoluted culture histories that can only be understood by deeply entrenched locals. Gallegos has offered a path out of this morass for San Diego, but will anyone take it?

Gallegos has done a masterful job of synthesizing a huge quantity of information. To his credit, he also provides a decent quantity of primary data for sites that have proven critical to perceptions of the local prehistory. Few other scholars could probably have done this so effectively. Still, I did find myself wanting a bit more information in some areas. I would definitely have liked to see at least one appendix with all of the region's radiocarbon dates, and perhaps another

with faunal data. I also wish that more details were provided about certain sites, like CA-SDI-11079, Remington Hills, which produced one unequivocally cultural date of 10,600–9,700 cal BP, making it as old as any site in the county. Situated five miles inland on the shore of Tijuana Sloughs, CA-SDI-11079 is linked by Gallegos to Erlandson's Paleo-Coastal Tradition, but the single most abundant formal artifacts are manos, represented by 120 examples. To me, this screams Milling Stone (or La Jollan), and does not seem to provide great support for a connection with Paleo-Coastal, which at the very least is 2,000 years older on the Channel Islands. Rather, Remington Hills seems to be a Milling Stone site exhibiting some modest use of shellfish and fish with greater emphasis on terrestrial foods. In setting and tool assemblage, it seems similar to the comparably dated Cross Creek site in San Luis Obispo County (Fitzgerald 2000). I would like to know more about this site and I encourage Gallegos to develop a stand-alone article on it soon for *California Archaeology*.

But such a request is nothing more than a minor quibble. This is obviously a very important contribution to the archaeology of San Diego County, and to California in general. The book belongs in the hands of all those working in the region, along with everyone else interested in California archaeology and prehistory. Nice job, Dennis!

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