

Early Human Occupation in British Columbia

Roy L. Carlson and Luke Dalla Bona, editors

Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996. Illus. 261 pp. \$65 cloth.

By Duncan McLaren
University of Victoria

BRITISH COLUMBIA occupies a pivotal position in terms of the understanding of the peopling of the Americas. Both pioneering migration routes, the so-called ice-free corridor and the coastal migration route, pass through British Columbia. For this reason the contributions to *Early Human Occupation in British Columbia* have the potential of being significant to understanding early cultural manifestations not only in British Columbia, but also in the Americas in general. It is within this framework that the book is set in the introduction written by Roy Carlson. Elements from five early American traditions are found in British Columbia: the fluted point, plano, intermontane stemmed point, pebble tool, and microblade traditions. However, the dates associated with these traditions in British Columbia are late in terms of palaeo-Indian occupations in the Americas.

Reports on the fluted point tradition are from northeastern British Columbia and are written by K.R. Fladmark, J.C. Driver, and I.R. Wilson, respectively. These sites, and, in particular, Charlie Lake Cave, are interpreted as representing a late backwash of the fluted style/technology into previously marginal regions. W. Choquette and D. Fedje contribute reports on the intermontane stemmed point tradition from southeastern British Columbia (Choquette) and Banff (Fedje). This tradition is better

defined from sites in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon (e.g., Rice 1972). Although both the fluted and stemmed point traditions were found in Banff, a reliable and accurate sequence between the two cultural manifestations could only be provisionally inferred. This is unfortunate, as some recent research in Idaho suggests that the two traditions may be contemporaneous (Wisner 1998).

The majority of contributions to *Early Human Occupation in British Columbia* are from the coastal areas. The editors of the volume have divided these contributions into the pebble tool and microblade traditions, depending on whether or not microblades are present in early period assemblages. Recent publications have demonstrated that coastal refugia existed in British Columbia and Alaska during the Pleistocene (Heaton et al. 1996; Erlandson et al. 1996; Fedje and Josenhans 2000). Models concerning the coastal migration route into the Americas can be temporally contextualized through an understanding of the descendants of such migrants. The compiled reports on these traditions allow for efficient access to archaeologists' knowledge of the early period. The definition of these technological traditions is of considerable value, as they differ in many respects from those found around the same time period in the rest of North America.

The last section of this book is devoted to contributions organized

under the heading *Transitional Cultures*. A.R. Stryd and M.K. Rousseau's report on the early prehistory of the mid-Fraser-Thompson River area is of considerable value as a tool for defining the characteristics of particular phases in this region of British Columbia. However, I find their association of the Lochnore Phase with a distinct linguistic group (Salishan) to be based on dubious evidence and historical assumption.

It is of considerable interest that, of the twenty-five contributors to *Early Human Occupation in British Columbia*, only one of them is female. This would seem to be a reflection of the demographics of archaeological research, at least in terms of early period studies, during the past half century.

The cultural-historical focus of *Early Occupation in British Columbia* is complemented by palaeo-ecological studies and diet reconstruction, geomorphological data, and insights into lithic technology. All of these are important in understanding the early occupation of British Columbia. One important aspect of the historical record for this time period is unfortunately missing from this text: ethno-historical data. The value of origin stories and other oral historical narrative in coming to an understanding of major historical events during the early occupation in British Columbia is great.

Early Human Occupation in British Columbia will be of particular importance to archaeologists working with early period material in British Columbia and in neighbouring areas, including Washington, Alaska, Oregon, and Alberta. It will also be of interest to scholars investigating the peopling of the Americas. Many of the contributions in *Early Human Occupation in British Columbia* relate technical

details or draw on terminology that may not be easily understood by non-archaeologists. Most of the contributions are accompanied by informative figures and tables that aid the reader in conceptualizing the subject matter and that will allow early period researchers to draw on valuable comparative data.

REFERENCES CITED

- Erlandson, Jon M., Douglas J. Kennett, B. Lynn Ingram, Daniel A. Guthrie, Don. P. Morris, Mark A. Tveskov, G. James West, and Phillip L. Walker. 1996. "An Archaeological and Paleontological Chronology for Daisy Lake Cave (CA-SMI-261), San Miguel Island, California." *Radiocarbon* 38,2: 355-73.
- Fedje, Daryl W., and Heiner Josenhans. 2000. "Drowned Forests and Archaeology on the Continental Shelf of British Columbia, Canada." *Geology* 28,2: 99-102.
- Heaton, Timothy, and Gerald F. Shields. 1996. "An Ice Age Refugium for Large Mammals in the Alexander Archipelago, Southeastern Alaska." *Quaternary Research* 46: 186-92.
- Rice, David G. 1972. *The Windust Phase in Lower Snake River Region Prehistory*. Report of Investigations No. 50, Laboratory of Anthropology Washington State University. Pullman, Washington.
- Wisner, G. 1998. "Cooper's Ferry Spear Cache One of the NW's Oldest Sites." *Mammoth Trumpet* 13: 4.