

conducting groundbreaking orca acoustics research. Whaling historian Joan Goddard, whose grandfather managed BC whaling stations earlier this century, comments, "I'd like to write about how we are going to relate to whales in the next century – about use of whales with respect." Spalding muses that whale people are "as fascinating as the whales themselves."

*Whales of the West Coast* serves as a useful handbook for newcomers to

whale watching as well as seasoned observers. Its 200 pages include details on whale parks, museums, hotlines, research and conservation agencies, and information on when and where to view whales in the wild. Spalding thinks that our growing fascination with whales can only pay dividends: "If closer association with whales can help us develop a new more intimate, friendly relationship with nature, we surely need it."

*Since the Time of the Transformers:  
The Ancient Heritage of the Nuu-chah-nulth, Ditidaht,  
and Makah*

Alan D. McMillan

Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999. 252 pp. Illus., maps. \$85 cloth.

By Donald Mitchell  
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**I**N AN IDEAL WORLD of archaeological scholarship, definitive regional summaries and interpretations would be offered once basic data recovery had passed some threshold of adequacy. There would have to be studies reporting the results of excavations at sites that are collectively representative of all categories of sites from all periods of human occupation in all distinguishable sub-regions. We will not even approach such a daunting ideal on the Northwest Coast for many generations to come. Meanwhile, there is a place for less-than-definitive publications, describing what is currently known and outlining at least an interim reconstruction of past forms, events, and processes. Studies of this sort are a kind of stock-taking, informing us of the present state of

investigation and defining and clarifying the problems still to be resolved.

Such a work is *Since the Time of the Transformers*. The territories of the South Wakashans (Nuu-chah-nulth, Ditidaht, and Makah) delimit the region – an area in the very early stages of investigation, with large portions still archaeological terra incognita and with substantial segments of time as yet unrepresented. The core body of data for reconstructing the region's prehistory comes from major excavation projects: Ozette and Hoko River on the Olympic Peninsula, the Toquaht project at Barkley Sound, Shoemaker Bay at the head of Alberni Inlet, the Hesquiat Harbour project, and Yuquot at Nootka Sound. McMillan's Toquaht archaeological project – and

especially excavations at Ch'uumat'a – plays a particularly prominent role in this reconstruction of West Coast and Olympic Peninsula prehistory, but the author does not fall into the trap of viewing the region exclusively from “his” sites. We are given an admirably complete introduction to *all* work done in the area, thanks, in large measure, to the author's evident familiarity with the region's “grey” literature: dissertations, theses, reports, and conference papers.

A major thesis of the volume is that, in the light of recent research, the West Coast culture type (a descriptive concept based on work known up to about 1987) is in need of revision with respect both to its presumed uniformity and conservatism and to its assumed geographical extent over time. While confirming the culture type's general applicability to the entire area in recent times, McMillan outlines some important spatial and temporal internal variation and makes a solid case for the existence of an earlier, different culture on the southern part of the Coast. The 4,200-year span of the Yuquot site's occupation still stands as evidence of long-term existence of the West Coast culture type, but early assemblages from Ch'uumat'a, Little Beach, Shoemaker Bay (and other sites in the Alberni Valley), and Hoko River are of a markedly different form. Their closest resemblance is to contemporaneous assemblages from the Strait of Georgia and northern Puget Sound. This discovery is an exciting development, for it opens the possibility that prior to a Wakashan spread,

represented by the widely distributed West Coast culture type, there was a Salishan occupation of the whole of southern Vancouver Island. The early presence of Salishan speakers has long been suggested for the head of Alberni Inlet, and Hoko River's initial component is identifiably like the Strait of Georgia's Locarno Beach culture, which is of the same age. But it now looks like the whole area from at least Barkley Sound south was also allied to the culture of the Strait of Georgia (Salishan) area.

McMillan's synopsis makes very evident those gaps in the record that wait to be filled. No cultural deposits have been found predating 2300 BC, although the area was free of ice several thousand years earlier and known occupation of Vancouver Island dates back to 6000 BC. And almost no sites have been excavated within the northern one-third of Nuuchahnulth territory. That large area, along with the adjacent, even larger, Kwakwaka'wakw portion of northwestern Vancouver Island (also without significant excavation), forms a particularly intriguing frontier. A number of signs point to it as the “homeland” of the Wakashans, from which expansion took place south, east, and north (as the South and North Wakashans grew separate).

If still a long way from a definitive history of the West Coast people, we have at least a first-class summary and provisional interpretation to set the stage for research in the new millennium.