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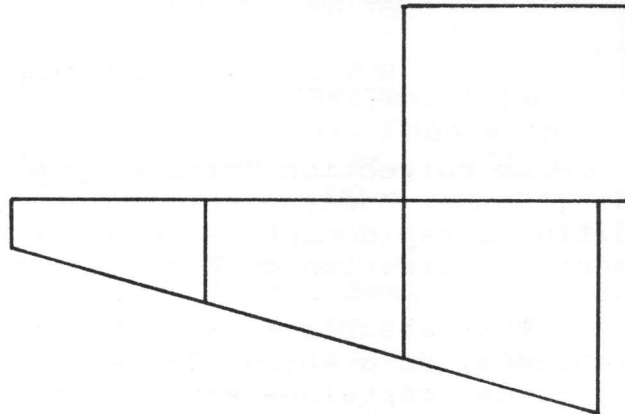
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CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LATER PREHISTORY
OF KODIAK ISLAND, ALASKA

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WITH SECTION BY
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EXCAVATIONS AT KARLUK

Karluk River is the most important salmon stream on Kodiak Island and formerly was one of the major red salmon streams of Alaska. It carried substantial runs of red and pink salmon and minor runs of chum (dog), silver, and king salmon, steelhead trout and other trout. Several sites have been reported in the Karluk drainage although there have been no complete surveys, and we could expect this to be one of the more important archaeological areas on Kodiak. In 1952 Frederick A. Milan, supported by a grant from the University of Alaska Museum, tested the main site on Karluk lagoon, Kar-716, and briefly another site on the lagoon, Kar-715 (Fig. 11). The following report consists of two sections: an archaeology section taken from Dr. Milan's report of excavations dated March 10, 1953, at the University of Oregon (slightly rewritten by Dr. Milan for inclusion in the present report); and artifact descriptions based on my examination of the collection in December 1965 at the University of Wisconsin. I have been parsimonious with comparisons inasmuch as larger collections similar to the Karluk materials have been dealt with elsewhere (Heizer 1956; Clark 1968, 1973a). I am in accord with Milan's conclusions to which I have added some comments following the description of the collections. Earlier reference to sites in the Karluk River drainage is to be found in the works of A. Hrdlicka (especially 1944), but heretofore no collections have been described.

Archaeological Investigations At
Karluk On Kodiak Island

By Frederick A. Milan

The deposits of culture-bearing material along the banks of Karluk River appeared extensive, and isolated human skeletal remains were found protruding from the river bank at several places. Unfortunately, the village houses and gardens were on the top of the site, and this limited excavation to certain areas. In all, five test pits were excavated in the general Karluk area. Four pits were in Old Karluk [site Kar-715] and one in New Karluk [site Kar-716] (Map Fig. 11). In general,

At Excavation A a 2-by-3-meter trench was excavated to a depth of 1 meter in the oval depression of a collapsed barabara. The bottom of the cultural material was 1 meter from the surface. This barabara pit, and, in fact, all of the surrounding terrain was covered by extremely heavy vegetation. Immediately beneath the sod were found glass beads, brass cartridge shells, porcelain sherds, and several large ground slate semi-lunar knives. This showed the temporal co-existence of European trade goods and ground slate tools until recently. The remainder of the artifacts consisted of stone sinkers, beach pebbles notched on opposite ends, a bone wedge, and ground slate knives. There was no observable stratigraphy.

At Excavation B, a 2-by-2-meter trench was excavated 1 meter to the bottom of the deposits. Excepting for several sinkers and slate knife fragments, the artifactual yield was negligible.

At Excavation C, which was adjacent to a small stream, was a little knoll bearing the somewhat circular depressions of five barabaras. Here an area 3 by 4 meters was laid out in 1 meter squares and carried down to 2 meters in depth. Subterranean seepage of water precluded reaching the bottom of the site. According to oral tradition recounted by one informant, running water was available in one of these barabaras. Three house floors, which were clearly marked by wood chips and gravel over hard packed earth were found. House posts and rafters were encountered over these floors. Therefore, the cultural material was relegated to three levels. The first level was at 1 meter in depth, second at 1.5 meters, and the third at 2 meters. The artifacts were dominated by the presence of ground slate tools in all levels. There were numerous wood objects in the lower two.

On the surface at this site were found two coffin burials which were merely covered with heaped up earth. The wood and skeletal remains had disintegrated owing to dampness, but the remains of a shroud consisting of bird skins sewn to a factory made brown woolen blanket and decorated with red, blue, and white beads was still preserved. The dead of Karluk are presently interred in the Christian cemetery in the vicinity of the church on the other side of the river [New Karluk]. Old Karluk

of fish bone, crushed echinoid tests, and mammal bones. A similar artifact inventory obtained here as in Excavation C with the addition of an antler spoon, a leister prong, a symmetrical single barbed dart point, a socketed bone object, tabular abrasive stone, harpoon socket piece, and a fish hook shank.

In New Karluk (site Kar-715) a trench, Excavation E, measuring 1 meter by 3 meters and carried to 1.5 meters depth, was excavated behind the former school house. Owing to the presence of the dwellings of the present day inhabitants this was the only location where excavation was feasible. The artifacts included a wooden female figurine, a wood gorge, a prepared core of "flint," an adze, and lance or arrow shaft fragments.

Conclusions

The excavations at Karluk failed in obtaining a satisfactory stratigraphic column owing to the presence of houses and gardens on the site, limiting excavation to shallow deposits on the periphery. The Karluk collection [analysed before Heizer's description of the Uyak site collections was published] is dominated by ground slate implements and is similar to the so-called Neo-Eskimo material described by Larsen from Bristol Bay (1950). It can be termed a Recent Prehistoric Culture which continued during the early stages of the Russian Period on Kodiak. This however, does not completely negate a hypothesis that the beginning of the aboriginal occupation of this area may be of considerable antiquity. Upstream from Karluk are numerous barabara pits which deserve attention; local tradition relates of a large abandoned village several miles from the river mouth. Karluk Lake, visited by the writer in the summer of 1949, showed other promising looking sites along the lake shore. Further work in the Karluk area, which is environmentally ideal for a people with a subsistence economy, should increase our knowledge concerning the earliest inhabitants of Kodiak Island.

(Excavation E), possibly natural in origin, may be a gorge (Pl. 15 L).

Glass beads. Two spheroidal light blue glass beads, each about 8 mm in diameter, come from C-1 and Excavation D (Pl. 16 H). The only other probably modern trade object in the collection is a plain white china sherd from unit D.

In 1960 the writer obtained from the children of Karluk a number of trade beads said to have been obtained from the beach at New Karluk. Four types or type groups appear to be represented. One is a very large transparent blue faceted bead. There are twenty-nine well rounded more or less doughnut-shaped very small beads 2 to 2.2 mm in diameter — fourteen clear colorless glass, eight harsh red-orange, six brilliant white, and one transparent purple-blue bead. These are essentially like some modern seed beads although beads of similar size and shape also were used in the interior of Alaska during the later part of the nineteenth century. The numerous very small transparent hexagonal glass tube beads are of the same diameter, generally about 2.2 mm, but are not as flattened as are the well rounded beads. Colors represented are: layered with clear exterior and pink interior (thirty-one), colorless mottled with yellow-green (twenty-one), colorless mottled with flesh tone pink (nine), red amber (twenty), amber (eighteen), yellow amber (twenty-one), nearly colorless green (eight), and transparent colorless (ten). There also are three relatively long green tubes. The beads in certain color groups are partially rounded. These beads are essentially the same as some modern beads used in the interior of Alaska for decorative designs on clothing. The last group consists of well to partially rounded tube beads ranging in diameter from 2.5 to slightly more than 5 mm and trending around 3 mm. Within any one color group the size and degree of rounding is quite variable. The beads range from transparent to opaque but do not display the harsh colors or glassy lusters of the two groups of seed beads. The beads of this group are unlike those currently used for garment ornamentation in Alaska and tend to be found in nineteenth century and earlier sites. Colors represented are: the familiar layered Cornaline d'Aleppo with red-brown exterior and clear —actually faint green— interior (thirty-nine), blue-green (seventeen), deep blue (seven), very light

blue (five), gray-blue (five), deep green (four), white (four), and small yellowed white (four). The blue-gray and the layered red-brown beads have a glazed surface luster. No white-lined layered red beads were recovered.

Assessment

Some of the artifacts described here would not be out of place in a Pre-Koniag or Kachemak tradition context, but the collection has an overwhelming Koniag-phase cast. Contact materials and metal-cut objects, found predominantly in the upper part of the excavations, indicate that the sample is part of a continuum from the prehistoric Koniag phase into the contact period.

There is nothing to indicate that more than a very few centuries time depth is represented by the majority of the artifacts. That most of the bone artifacts came from one excavation unit probably is of only local significance and should be devoid of any temporal implications. That wood has been preserved in some areas does of course tend to indicate recency, but more than that it is an indicator of ground water conditions. Both sites are at the base of hills and in this situation the ground water table frequently rises into the site deposit thus preserving, for a while at least, wooden artifacts. No waterlogged site has been extensively excavated on Kodiak, but the wooden and fiber artifacts and structural details obtainable from such deposits would make their excavation worthwhile regardless of a drainage problem which would have to be overcome.

As Heizer (1956:10) and others have suggested, one would expect to obtain a long archaeological sequence at Karluk, and with Milan I am disappointed that the excavations revealed, as we interpret the remains, an occupation of only the last few centuries. Probably the chert core is derived from an earlier component, although it differs from the Ocean Bay I cores recovered from the Afognak River (Clark 1973c, 1973d). Further investigations of sites in the area should uncover older occupations. Hrdlicka (1944) indicates that decorated stone lamps, indicative of the late stage of the Kachemak tradition (pre-Koniag) have been found at these sites. The Karluk excavations help tie the

archaeological remains of the western side of Kodiak Island into the contact period, and in this manner they complement the extensive Upper Level collection from the Uyak site which lacks continuity with the ethnographic present.

PLATE 16

ARTIFACTS FROM KARLUK

Identity	Excavation Unit	Catalog Number	Page Reference
A. Bone wedge	D	124	91
B. Bluntly pointed antler strip	D	125	91
C. Worked bone object	D	127	-
D. Spoon, antler tine	D	97	91
E. Fish hook shank	D	96	91
F. Flat bone or antler peg (site Kar-715)	E	139	-
G. Quartz crystal	C-1	23	89
H. Blue glass trade beads	C-1, D	71, surface	95
I. Foreshaft-socket piece for sea otter harpoon-arrow	ethno- graphic	87	90
J. Harpoon socket piece, damaged	D	94	90
K. Harpoon fragment, antler	C-1	57	90
L. Barbed-serrated prong or point	D	89	90
M. Barbed harpoon-dart point	D	90	90
N. Other side Plate 15 N		123	91



Plate 16