APPROACHING PREHISTORY IN THE FUTURE ON MCB CAMP PENDLETON, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Pendleton is located in San Diego County, California along the Pacific coast and extends inland for a distance of approximately 32 km. It extends 28 km from San Clemente, California southward to Oceanside, California (Figure 1) comprising 125,547 acres. The base lies within the Peninsular Range geomorphic province. Elevation ranges from sea level to 972 m. Narrow, flat coastal terraces dissected by northeast to southwest flowing drainages typify MCB Camp Pendleton. The terraces change to hills leading to the highlands of the Santa Margarita Mountains east of the base.

MCB Camp Pendleton is a Marine Corps training facility, which facilitates the intensive training required to develop combat instincts, innovation, and leadership skills in a short period of time. The Base's natural resources are unique and irreplaceable to the Marine Corps because they combine a long coastline and extensive, diverse inland ranges and maneuver areas. These provide the only setting available to the military where the full spectrum of Marine combat doctrine can be exercised: amphibious landings and all elements of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) including aviation and support combat arms.

MCB Camp Pendleton is home to approximately 50,000 Marines, 13,000 dependents, 3,000 civilian employees and contractors. The base supports the I Marine Expeditionary Force, 1st Marine Division, 1st Force Service Support Group and many tenant units, including elements of Marine Aircraft Group 39 and Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity (MCTSSA). There are 7,300 family housing units, 3,000 buildings, 530 miles of roads. Within the course of a year there can be up to 40,000 training events ranging from small unit to battalion size. To support this use, it has become necessary for good management practices that the location and nature of the archaeological sites be known.

The last 10 years has witnessed a flurry of archaeological investigations on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. Prior investigations have been synthesized in overviews, Base-wide protocols for fieldwork established, over 108,000 acres have been surveyed, and over 250 sites tested for National Register eligibility. Detailed studies of faunal material, paleoethnobotanical remains, various artifact sets, and Mission Records, as well as a concerted long-term program to reconstruct the paleoenvironment have gone hand in hand with this archaeological program. Furthermore, projects have periodically employed cutting-edge techniques, such as micromorphology and lipid residue analysis, to enhance insights into the past. These studies have made great strides in reconstructing the paleoenvironment and exploring settlement and subsistence patterns on Camp Pendleton.

These results also have been used to build models of the past, have been published in variety of peer-reviewed journals (e.g., Brewster et al. 2003; Byrd and Reddy 1999; 2002; Reddy 1999; Reddy and Berryman 1999; Waters et al. 1999), and this has sparked healthy debate and discussion of how this archaeological record should best be interpreted (e.g. Byrd 1998; Rosentahal et al. 2001). In short, recent projects on

Figure 1: MCB Camp Pendleton Location.

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Camp Pendleton have been problem-oriented, addressing topics of broad interest rather than static status quo data gathering and reification of existing constructs.

Indeed, Camp Pendleton arguably has emerged as a vital Southern California laboratory for investigating the past that compliments the long-term programs on San Clemente Island, the Northern Channel Islands, and Vandenberg Air Force Base. This development is a testimony to the foresight, efforts, and accomplishments of Camp Pendleton Environmental Security and supporting agencies such as Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Southwest Division

Rather than talk about these accomplishments, the most recent insights, and key trends this paper will articulate a series of prominent research questions that remain unanswered but that can be profitably addressed in the future. Five questions that future scholars should grapple with will be addressed. It is emphasized here that finding answers to each of these questions entails a more concerted effort to put the archaeology of Camp Pendleton in a broader regional and theoretical context.

TALKING BETTER ABOUT TIME

The first problem concerns talking better about time. We must move away from the culture phase classification that has held sway for so long at Camp Pendleton and really for the coastal region of San Diego as a whole.. In this area, the existing two or three period classifications (often referred to as Paleoindian [very rarely encountered], Archaic and Late Prehistoric or sometime simply designated Early and Late) lacks temporal resolution, and clear diagnostic traits. As such, these classifications are an impediment to examining diachronic trends across the Holocene.

Instead, we advocate adoption of an arbitrary radiocarbon-based chronological classification that divides time into finer segments the closer one comes to the present. This should be a calibrated chronology, since this provides more accurate estimates of actual time and allows us to more easily integrate archaeological results with those of paleoenviromental scholars, who almost exclusively use calibrated dates. Such a chronological classification greatly facilitates sites being grouped into time segments, exploration of long-term trends, and a more fine-grained discussion. The use of such a structure does not require that we ignore temporal developments that were rapid and occurred within arbitrary time segments – instead, it provides a framework for tracking trends and a jumping off point to nail down the timing of key events.

FIRST ASHORE / FIRST ENTRADA

The initial settlement of the Camp Pendleton area represents a major unresolved question. When did the first inhabitants arrive in this area and via what means? Currently the earliest dated archaeological site on the Base is at a minimum 600 years younger than the earliest occupation to the south, notably around Agua Hedionda and San Elijo lagoons. These early sites on the central coastline of San Diego are dated to approximately 7000 BC calibrated.

Is contemporaneous early occupation present on Camp Pendleton? If not, does this actually reflect differential or delayed settlement of the Camp Pendleton area and if so why?

Or alternatively, is this a product of differential coastal site preservation related to shoreline morphology variation between central and northern San Diego. Our reconstructions on Camp Pendleton have indicated that the 7000 BC calibrated shoreline was considerably further to the west than the contemporaneous shoreline at the lagoons along the central coastline of San Diego where the earliest occupation in the region is situated. A concerted program to address this question, including rigorous and extensive dating of potential early sites on Camp Pendleton, has the potential to contribute to understanding the nature of early migration and settlement in the region whether or not it represented a coastal event or a land-based event.

TRACKING SOCIO-IDEOLOGICAL CHANGES AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

Another major research objective entails tracking socio-ideological changes and technological innovations. Casual models need to be developed explaining the pace and timing of major changes documented in the regional archaeological record. Currently we lack strong chronological and contextual data to rigorously address these issues.

With respect to the emergence of new technologies on Camp Pendleton, such as ceramics and the bow and arrow, when were they adopted and why? How does the timing of their appearance and then, if present, widespread acceptance on the Base compare to the timing documented in adjacent regions? And what sort of explanations can be offered if the adoption of a new technology, such as ceramics, was later or earlier on Camp Pendleton than adjacent areas.

Or if a technological innovation that held so much importance in a nearby area (such as fishhooks on the nearby Channel Islands) was of minimal importance in coastal Camp Pendleton, as currently appears to be the case, then why did this occur? In short, we need to control for the timing and scale of such events and then model these trends.

Similarly, the pace of major social and ideological changes needs to be explicitly addressed. One example of this concerns mortuary behavior. In the San Diego area, cremations are considered to have been a hallmark of the "Late Prehistoric" period, variously estimated to begin around 1200 to 800 years ago. Based on existing data, they are essentially absent during this time frame on Camp Pendleton. Instead, it appears that inhumations are the prevalent mortuary practice throughout the Late Holocene. New models of social interaction and identity that integrate the Camp Pendleton data are needed to explain these spatial patterns in mortuary behavior. In short, we must explicitly gather data to address these topics and buildexplanatory models that accommodate the emerging results.

Shoshonean Wedge - The Elephant in the Middle of the Room

The arrival of Uto-Aztecan speakers, often termed the Shoshonean wedge, that brought the Luiseno and others to the California coast has long been an accepted part of archaeological reconstructions and indeed recognized as a fundamental development that shaped the past. Various hypotheses have been offered over the years, and prevailing wisdom has it that this event is correlated with the onset of the "Late Prehistoric" period in the region.

Yet, we have no archaeological proof that it happened. It represents one of, if not, the most important unresolved issue facing scholars in the northern San Diego area. It is effectively the 2 ton elephant sitting in the middle of the room that we don't talk about. We need to work hard to develop material correlates that will allow us to understand when it happened, and what were the regional impactions – such as population displacement?

Placing Camp Pendleton in Broader Regional Context

The archaeology of Camp Pendleton has been largely examined in its own right in recent years. There has been much less rigorous examination of how the prehistory of the Base jives with reconstructions for adjacent regions such as the Channel Islands (especially nearby Santa Catalina), the O.C (or Orange County) up the coast, the central San Diego coastline, and inland settings (such as along the I-15 corridor) where researchers like D.L. True did productive early work.

An important future research focus should be to scrutinize how the robust data on the Base meshes with data sets, reconstructions, and causal models in adjacent areas. These sorts of compare and contrasts exercises should ultimately provide very constructive results and greatly enrich our insights into pan-regional trends in hunter-gatherer adaptation

It needs to be emphasized that in developing these archaeological stories about the larger region we should not assume that Camp Pendleton had a single settlement pattern, subsistence regime, social organization, or ideological construct at any one point in time. Instead, the existing archaeological evidence suggests that strong spatial variations exist within the Base, such as between coastal and more inland settings. These patterns may provide a useful starting point to explore the broader regional picture.

One approach to better understanding the regional context is through landscape archaeology. Camp Pendleton is moving towards landscape archaeology as an overarching view to understanding the archaeological record and aiding in translating it to the wider public. Landscapes are the stage on which human activity takes place. "The evolving human landscape is depicted as a continuum rather that as a series of stages emphasizing the likelihood of continuous rather than discrete development. The evolving landscape is acknowledged to be a consequence of both previous landscapes and of the ongoing process prompting change" (Norton 1989:3).

An archaeological landscape is a transformation of the biophysical landscape. The landscape at Camp Pendleton is marked by a variety of site types including stone quarries, milling sites, shell shucking sites, camp sites, villages, and rock art sites. The landscape can be discerned by artifact and/or site distribution patterns.

"When things are done to the land, they are done knowledgeably, expressing an understanding of what is required at that moment and at that place," (Cooney 1998:26). As the environment changes, the use of the landscape also changes. These land use changes do not just happen in a haphazard fashion but rather are deliberate responses by people with knowledge of their environment. This can be discerned by artifact and/or site distribution patterns. A landscape is a text, "a medium to be read for the ideas, practices, and contexts constituting the culture which created it" (Ley 1985:419).

The same landscape may be seen and used differently by different cultures. For example, the Spanish explorers saw coastal southern California as a sparsely populated, barren, grassy area ideal for colonization. They immediately put their stamp on the lands to demonstrate their power and place. The Native American inhabitants perceived the land based on uses and needs, family histories, oral traditions, and religious symbolism. The differences in perception can be seen today at Camp Pendleton. The populations outside the Base's boundaries perceive that it is open space that is only minimally used with free flowing rivers and sparse population. The 50,000 marines that live, work, and train see the space completely different. They see it as heavily used; a landscape shaped to their uses and needs. There are special areas used for specific types of training including amphibious landings, armored vehicle training, artillery training and spaces are set aside for living, education and worship.

The various landscapes, ethnohistorical, topographical, and archaeological are all seemingly different but when combined can give us a picture of changing land use. To understand the landscape continuum well-dated sites are required. To date 232 radiocarbon dates have been derived from 76 sites. The sites include large, complex sites along the coast and river valleys, and smaller upland foothill sites. We recognize that more dated sites are needed if a clear understanding of the Camp Pendleton landscape is to be achieved. To that end, radiocarbon dates are required from all sites excavated with datable material. Also, the Base is dating material from previously excavated sites currently being curated. All of this is part of Camp Pendleton's commitment to understanding and managing its cultural resources. We are looking at the landscape, not the individual site as the unit of analysis and management. The major landscape studies underway or completed include the Red Beach/Las Pulgas Corridor, Santa Margarita River, San Mateo Creek, and Case Springs (Figure 2).

Conclusion

We have briefly highlighted a series of important research questions that are currently unresolved and one approach used to understand and manage the archaeological resources on MCB Camp Pendleton. To recap, the questions include talking better about time;

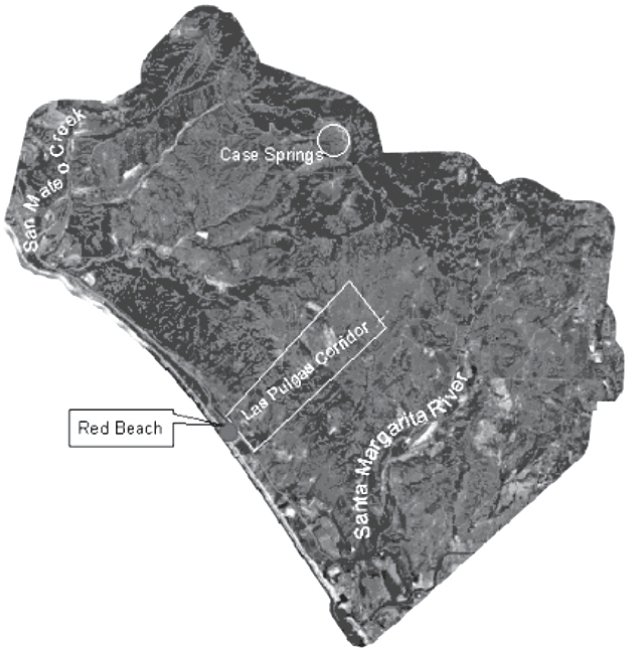

Figure 2: Landscape Study Units on MCB Camp Pendleton.

clarifying the timing of first entry into Camp Pendleton; better understanding socio-ideological changes and technological innovation; identifying archaeological evidence for the Shoshonean wedge, and placing the prehistory of Camp Pendleton more firmly in regional context. Many other important questions can be added to this list.

The seminal aspect of each, however, is explanation and the search for proximate and ultimate causes. As such, they all require that problem-oriented archaeological research be conducted. This entails assessing how a particular project may be able contribute to one of these questions and then rigorously looking beyond the inherently arbitrary confines of the project at hand to place ones study in large context. We fully anticipate that archaeological research on Camp Pendleton during the next decade will result in additional major advances in our understanding of the prehistory of the region.

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