Concerning Migration Paths, or What Became of the Hopewellians?

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Archeological research in Indiana has discovered within our state manifestations of three basic culture patterns—the Mississippi, the Woodland, and an Unknown, or, rather, phases of this designated as an Unknown pattern. This differentiation is founded on the archeological culture classification plan for the eastern United States, originally proposed by McKern (1). In Indiana, as also in several surrounding states, the problem of distinguishing between the Mississippi and the Woodland patterns, and the differentiation of these from the Hopewellian phase of the as yet Unknown, (or, shall we say; unnamed) pattern, is a peculiarly difficult one because of the apparent diffusion of similar culture traits into the body of the three patterns.

Wissler has suggested that migrations move forward—that the diffusion of traits spreads (2, p. xvi). Diffusion implies migration of ideas from mind to mind and group to group. This is quite a different thing from tribal and group migrations. The proximity of receptive minds is essential to the diffusion of ideas that translate themselves into culture forms; and the migration of peoples is but one method of bringing these minds together. The distinction between migration and diffusion has long been recognized in the Old World; and some of the difficulties attendant upon New World archeological and ethnological interpretations can be traced to the "slowness to recognize that diffusion and tribal migration are different things." (2, p. 183.) Migration is one of the natural avenues of social development. For primitive peoples, migration was set in motion primarily by the pressure of population on food supply; under the banner of conquest it has made the grand epochs of history; as a colonizing force it has transformed the world; and as an agency of free initiative it is one of the most powerful factors in social adjustment. Diffusion enjoys its greatest opportunities among relatively stable populations when they have reached the stage of social and commercial interchange with neighbors and with visitors from afar.

The mingling of culture traits in Mississippi, Woodland, and Hopewellian would imply diffusion among these groups in Indiana. Stratigrahpic differentiation of these traits on suggestive time horizons between them would suggest successive migrations into Indiana of the possessors of these cultures. In prehistoric days state boundary lines were not a source of embarrassment. McKern (4, pp. 138-143) has suggested the possibility of an Asiatic origin for the Woodland culture pattern and the attainment of its highest development in Wisconsin and Minnesota or in territories relatively close thereto. The Mississippi culture pattern is generally considered to have reached its height in our southernmost states and as characterized in the Lower Mississippi phase. Hopewellian appears to be more ancient than Woodland in the north

(3, p. 179) and at the bottom of a suggested time horizon in the south (4, p. 271).

Hopewellian still is classified as a phase of an Unknown pattern because of its possession of both Mississippi and Woodland traits. The culture level of the Mississippi pattern apparently was much higher than that of Woodland. On the basis of present knowledge this thought is highly speculative, but, if Hopewellian be older than Woodland in the north, and the oldest suggested horizon in the south, does it not suggest the possibility of the migration northward from the south of peoples possessing an early Mississippi culture pattern? And furthermore, that when peoples having a Woodland culture pattern migrated from the north and came in contact with these Hopewellians, diffusion began its processes of interchange. An unequal population balance may have had much to do with the final outcome: Woodland traits permeated the Hopewellian phase, and, because of their superior numbers, the Woodland peoples absorbed the Hopewellians and finally destroyed the Hopewellian culture.

This suggestion is now made possible because of McKern's tentative suggestion of a migration route for the Woodland peoples from Asia via Bering Strait to the Great Lakes area by way of the Yukon and Mackenzie valleys (3, p. 142). If we may be allowed to consider time as an element in culture development, it is reasonable to believe that an earlier migration path from Bering Strait led incoming peoples to the south-southeast. It is significant that the highest culture centers created by the American Indian lay in a direct line south-southeast of Bering Strait, down along the west coast of the Americas. As against the relatively simultaneous springing up of the white man's culture centers along our eastern shores, we face the problem of the red man's migrational flow into northwestern America through a relatively narrow gateway, much the same as if all European entrance had come in by way of Labrador and the gulf of the St. Lawrence. And so in the northwest it is not unreasonable to assume the creation of advancing culture stations, primarily population stations, into which poured wave after wave of immigrants, in them to be begun the leveling processes which subsequently evolved the American Indian racial type. The suggestion made as early as 1868 (5, pp. 158-257) that the territory embracing the valley of the Columbia River and the coastal lands opposite Vancouver Island to the northward provided the natural endowments for a great prehistoric population station, is not without interest. The center of this domain is approximately two thousand miles southeast of Bering Strait. Neither in these two places, and along the vast distance between them, nor to the eastward of all that northwest country have been found, as yet, the ancient ruins of a great Indian culture rivaling the cultures developed far to the south. Some three-thousand-two-hundred miles south-southeast of Bering Strait the American Indian acquired the social technique to create a civilization of such permanency as to carry on, in some of its forms, to our present day. On to the south-southeast below the Pueblo country lay the prehistoric civilizations of Mexico, Guatemala, and northwestern South America. The Pueblo country is practically the same distance from Bering Strait as is the country bordering Lake Superior. Again, if time is a factor in cul-

tural growth, the migrations south-southeast must be assumed as earlier than those to the east-southeast of Bering Strait.

There is evidence of the migration of peoples into the lower Mississippi Valley from the west and southwest, moving into those lands where the Mississippi culture pattern achieved its highest development. This cultural horizon also predicates the necessity of time for its growth.

When we consider the Hopewellian mounds of the Ohio Valley and their cultural accessories which point toward a southern origin, we dare not think of them as the creations of some strange, unknown group, but, rather, as the work of an ethnic group or fusion of groups, at least one of which migrated out of southern culture centers characterized by the Mississippi culture pattern.

References

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