Comments on Anarchism and the Archaeology of Anarchic Societies: Resistance to Centralization in the Coast Salish Region of the Pacific Northwest Coast

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practice as "the anathema of aggregation." Moreover, Thom detailed how the authority of any Coast Salish individual to speak for the Coast Salish in such negotiations must be justified for the purpose it serves and accepted broadly as such. As with their ancestors in the past 2 millennia, the Coast Salish aim to decentralize power, emphasizing greater local autonomy and the subjection of authority to challenge.

Conclusion

The archaeological data we present provides a basis for understanding how processes of decentralization and resistance operated in past Coast Salish society. The expansion of a hereditary elite class to include a broad segment of society, as measured through the increasing prevalence of cranial deformation over time, reflects commoners successfully exercising and leveraging their autonomy within households to negotiate for elevated status, effectively mitigating increasing socioeconomic differentiation pursued by existing elites. Warfare provided a more overt tool of conflict primarily among the elite class to break increasing exclusivity of access to material and social resources. In these practices, core principles of anarchism were expressed and embedded in Coast Salish social systems, shaping the historical trajectory of political evolution in the region for 2 millennia.

We have argued that the theory of anarchism has much to offer to archaeologists and other social theorists. Anarchism can serve as a framework for the analysis of nonstate or other noncentralized societies and, in particular, the dynamics of power and authority that operate within them. The principles of anarchism provide a set of propositions to examine social forces within heterarchical societies. Anarchism allows us to move beyond the weaknesses of concepts of egalitarianism, expanding our understanding of the dynamics of power and authority in small-scale social formations. The principles of anarchism provide not a set of traits to be measured but rather constitute a set of generative principles and overarching framework for the analysis of history. In an anarchist view, every society constantly renegotiates the terms of its sociopolitical relationships. Accordingly, we would expect shifts in the expression and emphasis of these principles over time, with shifts from autonomy to domination, from involuntary identifications to free associations, from cooperation to competitiveness, from hierarchy to heterarchy, and from imposed to justified authorities.

As we have shown with our Coast Salish case study, it is possible to measure such shifts with archaeological data. In the process, we have outlined how the theory and principles of anarchism can provide insights into archaeological and ethnographic patterns that have been confounding or explained only in a cumbersome fashion. The "conundrum" of the Northwest Coast past—where "high social complexity" was combined with "low political complexity"—arises from an attempt to fit inappropriate models based in teleologies of centralization to the elaborate yet decentralized societies of the Northwest Coast. Moreover, through an anarchist analysis it is possible to clarify how a society can develop and operate when a majority of individuals are in fact of "elite status."

In the end, our main point is not to excessively amplify the strident nature of Coast Salish autonomy and decentralization. Our emphasis, instead, is to suggest that there is utility in an anarchist approach to the past. Simply put, societies without governments are anarchies. Given that, we propose that the rich intellectual tradition of anarchist theory and practice has something to offer those studying the material record of those anarchic societies.

Comments

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This paper contributes to several important trends in our understanding of Northwest Coast social evolution. The first is a remarkable surge of archaeological and ethnohistorical scholarship over the past decade focusing on the Salish Sea and the lower Fraser River. This region is the best known anthropologically on the Northwest Coast (taking archaeology, ethnography, ethnohistory, and linguistics together). Despite that, it is not all that well know, and single projects can still force significant revisions of what we thought we knew (e.g., Clark, Coupland, and Cybulski 2012). The paper also contributes to a recent welcome rethink (e.g., Coupland, Clark, and Palmer 2009; Grier 2006a; Martindale and Letham 2011) and critique of the models of the evolution of social complexity on the coast that took shape in the 1990s (e.g., Ames and Maschner 1999; Matson and Coupland 1995). This critique includes arguments that concepts like complexity and intensification have outlived their value, do not fit the circumstances of the coast, and should be abandoned (Moss 2011, 2012) because these broad, universalizing ideas founder on the coast's fine-grained environmental diversity (e.g., Cannon, Yang, and Speller 2011). The diversity of the coast has been long known (e.g., Schalk 1977; Suttles 1968) but insufficiently appreciated. And as data accumulate, the picture becomes even more complicated temporally and spatially, appearing like a shifting 3-D mosaic. At some scales, patterns of change through this mosaic exhibit the Rowley-Conwy affect (Ames 2004): change proceeds in fits, starts and pauses, zigs, zags, reversals, and tangents (Rowley-Conwy 2001) in a dynamic that could be labeled chaotic or perhaps anarchic. Yet at other scales there is profound stability or stasis (e.g., Ames 1991, 2000; Cannon 2003; Lepofsky et al. 2009; Moss 2011). For a discipline

built on studying change, this presents considerable theoretical and methodological problems.

This paper also contributes to a long-standing anthropological tradition in which the Northwest Coast is a place to test high-level theory. This is because, as Angelbeck and Grier comment, the coast's ethnographic societies do not readily fit into anthropological, sociopolitical, or economic (e.g., Deur and Turner 2005) categories with its social stratification without polities (but see Arnold 2006). Consequently, we do not lack for theory on the coast; processual archaeology is alive and well in places; household archaeology with its Marxian focus on political economy flourishes; some researchers explore human behavioral ecology, others Darwinian evolution, while others work within the varied frameworks labeled postmodernism. Theories do not go away; they just accrete. What is lacking is coherence. A question arising, then, is whether we need anarchy concepts to elucidate the issue this paper addresses.

The absence of polities or of even stronger inequality is an issue larger than the Salish Sea. In many places along the coast, populations were large and dense enough to sustain permanent political leadership and polities. Ames and Maschner (1999) speculate that the coast's archaeological record may actually contain evidence of failed experiments in polity creation. The fur trade threw up several great chiefs (Ames 1995) along the coast, so it seems not unlikely that also happened earlier. Dislike for arrogant leadership or too much authority was not limited to the Coast Salish. The ethnographic record for the coast is clear—while chiefs might have had high prestige and authority, generally they had little real power or their power was circumscribed in a number of ways, some institutional (e.g., councils of elders), others more direct. For example, John Jewitt, an American captured and enslaved by Maquinna, the great Nuu-chah-nulth chief of the early nineteenth century, indicates in his journal that Maquinna feared assassins sent by other chiefs (Jewitt 1967 [1815]). Explanations for the absence of polities include people voting with their feet (e.g., Stearns 1984). In the final analysis, chiefs controlled slaves only; free peoples could leave. Another possibility is structural: there simply were too many chiefs for them to be successfully integrated into a polity—the centrifugal force was just too great (Ames 1995). However, these suggestions lack an integrating theory.

Angelbeck and Grier present a theory that problematizes and calls attention to the issue in a way that has not been done before, accounts for the ethnographic data, and appears to link that data to the archaeological record of warfare, cranial deformation, and house sizes in the Salish Sea and lower Fraser River. What is perhaps most interesting is their account of the evolution of the pear-shaped distribution of status among the Coast Salish. Anarchy theory, at least in their hands, is productive. I look forward to seeing it applied to other aspects of the Northwest Coast's 3-D mosaic and seeing whether it consistently helps us to make sense of things.

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Angelbeck and Grier's creative and provocative article draws on anarchist theory as a new way of conceptualizing politics in nonstate societies. I mean it as high praise to say that it raises more questions—genuine questions—than it answers. The most obvious question is whether the theory of anarchism adds anything to a rich literature that has been busy modifying and deconstructing the neoevolutionary model since at least the mid-1980s. To this existing work on egalitarianism, heterarchy, networks, and various typologies of transegalitarian social formations, does anarchism offer new insights into how political relationships are constituted? Potentially, yes. Two aspects of this article are particularly useful. First, it extends a recent thread of argument (e.g., Wiessner 2002) that acephalous societies are distinguished not by a lack of permanent hierarchy but by the active assertion of codes and practices that work against hierarchy and allow people to function without central leadership. As the authors note, it is more productive to talk about these institutions in positive terms than as deficits (although, ironically, the term "anarchy" replicates the negative wording they critique, along with many other unavoidable terms in their article and in this comment). The second contribution is the vision of a persistent dialectic or tension between centralizing and decentralizing forces and practices in society. Over time, there might be oscillations back and forth, à la Leach (1954) and McGuire and Saitta (1996), or a long-term trend in one direction, but with the ever-present potential for reversal. This perspective directs attention toward "collapses," delays, or "pauses" (Dillehay 2004; Harrower, McCorriston, and D'Andrea 2010) and movements away from centralization as things that need explaining as much as increasing centralization.

Going forward, a core question must be the extent to which decentralization (like centralization) is accomplished by human agency and practice or by "external" conditions such as resource opportunities and constraints. Tendencies toward anarchism might be more realizable in some social and environmental contexts. For instance, the crucial ability of Coast Salish people to "vote with their feet" rests on a flexible bilateral kinship system. Did preexisting bilateral kinship foster decentralization and individual autonomy, or did a general ethos of autonomy and dislike of unjustified authority lead people to expediently define kin relations in bilateral terms? This kind of chicken-and-egg question highlights the problem of how we are to think of a priori anarchist principles like individual autonomy and voluntary association. Where do these principles come from? (Is their authority justified, so to speak?) Are they part of our evolved heritage as social animals? Are they inherent and necessary structural properties of an acephalous society if it is to function? Are they present in germ form in any society, even the most hierarchical? Do