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Title

Memorial to Martin Alexander Baumhoff (1926-1983)

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Journal

Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology, 6(2)

ISSN

0191-3557

Author

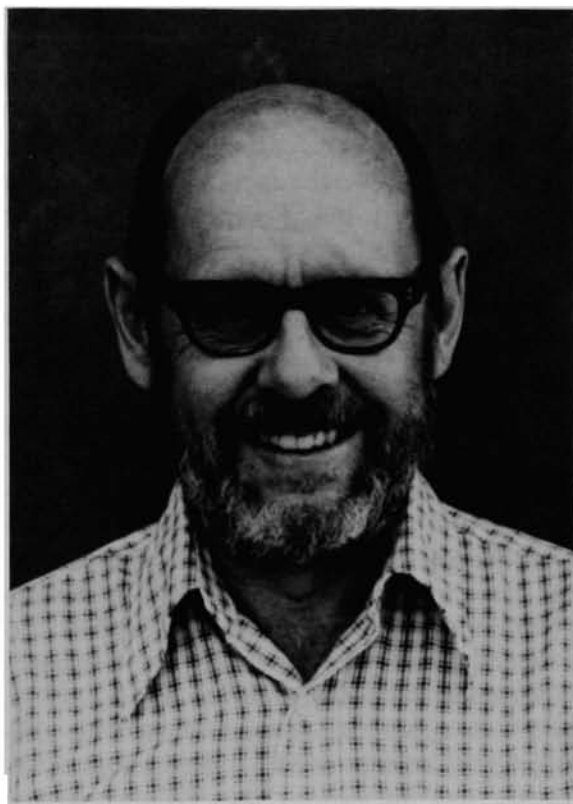
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Publication Date

1984-07-01

Peer reviewed

Memorial to Martin Alexander Baumhoff (1926-1983)



M. A. BAUMHOFF, Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Davis, was born in Camino, California, on December 22, 1926. He died of cancer on March 27, 1983. After joining the Davis faculty in 1958, he served as Chairman of the Department of Anthropology from 1963 to 1966. For the next two years, during the heyday of so-called student unrest, he was the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs at Davis.

Baumhoff's substantive contributions to the archaeology of California and the Great Basin are relatively well reflected in his publications, a list of which follows. His archaeology was heavily grounded in material culture studies, and his early publications deal with, among other topics, the basketry of California and the Great Basin, a subject that fascinated him for more than three decades. While still a graduate student, Baumhoff published (with J. S. Byrne), a now-classic analysis of Desert Side-notched projectile points as time markers. Curiously, while he was always drawn to the implications of such analyses, the actual objects seemed to interest him very little.

Research on Great Basin rock art, which began with field investigations at the Lagomarsino site (Nevada), culminated in 1962 with the monumental *Prehistoric Rock Art of Nevada and Eastern California*. Coauthored with Robert F. Heizer, it is still the baseline for rock-art research anywhere in the American West. And, just for the record, Baumhoff was responsible for virtually everything contained in that volume, compiling all the tables and figures, and writing virtually every word of the text. The so-called "hunting hypothesis" was his alone. That he was listed as junior author actively irritated him 15 years after the fact.

His doctoral dissertation, "Ecological Determinants of Aboriginal California Populations," was two decades ahead of its time. I am amazed, given the pervasive cultural historical thinking of the time (especially at

Berkeley), that Baumhoff was even allowed to pursue such a theme. The dissertation, published in 1963, clearly presaged contemporary developments in evolutionary biology (including his own collaboration with Robert Bettinger in 1982).

But the Baumhoff presence is only dimly reflected in academic publications. Infecting students and colleagues with his own voracious curiosity, he was above all a scholar of wide-ranging interests, many of which he never wrote about. To cite but one instance of this, Baumhoff had been inducted into the Army straight out of high school at Berkeley and assigned to the army of occupation in Japan. Nearly a quarter-century later, through the good offices of Dr. Shuzo Koyama—one of Baumhoff's many successful graduate students at Davis—he was offered a chance to return to Japan.

As a consequence, Baumhoff was instrumental in organizing the "Acorn Conference," sponsored as the Third Taniguchi Symposium, held in 1979 at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka. Beginning with his dissertation research, Baumhoff had been exploring the quantitative structure of the oak woodland, with special interest in its potential for human carrying capacity. The Taniguchi Symposium was explicitly designed to compare foraging economies of prehistoric Japan and California, two areas with superficially similar ecosystems. But unlike that of California, the technology of traditional acorn processing continued to be practiced in Japanese mountain villages until the 1960s. At the conference, Baumhoff seemed to be endlessly engaged in swapping the most minute details of the human-acorn relationship with Japanese ethnographers, who had been observing people doing this on their side of the Pacific.

As it turned out, Baumhoff contributed more than acorn lore to the Taniguchi Symposium. As the senior American scholar attending the conference, he was frequently

called upon to speak for the American contingent. Many of his California and Great Basin colleagues would have been surprised at the ease with which he mastered formal Japanese protocol, comfortably engaging in ritualized joking and kidding, proffering just the right after-dinner remarks and, on the last day, providing succinct participant-by-participant appraisals of the entire symposium.

Although closely associated with Dr. Baumhoff throughout my professional career, I learned more about him during our Japanese travels than in the previous ten years. I learned that, forty years earlier, he came perilously close to devoting his career to Japanese studies. But, typically anxious to get on with the business of original scholarship, he realized that the requisite decade of linguistic training rendered oriental studies impractical for him.

After two years in the Far Eastern Language Center at Berkeley, Baumhoff enrolled in the anthropology program there, graduating with honors in 1954. Continuing directly into the graduate program, his specialization became social organization, with particular emphasis on the anthropology of western North America. He served as Assistant Archaeologist of the University of California Archaeological Survey during 1951 - 1952, and was appointed Merriam Fellow in Ethnography during 1955 - 1956. Robert F. Heizer was his mentor, but he also worked closely with S. F. Cook, A. L. Kroeber, Robert Lowie, Robert Murphy, and David M. Schneider.

Never comfortable with a strictly anthropological approach, Baumhoff augmented his ecological orientation with a heavy dose of mathematical statistics. His early publications are sprinkled with original, quantitative thought—at a time when such speculation was still considered odd.

It was not long before young Dr. Baumhoff imported his brand of quantification to

the Davis campus, where he was instrumental in promulgating the then-eschatological curriculum requirement: all undergraduate anthropology majors at Davis must pass at least one course in elementary statistical methods. I know of no other undergraduate program in the country that—in the mid-1960s—required its anthropology majors to study statistics.

Baumhoff reasoned that statistical training had become imperative in the preparation of undergraduates. Not only would they use the techniques themselves, but at least anthropological majors from Davis could critically cope with the quantitative lunacy then cropping up in the contemporary literature. Or so he argued.

Although some students satisfied this mandatory course in the mathematics or psychology departments, most enrolled in Baumhoff's infamous "Anthropology-13," Statistics for Anthropologists. My most vivid graduate student memory centers on this dreaded Anthro-13 class.

During one of those semesters, as Baumhoff was calling for last-minute questions before the final exam, one obviously disenchanting student spoke up.

"OK, Dr. Baumhoff, I realize that we must learn binomial expansions and chi-squares to get a degree in anthropology here. But, come on, can you tell me *any* question in anthropology that can be answered with this numbers stuff?"

Rough talk, but this *was* the 1960s. An amused class watched Baumhoff's ears redden as he wheeled around.

"When can you use it? When can you use it? Are you kidding?"

In typical Baumhoff dialectic, he shot back, "There isn't a question in anthropology that *can't* be answered by statistical inference." As a first-year grad student, slouched knowingly in the back row, I remember thinking, "Look out now, dude, the Man's going to eat your lunch."

Not so. Instead of jumping the guy who asked the question, Baumhoff pointed at me. "Thomas, you're a statistics hot shot"—he liked calling the younger grad students "hot shots"—"*you* answer the question."

Come on, unfair. Here I was, dutifully auditing Anthro-13 for the *third* damn time (Who would miss it! The class was totally different every year) and Baumhoff starts picking on me. I didn't know what he was after, so I said something stupid and superficial, hoping he was kidding.

But Baumhoff was serious! "Come on, Thomas, name a problem that a quantitative approach can't solve."

Always a shaky lecturer, Marty was at his best when arguing a point in public. He never hesitated to badger a student in a debate, apparently operating on the premise that any student unwilling to shout back at him must not be very smart.

At that time, I was writing my dissertation proposal, and thinking there was something critical that needed to be said, I proceeded to announce that, no matter what, no amount of quantitative data or number grinding would ever tell us whether patrilineal bands once existed in the Great Basin.

This must have been what Baumhoff was waiting for. As he mutilated yet another unlit cigarette, he seemed to be sizing up my jugular.

"Patrilineal bands in the Basin, huh? Who the hell cares about patrilineal bands—anywhere?"

Today the dialogue seems a blur, but I do remember wide-eyed undergraduates watching as Dr. Baumhoff, who by this time had forgotten all about the final exam, proceeded to grill this novice in an animated diatribe ranging from Great Basin social organization to Desert Side-notched points.

Our three-hour "debate" that began in a classroom moved vociferously through the halls and across the street, ending up in his

cluttered office. There, repeatedly molesting his bookshelf, pulling out book after monograph—each source debated and dissected, he moved on, more agitated than before. Precarious stacks of publications sprouted all over his desk.

“Sweet Jesus, Thomas! Don’t you think John Wesley Powell saw more Shoshones than Elman Service?”

“What’s this *virilocal* crap?”

Finally, grabbing some brown, dog-eared volume from the bottom shelf, he seemed exasperated: “I suppose now you’re going to disprove Strong’s stuff on bands too.”

Touché. I’d never seen that book, didn’t know who Strong was, and had no idea what this guy said about bands. Although I tried a half-hearted bluff, saying something about Strong (whoever *he* might be) having never worked in the Basin. But he had me, and we both knew it.

“I *see*,” he said, in his best and most deliberate John Houseman voice, “I suggest we continue this conversation once you learn the literature.”

Being Baumhoff’s graduate student was a lot like enrolling in law school. He not only demanded mastery of the subject matter, but he seemed to engage in a personal crusade to coerce his students into actually *thinking*—and articulating—in a rational, almost legalistic manner. It was years before I realized that graduate students did not become “his” until they’d survived the inevitable tooth-and-fang debate. Somehow, this was Marty’s way of moving from passive to active voice with each student.

But I did know, even as a first-year graduate student, that from that day on, I was “Baumhoff’s student.” I still am today.

Isn’t it ironic that Martin Baumhoff’s lasting legacy to our field is as a teacher? Undergraduates were bored by him. Many (if not most) graduate students were afraid of him. And he always looked as though *any-*

place would be better than standing in front of a class. But somehow, Marty had a way of providing “his” students with whatever it took to make it in today’s archaeology.

Through the years, Marty’s students have done pretty well in an increasingly competitive profession. The naive probably think they did it on their own.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am especially grateful to Ms. Helen McCarthy for providing background and bibliographic materials. In preparing this memorial, I consulted the recollections of David Fredrickson (published in the Society for California Archaeology Newsletter) and an unpublished obituary prepared by Kenneth Thompson, D. L. True, and D. L. Olmsted. I also thank Robert Bettinger, Richard Hughes, Lorann S. A. Pendleton, and Margot Dembo for assistance in preparing the manuscript.

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