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Observations on the Review of Archaeological Investigations in the Sacramento River Canyon

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... What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not wait for an answer.

– Bacon

Henn's (1984) interesting review underscores one of the hazards of impatience: the audience that expects the prelude to subsume the fugue always risks disappointment. Henn's disappointment with our work in the Sacramento River Canyon springs in part from his failure to distinguish some important stages in the conduct of inquiry, and he is led, at our disadvantage, to review our achievement of goals to which we did not aspire.

The Sacramento River Canyon research was designed and executed as a testing program, responsive to the threat posed to seven previously recorded sites by the anticipated relocation of Interstate Highway 5. Exploratory in scope, and presupposing that more comprehensive work would follow, the study sought to assess the significance of the subject sites in terms of their data content relative to identifiable arenas of inquiry. Our delineation of 44 "research questions" (by Henn's count) was intended to provide a framework against which the potential of each site could be

measured and within the context of which future research might be organized.

That the questions were identified without a suite of "test implications and corresponding proofs" indicts neither the logic of the work nor the success of its performance; the *single* test implication of this stage of the investigations was whether each (or any) of the sites retained data useful for addressing various of the questions at a subsequent, more intensive, stage of research. Also, the anticipation of follow-up research was no vacuous conceit, since that was understood from the beginning to be the component of the project toward which all our preliminary work was directed. Henn should recognize that negative results in such a context do not constitute a failure to meet objectives; rather, they signal simply and usefully that some questions, excavation strategies, or analytic techniques have proved inappropriate and need to be revised. In most such instances we were able to suggest specific modifications to guide subsequent research. This, it seems to me, is the chief function of the testing phase of a multi-phase program.

Two lesser issues merit note, as Henn's review appears to suggest oversight. In the first place, the important work of Hildebrandt and Hayes (1983) became available only after we were out of the field and much text had been written; to incorporate adequately the implications of their land-use model would have required that it be considered at the stage of project design. In the second place, Henn chides our scant attention to the various survey reports previously generated in the Sacramento River Canyon, and invokes my

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own admonition that multiple lines of inquiry may be conjoined potently. In fact, the reports of such surveys, as well as those of the few and limited data retrieval programs so far conducted in the area, were reviewed for useful information; the cursory summary of them in Chapter 2 of our report reflects simply that we did not find in them much that was useful to our purposes. In this, Henn has misconstrued my prescription for "excavations coordinated with site surveys" to mean simply that available sources of information should be exploited. What is diluted in this reading is the more important exhortation that archaeological problem-solving invokes diverse strategies, and is the most effective arbiter of when and *where* they should be brought into play; after all, the instances in which excavations dictated by the contingencies of highway planning can benefit much from surveys dictated by the contingencies of timber sales always will owe more to serendipity than to insightful research design.

It is on this ground, in fact, that I find myself most at odds with the understanding expressed in the review. Henn chooses to assess the "excitement" level of our work in the Sacramento River Canyon in light of my remark on northeastern California (Raven 1984: 459):

There have, however, been a number of instances in which the decision to excavate a site has been preceded by the phrasing of specific questions in order to resolve identified problems in understanding. When that has happened, the results almost always have been exciting.

It seems almost superfluous to point out that the decision to excavate the Sacramento River Canyon sites was made well in advance of any identification of problems or phrasing of questions, and was preceded chiefly by the decision to build a highway. And that is not what I meant, at all.

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Correction to "Kumeyaay Socio-Political Structure"

FLORENCE C. SHIPEK

In the original manuscript of my article entitled "Kumeyaay Socio-Political Structure" (Vol. 4[2] of the *Journal*), a sentence was omitted. On page 301, column 1, the first paragraph should read: "'Paayon' (Pion, Davis 1919) of the Hillymeyup *shiiimull*, and his son Jose Largo were the last two Generals, or *Kuchult kwataay*. The other grandfather (stepgrandfather, actually) of their descendants who were trained for the leadership position, was Jose Kotem Cuero (Kwash *shiiimull*), who was also part of the leadership hierarchy."

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