

"Marine foraging" in the Yamana-English dictionary. Exploring historical sources of Patagonia and their relevance to the archaeological records from Tierra del Fuego and Norway.

By Elisabeth Forrestad Swensen

Advisor: Hein B. Bjerck

"Marine foraging" in the Yamana-English dictionary. Exploring historical sources of Patagonia and their relevance to the archaeological records from Tierra del Fuego and Norway

When the exploration of the “New World” began after its discovery, the Europeans learned many new things in the encounter with this remote place and its people, like the Inuits, Aztec and Yamana. We still haven’t got quite hold of the extent of the information these “new” people gave us. Still, a variety of sources holds mountains of information about several topics that can help researchers today. So what have been written? What can we learn?

This MA project is part of the Norwegian-Argentinean research project Marine Ventures (<http://www.ntnu.no/vitenskapsmuseet/marine-ventures>, Bjerck and Breivik 2012). My project will be based mainly on a dictionary written by a missionary, and on other extensive ethnographical and historical records of the “Canoe peoples” of the Patagonian archipelagos, and it will explore what these sources will tell about marine foraging. The theoretical discussion will include the use of “analogy”, and compare the historical sources to the archaeological records of Tierra del Fuego and Norway. The postglacial environment of Patagonia and Scandinavia are similar, and the regions make an interesting frame for comparisons.

In the Mesolithic period, the people of Patagonia and Scandinavia began, after a while, to approach the marine environment. They became marine foragers. What a marine forager is has to do with what kind of relation to the sea they have. Bjerck wrote in 2009 a very useful description, which divides different kinds of use of aquatic resources, the peoples’ aquatic relations. The canoe people of Patagonia clearly fall into the category of marine relations, a kind of open water foraging. It differs greatly from littoral relations, land-based maritime relations, by being mainly dependent on elaborate boats (Bjerck 2009: 121-122). In my project I will include the “hunting” of seabirds, as several of the ethnographic sources mention the trapping and killing of such birds, and are an important addition in the diet.

In Scandinavia, there are abundant sites from the early marine society, but our knowledge suffers from the lack of organic preservation. In Norway we can trace the Mesolithic people mainly by the remains of tent-rings, housefoundations, hearths, and lithic artifacts. In Tierra del Fuego, zoological material is abundant, and there is a broader expertise on this subject (Zangrando 2009, Tivoli and Zangrando 2010). This and the historical and ethnographical records reveal details that are hard to obtain in the archaeological record in Norway.

The main area for research is Tierra del Fuego, but I will also consider the whole area of Patagonia and two canoe peoples; the Kaweskar/Alcaluf, and the Yamana/Yaghans. Numbers of written sources speak of these people, and they might give an interesting view into early marine cultures. The most important source in my study is Thomas Bridges’ Yamana-English dictionary, which provides details about equipment, environment and activities related to marine foraging. The fact that this is described in their own words makes the dictionary a unique source. I will use an analysis of the dictionary to approach these questions: What kind of technology and tools is described? What kind of prey were “hunted”, and where? How did they catch their prey, and who did it? Did they rely on the seasons for their lifestyle? How about procurement and storage? What did the marine lifestyle have to say for their settlements and social structure? What can the dictionary reveal about the peoples foraging habits? From this again, one important question emerges. Could the sources of Patagonia, archaeological, historical and ethnographical, aid us in the understanding of the early marine cultures in Scandinavia?

An analysis of Bridges' dictionary will be used as a main source to answer these questions. Bridges had a very close relationship with the Yamana people. His insight to their way of life and language offers great possibilities to understand marine foraging then, and perhaps also in the Stone Age. The Yamana people speak to us through Bridges, and this gives us a great opportunity to analyze a way of life more intimate than what is usual with vanished cultures.

To give a better understanding of the further reading, a term must be defined. Ethnography can be defined as "a branch of anthropology dealing with the scientific description of individual cultures", the study of cultures (ethnography). Ethnographical written sources will then deal about this. What then are historical sources? History can be defined as "a continuous, systematic narrative of past events as relating to a particular people, country, period, person, etc., usually written as a chronological account; chronicle..."; and it is clear to see that ethnography is a part of this history (history). But those ethnographical sources I am going to use, are not of a recent date, mostly they date back to 50 to 150 years ago. And the people described do no longer exist. Historical sources include so many different types of sources that I will name my sources historical-ethnographic sources. They are a part of history, but a specific part, dealing with ethnographical sources written a long time ago.

Research history

Research history about the use of historical-ethnographic sources and the use of analogy in archaeology. Ethnographical sources are, as all written sources, cultural products; products of their time and space and personal beliefs. Via Trigger, we can get insight to the history of the use of ethnography and analogy in archaeology.

There is no lack of ethnographical sources about Tierra del Fuego, but before 1975, there was not much archeological work worth mentioning. Bird did some work in the 1930's, and Emperaire and Laming did some in the 60's (Orquera, Legoupil & Piana 2011: 61). In 1975 started a systematic gathering of archaeological data, in the Argentine part of Tierra del Fuego, through the "Beagle Channel Archaeological Project", BCAP. Two important sites have been Túnel 1 and Imiwaia 1 (Orquera and Piana 1999a, Piana & Orquera 2009). Most of the sites are shellmiddens, and they are very important because of their high CaCO₃ levels, which is good for the preservation of bone and organic materials. In addition they are quite visible in the landscape and they have a fast accumulation rate "...which generates high spatial and temporal resolutions" (Ibid.: 107).

The Mesolithic age in Norway has been a field for research for many years, and we can say it started with the works of Nummedal. He discovered the earliest known cultures in Norway called Fosna and Komsa (Bjerck 2008: 61). There were not much progress in Mesolithic research until natural sciences got its hold of archaeology in the 60's. The expanded use of radiocarbon dating was especially important and gave a better understanding of postglacial shoreline displacement. The 80's came with more concern of social aspects. After a while one started do discuss a bigger diversity in maritime Mesolithic societies than what had been believed till now, concerning sedentism, ethnicity, social organization and subsistence patterns (Bjerck 2008: 64-65).

In his article about aquatic adaptations, Erlandson introduces how the prehistoric maritime traces have been used in research (mainly) the last 50 years. He claims that mostly the traces have been ignored or that the aquatic resources have been seen as the "last resort". Anyways, the archaeological evidence for such subsistence was limited (Erlandson 2001: 287-289).

The research history clearly shows a need of collaboration to expand the view of understanding our prehistory. The broadened knowledge we get about other similar societies bridges even the biggest oceans. This project with Argentine researches cannot give anything but positive results, even though they could be negative. I have embraced the importance of negative results as well as the positive.

Theory and method

The use of these sources is an important method to reveal relevant information, as well as interpreting the archaeological record. What information about marine foraging can we wring out of the dictionary, and the other sources? I will use information analysis and perspective analysis (the latter being a kind of context analysis) on the dictionary, and on the other historical-ethnographic sources to accomplish this task (Berg 2001: 77). Context analysis will be applied to several other aspects of the project, included in a hermeneutic perspective. A hermeneutic perspective is a theoretical approach dealing with the how we understand and analyses what we read and see, a special kind of epistemology.

It is about how we only can understand the prehistory on our own terms; we have different horizons of understanding. By expanding our horizon, we can gradually get a better understanding of the past. The hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer has been used in ethnography and sociology long before it got integrated in archaeology. The way Hodder approaches this is by contextualism; that we can study the relationship between prehistoric and present contexts critically, and then get a better understanding of both (Baudou 2004: 298-299). It is important to understand how knowledge is made when we cannot be unaffected by our time and place in the world, and how this affects for example the writing of a dictionary.

First a context analysis will focus mainly on the dictionary by T. Bridges, and then some other ethnographical sources (Darwin, Bridges, Lothrop, Snow), and the collected work "La vida social" (Orquera and Piana 1999a), and Anne Chapman's book. I will then look into the published archaeological record of Tierra del Fuego with a hermeneutic perspective, and compare it to the historical record above. By the use of analogy, I will try to find out if relevance can be drawn from the Tierra del Fuego results to early marine foragers in Norway.

Theory, as the thoughts and intentions behind every action, is of course closely related to method, and sometimes difficult to tell apart. Ethnographic theory will then be very important, as well as hermeneutics, and maybe symmetrical theory will be used as well. Symmetrical theory is an approach that wants to show the "symmetrical" relationship between humans and things. People do not exist separate from material. The approach is derived from Latour's anthropological agent-network theory, where society should be understood as a complex network of people and things that co-exist (Olsen 2006: 13-15). In archaeological research this is an interesting point of view, because it makes the things we find even more important than has been the recent tendency to think. Olsen sees the symmetrical archaeology as a little protest to post-processualist thinking, where things have been seen as inferior to human thought and action. It also reacts against the processualist focus on function and use. He sees the things as a part of the network that is society (ibid.: 16). This could be interesting in the interpretation of the words about things in Bridges dictionary. How is the relationship between a thing in the language and the use of the actual thing?

Could there be found a relation to the landscape in Bridges' dictionary in the same way we can trace the use of it in the archaeological records? "Environmental archaeology is the study of the relationship between humans and their natural environment through time", is Renfrew and Bahn's explanation of the term environmental archaeology (2005: 85). This theoretical

thought is very interesting when comparing Patagonia and Scandinavia, because even with a similar starting point, there was a difference in the climatic change over time. We know that the people also went through different changes over time. Maybe landscape archaeology will be a more accurate theoretic approach.

I will start this project with an introduction to the project and its goals, and say something about the importance of and possibilities in Bridges' dictionary. Then I will look into the history of maritime Mesolithic research. From there it will be a critical discussion on the use of historical-ethnographic sources. This will also include a discussion about the use of analogy. Climatology is of some essence in my use of analogy, and a chapter will be given to the theme. The main part of the project will be focused on an analysis of Bridges dictionary to find answers to the questions about marine foraging. I will then go on with the dictionary and other ethnographical sources, and see these sources up against each other. Do they tell the same tale? There will be given a review of archaeological research from Argentina to see how the ethnographical sources coordinate with these. Then there will be a final discussion of how these results can aid the understanding of Norwegian maritime Mesolithic research, now and in the future.

Here is a plan for further reading and writing:

- Autumn 2012:
 - o December: exam, write the project description and get it approved. Learn Endnote. Define ethnographical/historical sources.
- Spring 2013:
 - o January: Prepare for Argentina (prepare questions for Argentinian researchers), learn about analogy, dictionary – scan – and work out analytical strategy
 - o February: Argentina. Read and buy relevant literature and make daily notes to remember the essentials of the experience.
 - o March: Find and read archaeological reports from Argentina. Analyze dictionary.
 - o April/May: Make a framework for the thesis with chapters and some lines about the content, and learn about climatology. Analyze dictionary.
 - o June: Exam. Continue on the framework. Research history. Analyze dictionary.
 - o July: Research history. Start working on theory. Analyze dictionary.
- Autumn 2013:
 - o August: Internship, theory, use the dictionary.
 - o September: Internship, theory
 - o October: Internship, theory, write a report about the internship
 - o November: Start making first versions of some chapters
 - o December: continue writing
- Spring 2014:
 - o Write for your life!

There could be some expenses during the stay in Argentina, for example equipment.

Literature:

- Aune, K. (ed.), Pettersen, K., Binns, K. S., Sognnes, K., Dybdahl, A., Bjørkvik, E. & Sæther, S. B. (2005). *Fosens historie, Fra istid til 1730*. Orkanger: Fosen historielag 7.
- Baudou, E. (2004). *Den nordiska arkeologin – historia och tolkningar*. Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien.
- Berg, E. (2001). *Arkeologi i grenseland. Bruk av (skolte)samisk etnografi I studier av forhistoriske fangstsamfunn*. (Master thesis, University of Tromsø, Norway). Tromsø: University of Tromsø.
- Bergsvik, A. (2002). *Arkeologiske avhandlinger og rapporter fra Universitetet i Bergen, Arkeologiske undersøkelser ved Skatestraumen, Bind 1*. Bergen: Bergen museum, University of Bergen.
- Bjerck, H. B. (2008). Norwegian Mesolithic Trends: A Review. In: Bailey, G. & Spikins, P. (ed.) *Mesolithic Europe*, 60-106. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bjerck, H. B. (2009). Colonizing Seascapes: Comparative Perspectives on the Development of Maritime Relations in Scandinavia and Patagonia. *Arctic Anthropology* 46: 118-131.
- Bjerck, H. B. & Breivik, H. M. (2012). Scandinavian and Patagonian lifestyles compared in the *Marine Ventures* project. *Antiquity* 86, 333.
- Bridges, E. L. (2007). *Uttermost part of the earth. A history of Tierra del Fuego and the fuegians*. New York: The Rookery Press, Tracy Carns Ltd.
- Bridges, T. *Yamana-English Dictionary*.
- Chapman, A. (2010). *European Encounters With the Yamana People of Cape Horn, Before and After Darwin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Erlandson, J. M. (2001). The Archaeology of Aquatic Adaptions: Paradigms for a New Millenium. *Journal of Archaeological Research*, 9 (4): 287-350.
- Erlandson, J. M. and Moss, M. L. (2001). Shellfish Feeders, Carrion Eaters, and the Archaeology of Aquatic Adaptions. *American Antiquity* 66 (3): 413-432.
- ethnography. (n.d.). *Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition*. Retrieved 22.11.2012, from Dictionary.com website:
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ethnography>
- Garson, J. G. (1886). On the Inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego. *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 15:141-160.
- history. (n.d.). *Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition*. Retrieved 22.11.2012, from Dictionary.com website:
<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/history>
- Lothrop, S. K. 1922 (2002). *The Indians of Tierra del Fuego. An account of the Ona, Yaghan, Alcaluf and the Haush Natives of the Fuegian Archipelago*. New York: Zagier & Urruty publications.
- McEwan, C., Borrero, L. A. & Prieto, A. (1997). *Patagonia. Natural history, prehistory and ethnography at the uttermost end of the earth*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

- Moreland, J. (2007). *Archaeology and Text*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.
- Olsen, B. (1997). *Bosetning og samfunn i Finnmarks forhistorie*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget AS.
- Olsen, B. (2006). Ting-mennesker-samfunn. Introduksjon til en symmetrisk arkeologi. *Arkæologisk Forum* 14: 13-18.
- Orquera, L. A., Legoupil, D. & Piana, E. L. (2011). Littoral adaption at the southern end of South America. *Quaternary International* 239: 61-69.
- Orquera and Piana (1999a). *La vida social y material de los Yámana*. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, Instituto Fuegino de Investigaciones Científicas.
- Orquera, L. A. and E. L. Piana. (1999b). Arqueología de la región del *canal Beagle (Tierra del Fuego, República Argentina)*. Buenos Aires: Sociedad Argentina de Antropología.
- Piana, E. L. & Orquera, L. A. (2009). The Southern Top of the World: The First Peopling of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego and the Cultural Endurance of the Fuegian Sea-Nomads. *Arctic Anthropology* 46 (1-2): 103-117.
- Stugu, O. S. (2008). *Historie i bruk*. Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget.
- Tivoli, A. and A. F. Zangrando (2011). Subsistence variations and landscape use among maritime hunter-gatherers. A zooarchaeological analysis from the Beagle Channel (Tierra del Fuego, Argentina). *Journal of Archaeological Science* 38: 1148–1156.
- Trigger, B. G. (2006). *A History of Archaeological Thought* (2nd edition). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zangrando, A. F. (2009). Is fishing intensification a direct route to hunter-gatherer complexity? A case study from the Beagle Channel region (Tierra del Fuego, southern South America). *World Archaeology* 41(4): 589–608.