

ARCHAEOLOGY

Japanese in B.C. America?

Fragments of pottery unearthed on the coast of Ecuador and dated to 3000 B.C. show markings uncommon elsewhere in the world at that time except on Japanese pottery.

► FRAGMENTS of ancient pottery found in Ecuador indicate that the Japanese landed in America in 3000 B.C.—thousands of years before Leif Ericson or Christopher Columbus.

Research by two archaeologists, Drs. Clifford Evans and Betty J. Meggers of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., show that there are strong similarities between the designs and pottery techniques of ancient Ecuadorian artifacts and those of ancient Japanese pottery.

The pottery fragments, unearthed at the village Valdivia, on the Pacific coast of Ecuador, show markings such as zigzag gouges, parallel lines and grooves that were uncommon elsewhere in the world at that time except on Japanese pottery, in particular from the Jomon sites on the westerly islands of Honshu and Kyushu.

The pottery was made in Ecuador, but under the influence of Japanese, say the archaeologists, who are husband and wife. Perhaps a fishing boat was caught in a typhoon off Japan and was swept away in prevailing ocean currents, traveling first to the northeast, then to the southeast on an arc of more than 8,000 miles across the

Pacific Ocean. Before that time the people of that area did not know how to make pottery. The newcomers from Japan began to instruct the Valdivians, who were such apt students that their pottery soon equaled and perhaps surpassed that of distant Kyushu.

The researchers said "Fortunately, it was possible for us to visit Japan and to examine and photograph pottery from a number of Early and Middle Jomon sites on Kyushu, with results that have supported the hypothesis of trans-Pacific origin for Valdivia Phase pottery beyond all reasonable expectation."

First clue to the theory of Japanese landings was found in 1961 by an amateur archaeologist, Emilio Estrada, who uncovered a fragment of pottery with a rim and herringbone markings similar to those of an ancient jar from Honshu Island. This fragment was found in a site calculated by various means to date from 3000 to 2300 B.C.

Mr. Estrada died unexpectedly in November, 1961, but the Smithsonian researchers continued to find many other similarities between Ecuadorian pottery fragments and

pottery from the Jomon period of Japan. The Valdivia pottery is different from other early New World archaeological artifacts, the archaeologists found, and could not have developed from any known source there. The Valdivia pottery could not have been a local invention because of the variety this pottery exhibits from the very start—such variety usually evolves only as the culmination of a long period of development.

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GEOLOGY

New England Lake, River Now 500 Feet Under Sea

► ABOUT 13,000 to 35,000 years ago New England had a lake, a delta, terraces and a major river system along its southern shores.

But now these landscape features lie submerged under as much as 500 feet of water, reported Louis E. Garrison of the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, Kingston.

Areas of land used to rise from the sea during the great ice ages, when water was removed from the oceans and stored in glaciers on the continents for thousands of years, Mr. Garrison said.

When the huge glaciers melted, the level of the oceans rose and the coastal lands became submerged.

By using thousands of echo soundings from the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, researchers have constructed a map of the Atlantic continental shelf, showing an ancient river that flowed south through a 10-mile-wide valley which is now Long Island Sound.

This river and its tributaries carried water from the melting glaciers to the sea, along with tons of sediment that formed a great delta extending all the way to the edge of the shelf and down the continental slope. Three ancient terraces were cut into the outer continental shelf by the action of the sea during "pauses in the migration of the shoreline," Mr. Garrison said. A large depression of some 250 square miles must have held a lake at one time.

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CONSERVATION

Herd of Plains Buffalo To Return to Wilderness

► A HERD of 20 plains buffalo will be settled in a Canadian woods and lake district from which their ancestors were driven or destroyed nearly a hundred years ago.

In a pilot project carried out jointly by the Manitoba Department of Mines and Natural Resources and the Canadian Wildlife Service, the bison are being released in the 500,000-acre Mawdesley Wildlife Management area to find out if they can survive in the wild again. If they do adapt to their new surroundings, more buffalo will be released in the area later.

Buffalo did occasionally inhabit the area at one time.

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Smithsonian Institution

ANCIENT JAPANESE IN ECUADOR—This pottery fragment came from the lowest level of a Valdivia culture site in Ecuador. It displays a rim decorated with a "castellation," or peak, uncommon elsewhere in the world at that time, about 5,000 years ago, except on the Jomon pottery of Japan.