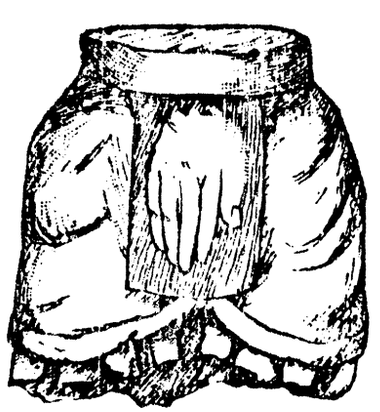
Augustus Le Plongeon's restoration drawing of the Platform of Venus, with chacmool, at Chichen Itza. Le Plongeon's restoration "included a detailed record of the existing decorative panels along with speculation based on their excavations. The drawing was photographed by Le Plongeon who added the foreground and cloudy sky from other photographs." The composite photograph was published in Le Plongeon's *The Origins of the Egyptians* in 1913. [From *A Dream of Maya*]

graphic documentation of the archeological sites of Uxmal and Chichen Itza—as well as visits to other archeological zones. The timing of their stay in the peninsula could not have been worse for the pair, given the dangers attending the ongoing "caste wars" that disrupted the northern Maya zone well into the present century. Augustus Le Plongeon's excavations at Chichen Itza were among the first to take place in the Maya Lowlands; his meticulous cross section of the Venus Platform (from which was excavated the famed "chacmool" sculpture) is noteworthy for both its time and place.

It is not the priority of excavation or recording that has endured in the historical perception of Le Plongeon, however, but rather the unorthodoxy of his interpretations. Early on, Le Plongeon was convinced that the ancient Maya constituted a sort of ancient "world mother culture" that fostered the spectacular accomplishments of ancient Egypt and other seats of high civilization. However, even in an age when raw data on culture and chronology remained relatively sparse and unorganized, Le Plongeon's speculations on the meanings of the ancient murals, sculptures, and architecture went blatantly far beyond the evidence. As a result, the whole of his labor became subject to ridicule by virtually all of his professional peers, and forever suspect.

As Jaime Litvak King notes in his excellent foreword in this book, Augustus Le Plongeon seems, in retrospect, larger than life. He crossed the stage of American archeology just as the science was forming, and he appears to have been sent by Central Casting for the part: His bearded countenance stares formidably from these published images; he was apparently indefatigable, his conclusions were unique and controversial, and I would like very much to have known him.

For me, the primary value of *A Dream of Maya* lies in two areas. First, it makes available many hitherto unknown photographic images of the northern Yucatan Peninsula, its people and important archeological remains—these for a time from which photographs are all too rare. Desmond and Messenger deserve our collective gratitude for bringing these images out of obscurity.



Sculpture fragment represented by Augustus Le Plongeon as evidence for a connection between the Maya and Freemasonry. "As a Mason himself Augustus knew the symbolism of that secret order and found what he considered to be ample evidence of it at Uxmal," including a carved skull and crossbones carved on the Adivino Pyramid and this "sculptured torso with an inverted hand on an apron." After Le Plongeon "showed the piece to two American friends in Merida it disappeared, leaving only his sketch which he published in an article for *Harper's Weekly*" in 1881. [From *A Dream of Maya*]

Second, the work provides us with useful insights into one of the prominent issues of the present day, namely the competition in the public media between the findings of "establishment" or "mainstream" archeology and the roster of pseudoscientific "discoveries"—the alleged power of pyramids, the dangers of the "Bermuda Triangle," and so on—that weekly proclaim themselves from the sensationalist tabloids. Thus, this welcome work by Desmond and Messenger should become a key source for those of us concerned with the public perception of archeology and archeologists.

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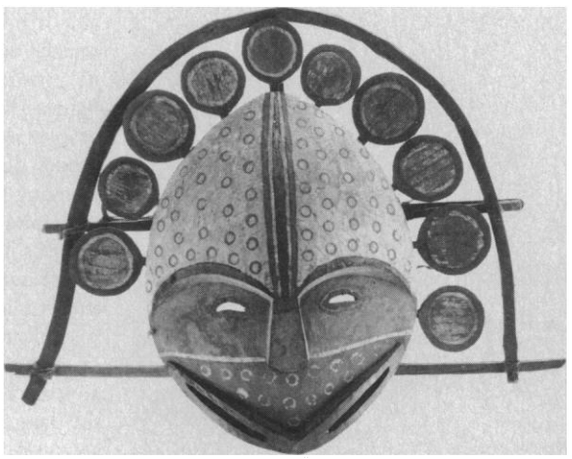
Northern Connections

Crossroads of Continents. Cultures of Siberia and Alaska. WILLIAM W. FITZHUGH and ARON CROWELL. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 1988. 360 pp., illus. $45; paper, $24.95.

The exhibition catalogue is an imperfect genre. Like the exhibition it accompanies, it is invariably the product, more than other forms of scholarship, of a severe deadline, uncertain funding, and endless compromise. Not infrequently, important decisions on form and content are controlled by someone other than the author or editor. Perhaps this is why it is always so easy to fault the product; to do justice to catalogue or exhibit, one might argue, neither should be treated in isolation from the other.

Crossroads of Continents was published in the fall of 1988, at the same time as the exhibit of the same name—"Crossroads" herein—opened at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of Natural History. The exhibit, whose aim was to show the indigenous people living on either side of the Bering Strait as "components of a pan-North Pacific 'oecumene' " and to show how they have been related, through time, by the exchange of cultural products and culture itself, opened to considerable acclaim. That it happened at all is a feat for which William Fitzhugh should receive lasting credit.

"Crossroads" brings together, for the first time, ethnographic artifacts from Alaska and Siberia found today in American and Soviet



Koniag Eskimo bird mask. "Masking traditions of the Pacific Eskimo were as developed as those of their northern Yupik relatives. This mask may be one of the set obtained by Voznesenskii in 1842 from a performance of a Kodiak Island ceremony. Its feathers missing, the mask depicts a bird-man spirit. Three-quarter hoops and circular appendages are typical Koniag traits, as is circle decoration, which may be equivalent to spots used on masks from the Bering Sea coast." [From *Crossroads of Continents;* Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Leningrad]

collections. It shows objects in many contexts, archeological, cultural, and geographical. Like many other exhibits of ethnographic artifacts, "Crossroads" favors the aesthetic, perhaps because, in this as in other instances, many of the objects selected—clothing, masks, hunting hats, and on—are visually riveting. Of course, the total range from which selection was made is not equally so—one is reminded, in this regard, of the thoroughly decontextualized "primitive art" displayed in art museums. A further encouragement to the display of ethnographic artifacts as art objects may be that they travel well between museums, as "Crossroads" artifacts themselves are now doing, in their self-contained, climate-controlled case-environments, to be exhibited elsewhere.

When originally collected, the artifacts exhibited in "Crossroads," like artifacts everywhere, were stripped both of the historical contexts within which they were made and used and of the cultures that gave them meaning. As they are exhibited and recontextualized, ceremony, symbolic meaning, and aesthetic interest figure prominently, as does the hunt. History does not. The conditions of the native people directly preceding, and at the time of, the collecting activity go largely untold. One can only speculate why this is so—might the exhibit never have been realized had it been otherwise?—but one cannot deny that the silence enables "Crossroads" to be an effective vehicle for détente and glasnost, a superpower exhibit focused on the traditional material culture of native people in the Bering Strait region and on Russian and American activity and collections.

Some issues not treated in the exhibit are in *Crossroads of Continents*, the catalogue, which contains 36 essays written by 29 scholars, mostly Soviet and American. Societies that receive brief introductory reconstructions include the Tlingit; various Northern Athapaskans; the Aleut; the North Alaska, Bering Sea, Asiatic, and Pacific Eskimo; and the Koryak, Itelmen, Even, Chukchi, and several peoples on the lower Amur River of Siberia.

Not surprisingly, these essays, authorship of which is about equally divided among Soviets and Americans, are of uneven quality; they vary especially in the degree to which historical context is provided. With respect to the latter, however, L. Black's "The story of Russian America" clearly and succinctly locates Russian-era artifacts in the historical conditions of their manufacture and use. The history of relations between Native Alaskans and Russians is one in which imperialism, the impressment of native people, and depressingly familiar aspects of the colonial frontier figure prominently. Black discusses these themes for the Russian period; how welcome a companion essay on the early American era in Alaska would have been. This imbalance is corrected somewhat for the contemporary period, for which essays on Soviet and Alaskan natives (and on Alaskan native arts) are provided.

Four essays discuss collection activity: one on the Russian collections provides details on that extraordinary systematic collector, I. G. Voznesenskii, whose artifacts in the exhibit consistently impress; a second is an excellent account, by S. A. and R. S. Freed and L. Williamson, of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History; and two others discuss Berthold Laufer's participation in that effort and Smithsonian collectors. Four other essays detail prehistory (S. A. Arutiunov, Fitzhugh, Crowell) and biological affinities (C. G. Turner II) and contemplate Beringia, that land corridor over 1000 miles wide—so much for the narrow "bridge"—through which animals, humans, and ideas poured from Old World to New (S. B. Young).

The most interesting and controversial ideas in *Crossroads* are raised in Thematic Views, a section of 14 essays on language, economies (the lack of emphasis on fishing in the exhibit is corrected here), dwellings and settlements, war and trade, ceremony, clothing, and art. The authors are over-

Alaskan reindeer herders. "In this Lomen Brothers photograph Alaskan Eskimos pose with their sled reindeer near the Kuzitrin River of the Seward Peninsula (1920s). The experimental grafting of reindeer herding, a Siberian economic pattern, onto Alaskan Eskimo culture enjoyed only brief and limited success." [From *Crossroads of Continents;* Glenbow Archives, Calgary, Alberta]

whelmingly American or based at the Smithsonian—one notable exception being S. Ia. Serov, who provides an engrossing survey of Siberian supernaturalism.

The emphasis in most of these essays is unrelentingly comparative: North Pacific Rim maritime economies and technology (J.-L. Rousselot, Fitzhugh and Crowell); inland herding, hunting, trapping, and fishing (J. W. VanStone); a typology of economies in Siberia and Alaska (I. I. Krupnik, Fitzhugh); dwelling types throughout the area (Crowell). Each essay provides considerable cross-cultural ethnographic detail. If there are similarities between regions, an essay on trade—and war—by E. S. Burch, Jr., makes clear why: the existence of annual international, indeed intercontinental, trade fairs, which were fueled by European trade goods from the west and east and became magnets for cultural exchange.

Complementing these essays on technology, economy, dwellings, and trade are others that more directly relate to the cultural interpretation of artifacts: a fine essay on the style, function, and meaning of clothing (V. Chaussonnet), which was a major medium of expression throughout the region—(many of the visually most exciting pieces in the exhibit are clothing); the aforementioned discussion of Siberian shamanism, cosmology, and death; a consideration of Yupik spiritual life, meaningfully informed by contemporary ethnography, wholly relevant to the interpretation of Yupik art (A. Fienup-Riordan); an exploration of potlatch ceremonialism (F. de Laguna); and an essay on the structural and formal features of Tlingit and Pacific Eskimo material culture (B. Holm). These essays are strong. They tend to limit—de Laguna's and Fienup-Riordan's especially—the contextualization of material culture to a single "nation" or to a group of related people, or, as in Holm's, to compare rigorously within a limited set of contiguous but unlike ethnic groups (for example, Tlingit, Chugach).

Elsewhere, the thrust is to compare broadly and deeply. Nowhere is this more evident than in Fitzhugh's "Comparative art of the North Pacific Rim." Fitzhugh's comments here are presaged in his and Arutiunov's earlier essay, "Prehistory of Siberia and the Bering Sea," in which iconographic connections between Scytho-Siberian, Shang, Eastern Chou, Old Bering Sea, and Northwest Coast are postulated. Fitzhugh also explores some connections between expressive culture and strategies of adaptation, postulating different art styles and themes for pastoralists and hunter-fishers. The second hypothesis will probably be more openly regarded as productive than the search for deep structures—the distance between 14th-century B.C. Shang and A.D. 19th-century Northwest Coast is great and complicated by numerous specific historical circumstances—but even Fitzhugh considers his analysis "preliminary" (p. 294).

I cannot close this review without mentioning the design of the catalogue: with its striking photographs of over 450 artifacts, almost all in color, placed so that they overlap other images, and in the juxtaposition of text, artifacts, maps, and drawings, the design is a stunning success—the few errors do not bear mention—and should set the standard for ethnographic catalogues for some time to come.

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