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PRESENT STATUS OF INVESTIGATIONS CONCERNING ANTIQUITY OF MAN IN CALIFORNIA¹

THE fact that archeologists and historians have been interested in the problem of the antiquity of man in California for the past 60 years is due in a considerable measure to the peculiarity of the problem in that region. The California area offers exceptional opportunity for a great variety of studies in archeology and anthropology, and especially for those dependent upon our knowledge of geological processes of the present and of the period immediately preceding. The fact that the coast region of California seems to have been in almost continuous movement throughout the later geological periods means that there has been continuous erosion accompanied by continuous deposition, giving us at the same time a record of the processes of erosion and deposition and of the life of the region in this period.

It has been realized from the beginning of our studies on the Pacific coast that satisfactory conclusions regarding the antiquity of man in California can not be reached within any narrow time limits, and that no single mode of attack may be considered sufficient in itself. At the initiation of the studies conducted at the University of California four lines of investigation were laid down: (1) Tracing man back in time through an examination of the great shell mounds of the coast region, the most critical study being given to the lowest or earliest deposits. In this work opportunity was offered for going from the known culture of the uppermost layers of the mounds back to a period in which conditions may have been quite different from those governing the life of the Indians of the last centuries. (2) The thorough investigation of all available cave deposits, whether Recent or Pleistocene, with particular reference to possible human occupation. (3) A careful study of those Pleistocene and Recent land, stream, lake and marine formations in which the occurrence of human remains or relics appears possible. This comprised a study of many Pleistocene formations and the collection in them of all obtainable fossil remains. (4) A careful review of all evidence relating to the reputed occurrence of implements or human remains in the older gold-bearing gravels or other ancient deposits of a similar nature in California.

¹ Read before the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D. C., April 29, 1924.

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