

Archaeology - A Journey of Discovery from Ancient Origins to Recent Past

On Saturday, October 21, 2017 Sacramento Archeological Society, Inc sponsored a seminar on "A Journey of Discovery from Ancient Origins to Recent Past". The event was held at Maidu Museum and Historical Site, Roseville, California. Human origins in South Africa and Oregon Trail archaeology were featured. Allan Keown, Membership Chair for Renaissance Society at CSUS introduced a video presentation by Dr. Curtis Marean. In this video Dr. Marean, professor of archaeology at Arizona State University presented a causal model of human origins based on research of South African paleo-climate, environment, ecology and anthropology. He concluded that all modern humans are descended from a progenitor lineage that appeared sometime between 200-130 ka and that lineage lived in Africa and then spread out to the rest of the world. The South African coast has the features that make it an excellent refuge during the cold phase when modern humans evolved. He postulated a very interesting theory that South Africa is the birthplace of modern human lineage.

Dr. Teresa Steele, professor of anthropology at University of California Davis continued the review of human origins by discussing several Middle (315 ka - 40 ka) and Late Stone Age excavations in South Africa. She illustrated various finds and pointed out how human origin theories have changed over time. She discussed several South African sites that are located near the coast and highlighted her research at Middle Stone Age site at Knersvlakte that is located inland from the South African west coast. She closed by presenting investigations in Morocco. We were very fortunate to have her add another layer of understanding to human origins.

John Winner brought us back to California. John is the past president of Oregon-California Trails Association. His very informative presentation led us through the process of mapping emigrant trails. We learned about the 6 classes of trails: unaltered, used, verified, altered, approximate and reconstructed. He described in detail the process of trail discovery and reporting. Archaeological investigation applies to recent events such as the westward emigration as much as ancient human origins.