

Ascending Tides: The Logistics, Materiality, and Social Integration of Marine Resources in Inland Prehistory

Keywords: *Cross-zonal mobility, Coast-inland interaction, Provenance studies, Shell exchange networks, Zooarchaeology.*

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Abstract:

The presence of marine resources, ranging from shell ornaments to dietary staples, in inland contexts represents more than long-distance exchange; it signifies the triumph of mobility over diverse topographies. While coastal archaeology often focuses on local adaptation, this session explores how "the sea" was transported, consumed, and conceptualized by communities far removed from the shoreline. Adopting a strictly global perspective, we invite research comparing how cultures, whether in the arid interiors of Australia and Africa, the vast highlands of Asia and the Americas, or the continental plains of Europe, navigated the challenges of bringing marine goods to the hinterland. We seek to move beyond distribution maps to understand the logistics of connectivity and the transformation of value. How did marine objects change their ritual significance as they moved inland? What infrastructure facilitated this ascent?

- Zooarchaeology & Taphonomy: Identification of marine faunal remains in inland middens and analysis of transport methods.
- Material Culture & Technology: Examining whether marine materials arrived as raw stock or finished goods, and how inland communities reworked them into tools or ornaments.
- Provenance Studies (Geochemical Analysis): Sourcing specific marine materials to map precise trade routes.
- Landscape & Iconography: Modeling movement corridors and interpreting maritime artistic themes in inland settings.
- Ethnography: Applying models of exchange to the archaeological record.

By bringing together diverse case studies, this session aims to reconstruct the dynamic "ascending tides" of human interaction that brought the sea to the mountains.