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The Meeting: An Essay on Memory

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The Meeting

AN ESSAY ON MEMORY

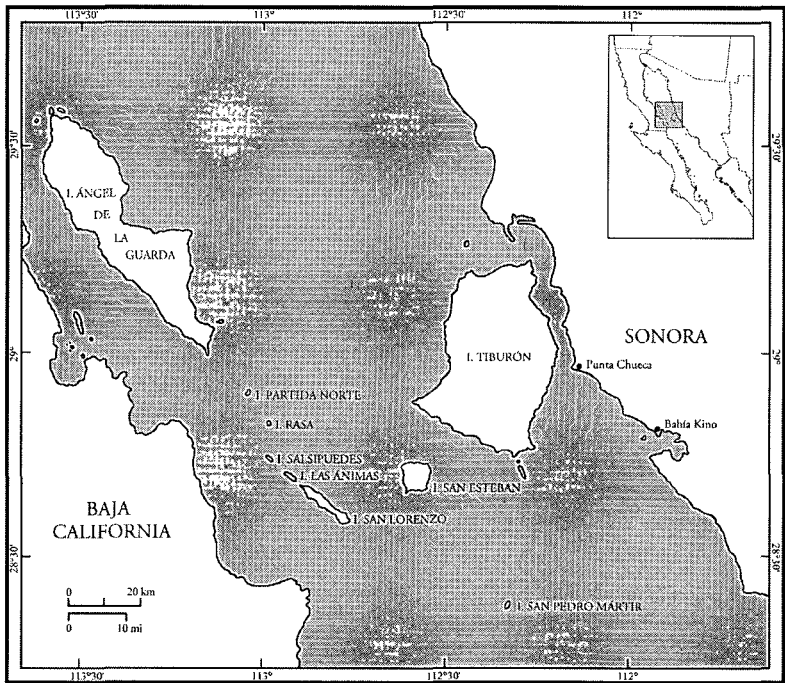
Thomas Bowen and R. James Hills

With contributions by Jock Favour, David Yetman, and Richard Yetman

We—Tom Bowen and Jim Hills—met in January 1980. At least, that's when we think it was. The meeting itself was of no particular importance—we already knew each other from correspondence because we had both conducted research involving the Seri Indians. The fact that we met unexpectedly is not important either, except that the encounter took place on Isla San Esteban, a small uninhabited desert island in the middle of the Gulf of California and about as isolated a place as you can find in North America (see map). That isolation triggered some pretty strange behavior, which nobody who was there remembers in quite the same way.

In the years since, we have had some good laughs about this goofy event, but we never discussed the details of what happened with each other or with the other people who were there with us. Thus we came to realize, nearly thirty years later, that we might be able to use the incident as an informal test of the reliability of eyewitness accounts, which of course is the raw material of history, both oral and written. Eight people, including us, were involved, and we decided to ask each person to write what he or she recalls of the meeting and how it came about. By comparing these accounts, we hoped to

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MAP OF ISLA SAN ESTEBAN

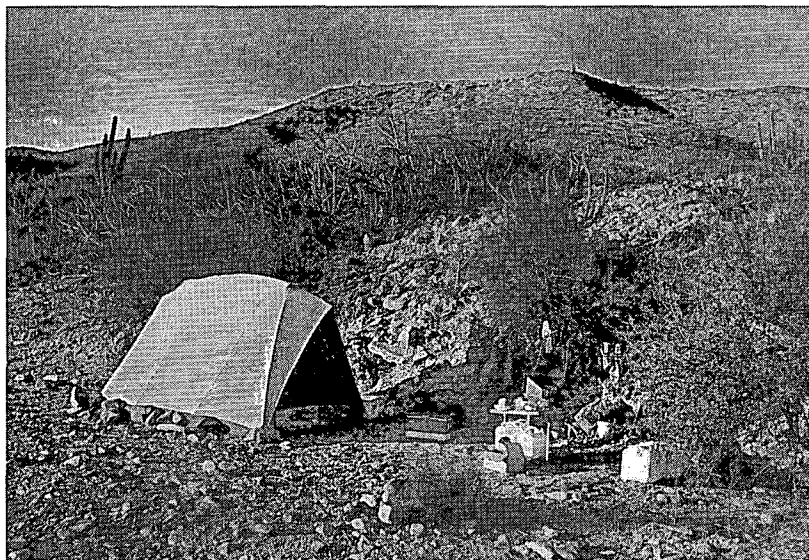
Isla San Esteban and surrounding region of the Gulf of California.
(Map courtesy Thomas Bowen)

gain a sense of how well our own memories had preserved this little slice of mutual experience. The results are, to say the least, humbling.

We successfully contacted all but one participant. We reminded them of the meeting and the events leading up to it but minimized our mention of specifics in order to avoid altering their recollections or implanting false memories. We asked each person to write his or her account independently and entirely from memory—without the aid of journals or input from any of the others. Five people recalled the events well enough to write about them. Only after the pieces were completed did anybody see what the others had written. For presentation here we have excerpted the portions that pertain specifically to the meeting, and we have lightly edited the pieces for grammar, spelling, and continuity. We have altered neither content nor style.

Context

The four of us in the archaeology group—Tom Bowen, Dan Bench, Dana Desonie, and Elisa Villalpando—had come to Isla San Esteban to conduct

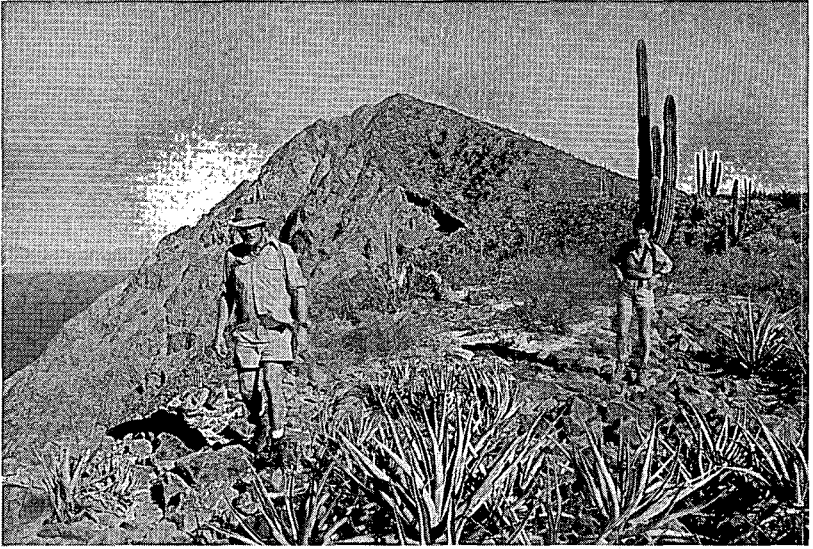


ILL. 1. ARCHAEOLOGY CAMP, ISLA SAN ESTEBAN

(Photograph courtesy Thomas Bowen)

a site survey. It was the first of several field trips to the island over the next few years. We launched from Bahía Kino on 28 December 1979, in two inboard sport-fishing boats and were dropped off later that day. We set up camp against the bank of Arroyo Limantour, the main drainage on the eastern side of the island. We chose a spot about four hundred yards from shore around a bend and behind an ironwood tree, in a vain attempt to find shelter from the wind. As we began our survey, we quickly slipped into a routine—up at dawn, down to the fifteen-foot terrace above the beach to watch the always magnificent sunrise, breakfast, and then to work. Often we would hike deep into the interior of the island, recording sites as we found them, and return dog-tired to camp around sunset. Then we would have dinner, do dishes, write up the day's notes by the light of the Coleman lantern, relax with a sip of tequila, and try to last until nine o'clock before collapsing in our sleeping bags. Although a couple of times Mexican fishermen arrived for brief stays, we had little contact with them. Their camp was a good half mile from ours, and they spent their days at sea. Much of the time we felt we had the entire island to ourselves. It was a great way to spend two weeks. San Esteban was a really spooky place, but we loved it and relished the isolation. We had been there nearly two weeks when the panga group showed up.

Those of us in the panga group—Jim Hills, Jock Favour, Dave Yetman, and Dick Yetman—went to San Esteban as something of a historical experiment.



ILL. 2. SURVEYING ISLA SAN ESTEBAN

Dan Bench and Dana Desonie above the sea cliffs on the west side of the island.

(Photograph courtesy Thomas Bowen)



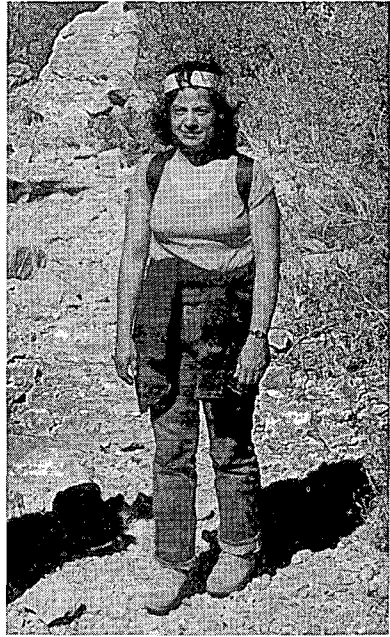
ILL. 3. SURVEYING ISLA SAN ESTEBAN

Tom Bowen recording a site on the western side of the island.

(Photograph courtesy Thomas Bowen)

We wanted to replicate the experience the Seri Indians must have had during the 1940s and 1950s when they navigated the treacherous waters of the Gulf in the heavy old wooden *pangas* (small open fishing boats) with their tiny ten-horsepower outboard engines. For three of us—Jim, Dave, and Dick—it was our second trip. Jim had bought one of the last of the old pangas, which Dick dubbed the *Seri Queen*, and we took it to San Esteban for the first time the year before. Crossing the infamous channel between Islas Tiburón and San Esteban with an inadequate engine was a very scary experience, which Dave recounted in his book *Where the Desert Meets the Sea* (1988).

Having learned something from that trip, this year we installed a twenty-five-horsepower outboard engine and towed an aluminum dinghy as insurance. We left on 8 January 1980 from the Seri Indian village of Punta Chueca amidst the local folks' laughter at the foolishness of our undertaking. We spent the night on Isla Tiburón and started across the channel the next morning. But again the crossing nearly ended in disaster. The bigger engine was too heavy for the old motor mount, and part way across the channel, the mount broke and we barely saved the engine from a quick trip to the bottom. With enormous effort we managed to use the dinghy and its tiny engine to tow the heavy panga the rest of the way to San Esteban, nearly capsizing several times along the way. Fortunately, some Mexican fishermen showed up and helped us craft a makeshift motor mount from driftwood, which we fervently hoped would last long enough to get us back to the mainland. At least we had arrived on San Esteban in one piece. We set up camp just behind the beach, in a little cave under the fifteen-foot terrace at the mouth of Arroyo Limantour. We were looking forward to the next couple of days exploring the island, and we especially wanted to revisit the strange site with stone alignments we had seen the year before. The fishermen who helped us left, and as we settled in, we were sure we had this weird island all to ourselves.



ILL. 4. SURVEYING ISLA SAN ESTEBAN

Elisa Villalpando negotiating an arroyo on the eastern side of the island.

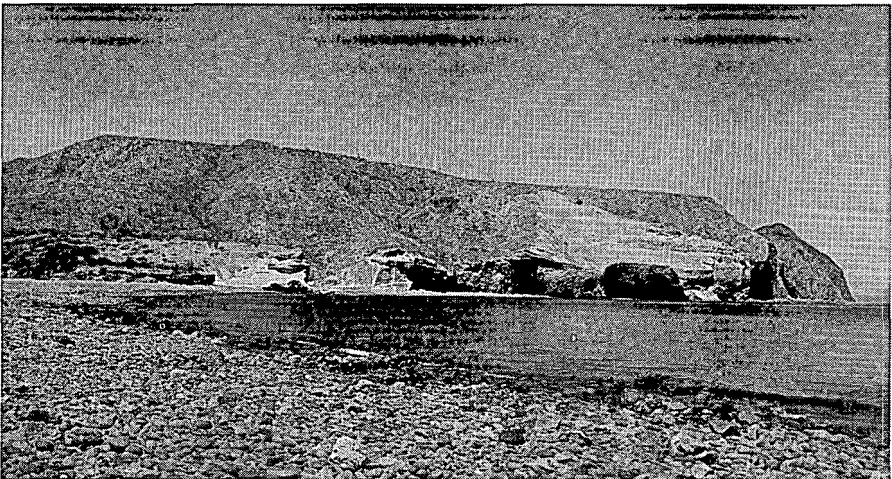
(Photograph courtesy Thomas Bowen)

The Meeting

Dave's Account. We made our camp on a knoll above the little bay where we could see our panga and dinghy and look across the channel to Tiburón Island, some eight miles away. Our sleeping bags were located close enough to the water that the waves could lull us to sleep, but we were situated high enough that we had no worry about rising water. We spent the remaining few hours of daylight kicking around the shore and wandering a little way up the big wash whose mouth forms our little bay.

The afternoon waned all too quickly and we built our fire and cooked dinner, all the while staring at the sea. One of the finest parts of camping on the Gulf is the evenings sitting around the fire with the Gulf in the background. On this particular night there was no moon and the ocean, though calm, took on an eerie effect. So far as we knew, we were the sole human occupants of Isla San Esteban. It was a most satisfying thought.

After we had finished dinner, had a beer or two, stared at the fire for a couple of hours, and swapped a few dozen lies, I felt the urge to pee and headed out behind our camp, i.e., inland, to where our knoll, actually a flat ridge, headed down into the wash. It was pitch-dark and I had to move carefully to keep my footing. I looked inland as I peed, and what I saw made



ILL. 5. PANGA GROUP'S CAMP, ISLA SAN ESTEBAN

The panga group camped under the low terrace at the far left center of the photograph.

(*Photograph courtesy Thomas Bowen*)

my skin crawl. A quarter mile or so up the wash there was a most unnatural glow coming from the rocks that bordered the watercourse. I recall that I stopped breathing and my heart raced. I had never seen a more otherworldly sight, for the light was not a natural color. It had to be one of two things: *narcotraficantes* (drug traffickers) with huge spotlights come to rob us, or a UFO. Nothing else in the world could explain it.

I remembered to zip up my fly (good policy, that) and tiptoed back to the fire. “Guys,” I said, half whispering, breathless, and still caught between astonishment and fright, “you’ve got to come see this right now.”

The rest of the group sprang to their feet and followed me. They saw the same sight. Their reactions were expressed in low breathy tones and mixed with words not repeatable in polite company. None of us was able to guess what we were seeing. However, there was no hesitation. We had to venture up the wash and find out what was producing that unearthly glow.

Dick, Jock, and Jim headed out. I bravely volunteered to stand fearlessly guarding our camp just in case the aliens chose to launch an amphibious attack (one never knows when a glow might just be a ruse to divert attention). I waited forever, probably ten, fifteen, twenty minutes. Not a sound. Finally I heard a loud whoop from up the wash, a happy one, not a fear-driven call of desperation. The three scouts tramped back into camp. “Yetman,” Hills said, “you’re not going to believe this.”

“What in the world is it?” I asked.

“It’s Tom Bowen and some students. They are camped around the corner of the wash and the glow is the reflection from their Coleman lanterns.”

I don’t remember whether I was disappointed or elated, but I do know I was relieved. Better by far it be Tom and students than aliens or narcotics.

We slept fine that night.

Dick’s Account. That night the sky was relatively clear. I went out to urinate, and looking up to the interior of the island, I saw a glow coming off the cliff. I remember the hair on my neck standing up and thinking, this is weird—this is something totally strange—foreign to what I’d expect to be here. I went back and said something to everybody else and we all came back and looked, and sure enough, it was a light. And finally we all determined that there must be somebody camped up there. And then I remember Jim Hills making the worst coyote sound I ever heard—an embarrassing coyote sound that wouldn’t have fooled my mother. Anyway, we went to bed knowing that we weren’t alone on the island anymore. We had thought

we were in Shangri-La, the Promised Land, and it turned out there was somebody else there.

The next day Jim and Jock, I believe, took a hike into the interior of the island and encountered the group that was up there. I subsequently learned that it was Tom Bowen. I didn't meet him and I don't believe my brother Dave met him, but I know Jim did and Jim had known him in the past as well.

Jock's Account. San Esteban felt like an evil place but we were glad to be on solid ground [after the scary voyage]. We set up camp in the big cliff overhang on the east shore, moving aside the garbage left by former occupants. The cave had been used since prehistoric times and made a good shelter out of the wild Gulf weather.

After dinner [the next evening] Jim went up the hill to take a crap. He returned to camp, alarmed at seeing the obvious glow of a large light inland toward the main arroyo. "What the hell is going on," he asked us. "No fisherman would be camped back there and we have the only boat on this side of the island. Too weird."

The next morning revealed fine weather and we were off to explore the island. Jim and I took off toward Arroyo Limantour.

Late in the afternoon we headed back toward the shoreline. As we came across a big flat area, we spotted humans that were not of our group. Through our binoculars we made out *dos hombres y una mujer, de gente ajena* (two men and a woman, strangers). The group was examining large stones that had been laid out in parallel lines by some earlier occupants. The pattern reminded me of Seri face paintings.

The three coldly responded to our greetings as we walked up to them. We all shook hands and they informed us that they were collecting data and doing site surveys on the island. The head man said his name was Tom Bowen, an archaeologist from the University of California. Jim recognized the name from his contacts [with other Seri researchers]. I left them talking and I went back to camp.

I told Dick and Dave that we had solved the mystery of the light last night. "Three scientists from California! They're probably out here getting in touch with their inner feelings, financed by our tax dollar." Natives of Arizona have learned to be a little put off by Californians.

Dave said, "A large boat will come and pick up the science people, so we can get back to the mainland if our boat fails us."

Dick said, "Yeah, and if we run out of food we can pull off a raid on their camp."

Jim returned to the cave and had an idea of what the San Esteban Seris would do. “They would take the woman scientist and eat the two men.”

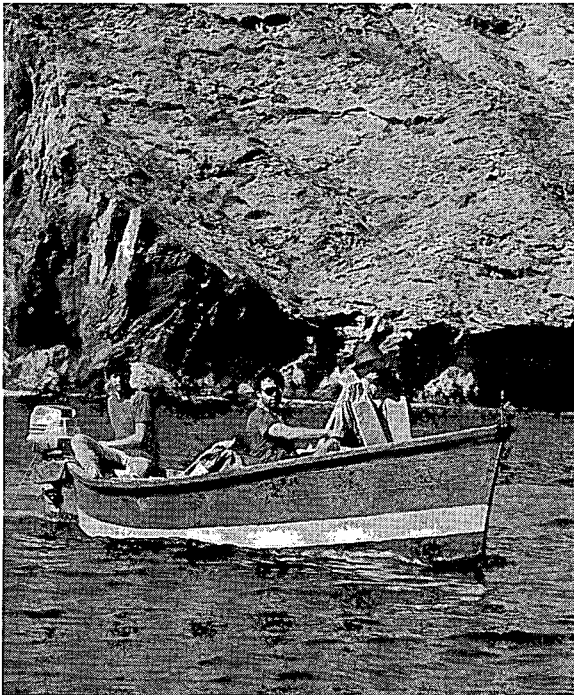
The next morning early, we left the sinister San Esteban Island and the “data-eating” archaeologists.

Jim’s Account. This was the second trip we made to San Esteban in my traditional eighteen-foot Seri wood-plank boat, and I believe it took place in the fall of 1982. It was either the first or second night [on the island], after dark, when Dick Yetman wandered out from under the shelter to take a pee and made a very weird discovery. He came back shortly and told us of a strange light — “a glow” I think were his words — emanating from the island’s interior. We all jumped up and moved inland just a few yards to see the light and began discussing what in the heck that light could mean. Drug runners was the first thought since there were no other boats in sight. We were sure they were hiding out up the arroyo about half a mile or so, staying out of sight, probably guarding their stash, waiting for the pickup. Since we were camping in exactly the spot where the pickup would likely take place, our level of concern quickly rose to a crescendo. After a few minutes we decided that Dick and I would have to sneak up on the group to figure out just what was going on. We sure wished we had guns for protection. We began moving out, sneaking up the valley toward the light. I remember thinking, this is crazy, but we all knew that until we could find out who these people were, we would never be able to sleep or feel comfortable staying in our chosen spot for the night.

After picking up a couple of large rocks to throw if we needed to, we followed the glow of the light inland. When we got closer, about two hundred yards inland, we could see a couple of tents and from one of those tents it was obvious a lantern of some kind was burning brightly. We got down on our hands and knees and sneaked up close enough to satisfy our curiosity by listening to the voices of a woman and a man coming from inside the tent. They were speaking English and the woman was giggling, so we assumed it was a couple of students working on the island and maybe having a bit of extracurricular fun that evening. We returned to camp, much relieved, and decided all was OK and that we didn’t have to worry about drug runners, machine guns, and large knives. We slept well that night, in spite of the rain.

The following morning I wanted to show Jock Favour the strange arrangement of rocks about a mile up the arroyo that we had discovered the year before. So after breakfast Jock and I set out to find them. As we walked

up the arroyo we noticed the students' camp was empty and figured they were out hiking. After a few side trips checking out *tinajas* (bedrock pools) and a small side canyon, we got to a spot in the arroyo that looked familiar to me. I said that it looked like the spot we needed to climb up to get to the terrace where I remember the rocks being set out in bizarre alignments. As we climbed up the twenty-foot side of the arroyo to the terrace, we saw people looking at the site. As I approached them I remember saying to a tall fellow that he must be Tom Bowen, an archaeologist who had been working in the area for years, and probably the only other person besides me who was crazy enough to venture to San Esteban. As it turned out, it sure enough was Tom, with another man and a woman, who we assumed were in the tent the night before. It appeared to Jock and me that Tom was leading some students to the island, since he was teaching somewhere in California, and that this was some kind of university sanctioned event. After some brief words, I showed Jock around a bit and then we departed to look around San Esteban some more. We returned to our beach cave camp later that afternoon.



ILL. 6. THE PANGA AT
ISLA SAN ESTEBAN

Left to right: Dick
Yetman, Jock Favour,
and Dave Yetman.

(*Photograph courtesy R.
James Hills*)

Tom's Account. The meeting took place in January—it must have been 1981 or 1982. The first inkling we had of anything unusual was when we saw the panga. We were working along the sea cliffs when we noticed what looked like an old-style wooden panga in the water far below. It was moving slowly, and it looked like there were four people in it. Seris? They didn't seem to be fishing, and we didn't know what to make of it. We watched for a while and then went back to work.

Late that afternoon we dragged our tired bodies into camp. Soon afterward, Dana headed down to the beach—probably to fill a bucket with sea water for washing dishes. A few minutes later she came half-running back into camp, looking worried and a little shaken. “There’s a bunch of guys down there on shore,” she blurted, “and it looks like they’re setting up camp in the little cave under Sunrise Terrace. I think it’s the people in the panga. I’m pretty sure they didn’t see me.”

“Oh, crap,” Dan and I said, thinking the last thing we needed was visitors. You have to understand that when you get dropped off on a desert island and spend a lot of time exploring, you get very proprietary. San Esteban was *our* island, and whoever those guys were, they were trespassing on *our* turf. Worse still, they were taking over “Sunrise Terrace,” one of our favorite spots where each morning we would sit and watch the “Morning Miracle,” as we called the sunrise. But we sure couldn’t do that with a bunch of strangers camped right below.

We decided that Dan and I needed to see what was going on. With Dana leading, the three of us cautiously worked our way down toward the shore. We kept high because by sneaking up on them from above there would be less chance of being seen. As we approached the edge of Sunrise Terrace, we crouched low and moved silently. We could hear voices. Suddenly, a couple of heads appeared below as two of them moved out of the cave and down toward the panga. Damn it! Almost reflexively, we ducked back out of sight and started running, still half-crouched, back toward camp. Going down there was a really stupid thing to do—they might have seen us!

Back at camp, we tried to figure out what to do next. The only thing we could think of was try to stay hidden and, with luck, they would leave in the morning. We knew we were far enough up the arroyo that they couldn’t see or hear us. By then it was getting dark, so we lit the Coleman lantern, cooked dinner, and washed the dishes. For an hour or so I wrote up my notes for the day. About nine o’clock we crawled into our sleeping bags.

The next morning, as usual, we got up at dawn and made coffee. But instead of our usual cheery selves, we found ourselves grouching darkly about

missing the Morning Miracle. The main thing now was how to avoid contact with those people. We figured that if we ate a quick breakfast and headed out right away they wouldn't see us. Even if they found our camp, they might be gone by the time we returned at sundown. We ate quickly and loaded our packs.

But not fast enough. Voices! They were coming up the arroyo. In a blind panic we scrambled up the arroyo bank, the only thing we could think of to avoid being seen. We stood there silently, fifteen feet up, as the four men appeared around the bend, trudging single file toward our camp. We were angry but also starting to feel pretty silly, standing up there like a bunch of Hollywood Indians in a B-movie looking down at the hapless wagon train. If we kept quiet, they might still just walk right on by and not see us.

And then, for no obvious reason, one of them looked up.

“JESUSCHRISTOHMYGOD!!!”

Well, that was some consolation—at least we scared the hell out of them.

Now that our cover was blown, we knew we had to try to be civil to them. So down we came.



ILL. 7. DEPARTING FROM ISLA SAN ESTEBAN

Jim Hills driving the panga with Isla San Esteban in the distance.

(*Photograph courtesy Dick Yetman*)

“Hi,” I said, half hoping my flat intonation would let them know they were not welcome.

“God, you scared the hell out of us,” said the guy who had let out the exclamation. We must have mumbled something quasi-conciliatory in reply. Then I realized he was looking at me a little quizzically. Suddenly he asked, “Are you Tom Bowen? Tom Bowen is the only person I know of who would be crazy enough to be out here.”

Now the shoe was on the other foot—I had never seen this guy before, and I was totally flustered.

“What . . . ?” I stammered, “Where did . . . ? I mean, how do you know my name? Who are you?”

“I’m Jim Hills.”

“You’re Jim Hills? This is unbelievable! What are *you* doing here?”

That broke the ice. I had never met Jim, but I sure knew who he was. He had been a trader with the Seris while I was first doing field work in Seri country. A bit later, Jim wrote his master’s thesis on the prehistoric human ecology of the Seri area, and we had corresponded several times. We shook hands, introduced ourselves all around, talked for maybe ten minutes, and then went our separate ways. As we parted, Dan and Dana and I felt a lot better about these guys sharing our island. When we returned to camp that evening they were gone. Was that a slight twinge of disappointment we felt when we realized we were once again alone on the island?

Discrepancies

Not surprisingly, all five of us portray the events in terms of our individual personalities, attitudes, and perspectives. We also recall differently some of the basic facts of the experience. Here we point out some of the important discrepancies.

Who in the panga group first saw the light? The accounts agree that it was just one person, but three different people are credited with the discovery. Dave says it was Dave, Dick says it was Dick, Jim says it was Dick, and Jock says it was Jim. Interestingly, Dave and Dick both remembered their discovery of the light as a unique personal experience not shared with anyone else.

Who investigated the light? Dick says they all did, Dave says it was everyone but him, Jim says it was he and Dick, and Jock implies that nobody did, since the “mystery” was not solved until the meeting took place the next day.



ILL. 8. SITE WITH STRANGE ROCK ALIGNMENTS, ISLA SAN ESTEBAN

These rock figures, which have puzzled many visitors, were probably built by Mexican entrepreneurs who tried to produce *mesqal aguardiente* (a traditional distilled spirit) from San Esteban's agave plants for a short time in 1877.

(*Photograph courtesy Thomas Bowen*)

Who met the archaeology group the next day? Dick, Jim, and Jock all agree it was Jim and Jock. Tom says it was all four of them. Dave implies it was Jim, Jock, and Dick, and that it took place the previous evening when they investigated the light; otherwise they could not have specified Tom by name when they returned.

Where did the meeting take place? Jim and Jock say it took place at the rock alignment site while Dick mentions a nonspecific inland location. Dave implies it was at Tom's camp. Tom remembers it being at his camp.

What was the composition of the archaeology group? Dave recalls it was Tom and "some students." Dick recalls it was Tom and an unspecified "group." Jim and Jock both remember it being three people—Tom, another man, and a woman. Tom also remembers it being three people—himself, another man (Dan), and a woman (Dana). But this raises a perplexing question. Where was Elisa while all this was going on? Although Elisa played a vital role in the 1980 trip, which Tom remembers well, he has absolutely no memory of her in the context of the meeting. Because of this, he assumed the meeting

must have taken place in 1981 or 1982, which were both years when Elisa was unable to come to the island.

Truth from the Written Word?

Dick, Jim, and Tom all kept journals of the trip but none of us wrote much about the meeting or the events preceding it. Jim's journal contains the only written record of the eerie light. In his entry for 9 January, he wrote: "Light in the night—Jock, Dick and I off to inspect it—dope runners, miners, fishermen?—only college kids."

As for the meeting itself, Tom alludes to it in his notes for 9 January: "Jim Hills is here with some friends. He says last year he found [a] tinaja that held 10+ gallons high in the 1st arroyo that flows N. into the A. Limantour."

Jim describes the encounter in his journal entry for 10 January: "Jock and I went up to the [rock alignment] site I saw the year before, and there were 4 people there—Tom Bowen and biologist and 2 chicks. Tom was evasive—he doesn't really think these people [who made the rock alignments] were Seri. Also he jumped to conclusion about the water hole [we found last year]."

Dick also described the meeting in his journal entry for 10 January: "After we ate we took a short hike up the canyon to the 'site.' There were 5 people camping up the canyon. Two men & 3 women. One was an anthropologist that Jim knew & the other was a botanist."

These records, although written, contain their own discrepancies. Contrary to what Jim wrote, Dick's journal implies that he was present at the meeting. He recorded five people in the archaeology group whereas Jim noted four. Dates are also inconsistent. Tom's journal has the meeting on 9 January while Jim and Dick place it on 10 January; at least all three journals agree that the year was 1980. Not so Dave's book (cited above), which places the *first* trip to San Esteban in January 1981, implying that the second trip, and hence the meeting, did not take place until 1982.

And What to Make of All This?

First of all, since the meeting was not particularly important, one might wonder why any of us remember it at all. For two of us—Jim and Tom—it was noteworthy because we were at the epicenter and because we had already established a personal relationship. The other three members of the panga group may have remembered the meeting largely because of its

connection with the ghostly light, which was itself memorable because of its spookiness. More importantly, we suspect that these events were preserved in memory mainly through their association with the frightening—and hence literally unforgettable—voyage to the island. This seems clear from the fact that all four members of the panga group wrote much more, and much more consistently, about the voyage itself than about the events surrounding the meeting.

Because Tom's narrative differs sharply from the others in both perspective and certain basic facts, it is a pity we have no accounts from other members of the archaeology group to corroborate or contradict his memory of events. For Dan and Dana, the entire episode was apparently neither significant nor associated with anything outstanding that would fix it in memory, since neither of them recalls anything at all.

Second, we note that we all resented the presence of others apart from our own group. One might conclude from this that we are all just a bunch of antisocial misfits who self-select for trips to wild and uninhabited islands. But even if true, it does not explain the intensity of the emotion or the exaggerated avoidance behavior that some of us engaged in. In fact, avoidance behavior in isolated situations is rather common—many ordinary people off by themselves feel an overwhelming need to hide when strangers appear. People in such circumstances will even dive for cover when an airplane flies low overhead. Could this be a legacy of our deep past when our ancestors lived in small kin-based groups and strangers were viewed as potential enemies?

Third, we are acutely aware that as Euroamericans, we almost always consider the written word to be inherently more trustworthy than oral history, especially when the words are set to paper shortly after the events they report. To be sure, the accounts of the meeting derived from our memories thirty years later contain numerous discrepancies of fact. However, we point out that even the written records disagree among themselves on two fundamental points—the date of the meeting and the composition of the archaeology group. Did the meeting take place on 9 January, as Tom's notes specify, or on 10 January, as Dick and Jim wrote? Did it occur in 1980, as all three journals indicate or in 1982, as Dave's book implies? Were five people from the archaeology group at the meeting, as Dick stated, or four, as Jim wrote? Or were there just three, as Jim and Jock and Tom all remember? Do two mutually contradictory written sources trump three consistent memories?

Finally, we note the enormous disparity between the richness of our memories and the poverty of our written records—which give only the

faintest hint of the raucous events we recall so vividly. None of the three journals makes any mention of our bizarre behavior on the day before the meeting, when each group sneaked up to spy on the other. Could it be that we are all suffering from false memories and that very little of what we think we recall actually took place? Or could it be that the three of us who wrote about what happened all considered these antics too embarrassing to commit even to the privacy of our personal notes? Is written history inevitably sanitized in this way, while the real richness of human behavior persists only in memory?

Conclusions

So what have we gained from this informal experiment? We have certainly unearthed some delightful accounts of the meeting, but in so doing have we come any closer to learning what “really” happened? Maybe the Western exclusionary “single-truth” paradigm is a fundamentally flawed way to approach history, whether it be global events or trivial incidents in our own past. As for us—Tom and Jim—we feel that by assembling this collection of contradictory accounts we have greatly enriched one small corner of our lives. We now know that there were many different ways that the meeting took place.

Acknowledgments

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