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## REVIEWS

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*The Native Alaskan Neighborhood: A Multi-ethnic Community at Colony Ross. The Archaeology and Ethnohistory of Fort Ross, California, Volume 2.* Kent G. Lightfoot, Ann M. Schiff, and Thomas A. Wake, eds. Berkeley: Contributions of the University of California Archaeological Research Facility, No. 55, 1997, 429 pp., 191 figs., 10 plates, 74 tables, 3 microfiches, 29 appendices, \$35.00 (paper).

Reviewed by:

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Between seaside cliffs and the reconstructed Russian redoubt at Fort Ross State Park, north of San Francisco, extends a broad terrace traversed by the gravel road to Fort Ross cove. The fort itself, including a restored log palisade, two blockhouses, the Officials' Quarters, the Kuskov House, the Rotchev House, and a Russian Orthodox chapel, is a prominent public monument to the Russian-American Company's (RAC) colonial adventure in California (1812-1841). Close examination of the terrace in front of the fort suggests that there is more to Russian history in California than first meets the eye. Scattered in the grass are nutting stones and manos, obsidian arrow points, glass and shell beads, barbed bone harpoon and dart tips, and fragments of metal, ceramics, and glass, all hinting at an overlooked history of Native American occupation.

It is a telling point about both the colonial past and historical archaeology that this intriguing site, with its mixture of Alaskan, Californian, and European-made artifacts, has remained virtually invisible in terms of scholarly and public awareness. Historical documents referring to the settlement are scarce, and early archaeological studies have focused exclusively on the architecture of

the fort and on the lifeways of ranking RAC personnel who were housed within its walls. Yet the majority of the large work force at Fort Ross was Alaskan native hunters transported south by the RAC to hunt sea otters and fur seals, Creoles (born of Russian or Siberian fathers and native mothers), and Native Californians. These groups held lowly positions in the social hierarchy of the colony, and lived outside the palisades in ethnically organized "neighborhoods." Alutiiq (Pacific Eskimo) and Unangan (Aleut) hunters from Alaska lived on the terrace in front of the fort, now known as the Native Alaskan Village Site (NAVS), with their Pomo and Coast Miwok wives and children. Here and at the nearby Fort Ross Beach Site (FRBS), these families left behind material traces of their daily lives and mingled cultural heritage.

Studies at NAVS, FRBS, and other sites in the vicinity of Fort Ross have been conducted since 1988 by University of California, Berkeley (UCB), archaeologist Kent G. Lightfoot, who refers to his work as "the archaeology of pluralism" (Lightfoot 1995; Lightfoot et al. 1998). The program, which is supported by the National Science Foundation, casts a wide collaborative net that includes other Russian and American scholars, the California Department of Parks and Recreation, indigenous cultural organizations in California and Alaska, and a generation of UCB graduate students. The research results contribute to interpretive programs run by the park staff, and to an interactive World Wide Web site (Fort Ross Global Village) developed by regional archaeologist, E. Breck Parkman.

*The Native Alaskan Neighborhood: A Multi-ethnic Community at Colony Ross* is Volume 2 of the series *The Archaeology and Ethnohistory of Fort Ross, California*, published by UCB's Archaeological Research Facility. Volume 1 (Lightfoot et al. 1991) provided an introduction to the

history, research issues, and wider Fort Ross State Park study area. The second volume, reviewed here, gives a detailed presentation of survey and excavation results at NAVS and FRBS. The volume is edited by Lightfoot, A. M. Schiff, and T. A. Wake and, in addition to introductory and concluding sections by the editors (with L. Holm, A. Martinez, and others), it includes chapters on site formation processes (H. A. Price), soil resistivity surveys (A. Tschan), historical archaeology (G. Farris), European artifacts (S. W. Silliman), glass beads (L. A. Ross), lithic artifacts (A. M. Schiff, P. R. Mills), bone artifacts (T. A. Wake), faunal remains (T. A. Wake, D. D. Simons, K. W. Gobalet, A. M. Schiff), and site chronology (K. G. Lightfoot and S. W. Silliman).

The work is a technical tour de force of high-resolution household archaeology, with a theoretical focus on cultural innovation and social strategy. The approach is essentially post-processual, and emphatically distant from the passive acculturation models that once served for the interpretation of historical period Native American sites. The authors emphasize Native American social strategies and choices that were possible even under RAC authority. The "active role" of material culture in the expression of ethnic identity is considered, in areas such as architecture, food preparation and consumption, clothing, spatial organization, tool manufacture, and refuse disposal patterns. The authors document archaeologically observable differences in Alaskan, Californian, and Russian practices, and use such distinctions as the basis for interpreting social dynamics at the household level.

In this volume, alternative situational responses for ethnically mixed NAVS households are suggested. One option was the cultivation of a distinctive native identity on the part of each spouse, along with the rejection of Russian culture. Emulation for purposes of social advancement was another alternative, involving the acquisition of Russian goods and/or elimination of

expressions of Native Californian culture, the lowest in status. Emergence of a new identity based on an amalgamation of Alaskan, Californian, and Russian elements is suggested as a third possibility. On balance, the authors find most support for the first alternative. NAVS households did utilize a significant quantity of Russian imports, but seldom acquired whole objects like teacups or glass bottles, probably because of their cost and limited availability. Instead, they used broken glass and ceramic fragments as raw material for ornaments and traditional tools like projectile points and scrapers. It also appears that Alaskan husbands and Californian wives accommodated their cultural differences and learned new skills from each other as needed, while maintaining a fundamental identification with the ways of their respective peoples.

A related observation, based on Russian statistical data (Istomin 1992), is that ethnically mixed domestic unions at Fort Ross were inherently unstable and short-lived. Women returned, sometimes abruptly, to their families in Pomo and Miwok villages, and the men were sent back to Alaska by the RAC; passage for wives was not included. The social dynamics of the situation, which included negotiation of marriages and reciprocal kin obligations between Alaskans and their California in-laws, are effectively delineated in the volume through a combination of archaeological and historical data. As the authors show, traces of this historical contact between distant native peoples survive today in oral histories, family names, and loan words in their respective languages.

The methodology of the Fort Ross study has been thorough and innovative, both in the field and in the laboratory. Detailed topographic mapping, systematic surface collection, and remote sensing techniques (magnetic and electrical resistivity surveys) contributed to the detection of houses, middens, and subsurface features, allowing the NAVS and FRBS sites to be treated holistically despite a small volume of actual excavation. Stratigraphic issues are considered very

carefully in the report, which is particularly important because of the high degree of rodent bio-turbation at the two sites. Fortunately, excavation blocks at NAVS revealed rock-armored "bone bed" features (midden dumps) which were undisturbed by gopher activity. Meticulous piece-plotting and microspatial analysis of these beds allowed reconstruction of depositional episodes associated with individual meals, and thus a fine-scaled analysis of diet and food preparation practices. Obsidian hydration studies were used to explore the tricky issue of obsidian projectile points found at the sites, most of which appear to be precontact in age, but may be present as the result of material recycling and/or a background presence of prehistoric material.

One drawback to the very deliberate pace of excavation is that no house floors have yet been substantially exposed. The Fort Ross project is therefore uniquely focused on household interpretation without having actually excavated a house, an approach made fruitful only by detailed attention to the extramural midden deposits. Many issues, therefore, remain to be resolved by future work. The architecture of the NAVS houses is variously and vaguely described in historical reports, and no archaeological data on this topic are yet available. An unresolved difficulty in site interpretation is that a detailed 1817 Russian map of the village does not correspond very well with the archaeologically described layout. It seems possible that a spatial reorganization of the village may have occurred during the first years of occupation, marked by a shift from an initial linear arrangement of semi-subterranean Alutiiq houses along the bluff edge (where depressions are visible today) to a nucleated settlement of log houses in the area shown on the 1817 map. In any case, the overall organization and development of this neighborhood at Fort Ross are still clearly at an early stage of understanding.

The artifact analysis chapters are exemplary in many respects. In general, there is a strong

focus on materials analysis, spatial distributions by count and density, and stylistic distinctions among the Native Alaskan and Californian artifacts, elements which are woven into the overall analysis. Wake's discussion of bone tools and manufacturing sequences is very well handled. However, some lapses in the treatment of the European and Russian materials are apparent. For example, individual decorative transfer patterns found on the earthenware sherds are not identified or illustrated by Silliman, and the potential for deriving date estimates for individual houses and stratigraphic layers is not explored. Nor does Ross consider temporal trends in glass bead types or their stratigraphic contexts at NAVS, which might be equally useful in the dating of different parts of the site.

These and other minor flaws, including some figure mix-ups and total structural failure of the binding after one reading, are easily set aside. The volume is highly interesting, meticulously researched and edited, theoretically innovative, and ambitious in scope. The Fort Ross project has set a high standard for archaeological work on the Russian colonial era.

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*The Noontide Sun: The Field Journals of the Reverend Stephen Bowers, Pioneer California Archaeologist.* Arlene Benson. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 44, 1997, xiii + 288 pp., 57 figs., 2 tables, 2 appendices, references, index, \$36.00 (hard cover).

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The challenge facing a writer who fashions a biographical and anthropological work is to deftly interweave the parts. Benson has brought forward a work of separate elements—and leaves the task of integration largely to the reader. It is part detective yarn, part history, part biography, and part treatise on Chumash intravillage organization.

The book's greatest anthropological contribution is its discussion of village organization. The reader will benefit by reading the sections on intravillage organization first—before dipping into the life and words of the Reverend Stephen Bowers. I also suggest *Time's Flotsam* (Blackburn and Hudson 1990) as a companion reader, since questions over the fate of the artifacts are a certain response to the scope of Bower's energetic antiquarianism and assiduous collecting.

The story of the gradual surfacing of the Bow-

ers notes and related documents is entertaining. It reminds us of the hard work and occasional sheer good luck that prompts the discovery of original historical documents. The notes survived water, fire, and sometimes indifferent curation to arrive, neatly compiled and nearly complete, in our laps. Benson has made a significant contribution in bringing forward these long-awaited notes, interpreting them in terms of their historical context, and deriving from them useful archaeological information.

I found myself wishing for a more substantial biography of Bowers and for less of a firewall between his life and his work. Bowers seems to have sprung fully developed from Indiana (via Oregon) with a B.A. from Indiana University, a Ph.D. of uncertain origin, a religious epiphany, and convictions of Caucasian superiority. The biography begs the simple and complex questions readers may have as they confront Bower's very personal notes. How old was he? Where was he born? We are told he left the ministry. Well, what was that all about? Was it the untimely death of his wife, Martha? Was it an unresolved conflict between religious faith and the demands of science?

The notes themselves are more revealing of his qualities; they yield biographical information to those curious about the man himself. Bowers was industrious, a natural historian of note, a gifted and sometimes humorous observer, and a man of opposites. Bowers and his band of assistants and supporters maintained an awesome field schedule. He organized field programs of long duration, succeeding under conditions that would turn most of us around. The mass of recovered artifacts is measured in tons and the volume is measured in bushels. What inspired him to this level of effort? His driving forces were probably many, but one stands out: the competitive and nationalistic race to secure the national treasure. His competitors were chiefly the foreigners Schumacher and DeCessac/Pinart. The race was intense. Bowers notes in several cases that sites