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European artists can afford the luxury to dream and invent their own worlds through art.

*Julius Seyler and the Blackfeet* has endnotes; a long and extensive bibliography with historical citations from archival sources, books, articles, theses, and leaflets—all included as factual evidence of excellent scholarly research; and an index. Farr wisely included sufficient honest and meaningful art critiques of the painting style of Seyler and even something of a critique by Charlie Russell, who did not like Seyler's work, something that this reviewer sees as essential to any good art book about any kind of art. However, suffice it to say that Seyler was apparently a better landscape painter than a painter of Indians. One painting in particular that seems inspired is *Sunset over St. Mary* (72), which echoes the painting of the romantic English sunset "painter of light" Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), better known in England simply as Turner. Many of Seyler's Indian works in this book are more in the nature of illustrations than innovative in concept, design, quality, and original thought. However, not knowing the full breadth of his life's work, it is difficult to tell if some of these were studies to be completed later as paintings. Even so, there is no cutting-edge artistic originality here. Regardless, I find this artist to be important to the genre of Western art just the same. The only pity is that I have run out of space in which to give the reader more information, so by all means, buy the book and find out for yourself why this is true. One last word, the painting for the wrap-around cover might have been better considered.

*Alfred Young Man*

Professor Emeritus, First Nations University of Canada

**Life on the River: The Archaeology of an Early Native American Culture.** By William R. Hildebrandt and Michael J. Darcangelo. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 2008. 120 pages. \$13.95 paper.

*Life on the River* describes what was learned from an archaeological project that took place at a Wintu habitation site occupied during late prehistoric and early historic times. The Wintu are a Native American tribal group that lived, and still live, in the upper Sacramento River valley. The site was given the Wintu name Kum Bay Xerel, meaning "shady oak village," although it was not recorded as being one of the Wintu villages occupied during the early historic period. As the authors indicate, the Wintu people moved into the upper Sacramento River valley about 1,500 years ago, and at the beginning of the historic period, they occupied a series of villages within the watersheds of

the upper Sacramento and Trinity rivers. They were among the most populous in California, with complex social, political, and economic institutions. William Hildebrandt and Michael Darcangelo are archaeologists with the Far Western Anthropological Research Group, one of the most highly respected archaeological consulting firms in the state. The firm was contracted to recover information about the inhabitants of the site before it was impacted by a residential housing development. Mandated by the California Environmental Quality Act, such projects take place throughout California in response to various sorts of land development that adversely affects sites where prehistoric people lived and worked.

The book begins with an explanation of why the excavation took place at Kum Bay Xerel, which is followed by a short expository of the practice of archaeology—particularly how archaeologists are able to determine when prehistoric events occurred by using such techniques as radiocarbon and obsidian hydration dating. This discussion is followed by an overview of the prehistory of the upper Sacramento River valley, which began at least eight thousand years ago, and a description of Wintu culture as it existed during the early historic period as documented in historical accounts and by ethnographers. The core of *Life on the River* is a description of the archaeological project and the various sorts of artifacts and cultural remains, such as structural features encountered during excavation. Of particular interest were the remains of a house, an earth lodge, two cemeteries, and a variety of carbonized plant-food remains and animal bones.

The remainder of the book is largely devoted to a consideration of the two cemeteries discovered at Kum Bay Xerel during the course of excavation. As the authors indicate, archaeologists avoid excavation of cemeteries for ethical reasons, and one of the cemeteries, dating to the prehistoric period of occupation, was left intact and placed into a conservation area in which no development will occur. The other cemetery, dating after the Wintu were contacted by Euro-Americans, occurred in an area that could not be avoided by the housing development, so the remains were moved to the conservation area. This cemetery apparently was used to bury many Wintu people who died during a malaria epidemic in 1833. Historical accounts that are summarized by the authors indicate that a very large proportion of the whole Wintu population died during this epidemic, and characteristics of the cemetery, such as well more than one hundred burials within an area only seven-by-seven meters in size, reveal that many interments took place over a very short period of time.

This book was written mainly for the nonprofessional, including students and anyone with an interest in archaeology or Wintu culture. Professional archaeologists certainly would be interested in this book, but presumably a technical report concerning project findings exists that would satisfy their

interest in the details of the research. The authors minimize the use of archaeological jargon; although some terms peculiar to archaeology are used, their meanings are readily apparent by the contexts of their use. As a result, the nonprofessional reader will gain an excellent idea of the nature of an archaeological excavation project—of any sort, not just one undertaken in light of impending land development. The reader also will acquire knowledge about the traditional culture of the Wintu people, which had similarities to many other traditional cultures that existed in California. To help the nonprofessional reader appreciate the humanity and rationality of traditional Wintu culture, the authors often relate their interpretations to analogous situations in contemporary Western culture. Although the authors' treatment of the prehistory of the upper Sacramento River valley is brief, it does give an idea of the major cultural changes that occurred during the course of eight thousand years.

An important theme running throughout the book is archaeologists' relationships with the people whose prehistory they study. Contemporary Wintu people not only monitored the fieldwork and provided advice as well as insights useful in interpreting the findings, but also some actually participated in the excavation as trainees. Wintu people also had a say in what was to be done with the two cemeteries of their ancestors and how the human remains in the historic cemetery were to be treated once they were exposed. They allowed the archaeologists to document the details of each burial and to carry out basic osteological analysis of the human bones before they were reburied in the conservation area. As a result, a great deal of information was obtained about mortuary practices and their reflection of social organization, as well as the demography of the Wintu population during prehistoric and historic times. This sort of interaction between archaeologists and California Indian people is relatively typical of archaeological excavations in California today, although the close working relationship during the course of the project at Kum Bay Xerel is exceptional and serves as an excellent example for archaeologists and Native Americans alike.

By revealing information concerning the impact of the 1833 malaria epidemic, the results of the historic cemetery investigation exemplify the impact of Euro-American exploration and the eventual colonization of California as well as elsewhere in the Americas. Of all the ways that Euro-Americans affected Native American peoples, the introduction of European diseases frequently had the severest and most negative impacts on the Native populations and their traditional lifeways. Epidemics caused by such diseases as malaria, smallpox, and measles often wiped out more than half of a tribal population during the course of just a couple years. Rarely have archaeologists armed with modern analytical techniques encountered a historic cemetery such as that at Kum Bay Xerel, but surely others exist in California. In deference

to Native American concerns (and because of the dictates of California state law), such cemeteries are unlikely to be investigated, but it is worth noting that some of them contain the only information available about the nature and severity of the impacts from European diseases.

Deficiencies in the authors' presentation are few but worth pointing out. More photos of the excavation in progress, such as the exposure of the remains of the two burned structures, would have enhanced an understanding of the nature of the fieldwork. Similarly, a more extensive treatment of variability in artifact categories would have given the reader more insight into how archaeologists derive information about the past. In particular, more detailed information about the shell beads would have provided a better idea of the importance of shell bead studies in California archaeology. The plan-view illustrations of the two structures should have had scales in order to appreciate their sizes, and the description of procedures of obsidian hydration analysis would have been enhanced by a clearer reference to the microscopic observation of cross-sections of obsidian objects in order to measure hydration rind thickness.

A few of the authors' interpretations also may be questioned. First, the authors do not explain why excavation beyond the historic cemetery encountered no evidence of historic occupation of Kum Bay Xerel, whereas there is abundant evidence in the form of Euro-American artifacts (for example, glass beads) acquired from the cemetery. Was historic-period occupation of the site in parts that were not subject to excavation? Did Wintu people living at a nearby village use the site as a cemetery? This contrast between the historic cemetery and the rest of the excavated portions of the site is anomalous and worthy of consideration. Second, the authors place too much significance on the evidence of Wintu warfare derived from the historic cemetery. Ethnohistoric and archaeological evidence of warfare exists for many parts of California and among comparable small-scale societies throughout the world. A substantial amount of anthropological literature is devoted to warfare among traditional peoples similar to the Wintu. Perhaps the Wintu experienced more intensive warfare than elsewhere in California, and the authors present some reasons why this may be so, but if so, it should have been demonstrated through comparative analysis.

The shortcomings just mentioned do not detract from the value of the book. It should exist in order to bring the results of archaeological investigation to the attention of the interested public, including Native peoples whose prehistory the archaeologists study. More specifically, educational institutions could make good use of this book. It would be a useful complement to a general text in a college-level introductory course in archaeology, or it could be one of the texts for courses concerning California prehistory or Native peoples

of California. As well, high school students undoubtedly also could grasp the essence of archaeology as it is practiced from reading this book.

*Michael A. Glassow*

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**Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State.** By Jennifer Reid. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008. 314 pages. \$34.95 cloth.

Despite a voluminous body of literature and the publication of his personal papers in 1985, Louis Riel remains one of the most enigmatic figures in Canadian history. The profound legacy of the Métis leader, politician, and visionary is rendered complicated by his role in acts of resistance against the Canadian government during 1869 and 1885. In *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada*, Jennifer Reid argues that Riel “has become increasingly embedded in the Canadian cultural imagination” (1). The problematic creation of Canada as a confederation of disparate interests renders the search for a sense of collective identity enduring, difficult, and divisive. Thus during the years since his execution for high treason in 1885, Riel has appeared at various times as a symbol of indigenous resistance, Catholic rights, French-Canadian sovereignty, and Western alienation. Reid asks who better to unite these elements than Louis Riel? A man who—at least in myth—embodies them all.

Reid persuasively argues that Canada’s unique colonial origin precludes the formation of a cohesive identity. Throughout the twentieth century, Riel’s transformation from treasonous crank to visionary statesman has occurred as appeals to expansionist and imperialist discourses became increasingly irrelevant (136). More recent attempts to ameliorate our differences through official government policies, such as bilingualism and multiculturalism, did not prove to be unifying but instead worsened the dichotomies created by confederation. According to Reid, Riel, or more particularly the idea of “*metissage*” he embodies, is part of the elusive identity that Canadians seek. Riel’s status as someone “in between” fits “a variety of cultural agendas” as it simultaneously embraces minorities and the disadvantaged, French Canadians, Catholics, and proponents of provincial rights (32). That so many Canadians of diverse backgrounds and experiences can see something of themselves in Riel’s multifaceted image suggests that somewhere “in between” there is an alternative to the rigid extremes that traditionally divide us. In this respect, she cautions that it is unreasonable to expect national myths and heroes from a state-constitutional structure designed to integrate distinct regional interests. She observes that