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Costello and Maniery: *Rice Bowls in the Delta: Artifacts Recovered from the 1915 Asian Community of Walnut Grove, California*

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from light orange, to orange-pink, to red in color. Additionally, these sherds oftentimes have been burnished.

These minor problems in no way detract from the high quality of archaeological research represented by the monograph. The editors and contributors are to be congratulated for their fine work. This volume stands as a major contribution to the archaeology of the Salton Basin, and no doubt will become a standard reference for future workers in the region.

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In *Gum Saan*, Gold Mountain, it's said, one can get rich picking up gold nuggets from the streets. This story describing California still is told in southern China. The authors picked up 7000+ artifacts from the streets of Walnut Grove, California. This is a rich and extraordinary report. Even seven iron money safes were found in the streets. And, what more would one ask for—nearly 4,000 sherds of emptied sake bottles. Literary folklorists well might consider this another version of the *Gum Saan* tale, but this report really is a landmark pictorial catalogue of the evidence.

Walnut Grove, in the rich delta farmland 30 miles south of Sacramento, was established in the late nineteenth century and became a small, rural center for agricultural workers. By 1915 the property assessments listed 101 Chinese, 46 Japanese, and 20 Caucasians present. The Asians lived in the "Chinatown" area, "sharing" (p. 3) a three-block section that was entirely leveled by a major fire that year. Following the fire, the local Japanese, Sze Yup Chinese, and Chungshan Chinese each relocated as separate ethnic communities in different locales.

In 1984 Public Research Archaeology was contracted to monitor the backhoe trench excavations required for new sewers, storm drains, and water lines throughout Walnut Grove. In the three blocks of the old China-

town area, the trenching encountered a multitude of buried deposits containing burned debris from the 1915 catastrophe that had been redeposited within the public thoroughfares. Ultimately, the backhoe sectioned through 50 such features, and 17 were selected for sampling. This publication is a short report with an extensive pictorial catalogue of the principal forms of the salvaged artifacts.

This archaeological project is extraordinary in several respects. Methodologically, it presents a successfully coordinated construction monitoring program. Interpretively, the sampling strategy proved very rewarding. The real-world constraints of a monitoring operation in deep, narrow, shored, slit trenches, with workmen busily installing pipes and backfilling, made this an extraordinarily challenging undertaking. The project focused, obviously, upon the artifact-richest 1915 fire debris deposits. "A portion of the [selected] feature was then carefully troweled into large plastic bags for later screening. . . . The sheer volume of the material present under the streets of Walnut Grove precluded collecting more than a small sample of the features" (p. 8). Because these were secondary depositions in the public roadways, detailed sub-site analysis was considered unwarranted, a reasonable approach. The deposits typically contained Japanese and Chinese ceramics mixed together, along with a few Euro-American tablewares. The collection is "a sample of material culture. . . [that] reflect[s] the relative presence of the artifacts in the Asian community" (p. 16). However, the materials processed from each sampled feature were quantified by class and tabulated, with more detailed categories for ceramic materials; these details could provide for further analysis and interpretive insights. Thus, both in terms of approach and Asian material diversity, this project provides

intriguing comparisons with recent Asian ethnic community studies.

Walnut Grove presents a unique contrast to previous studies of Asian ethnic sites, with its apparent mixed archaeological assemblage of Japanese and Chinese ceramics occurring throughout the community. The authors mention this "co-occurrence" (p. 16) but provide no discussion. This raises several critical issues. Anthropologists need to inquire about the situational frameworks in which two ethnic groups live together, "sharing" space, material culture, and, ultimately, their critical identities. Conversely, we need to inquire about the social situations in which ethnic groups maintain their potential ethnic markers, such as distinctive Japanese or Chinese ceramics, in order to preserve their separate ethnic identities. The mingled archaeological materials apparent in the secondary depositions of fire debris in Walnut Grove may obscure fine-scale spatial and cultural separation of distinct ethnic groups. Similarly, archaeological material correlates never have been proposed for distinguishing between the Sze Yup and Chungshan Chinese, which often are distinct dialectic and social communities. Thus, the archaeology raises, but also may partially obscure, the ethnic relations of the community. Immediately following the fire, these three ethnic groups of Walnut Grove moved to separate areas.

In fairness, these social issues were not a project concern, but they penetrate the soft social interpretation to readers. They also penetrate the earlier historical-oriented report published on this project (Maniery and Costello 1986), where ethnic groups and factions are explicitly interpreted as reflected in the archaeology.

Within the report the authors pioneer a description and appreciation of the mass-produced, transfer-printed, domestic, porce-

lain wares that were newly developed with the factory technologies that swept Japan's Meiji Period (1868-1912). Three components or aspects of the Japanese-produced materials are detailed: (1) porcelain sake bottles; (2) the dashed-line style transfer decorated bowls; and (3) "Made in Japan" labeling pre-dating 1915.

Most important, two-thirds of this volume is a pictorial catalogue of the major artifacts in the collection. Nearly 150 crisp, black-and-white photographs, typically six per page, plus a few technical drawings, illustrate the major fragments of decorated Chinese and Japanese ceramics, the embossed glass bottles, and the few other foreign items. The patterns on these diverse transfer-printed, Imari, and other hand-painted ceramics are generally complex, so photographs are an efficient scientific approach. Unfortunately, gray half-tones fail to portray the original sparkle and aurora of colors that made these porcelains so popular.

This is an important publication for a number of reasons. It is a superb example of a contribution from a contracted, public proj-

ect. It demonstrates the worthy utilization of an unusually simple and constrained archaeological sampling technique. It is a first report on the historical archaeology of the Japanese in the West. It contributes substantially to our knowledge of Japanese ceramics, and it adds a measure on Chinese ceramics. It is an outstanding case study showing the modernization of Japanese economy, and the rapid adaptation of ceramic material culture by the Japanese people. It indicates that the Japanese were able to maintain a substantial marketing and supply network to California. It suggests a good deal about ethnic identities in California. In summation, this may be a pictorial catalogue, but its real importance is its potential to contribute variously to methodology, to description, to interpretation, and to understanding. It is a rich report, full of *Gum Saan* nuggets from the streets.

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