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Fryer: *Sandspit: A Redwood Northcoast Notebook, Book I*

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from statements made by Leventhal et al.). It does mean that we constantly strive to understand, in the fullest historical context, the meaning and implications of the historical documentation of Native American cultures and the biases inherent in the academic traditions within which most professional anthropologists were and are trained (e.g., as illustrated in papers by Brown, Milliken, King, Castillo, and Leventhal et al.). It is also part of our responsibility to all Native Americans to dispel the derogatory stereotypes that persist in professional and popular tracts still in circulation.

*The Ohlone Past and Present* dramatically symbolizes the nature of the contemporary relationship that exists between Native Americans and those who study their cultures from outside the Native American experience. For each group, the identification, prioritization, and consequences of issues studied are profoundly different. Yet, each group can and should benefit from interaction with the other. *The Ohlone Past and Present* illustrates how far we have come in building bridges between the two cultural traditions, yet how wide the separation remains.



*Sandspit: A Redwood Northcoast Notebook, Book I.* Francesca Fryer. Self Published, 1995, viii + 292 pp., 3 maps, 13 figs., \$21.50 (paper).

Reviewed by:

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*Sandspit* is a popular account of California's North Coast, from approximately Trinidad north

to Crescent City, and inland along the Lower Klamath River to Weitchpec. The author provides a moving impression of the land, its history, and people. She is especially interested in the inhabitants of the Lower Klamath: the Yurok people, the redwoods, and the salmon. Captain Spott, the great Yurok leader, and his adopted son and Kroeber informant, Robert Spott, are central to this story, as are Alfred Kroeber, the father of California anthropology, and another white man, Harry Roberts, who, before his death in 1981, collaborated on *Sandspit* with the author. Fryer considers these four men the "Participants" of her story, and the ones "who understood the need to have this story recorded" (passage from an advertisement accompanying the book). There are five "Witnesses" as well; Ruth Roberts, Florence Shaughnessy, Frank Douglas, and Audrey and Sam Jones, all people whom the author interviewed and drew insights from. Interwoven in the account, like the "foundation sticks" (p. 29) of an Indian basket, is Fryer's personal story of self-discovery and inner growth.

Essentially, *Sandspit* is a discussion of the author's need to write this book. According to Fryer, Yurok culture would have been lost had it not been for Robert Spott. While Spott shared many details of Yurok culture with Alfred Kroeber, he apparently did not share everything. Other knowledge was passed on to Harry Roberts (see Palmquist 1983:16; Roberts 1987; Pilling 1989:423), Spott's young, white apprentice and "adopted nephew," who in turn passed the information on to the author, with the request that she publish it. Additionally, Fryer was given a copy of a journal kept by Ruth Roberts, Harry's mother, during an outing in 1918 with Alice Spott, Robert's sister. Ruth Roberts, who later served as curator of both the Del Norte County Historical Museum and the McNulty Pioneer Home, was very interested in the Yurok people, as can be seen in her photographs of them (see Palmquist 1983). Apparently, her

journal contains many details of Yurok culture derived from Alice Spott. Fryer intends to publish the information derived from Harry and Ruth Roberts in the last two books of her planned trilogy. Book I, then, is a description of how the information came into the author's possession, and an explanation of why it should be published. Unfortunately, Fryer's explanation is flawed by a false assumption.

Interwoven in Fryer's account is the assumption that traditional Yurok culture has all but disappeared. In fact, readers may get the impression that, for the author, the culture now survives in a 100-page journal kept by Ruth Roberts in 1918, in Fryer's many hours of taped interviews with Harry Roberts, and in the letters written to her by him in the 1960s. I do not doubt that important details regarding Yurok culture are to be found in these materials. Indeed, Harry Roberts served as an informant to several anthropologists, and is known to have had an impressive awareness of traditional Yurok culture (e.g., see Driver 1939:422; Pilling 1989:423). However, I do not believe that the Roberts material, as presented in *Sandspit*, will prove to be the sole field on which Yurok culture will be saved or lost. Of course, this is not meant to detract from the validity of the Roberts data.

The information derived from Harry Roberts was passed down to him by the aristocratic Spott family of Requa, a family of unique and gifted individuals. For example, Captain Spott went on to become one of the greatest Yurok leaders of all time, in spite of the stigma of his illegitimate birth. And from all accounts, his adopted son, Robert Spott, understood Yurok traditional culture better than anyone of his time. Indeed, he was Kroeber's perfect informant (see Buckley 1989). As Theodora Kroeber (1970:160) put it, "Never did teachers have a more perfect receptacle for their knowledge and wisdom than Robert, who forgot nothing they taught him."

However, that does not mean that there were no other Yurok traditionalists at work during Robert Spott's lifetime, nor that traditional information was not communicated down through the generations. Indeed, this information was communicated and taught to younger people, and lives on today. In my own experiences with the Yurok, I have seen traditional Yurok culture alive in the dances of Dewey George, the houses of Walter Lara, Sr., and the canoes of George Blake. Thus, with the Yurok, as with groups elsewhere, traditional culture does not pass down unilineally, but rather multilinearly or communally. And while Western observers might help document the minutia of a Native Californian culture, its meaning and purpose survive most naturally as traditional (oral) knowledge among its members.

Some readers may have difficulty with Fryer's contentions regarding the survival of Yurok culture. In her defense, it should be noted that the author's impressions are based on the period of 1964 to 1972, in which she conducted her fieldwork, and perhaps an era in which the fate of Yurok culture seemed gravely uncertain (cf. Pilling 1978:148). In recent years, however, there have been great strides taken to preserve the traditions (e.g., see Parkman 1987, 1991; Margolin 1990; Ortiz 1990; Hinton 1994:240). Of course, the ultimate fate of traditional Yurok culture is still far from certain. But many of the old ways are surviving, due to the traditional (oral) knowledge possessed by the community. It is unfortunate that Fryer has been unable to visit the Yurok for over three decades, and thus has not observed the continuation of traditional culture.

Readers may also have difficulty with the image of a white man, Harry Roberts, as the sole possessor of Yurok heritage (cf. Pilling 1978:142). In a letter to Fryer, Ruth Roberts informed her that, "If you are trying to understand the psyche of the Yurok, I suggest you get in contact with my son, Harry K. Roberts,

who is the last wearer of the sacred stone of the Yurok People, who received this stone from Robert Spott, who received it from Waukell Harry, who received it from Pegah, who received it from her husband Captain Spott" (p. 256). And Harry Roberts told Fryer that, "I wear a tribal stone . . . all the time . . . The wearer of this stone is the possessor of the Yurok heritage at all times the stone is worn" (p. 79). Given the political structure of the Yurok, I am not sure how a single individual from one community could bear such a "tribal" distinction. Regardless, the talisman, and its inherent promise, were never out of Harry Roberts' mind:

Finally he reached under the facing of his shirt and drew out a blue-green Stone, attached to a leather thong that encircled his neck. Closing his eyes, he cupped the talisman in his fleshy, pink-white hands. Minutes later he replaced it—out of sight, although never out of mind. For this stone was his visible symbol, as well as daily reminder, of the Promise he had made years earlier, a promise which also carried a Price. At least, such were his wildly unlikely and unbelievable claims, on that first May interview in 1966. On completing his own Spirit Medicine and receiving this same Stone from the hands of Captain Spott, the Yurok intellectual Robert Spott had promised to teach his comprehensive Indian knowledge to someone else before his own death. "Robert Spott made his medicine to teach," Harry explained to me, on that first fateful day. As if he expected me to understand, on the spot, all that his words implied, the monumental burden in such a promise. In contrast, Harry's promise to Robert Spott—and an important distinction for SANDSPIT—had differed. It had taken him the all-important next step. "I promised to make sure that it would be written down," Harry affirmed in May 1966. In other words, he had guaranteed that the Indian knowledge he had been given would be recorded, somewhere, somehow . . . Over unknown centuries, this blue-green Stone had passed from one Yurok "Man" to the next. It had gathered its power from a lineage of gifted minds. Now it was tuned into its final instructions: "Pass on what you know." . . . There came a moment when I wished that I had never set eyes on that crazy blue-green Stone. A moment when I was afraid that Harry was about to drape it around my own neck [pp. 81-82].

Thus, Harry Roberts passed on his knowledge of traditional Yurok culture to Francesca Fryer, who uses the first book of her trilogy to introduce the subject. Just how useful this information is remains to be seen in the second and third books. Meanwhile, Fryer has given her readers a good overview of the North Coast, and a revealing glimpse at the emotional and intellectual rewards of working with native communities. Additionally, she has demonstrated an ability to document history in a fascinating and thought-provoking fashion. For example, her story of Alfred Kroeber is a poignant description of the renowned anthropologist who staked his early professional career on the Yurok. Without dismissing Kroeber's many achievements, Fryer shows that he was only human after all. And her story of the infamous flood of 1964, which brought death and devastation to all of the Lower Klamath River communities, is superb. Fryer provides a vivid and moving account of the tragedy, creating scenes that will stay with the reader long after the book is completed.

*Sandspit* is not without its problems, though. For example, Fryer's style of writing may prove difficult for some readers. The writing is broken and free style, and could have used more editing. And the book is distracting in that it fades back and forth in time, from chapter to chapter and within the chapters. But, in spite of its problems, *Sandspit* is interesting reading, and, once begun, may prove hard to put down. I suspect that those who take the time to read it will not be disappointed.

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*A Time of Little Choice: The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1769-1810.* Randall Milliken. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 43, 1995, xvi + 364 pp., 17 figs., 5 maps, 12 tables, and 4 appendices, \$32.95 (hard cover), \$24.95 (paper).

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For those of us who have been immersed in the ethnohistory of the California Spanish Mission-California Indian interaction, this book version of the dissertation by Randy Milliken has been long awaited. If anything, it is better than I had hoped. Building on pioneering work by one of his mentors, the late James Bennyhoff, Milliken has taken the multitude of written exploration accounts, as well as military and mission records kept by the Spanish (principally in the San Francisco Bay area), and developed from them an invaluable ethnogeography of the Indian villages found in the present-day counties of Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa, along with portions of neighboring counties. The maps he provides will be utilized by archaeologists and historians from now on.

Milliken then draws from his painstaking work of reconstituting the Indian families taken into the missions to create a comprehensible Indian history of their side of the first contacts with explorers and clerics like Pedro Fages, Juan Crespi, Junipero Serra, Pedro Font, Vicente de Santamaria, Miguel Costansó, Fernando Rivera y Moncada, and many more. Though the accounts of many of these Spaniards have long been available to scholars, they portrayed only their impressions of the interaction. Milliken's study goes a long way to providing us the other side of the story, or at least putting these obser-

