

SECTION III. COMPARATIVE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CHINATOWNS AND OVERSEAS CHINESE SITES IN THE WEST

Museum exhibits focusing on historical aspects of a community sometimes augment their display with artifacts on loan from archaeological laboratories. The SCM did so with the Song Wong Bourbeau Collection exhibit in 1994. This assemblage of family heirlooms offers insight into the art, culture, and history associated with Santa Rosa's former Chinatown community. The archaeological processes of survey and excavation generate many artifacts and valuable data. This material can be extremely helpful to the analysis, display, and public interpretation of museum collections because it contributes positive elements for "stimulating reflection and critique" in the museum setting by creating an "ethnographic ambiance" and a "patina of authority" (Erikson (2004:374).

By sharing information and relevant displays of collections, museums and archaeological curation facilities can produce the most fully informed history—given that adequate consultation and ethnographic research has been conducted. An object or artifact is relevant if it demonstrates a relation to the cultural identity or experience being addressed. Likewise, when specific artifacts are found to be relevant to stories presented in museum exhibits it is an opportunity to explain the importance of archaeology. Timothy K. Choy (2005:5) explains that interpreters can enhance the credibility of ethnic heritage displays: "If expert value is attributed to knowledge that moves from one domain to another, then translation is one technology that makes knowledge move and come to matter as expertise." Dual benefits arise—archeology validates history as archaeologists use "the metaphor of the material-as-text" to address the implications of

who interprets or “translates” history (Barrett 1996:578). This is also akin to the ethical dimension of heritage vis-à-vis “the concept of heritage requires a sense of ownership, and the consumption of heritage requires a sense of permission” (Graburn 2001:68).

This section will reveal the practicality of such collaborative efforts by examining findings edifying the preceding section’s historical context statement. Hence, it will offer realistic perceptions of the past useful in the educational and public outreach portions of this project presented in the sections to follow.

Archaeology and Cultural Resource Management

This investigative project claims to be an innovative approach to cultural resource management [CRM]. CRM, what’s that? You might ask. Fair enough, CRM is rarely known outside of archaeology. Ninety percent of all archaeologists work in the field of CRM—identifying, evaluating, and preserving cultural resources to assist the public and private sectors’ need to be in compliance with environmental and historic preservation laws. They use scientific methods to recover and analyze material evidence of human life and culture from the past. The “full range of cultural resources” include “cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, historical records, social institutions, expressive culture, old buildings, religious beliefs and practices, industrial heritage, folklife, artifacts, spiritual places” (King 2002:1). This project will present examples of each of these categories in the model exhibit outlined in the following section.

Since 1966 and the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act CRM has been responsible for generating a significant amount of archaeological materials. The Archaeological Collections Facility [ACF] in the Anthropological Studies Center [ASC] at Sonoma State University [SSU], Rohnert Park, California, is a case in point. In

operating the ACF, the SSU Academic Foundation, Inc. and the SSU Department of Anthropology provide opportunities in applied research and training for students. The university offers a Master of Arts program in CRM. The ACF repository is exemplary in its stewardship of cultural resources. Many facilities simply warehouse their collections and file away reports devoid of anything more than descriptions of artifact types and forms (Wiant 2004:89; Yang 1997:59). The usefulness of the ACF collections is a result of the ASC's commitment to promoting research into artifact function and providing ready access to the associated reports and artifacts. Moreover, the artifacts and data are stored in a well-organized and properly curated manner. Fortunately, the ASC received funds for the expansion necessary to accommodate an ever-growing body of collections.

Cultural resources are managed by many folks in various disciplines from anthropologists to public historians to managers of museum collections. It would seem that museums are the best equipped to reveal the findings from CRM initiated contracts. Public interpretation and outreach programs, such as the one modeled here for the SCM, aim to educate and encourage the public to value cultural resources and commit to preserving them for posterity.

Archaeology links behavior with visible remains of past human activity. Comparative analysis with other Chinatowns and Overseas Chinese archaeological sites in the West offers an important interpretive perspective and helpful guide to understanding what an object's function may have been and how common certain objects were in the past. For instance, comparing faunal analysis with Song Wong Bourbeau's (1994) oral history reveals similar accounts of dietary habits. Gaps in the documentary record of Santa Rosa's Chinatown include specific details of the material culture

associated with everyday life at the boardinghouses, merchant stores, or laundries—these can be filled by examining the findings from other Chinatowns and Overseas Chinese archaeological sites and thereby contribute a probable picture of the past. Archaeological research is conducted for the purpose of obtaining the time period of certain events; reconstructing past ways of life no longer evident; and recording cultural changes through time. In the process of archaeological investigations, inferences are made to determine how and why a resource was made or used, or the reasons why cultural change or continuity occurred. Therefore, much can be said about the material culture, social organization, and degree or process of assimilation by the working class Chinese (Greenwood 1980:113).

Archaeological analysis is aided by gathering ethnographic data. Jeannie K. Yang and Virginia R. Hellmann (1997), under the auspices of the ASC, conducted oral interviews of Chinese Americans in synthesizing data on the form and function of Chinese brown glazed stoneware (CBGS) uncovered from the Sacramento HI56 block in 1994. The ethnoarchaeological research adds desirable depth and probability to intellectual inquiry into an extremely common artifact type on Overseas Chinese archeological sites. This is pertinent to our discussion because it explores Chinese foodways, elements of which have not changed much in the last 200 years. Yang and Hellmann's work, and the other research cited in this section, demonstrate the usefulness of an archaeological literature review for specific material culture studies such as ours.

CHINESE CERAMICS AND CHINESE FOODWAYS

Chinese Brown Glazed Stoneware (CBGS)

All the CBGS types were easily obtainable from Chinese merchants who catered to clients preferring to retain their native foodways. The vessels could be found in kitchens no matter what one's class or economic status (Yang 1997:62). Jeannie Yang (1997:59) found that these vessels were "all containers of food and were produced locally in Canton." These brown glazed stonewares, in either globular or cylindrical form, were used for the containment of soy sauce and peanut oil, vegetables, wine, or distilled spirits. Preserved foods are a historic adaptive feature of Chinese foodways--methods include smoking, salting, sugaring, steeping, pickling, drying, and soaking in soy sauces (Chang 1977). Food preservation methods are a vital element to securing ample nutritional provisions for consumption. Such food customs proved time and again useful for those on voyages or as shipped items destined for those away from the mainland. Preserved foods included—garlic and ginger, vegetables such as yams, taro, turnips, radish, and onions, fruits such as plums, soy bean curd, dry oysters, shrimps, cuttlefish, dry duck, and birds' nests (Langenwalter 1980:103; Matthew 2005; Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1982:137).

The CBGS typology consists of: spouted jars, liquor bottles; wide-mouthed jars, globular jars, straight-sided jars, and barrel jars. Although their main use was for storage and shipping of prepared foods, liquors, and condiments, reuse has been known to occur except for liquor bottles. Felton et al. (1984:47) note that soy sauce bottles were reused for vinegar and molasses. Praetzellis (1990) found them used to store a blue liquid considered necessary in the laundry process. Yang's (1997:60) interviewees corroborated this by commenting that they could be used for anything.

According to Praetzellis and Praetzellis (1982:134), some of the brown glazed stoneware forms uncovered from another block (IJ56) of the early Chinese community in Sacramento, “exhibit kiln marks . . . which when found heretofore on later period sites, are very rarely marked.” Archaeologists working in Sonoma County have discovered only a few assemblages of Chinese heritage. An excavation of a Chinese bunkhouse in Miller Gulch, a Sonoma coast sawmill, uncovered a ceramic assemblage consisting of brown-glazed stoneware used as liquid and food containers (Douglass 2000).

Faunal analysis

Faunal analyses of archaeological assemblages show evidence for the consumption of both Western and Chinese protein sources. Isolation, intercultural contact, and resource availability were often determining factors in the acquisition of non-Chinese culture traits (Langenwarter II 1980:104). Evidence indicates that the Chinese diet relies predominately on plant rather animal foods, and primarily on fowl more than pork, beef, or sheep, the latter being scarcely represented. Metal food containers recovered from a merchant store in Madera County, California indicate the reliance on canned sardines for subsistence (Langenwarter II 1980:106). Protein analysis of a “bone bed” located outside a habitation site at a Chinese laundry in Evanston, Wyoming indicates the presence of goat, cow, and horse.

Praetzellis and Praetzellis (1997:66) working as 818 Sixth Street (formerly 12 N at Sixth Street) in Sacramento found many faunal remains of two species of turtles and two Chinese fish species: the Golden Threadfin and Sea Bream. They believe the feature, Pit 16, was probably a wood-lined well that was filled with refuse after piped water was secured and subsequently was filled with debris, ca. 1855. Evidence suggests it is

associated with the Yeung-wo Company and its boardinghouse at 525/527 I Street, which was destroyed by fire in 1855. Feature 4 (layer 41) in IJ56 Block of Sacramento is likely associated with a wooden structure occupied by Chinese residents, ca. 1854, which was replaced with the Euro-American construction of a brick building. Praetzellis and Praetzellis (1982:60-61) recovered faunal remains, which included: “bones from six species of fish, some of which originated locally, some from the San Francisco Bay, and one from China.”

Chinese Food Habits and Social Status

Praetzellis and Praetzellis's (1982:164) study of Chinese merchants while investigating the Overseas Chinese site in Sacramento offers interesting insights into merchant behavior aimed at gaining status. Taking advantage of their ethnicity, merchants would act to elevate their standing “within their community and the position of both themselves and the Chinese community within the larger society.” One means of promotion, an example of which was recorded 7 December 1861 in the Sacramento Bee, was to entertain politicians and other important members of white society with sumptuous banquets. Traditional Chinese food consisting of 26 courses and champagne were served on a table set with Western accoutrements. As the guests arrived and the meal was consumed, a lamp burned at the feet of a Chinese deity. In these ways, the merchants showed their willingness and adeptness at exhibiting food habits from two cultural traditions and a certain acceptance of a new identity—Chinese American. It is important to note that food consumption for the Chinese goes far beyond fulfilling a biological or even social need; it enters the realm of practical spiritualism, constituting a dominant aspect of health as espoused in Chinese medical philosophy.

Langenwalter II's (1980) archaeological investigation of nineteenth century Chinese subsistence at Chinese merchant stores in Madera County, California found that the stores serviced the entire community. The two businesses operated from the 1860s to 1885 and sold provisions to mostly Chinese miners, but local Native Americans and the white community also were consumers of their merchandise. The lower China Store is presumed to have been a residence as well. Chinese, intent on maintaining their traditional diet, ensured the existence of a Chinese store and Chinese cook just about anywhere they worked as a group. Analyses of butchering techniques reveal intercultural contact and a degree of subsistence reliance at the Madera County merchant stores. According to Langenwalter II (1980:106): "The pig remains are the only specimens which may be identified as having been butchered by Chinese while the sheep and cow remains are from finished cuts of meat traded to the store from local Anglos, having been cut using Anglo tools and technique."

Chinese Tableware

The manufacturing of most Chinese ceramics found in both rural and urban sites associated with ethnic Chinese took place in South China. Many nineteenth century Chinese ceramics were, as Felton et al. (1984:88) tell us, "mass produced and commercially transported" and "can reflect not only a people's eating habits but also their purchasing power and, by implication, their social status." The quality of the goods differed depending on the intended market--urban Chinatowns received lesser quality ceramics than those exported to the upper classes of Europe, Asia, and the United States (Greenwood 1996:67-68). Andrew Bockhorst's (2003) thesis examined archaeological sites in both urban and rural contexts in Arizona for artifact variability and found much

similarity in the forms and styles of the vessels, as did Felton et al. (1984), Greenwood (1996) and Wegars (1993). Various uses for these ceramics dictated the form of the vessels -- large serving and wine bowls; pots with spouts for oil, wine, or soy sauce; and individual rice bowls and condiment dishes, teacups, spoons, and chopsticks. There is substantial continuity of style in these ceramics throughout the decades surrounding the turn of the nineteenth century. According to archaeologist Roberta S. Greenwood (1996:67-79), there is ample evidence that the same styles were used in the late Qing Dynasty in China.

The most common Chinese tableware appears to have been porcelain decorated with a polychrome flora pattern known as the Four Flowers pattern or Four Seasons. This type of tableware was used for serving dishes, plates, bowls, and saucers. An overglaze enamel was used to depict four flowers in shades of green, pink, and red, which are representative of the four seasons: prunus (winter); lotus (summer); tree peony (spring); and chrysanthemum (fall). Some of these ceramics include a more abstract design of an infinite knot in orange at the base.

Other common decorative types of Chinese porcelains include Bamboo, Celadon, and Double Happiness. A high frequency of Bamboo style rice bowls have been recovered from rural work sites, while urban sites have had a higher frequency of Four Flowers and Celadon style vessel deposits (Felton et al. 1984:97). Archaeologists working in Sonoma County found several Bamboo pattern rice bowls, one Four Flowers, and one unidentified blue on white pattern (Douglass 2000:129). As archaeologists Sando and Felton (1993:163) explain: "The Bamboo pattern was one of the least expensive types of bowls, costing from 2 to 5 cents apiece in the 1870s. The Four

Flowers pattern was more costly, at 6.5 to 8.7 cents per bowl.” Thin bluish-green glazed porcelain used in manufacturing small vessels such as teacups or rice-soup bowls is known as Celadon or Winter Green. These sometimes have a blue maker’s mark at the base. The type of porcelain bowls known to archaeologists as “Double Happiness” refers to its decorative *shuang xi* motif, which denotes happiness (Sung 2002:171).

Bockhorst (2003) found that communal tableware styles included a fish-with-eel-grass motif serving plate and “Canton Ware.” The latter were more artistically crafted vessels adorned with vines and peapods to be used as serving jars and dishes or basins. Nonya ware is yet another style crafted for service functions; it is distinguished by a green interior glaze, and often having overglaze designs and markings on the exterior.

San Jose’s historic Chinatown sites have been excavated and the data analyzed. The roots of San Jose’s Chinatowns began at the San Jose Woolen Mills, a large business that operated out of a three-story building. Many Chinese laborers found employment there; two Chinese men leased one of the stores for 10 years (Yu 1999). The business was located on Market Street in Chinatown, which burned in May 1887 when a suspicious fire roared through the whole of Chinatown burning it in its entirety. Chinese merchants wasted no time in rebuilding. However, due to politics two Chinatowns developed: the Woolen Mills Chinatown made up mostly of single men and Heinlenville where families and wives resided. The Woolen Mills Chinatown was again consumed by arson in 1902; destroying the town that once boasted a barbershop, two restaurants, a laundry, a warehouse, a boardinghouse, gaming establishments, a Chinese theater, wok like oven near the river, the unusual presence of two joss houses, a Chinese bunk and cookhouse, and the Garden City Cannery. Heinlenville was leased land at Fifth and

Taylor streets belonging to John Heinlen; it remained standing and inhabited until 1931 (Lai 2004:188; Yu 1999).

In investigating the frequencies and attributes of different kinds of cups from an assemblage recovered during a 1985 excavation, Erica Simmons (2004) deciphered drinking habits of Overseas Chinese in San Jose's Market Street Chinatown. The assemblage of cups were separated into three categories: tiny Asian porcelain cups with a rim diameter less than 5cm used for rice wine; small Asian bowls with rim diameters between 5cm and 10cm; and any sized Euro-American cups. These drinking vessels are part of the larger social-historical context of a Chinatown consisting of three restaurants, tenement houses, and several gambling establishments where social drinking would have occurred.

Simmons found that the only common Asian decorations present were Four Season, most commonly found on the tiny cups, and Celadon for the small bowls. Both decorative types were the two most expensive ceramics available. One white cup with decorative Chinese characters painted in black was retrieved. Praetzellis and Praetzellis (1997:174) suggest that such "calligraphy on ceramics is a significant marker of value, as the cup must have been decorated by a literate artisan." According to Greenwood (1996:67), "in general, the one-of-a-kind ceramics had a higher price and status."

Tiny cups from China may have been the preferred vessel when consuming liquor. Some were uniquely decorated with calligraphy; in this way the cups conveyed a sense of Chinese traditional culture and a certain elevated status. Simmons suggests that the decorative cups may indicate "liquor consumption as the privileged drinking activity for expressing traditional culture." According to Praetzellis and Praetzellis (1982:161),

the Chinese merchants of Sacramento's Chinatown, ca. 1850, evidently preferred Western liquor to Chinese rice wine. It is interesting to note that Liz Clevenger's (2004) research found an absence of Asian stoneware liquor bottles associated with the Feature 20 assemblage (excavated from San Jose's historic Market Street Chinatown) containing a significant number of tiny cups. There were, however, six Euro-American glass bottles. At other sites, one sixth to one third of the alcohol containers were Asian stoneware liquor bottles (Clevenger 2004).

The two excavations in Sacramento previously mentioned revealed interesting yet typical Overseas Chinese assemblages. Chinese merchants once occupied the IJ56 Block of Sacramento; one feature was originally constructed as an "ad-hoc drain" and later filled with the storekeeper's damaged stock presumably following an 1855 fire (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1982:57-58). Feature 1 (layer 12) consisted of 52 Double Happiness Design bowls: "23 marked 'brave beautiful,' 28 marked 'clever benevolence,' and one marked 'clever virtue'" (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 1982:156).

Praetzellis and Praetzellis returned a decade and a half later to excavate an area of Sacramento identified as 818 Sixth Street. The evidence at Pit 16, ca. 1855, suggests it is associated with the Yeung-wo Company and its boardinghouse at 525/527 I Street. The deposit contained bowls of Celadon glaze and in the Double Happiness Pattern. Pit 16 (Late Deposit: Contexts 59, 60, 89) offers exceptional examples of a wide range of functional and decorative Chinese tableware including: bowls, plates, a spoon, a wine cup, and a teapot in the four classic traditional Chinese patterns: Double Happiness, Bamboo, Four Flowers, and Celadon glaze. Also recovered was a Chinese Brown Glass Stoneware form.

CHINESE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Archaeologist A. Dudley Gardner (2004) has spent several years researching and excavating a laundry at Evanston, Wyoming's Chinatown. Evidence points to a thriving Chinese business operating in 1900 out of a residential home, which dated back to 1870. Chinese immigrants were able to convert a home intended for four Euro-Americans into a mixed-use complex for five to 10 individuals. The business was part of a larger Chinese community of more than 200 Chinese residents by 1880, declining to 42 residents in 1900 and only two in 1920. Evanston's Chinatown was destroyed by fire in 1922.

The typical settlement pattern emerged in Evanston as it did elsewhere in the West. The Chinese immigrants initially worked in the mining and railroad industry and lived in tight quarters accommodating from five to eight individuals. But, eventually, by 1900, the habitation patterns changed as Chinese bosses began to room with their workers. A clear shift to "residential businesses" emerged and became the dominant settlement pattern. As Gardner (2004) explains, Chinese restaurants and laundries served as the central household for immigrants; and restaurant owners, their families, and employees often represented the only Chinese residents in the community.

The archeological excavations at Evanston's laundry site showed an extensive business complex. The Union Pacific Railroad Company owned almost all the wooden buildings, ca. 1870s, that comprised Chinatown. Unlike the rest of the buildings built of wood, the laundry was made of stone; it post-dated the wooden structures by 10 years. Gardner describes the complex as being comprised of: "At least four separate buildings joined either by moving the structures together by a connecting fence that ran between the buildings and formed portions of a courtyard. All the buildings described here shared

one common courtyard.” The 1885 Sanborn Insurance map for Santa Rosa’s Second Street Chinatown shows a similar arrangement (see Figure 71 on page 135). Three side-by-side structures are depicted joined together and sharing a common entrance. This entry, or courtyard, is at the rear of the building and situated such that it overlooks undeveloped land toward the creek.

An extant example of Chinese architecture is the town of Locke near Stockton, California. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it was built in 1915 and stands today as it did when it was first constructed. It is the only town in the United States constructed entirely by the Chinese for the Chinese. The Walnut Grove Chinatown once located on the east side of the Sacramento River north of downtown was burned twice and the Chinese merchants had enough tenacity and courage to start anew a mile up the river at Locke (Bohakel 1979: 26-28).

GLASS

The archaeological evidence retrieved from Chinese merchant stores operating from the 1860s to 1885 in Madera County, California included numerous varieties of glass beverage containers. According to Langenwaller II (1980:106), among the assemblage was “beer, wine, champagne whiskey, bitters, schnapps and possibly soda pop. Products definitely identified include ‘Budweiser Lager Beer,’ ‘Dr. J. Hostetter’s Stomach Bitters’ and ‘Udolpho Wolfe’s Schiedan Schnapps.’”

Edward Staski (1996:175 and 182), in his archaeological study of the Overseas Chinese in El Paso, Texas, found evidence of reuse: a patent-extract bottle containing traces of bluing and two American-made bottles with Chinese labels affixed to them.

Other bottles did contain originally intended contents, which he suggests indicates non-Chinese alcohol was an important element in the Chinese diet.

Archaeologists discovered remains of occupation in Stockton's former Chinatown, which was razed during redevelopment projects in the 1960s. The ASC excavated a Chinese laundry that was once located in this waterfront district. The assemblage recovered included a small, straight, cylindrical, blue vial with rounded shoulders that had contained traditional Chinese medicine. Chinese characters written in gold paint are visible on the vial. A short, straight, square, colorless glass bottle with stepped shoulders and a double bead finish that held ink for writing or drawing was recovered from the site.

OPIUM-SMOKING PARAPHERNALIA

Opium paraphernalia is nearly ubiquitous in any archaeological site associated with the Chinese, whether it is urban or rural, and whether the occupants were mercantile or working class (Felton et al. 1984:98). Excavations at the Woodland Opera House site in Woodland, California, ca. 1870-1880, uncovered "sherds of 25 ceramic opium pipe bowls and fragments of nine of the small tins in which prepared opium was shipped;" eight of the lids were stamped with Chinese characters, and five were identified with the brand of opium "Li Yun" or "Beautiful Origin" (Felton et al. 1984:98 and 67).

Opium pipe bowls, or *Yin Low*, were found at historic railroad campsites, ca. 1866, near Donner Summit, California and Virginia City, Nevada's former Chinatown; opium pipes, or *Yen Teung*, usually made out of bamboo, are seldom recovered from archaeological sites (Etter 1980:97-99).

CHINESE COINS

Excavations in Sacramento (Shultz and Davis 1980:27-28) have recovered 24 Chinese round coins with square holes, which were recorded randomly scattered throughout the city. Referencing an oral history of a past resident of Locke, researchers concluded that it was likely people sent away to China for such coins to be used as tokens. Their value was equivalent to one-tenth or one-fifth of a cent and thus would make small transactions monetarily manageable.

CONCLUSION

This exercise in comparative archaeology for the purpose of enhancing public interpretation is admittedly extremely circumscribed in scope. It is purposely so, for it is meant to introduce the utility of the method, rather than be a comprehensive synthesis on the subject of Chinatowns and Overseas Chinese sites in the West. Comparative studies can enhance understanding of the historical context of a community, and that in and of itself is worth the effort. But, comparative studies or not, some historical archaeologists are using their findings for the craft of writing sound creative narratives in the field. Proponents of this approach call it “contextual archaeology” or “interpretive historical fiction” (Conkey 2002; Gibb 2003:27; Orser 2001:627). My attempts at this innovative approach will appear in later sections.