

## HYPHENATED IDENTITIES

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### ABSTRACT

In the early 19th century the boundaries of the Kashaya Pomo of northern California were intersected by those of the Russians and Native Alaskans associated with the fur trade colony, Ross. Gaps and gateways in spatial, temporal, and ideological constructions allowed materials and ideas to pass through in multiple directions and in varying tempos, leaving archaeologists a seemingly blurred view of community. Do these ambiguities represent obstacles to research or do they reflect the fluidity and permeability of cultural, ethnic, political, and economic boundaries? Current theoretical perspectives on context, space, gender, and ideology will be used to integrate and add dimension and scale to the analysis of bone, shell, glass, ceramics, beads, metal, and stone.

### Introduction

While preparing this presentation I was distracted by one of the many publication lists we receive in the mail. I came across a book entitled *Life on the Hyphen* (Firmat 1994). This book is about the Cuban-American experience but the thoughts and images this title elicits can certainly be applied to other familiar hyphenated identities: Chinese-American, Mexican-American, Russian-American, or Native American.

But, you say, the term Native American is not hyphenated! Does this mean that, at any given time in any given place, there is an indigenous group that is completely homogeneous, without internal segmentation, factions, goals, and strategies? A group that can actually be bounded? The definition of cultural or ethnic boundaries can work in opposing ways; while boundaries give us units we can work with, they also constrain the recognition of culture change, a process that can permeate any perceived boundary, physical, socially constructed, spatial, or temporal.

So, the term Native American can be hyphenated in multiple ways and these combinations constantly change. Like the people who left the material remains we recover, the artifacts represent multiple materials, functions, technologies, meanings and identities that also do not fit easily into cultural or ethnic boundaries.

A focus of my research is the detection of change and continuity, dramatic and subtle, in the lives of the people who were already living in the area when the Russians and Native Alaskans established Fort Ross on the coast of California in the early 19th century. Ultimately, I want to be able to say something about differential change amongst segments of these people, but first I must be fully informed of the various contexts. Consequently, I am approaching my research with a telescoping spatial strategy beginning with consideration of global issues, regional issues, and finally village and intra-village issues. So at some point I have to deal with the beads, ceramics, lithics, bones, shell, metal and glass recovered from

the smallest spatial units of analysis. Today I will first briefly discuss some of the issues that have been and will be considered when analyzing material data. Next, I will introduce some of the cross-cutting segments creating the hyphenated identities of this particular culture contact situation. Then I will introduce some of the artifacts I have collected in the initial phases of my field work. Finally, I will discuss my strategy for dealing with the archaeological material, which includes: 1) a re-consideration of the association of cultural or ethnic identities with certain physical artifact attributes or indices; 2) an attempt to redirect the emphasis on culture or ethnicity as process rather than fixed attributes and distributions; and 3) to place the spatial distribution of artifacts in context and move these contextual boundaries through different scales of space, time, and group segmentation.

### Previous Research

How have the three parts of this strategy been dealt with by others? When it comes to the association of culture groups with attributes, some have defined ethnicity in the archaeological record through the definition of linguistic or cultural "markers." Others have used modified lithics and the characteristics of those modifications to designate boundaries and group movement. Another approach involves the spatial analysis of sourced materials that have been transported or exchanged across regions. The success of some of these methods and how the use of microscale analysis on the level of village, community and household may prove to be more useful are issues discussed by others in this symposium.

If we are looking for process, how do we measure the change of these identities when one culture comes into contact with another? Several different approaches to material culture studies have been employed to measure change through the types and direction of 'acculturation' that occurred in California Mission contexts (Hoover 1992:41). In 1963 Deetz compared a neophyte dormitory and a nearby historic village site using

traditional categories such as chipped stone, iron, copper, etc. Hoover (1992:41) points out problems with this study, including the comparison of unlike sites and differences in the amount of soil excavated, making absolute numbers possibly misleading. Also, artifacts related to the same function were split into different groups, obscuring the complexity of acculturation (Farnsworth 1986:41).

At Mission San Antonio, Hoover and Costello (1985) used a method based on a modified classification system devised by Quimby and Spoehr in 1951 designed for the study of museum collections. The Quimby and Spoehr classification uses two "artifact states" (Indian and European) and four "attributes" (form, material, technique of manufacture, and manufacturer) (Cheek 1974:24). Cheek's modification of the system led Farnsworth to point out a major flaw in her understanding of acculturation processes. He felt that she made the assumption that "Indians did not use European-made artifacts unless they were also of European form, material, and technique of manufacture" (Farnsworth 1992:22). In general, these models do not reflect the complexity of the possible combinations and sometimes they do not account for multi-directional change. Farnsworth, himself (1986), developed a third system based on a modified version of South's (1977) artifact pattern analysis. This system deals with entire assemblages and the functional groups within them (Hoover 1992), providing some flexibility.

The attempt to define cultural boundaries with strict artifact categories may be squeezing the human or behavioral element out of the picture. While archaeologists deal with material culture, what they are really interested in is behavior (Farnsworth 1992:25). For example, a European object that is used in precisely the same way as the traditional object by the native group does not represent a change in behavior. I agree with Farnsworth (1992:24) in that if we are to consider anything on a scale smaller than total site artifact inventories, the classifications cannot be too complex. I would add that the classification system should also be flexible or maybe even totally reevaluated for differing contexts. Also, attempts to quantify the degree of culture change may obscure the subtleties of the process. For example, a classification system with numerous categories containing one or two artifacts may be considered of little use because they are not appropriate for quantitative or statistical analysis (Farnsworth 1992:24).

In sum, besides not being mutually exclusive (Farnsworth 1992:24), Indian and European "states" are also not the only "states" to consider. Many of these methods are based on the assumptions that culture groups are homogeneous, static, and limited in the number of contact possibilities.

Some stylistic or emblematic studies outside of California have been done at different scales. Specific kinds of artifacts that are visible to all members of a community, for example, can transmit information concerning group identity (Wobst 1977). Basing her conclusions on the examination of metal projectile points of the Kalahari San, Wiessner (1983) suggested that artifacts signaling group identity should be visible in the archaeological record as discrete spatial distributions. In

prehistoric contexts of the American Southwest S. Plog (1980), Hantman (1983) and others have successfully examined stylistic designs on ceramics to examine information exchange, regional alliance information, and broadly defined social networks.

However, the identification of discrete spatial distributions of emblematic artifacts, particularly at the margins of colonial populations, has continued to prove elusive in most cases. Some of the problems are: 1) symbols are subject to widespread imitation by others for their own purposes; 2) how do archaeologists isolate and identify specific emblems or traits from the numerous possibilities, especially if material culture is widely shared between groups; 3) in identifying style, how do we step back from our own biases or from established typologies; 4) how do we evaluate the role of the emblems or artifacts themselves in social construction; and 5) finally, how do we account for the fluidity, in time and space, of group (as well as intra-group) affiliations, segmentations, and factions?

Is the fundamental problem in how we conceptualize group boundaries? When these diverse groups touched many more hyphenated identities were instantly created, so why would we expect to find forms characteristic of past times and distant places here? The "noise," the blurring, represents the creation of boundaries rather than the mere extension of boundaries. Some forms may look familiar but they have been altered.

Material items are active symbols in broadcasting and even negotiating a person's identity in culture contact situations—his or her social relations, political affiliations, and broader world views. The use of space, the construction of houses, the procurement and processing of food, and the disposal of trash can transmit considerable information about social relations and factional group alliances that cross-cut the newcomers and the indigenous people. According to this perspective, cultural transformations of material items do not occur simply because ideas, goods, and mates are exchanged between people. There are reasons why some segments of the population choose a conservative path while others may see advantage in forging alliances or accepting new materials and forms (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995).

Theoretically and methodologically, some questions can only be answered by investigating at different scales and within specific contexts. The specific scale and context addressed here is "village," which (as Breck Parkman so thoughtfully explains) has different meanings for me, for the people who lived there in the past, and probably for you. This fact does not preclude considering issues that pertain to all humans, but simply reminds us how difficult and complicated it can be to address cross-cultural issues. In fact, I think that in time the closer we look at particulars the more we will be able to recognize similar processes of different forms. Upward mobility, the acquisition of prestige goods, or access to the resources required for life, may be manifested in green glass rather than obsidian, ceramic rather than shell, but the processes could be the same. So, I don't expect to find discrete distinctions between Kashaya-Alaskan-Russian on the ridge above Fort Ross.

## Background

The Kashaya Pomo whom the Russians encountered in the early 19th century were not a "pristine" static group. In fact, they were not even the "Kashaya Pomo"—that is a designation someone else gave to them (see Hinton 1994). Like many other Native American groups they probably called themselves "people" which is what the "ya" part of Kashaya means (Hinton 1994:159). Even if we could trace cultural markers "back in an unbroken evidentiary chain into the remote past" (Layton 1990:4) we would not find the same group. The identity of the people whom the Russians encountered had been shaped by a hunter/gatherer subsistence, interaction, trade and intermarriage with other native groups, disease and other demographic upheavals. Culture contact experiences had been going on for a long time before the arrival of Europeans. To complicate the matter, this group consisted of women, men, children, and old people whose personalities could then exponentially be hyphenated by terms like friendly, greedy, powerful, weak, lazy or ambitious.

Who were the "Russians" who interacted with Kashaya? The term "Russian" could have been prefaced by Chinese, Mongol, Moslem, Cossack, Manchurian, and "the man, whatever his race, who adopted Orthodoxy qualified as a Russian" (Chevigny 1965:8). And, as Gibson (1987:1) points out, this was before the Russians became "dependent upon the Aleut, Kodiak, and Tlingit for such basics as furs, provisions, labor, and sex." How many Russians were there? "At no time did their numbers ever reach even a thousand in the whole of the vast country" (Chevigny 1965:3) of Russian America, which extended from Alaska to the most distant colony, Ross. Native Alaskans made up most of the group that encountered the Kashaya and they consisted of people who had grown up under Russian colonial jurisdiction for over three decades. The "Russian" culture most familiar to local natives may have been those Russian elements that had already been incorporated into Pacific Eskimo lifeways (Lightfoot et al 1995: 28).

## Methodology

As mentioned before, my methodology incorporates spatial as well as ethnographic and ethnohistoric sources. In order to determine the spatial distribution of artifacts it is critical to place emphasis on horizontal coverage within a village site. Where are artifacts found on a site? With what are artifacts found in association? How does this site relate to the region, the world? What are the spiritual, political, and economic contexts?

I am using a combination of surface survey, shallow test units, and remote sensing to understand and predict possible activity areas at Tomato Patch, a site on the ridge a few miles from the fort. This work will be done, is being done, in combination with broad scale areal excavation. These data will be compared with the Native Alaskan village site (CA-SON-1897/H) as well as other sites within and outside the stockade. Forty of the 50 or so shallow test units provide the data used for this preliminary analysis. All artifacts can be provenienced

to a 50 x 50 cm area, giving the horizontal distribution good detail. I will briefly give a couple of examples.

### Area 1

When collecting the artifacts our impression was that most of the historic materials were recovered in the area between a large and a small depression, and the tabulations show that indeed they were. Of all the ceramics cataloged so far, 66% of the glass, one piece of worked glass, and one of four beads were found in this area. They were found in association with hundreds of chert and obsidian debitage artifacts. This area also accounts for more than half of the wood (variable chunks of redwood) and charcoal collected so far. These data, combined with the observation that most of the glass had been melted or liquefied by heat at some point, might indicate burning within or of the structure.

Issues to pursue here could include, for example, the consideration of ethnographic descriptions of sweathouse or house layout and the burning of these structures. The presence of beads may have some interesting interpretations for production and relations of production. The eclipse of clamshell disk beads by European beads may have removed the strategic benefits of controlling an important medium of exchange. While artifacts of glass were a special attraction to us because of their novelty and color, the spatial distribution shows that they were found in similar or the same contexts as obsidian and chert and also worked in similar or the same ways.

### Area 2

Area 2 is south of the large depression in the midden. In this area we were impressed by the richness of the soil and other midden characteristics, so it is no surprise that we recovered 75% of the mollusk fragments from here. This area also accounts for 33% of the faunal fragments, including almost all the total identifiable elements, representing artiodactyls, deer, and sheep. All the ground stone fragments and battered cobble fragments collected in the shallow test units cataloged so far were also found in this midden deposit.

If we were looking for differential 'acculturation' between the sexes through gender activity attributions, like Deetz in 1963, we might feel daunted by site formation processes. But gender does not have to be addressed directly with artifacts. If we can infer sociopolitical changes through change or continuity in the behaviors evidenced by activity areas, trash deposition, and access to resources, we can then indirectly infer changes in production, relations of production, and gender dynamics.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this research is work in progress. I am very excited about developing appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of culture contact, culture change, and the issues of boundaries, whether they exist in time, space, form, or in our minds. The results of this project will eventually be compared and synthesized with the research

being done at the Native Alaskan village site and areas within and outside the fort stockade, creating an impressive study area.

The next phase of excavation starts soon and I am eager to begin developing a chronology. I expect I will find more cul-

tural "noise" but this "noise" reflects action, arbitration, redefinition, loss, and gain. Isn't this going on all the time? The creation of hyphenated identities is not something that happens only on the edges of frontiers, in California, or on the ridge above Fort Ross...it is a constant and ubiquitous process.

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