Title: Osteological Analysis of an Historic Burial at Fort Ross, California

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OSTEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF AN HISTORIC BURIAL  
AT FORT ROSS, CALIFORNIA

Peter D. Schulz

On April 21, 1972 an archaeological crew under the direction of William Pritchard discovered evidence of human skeletal remains near the bottom of what had been thought to be a privy pit or root cellar at Fort Ross. After exposing part of the skull and two loose molars which were assumed to derive from the interment, excavation was discontinued until representatives of the Russian community in San Francisco had been contacted. In the following week an agreement was reached whereby the burial would be exposed by the archaeologists at the site and then be removed for reburial in accordance with Russian Orthodox rites. The author was requested by the State Parks Archeologist to go to Fort Ross to aid in the exposure and retrieve any osteological information possible from the burial. The actual exposure occupied eight hours on April 28, and two hours the morning of April 29. The remains were removed about noon of the latter date.

Materials

The condition of the bones, as anticipated, was extremely poor. The only traces of bone in fact were portions of the cranium, mandible, left and right femur, and left tibia. These bones in turn were so badly decayed that no morphological
features whatever remained other than gross outline. The two teeth excavated on April 21 were assigned by the author to the genus Sus, and they may represent the same individual as a suid jaw found nearer the surface in the same unit.

In addition to these bones, ten tooth crowns or major fragments were exposed several centimeters caudal to the cranium. These were in association with what appeared to the excavator as faint traces of the mandible, but they were not in anatomical position. Only the enamel of the teeth was preserved, and this was chalky and quite fragile. These teeth which had experienced dentine exposure exhibited thin-edged circular holes on the occlusal surface where the dentine had once been. Since the teeth were not in position and had lost all trace of roots, it was not readily evident if they were maxillary or mandibular. The symmetry of the corresponding pairs argues heavily for derivation from a single arch.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tooth</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incisors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>This fragment of about half a tooth shows clear and complete absence of shovel-shaping. There is some wear, but no dentine exposure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Neither exhibits shoveling; both have experienced dentine exposure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premolars</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Both show dentine exposure; one is apparently P1, the other P2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molars 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>All show isolated patches of dentine exposure. All appear to be four-cusped, without accessory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cusplets.

Molar 3

Both are tricuspid, appear fully developed and probably fully erupted, but show no wear.

Although the provenience of the teeth may suggest that they are mandibular, the canine morphology struck me impressionistically as being maxillary—a suspicion which is confirmed by the tricuspid nature of the third molars.

Burial Position

The body lay extended, the head almost due magnetic east.

The upper surface of the femur shafts, as the burial lay exposed, were somewhat rounded and exhibited no hint of lineae asperae, hence the body rested on its back.

Age

On the basis of third molar eruption, suggested age is ca. 21, with a range of about 17 to 25.

Race

Assuming the recovered dentition was maxillary, the single incisor fragment was from a lateral incisor. This shows absolutely no sign of shoveling. Since Aleuts show shovel-shape frequencies of 100% (Moorhies 1957: 25), and aboriginal Californian frequencies approach this very closely (e.g., Newman 1957: 54), the individual buried at Fort Ross was almost certainly not
a Native American but rather a European.

Sex

It was impossible from the remains recovered to even tentatively suggest a sexual diagnosis on osteological grounds.

Bibliography

Moorhies, C. F. A.

Newman, R. W.

May 12, 1972

cc: F. A. Riddell
    W. E. Pritchard
New Excavations

Findings Show Russ Were in California Before 1812

BY WILLIAM K. LYNCH

Highway engineers often come across ancient sites, but in California they came across a Russian site.

In fact, some highway builders who a few years ago did not know an artifact from a hunk of rock can now spot one at 100 paces.

And archaeologists have found that highway builders can help them in the past.

The basic of the system is simple: Division of Highways Conservation plans are sent to advances in the Society of California Archaeology at 11 major educational institutions in the state. Then select the archaeologists can do their digging while the bulk does its around them.

Fort Ross Digs

An example of the past is the recent site of more than 140 years of California history by the Division of Highways at Fort Ross.

Twelve miles northeast of the Russian River, where the Pacific Ocean and the Russian shores of California meet, two excavation sites have been found and labeled Fort Ross.

The excavation proved there were more buildings and burial grounds outside the stockade than have been reported, he said.

Fort Ross, the home of the 100-foot fort and fort, was perhaps the major of life..

The fort was acquired by California as a part of the 1846 treaty.

Archaeologists have been working on the site for a few years.

The Russian Orthodox Church was established in 1812 by Father Peter Kveder, who was the first Russian to settle in California.

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Russian History In California Advanced Through

Historic Find At

Ft. Ross

SACRAMENTO — A chapter of early California history dating back 150 years was uncovered last week as a result of an archaeological survey conducted by the Department of Parks and Recreation in partnership with the Department of Public Works at Fort Ross State Historic Park in Sonoma County.

Thanks to the state's policy of making exploratory surveys in advance of highway alignments and other public works construction, a great site and evidence of an early Russian settlement were found by State Park anthropologists who searched on foot by 1 and 7/8 years the original Russian cemetery looked a pulp away.

The survey was being made using the new site of a way for State Highway 1, unprogressively results the historic site and is being respected.

State Park archaeologist William E. Pritchard, project supervisor of the survey team, called the discovery "a very significant find. The most amazing was there were small buildings and burial ground outside of the stockade that have ever been recorded before.

He added that in the area were the seventy Indian village found remnants of the Kack-Ski-Nan Indian village, whose land was purchased by the Russians from the Russian Indian labor.

Fort Ross, site of a settlement founded in 1812 by the Russians to search California's central waters for sea otters, they remained here until 1846, only 10 years before California gained the Union, when Captain John A. Sutter purchased their supplies and equipment for $30,000.

Over the next few years, Sutter and his men took away all of the buildings and removed the arms, equipment, and livestock that the Russians had left. After 1846, the area became the center of a large ranching operation.

The Fort was acquired by California the 188th State Historic Park in 1956, and the remaining buildings were restored, including the Orthodox Church, the commandant's quarters, and the surrounding stockade under the State Parks and Recreation.

The Fort Ross excavation is typical of California's 101 major educational institutions throughout the State Parks and Recreation, prescribed for the search and recovery of worthwhile archaeological, paleontological and historical objects.

The relocation of Ross 1 afoot Fort Ross State Historic Park is planned for this summer and will be set in the neighborhood of $400,000, it will provide a present avenue and recovery of worthwhile archaeological, paleontological and historical objects.

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