Refugees and Interethnic Residences: Examples of Colonial Entanglements in the North San Francisco Bay Area

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Abstract

This paper presents a spatial model for examining the diverse social entanglements that unfolded between Native and foreign peoples in colonial California. We consider the various residential options that Indians may have implemented in their negotiation of colonial landscapes in the Spanish and Russian frontiers of northern California. As colonists founded new settlements in the ancestral lands of tribal groups, Indian peoples had to continually assess their spatial proximity and relationships to these intruders. Archaeologists can evaluate Native agency in these dynamic colonial settings by examining the realignment of Indian residences in relation to recently established colonial settlements. Our spatial model views colonial frontiers as continua of ever changing spaces that include colonial settlements, their proximal zones, their hinterlands, and the interspaces of colonial regimes (outlands). By systematically examining different places of Native residences across colonial landscapes, archaeologists may contemplate how and why Indian people lived and worked in very different colonial contexts; this, in turn, may provide new insights into the varied strategies and coping mechanisms employed by indigenous groups in their social interactions with colonists. The paper presents two case studies from northern California state parks (Fort Ross State Historic Park and China Camp State Park) that exemplify the rich potential for examining the spatial dimension of Native residences both near and far from colonial centers.

Introduction

How did indigenous populations respond to, negotiate with, and maneuver around a diverse assortment of colonial enterprises in Alta California? After the founding of the first Spanish mission and presidio in San Diego in 1769, a protracted period of confrontations ensued between California Indians and colonial soldiers, missionaries, fur traders, ranchers, miners, and other foreigners who increasingly founded settlements in their ancestral homelands. Developing a better understanding of how Native groups implemented cultural practices and strategies that allowed them to survive these long-term colonial entanglements is a critical issue in California archaeology today. Addressing this issue will involve detailed studies of California Indians and their interactions with Spanish, Mexican, Russian, and American colonists in a variety of Native homelands.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a research program that we are implementing in the greater San Francisco Bay Area to address this issue. The program focuses on the spatial dimensions of colonialism—where people lived on the colonial landscape—as a starting point for exploring different kinds of Native and colonial encounters in northern California. We argue that the study of Indian residential patterns within the broader colonial world can tell us much about Native decision making, the kinds of opportunities and constraints they faced in interacting with foreigners, and even something about the nature of their social relationships with colonists.
Furthermore, this kind of spatial approach is tailor-made for archaeology, as research areas and specific sites can be selected for investigation both near and far from colonial centers.

We begin by outlining several considerations in studying the spatial dimension of colonialism in the Spanish and Russian frontiers of northern California. We then present two case studies from the greater San Francisco Bay Area that exemplify the rich potential for examining the spatial dimension of Native residences across colonial landscapes. Specifically, in presenting the preliminary results of the 2007 field work conducted at Fort Ross State Historic Park and China Camp State Park (Figure 1), we highlight two separate courses of colonial encounters between Native Californians and foreigners. Ongoing archaeological research in these two state parks seeks to understand the various strategies Native groups employed to negotiate the challenges of confronting colonial people and their settlements.

Figure 1. Map of greater San Francisco Bay Area showing the two study areas.
Spatial Dimension of Colonialism

Space is a crucial dimension for examining Native negotiations with colonial enterprises. Early Spanish and Russian colonists who came to California in the late 1700s and early 1800s founded missions, presidios, pueblos, fur trade outposts, ports, and ranches in territories already occupied for many thousands of years by indigenous populations. Colonial administrators, padres, and merchants chose the location of colonial settlements based primarily on available resources (e.g., potable water, arable land, timber, and coastal ports), the proximity to Native populations (who would be exploited as sources of labor), and distances to other already planned or built colonial settlements. There appears to have been little discussion or compromise with local Native groups about the placement of these colonial settlements. For example, the “treaty” that the Russian-American Company arranged with Kashaya Pomo leaders in 1817 came several years after the founding of the Ross settlement in 1812 (Hagemeister 1989).

The establishment of colonial settlements on already built Native landscapes would not only have come as a shock to local populations, but the rapid construction of colonial houses, churches, forts, and agrarian facilities would have redefined their conceptual world and spatial universe. Native groups would not only have had to reconfigure themselves in relation to these alien peoples and their innovative modifications of the landscape, but they would also have had to reassess their spatial relationships with local resource patches and other tribal societies. Consequently, we may expect that the founding of colonial settlements in the nearby region would have instigated a realignment of Native spaces involving their placement of villages and residences, their exploitation of resources for foods, raw materials, and medicinal purposes, and their management of the landscape through prescribed burning and other cultural practices. How tribal groups and individuals realigned themselves across space in forming new relationships with colonial peoples, resource patches, and other Indian societies and how these transformations unfolded over time may tell us much about the kinds of strategies employed by indigenous populations in coping with the emerging colonial world.

Diverse Options for the Creation of Native Spaces

A key point to emphasize in examining the creation of Native spaces in colonial California is that a diverse range of options existed for Indian peoples. Rather than follow a traditional perspective that might envision a segregated landscape of foreigners in newly founded settlements and Indians in the hinterland, we recognize considerable variation in the placement and movement of Native and colonial people across local regions depending upon specific colonial policies and Indian motivations, strategies, and cultural practices. For example, initial decisions about whether to move the location of indigenous villages may have been based on Native experiences in making first contacts with foreign colonists, as well as accounts exchanged between tribal groups in the broader region about the treatment of Indian people elsewhere by colonial regimes. The placement of Native residences was probably also influenced by the movement of additional Indian groups into the region. These “other” Indian people, who might now be associated with the colonists as laborers or as seekers of new homes after being displaced by colonial intrusions somewhere else, would have been recognized as friends or foes based on previous tribal ethnic relationships and politics that had been unfolding many centuries prior to the coming of Europeans.

The Spanish (and later Mexican) and Russian colonies of the greater San Francisco Bay Area during the period of 1776 to the 1830s exemplify the residential diversity of frontier zones. The northern Spanish settlements included the San Francisco Presidio, Branciforte Pueblo, San Jose Pueblo, and six missions (San Rafael, San Francisco de Asís [Mission Dolores], Santa Clara, San Jose, Santa Cruz, and San Francisco
North of the San Francisco Presidio about 130 km, the Russian-American Company established the mercantile colony of Ross, which took full advantage of a very lucrative local sea otter population while attempting to make agriculture a profitable endeavor (Figure 2).

This extensive frontier zone was home to more than 50 small Indian polities of people speaking Costanoan (Ohlone), Coast Miwok, Bay Miwok, Patwin, Wappo, and Pomo languages. Both the Spanish and Russian colonists recruited local Indians to their settlements, primarily to work as laborers in agriculture, ranching, and craft production. The Franciscan padres followed a reducción policy involving the aggregation of Indian neophytes at core mission sites where they were trained in Catholicism, European crafts and trades, and foreign cultural practices (Lightfoot 2005:59-66). Neophytes were assigned to specific residential quarters by the padres depending upon their age, sex, marital status, and work. The spatial organization of Indian housing varied from the placement of young
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and unmarried neophytes in dormitories in the central mission quadrangles to older, married people typically residing in neophyte villages not far from the mission centers. The Franciscans, along with other colonial settlers and military administrators, established ranches in the mission hinterlands where both colonists and Indians lived and worked. Gentiles, or non-neophyte Indians, also continued to reside in Native villages in the periphery of the missions, at least during the early years of founding a new mission.

With the recruitment of local Indians as laborers in agricultural fields and various mercantile enterprises by the Russian-American Company, Native workers and their families moved to the Ross settlement where they resided in a cluster of villages north of the Russian stockade complex. The Russians also founded a port facility (Port Rumiantsev) at Bodega Harbor near an existing Coast Miwok village, three outlying ranches or farms, and a hunting camp (artel) on the Farallon Islands where colonial overseers and workers lived in the periphery of the Ross center along with the Indian laborers. Indian communities also maintained their own villages in the more distant periphery of the Russian colony where people could remain in isolation from the mercantile colonists.

There appears to have been some flexibility in where Native people chose to live on the colonial landscape. The most rigid residential system was maintained by the Franciscan padres who would not allow Indians (once they were baptized) to leave the mission complexes without authorization. But choices existed even at the missions. Indian neophytes could be assigned to work at outlying mission ranches, as well as other nearby military and settler settlements, by the missionaries. Neophyte women could enter into marriage arrangements with colonial men and move out of the missions to the abodes of their newly minted colonial families (Lightfoot 2005:73-74). Finally, neophytes could escape the mission centers by becoming fugitives who disappeared into the periphery.

The residential settlement system of Colony Ross was more fluid than that of the Franciscan missions. Native people could choose to participate in agrarian and mercantile labor, living in villages near the Ross stockade, but when labor conditions became unbearable or negotiations with colonial administrators became unrewarding, they could disappear into the periphery where they might rejoin Native villages (Lightfoot 2005:178-180). Indian women who entered into relationships with colonial men could create interethnic households in the colonial center, but when these relationships soured, they could also return to homeland villages in the periphery. Census data indicate most of these interethnic relationships were short-term affairs that did not last more than a few years. Another option for Indian women (and men) was conversion to the Russian Orthodox faith and moving to the colonial center, a choice that evidently a growing cohort of single women, widows, and heads of single parent households (and their children) were making by the late 1830s (Lightfoot 2008).

Archaeological Studies of Colonial Spaces

By highlighting the residential diversity of colonialism, we believe that archaeologists can create spatial models for evaluating an array of research questions concerning Native and colonial interactions. Archaeologists can select specific places in frontier zones that may allow them to examine how Native people lived, worked, and coped under very different colonial contexts. This framework is best viewed as a continuum of Native residences established near and far from colonial centers. In developing our spatial model, we define four basic zones along this continuum that transcend across colonial settlements, proximal zones, hinterlands, and the interspaces of colonial regimes.

Colonial Settlements

As noted above, Native peoples lived within the confines of colonial settlements in both the Spanish and
Russian frontiers. Young unmarried women resided in Indian dormitories within the Franciscan mission quadrangles, and some high ranking mission Indian families were assigned to live in adobe apartment buildings near the quadrangles (Farris 1991; Farris and Johnson 1999). In the Russian frontier, California Indian women resided with colonial men in houses dispersed across different ethnic neighborhoods of the Ross settlement.

**Proximal Zones**

Native people also resided in areas close to colonial settlements. Although there are no hard or fast boundaries for this zone, we may for practical purposes define it as an area within one or two hours walk from the main settlement or within an approximate 5 to 10 km radius. These lands typically contained the manufacturing facilities, agricultural fields, and free-range for livestock for the nearby colonial communities. A critical component of proximal zones is that they were typically kept under surveillance by colonial administrators and could, if necessary, be reached by colonial soldiers and militia in relatively short order. Here resided various Indian families who often tended the agricultural lands and livestock herds. Most of the neophyte villages associated with the Franciscan missions were situated outside the mission quadrangles in the proximal zone. The majority of the Indians who worked for the Russians at the Ross settlement resided in Native villages established within a 5 km walk north of the stockade complex.

**Hinterlands**

Beyond the proximal zone of colonial villages extended Indian lands where Native populations typically maintained many of their villages. The number, size, and spatial distribution of villages in Indian lands would have changed significantly over time as colonial settlements and their hinterlands grew and as outlying indigenous populations declined in numbers due to disease, violence, and recruitment into colonial centers. Although the peripheral spaces of colonial California have received relatively little attention by archaeologists, this is a critical place for undertaking future research about Native populations who maintained some distance from colonial communities. For example, peripheral spaces in the San Francisco Bay Area and Central Valley served as places of refuge for neophyte Indians fleeing from Franciscan missions who often joined other Native groups in remote areas. Some of these outlying Native communities, increasingly comprised of an amalgamation of people from diverse homelands, were led by resistance leaders who harassed and raided Spanish settlements for horses and goods, especially in central and southern California (Phillips 1975, 1993). It is important to stress that some Indians in northern California, especially those dealing with the Russian frontier, apparently maintained relatively elastic and mobile residential patterns, with some Native people moving back and forth between colonial centers and their peripheries as social relationships and circumstances changed over time.

**Interspaces of Colonial Regimes**

In developing spatial models in archaeology for studying colonial frontiers, the interspaces between different colonial regimes add another important dimension for consideration. In California an extensive zone in the far hinterland between the northern Spanish settlements and Colony Ross represented an area controlled by neither colonial regime. These places might be viewed as outlands on the colonial landscape. The interspaces between colonial regimes (which commonly occurred across colonial North America) represented unique spaces of opportunity for Native people who could take advantage of the situation to become socially mobile as well as politically and economically resolute. In the greater San Francisco Bay Area, the interspaces between the Spanish and Russian colonial regimes served as significant places of refuge for Native people.
who could disappear into the periphery between the competing colonies. A number of neophyte fugitives moved into this region to escape Spanish retribution and recapture. Colonial sources indicated that Indians believed the Russians would prevent Spanish military excursions from entering into this frontier zone, and Russian administrators evidently persuaded some fugitives to relocate in the Ross Colony periphery to help maintain this area as a buffer zone (Farris 1992:15; Matiushkin 1996; Lightfoot 2005:155-156).

Our goal in developing this spatial model and in identifying four zones of colonial encounters is to better understand the motivations and strategies that local Indians employed in their entanglements with colonial powers by examining different types of Native residences across space and time in the Spanish and Russian frontier zones. In the remainder of this paper, we examine two different residential settings for Native people both near and far from colonial centers. The first examines the hinterland of colonial centers (and the interspaces of colonial regimes) as places of refuge for Indian people. The second examines inter-ethnic relationships at the Colony Ross where Native people may have literally lived along the north wall of the Ross stockade.

**Seeking the Abodes of Refugees**

The interspaces between the Spanish and Russian colonial regimes, as well as the vast unexplored landscape of California’s Great Central Valley, offer an excellent opportunity to search for and study the residences of neophyte fugitives. To these interspaces and to familiar village sites, refugee Indians escaped momentarily on excused leave from the missions or for longer periods of time as runaways. Up to 1831, it is estimated that one out of every twenty-four neophyte Indians fled California’s missions, amounting roughly to 4 percent of neophyte losses, or 3,400 of an estimated 81,586 baptisms (Cook 1976:59). Sherburne Cook (1976:90) cited at least four primary reasons for fleeing the spatial system of the Franciscan missions: emotional resistance to conversion; homesickness; revolt against over-aggregation (a term used for over-population within a confined area due to the *reducción* program by which Spanish missionaries brought together California Indian groups, in many cases Indians from different linguistic and cultural traditions to a single mission site [Cook 1976:85]); and resistance to confinement, as in the case of women’s dormitories, or *monjerías* (see also Voss 2000).

The motivations for Indians to escape and to seek refuge are countless, as mission records can attest. The transcribed interviews from José Argüello’s formal inquiry into the departures and subsequent recaptures of 280 neophyte runaways from Mission Dolores in 1795 provide revealing information about the motivations for fleeing mission sites (Beebe and Senkewicz 2001). What is less clear from such documents are the places to which hunter-gatherers fled. We seek to understand how these isolated areas were used and how identity and practices were shaped and maintained at places of refuge. In a complementary example from the region around the Great Lakes, White (1991:50) argued that the hinterlands, or “middle ground,” offered Algonquian refugees a context to reorder a fragmented world through a “process of mutual invention.” For the Algonquian, gift exchange, intermarriage, and shared rituals provided opportunities to form new kin relations during a time of considerable duress (White 1991).

For Native Californians fleeing the northern missions, familiar village sites represented key venues to momentarily, perhaps even seasonally, collect wild foods, socialize, remember lost loved ones, and carry on traditional ceremonies (Schneider 2007). In an example from the hinterland of Mission San Jose, Ohlone Indians at *Alisal Ranchería* performed ritual dances related to the World Renewal Ceremony and other tribal revitalization movements following the breakup of the mission system (Leventhal et al.)
Three shell mounds located in China Camp State Park are currently being studied as places of refuge where Coast Miwok-speaking peoples may have retreated during and after Spanish settlement in the San Francisco Bay area (1769-1830s).

Located on Point San Pedro on the southwest shore of San Pablo Bay and approximately 5 km from San Rafael, China Camp State Park is home to several shell mounds including CA-MRN-114, CA-MRN-115, and CA-MRN-328. In addition to the archaeological survey and mapping of MRN-114 and MRN-115 carried out by Nels Nelson in the early part of the twentieth century (Nelson 1909), Clement Meighan (1953) studied MRN-115 as part of the University of California Archaeological Survey (UCAS) in 1949. MRN-115, also called the Thomas site, may have been occupied as late as A.D. 1800 and as early as A.D. 1100 (Meighan 1953:5). The two smaller shell-bearing sites, CA-MRN-114 and CA-MRN-328, are located a few meters north and south of MRN-115 respectively, but they have not been the focus of intensive archaeological study. All together, the three shellmound sites form a distinct cluster.

Ongoing field and laboratory analysis at the three sites will attempt to understand the lives of refugee Indians living away from Mission San Francisco de Asís after its founding in 1776, before the founding of Mission San Rafael in 1817, and after secularization in the 1830s. While some Coast Miwok village sites would have been irrevocably changed and entirely disintegrated during the Mission period (Milliken 1995:179), other sites may have been reused in a different capacity. First, however, a firm understanding of pre-contact settlement patterns is needed.

Native Californian coastal settlement patterns in the years leading up to European colonization reveal seasonal use of bay shore sites. There may have been a shift from the year-round occupation of large mounded village sites toward seasonal habitation of smaller satellite sites in the hinterland of the larger mounded places (Lightfoot 1997). Luby (2004) and Luby and Gruber (1999) examined the ceremonial importance of this choice, arguing that older mounded village sites were places of social decision making, cremations, and ancestor veneration. Ongoing archaeological investigation seeks to evaluate a possible change in site use at China Camp and, if possible, determine archaeological signatures of refugees who may have continued to visit coastal shell mounds during certain times of the year. To this end, a multiphased field project involving surface collection, geophysical survey, and systematic augering was used at MRN-114, MRN-115, and MRN-328 in the summer of 2007 to first determine the extent and depth of the sites and then to locate possible activity areas based on surface and near surface artifact densities.

Compared to earlier archaeological stratigraphic deposits, we expect to find fewer quantities of materials in later, historic deposits of hinterland refugee sites. Access to particular raw materials and natural resources would have tightened as mobility became restricted by missionization efforts and modifications in the natural and cultural landscape (e.g., Lightfoot 2005:87). With limited access to a diverse subsistence base, resources from a localized area may also have been intensively exploited resulting in greater quantities of a particular kind of resource found in later deposits. Similar to the multiethnic households at Colony Ross, refugee sites on the frontier might also offer a mixture of Native American raw material and food preferences, processing methods, and European goods (Lightfoot and Martinez 1997). Such an assemblage may characterize the cultural amalgamation and ethnogenesis experienced by multiple Native Californian tribes living at the mission and subsequent creation of pan-mission identities (Lightfoot 2005:206; Voss 2008), as well as material practices on a socially charged and fluid frontier (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995).
Data from a 4 percent stratified random, unaligned sampling strategy are currently being used to identify artifact densities across each site and to define possible activity areas. In total, 116 1 x 1 m surface test units were sampled from all three sites. Fire-cracked rock was weighed, counted, and returned to the collection unit, and to control the amount of shell collected across the surface of each site, we collected only diagnostic shell parts and fragments no smaller than a pinky finger nail. In addition to fire-cracked rock, surface artifacts across each site included ground stone implements; chert and obsidian flaked tools and two obsidian projectile points; clamshell disc beads, which are characteristic of Late period occupations in Central California; faunal remains, including mammals, birds, fish, mussel, oyster, clam, snail, abalone, crab, and bat ray; and Euro-Asian materials that included glass, salt-glazed stoneware fragments, and a suite of bullet shell cartridge casings. The stoneware was most likely associated with the Chinese shrimp fishing camps that lined the Point San Pedro shore from the mid-1860s to 1905.

Flaked stone artifacts from MRN-114, MRN-115, and MRN-328 were produced primarily from chert (60 percent), but also from obsidian (14 percent) and other silicic rocks (26 percent). Higher densities of chert artifacts appeared in the uppermost deposits of the shell mounds and may be telling of shorter stays or daily processing activities rather than specialized tasks. Chert artifacts were also likely to have been from local sources and may have required thermal alteration prior to knapping, much like cherts from the southern San Francisco and Monterey bay regions (Parsons 1987). This is perhaps representative of persistent knowledge of raw material acquisition and processing. Analysis of the total lithic assemblage from the three shell mounds is ongoing.

The remainder of the summer and fall of 2007 focused solely on MRN-114. A G-858 cesium magnetometer was used to survey MRN-114, and we were able to identify several magnetic anomalies concentrated in the middle and western portion of the site. These findings meshed nicely with a surface density map of iron-rich, fire-cracked rock. Furthermore, a single test excavation over one of the anomalies yielded fire-cracked rock and what appears to be a burned earth feature represented by a highly compact mixture of pulverized shell, charcoal, and highly magnetic ash similar to that observed by Linford and Canti (2001).

Combined with our geophysical data, MRN-114 surface density maps of fire-cracked rock, chert, and obsidian may reveal possible activity areas. At MRN-114 and MRN-328 fire-cracked rock, chert, and obsidian appear confined to the northern and southern portions of each site, while at MRN-115 all three material categories ring the base of the mound. The spatial patterning represented by the surface density maps may provide useful information on the location of processing areas (chert and obsidian flaked stone tools), cooking areas (fire-cracked rock), as well as areas of habitation—perhaps indicated by a noticeable absence of chipped stone at the center of the three sites. While we are considering alternative explanations for the spatial distribution of archaeological materials (e.g., the shifting of cultural materials to the base of the mounds over time), the nonrandom dispersal of the surface materials may reflect how these sites were used during the later phases of their occupation. We are currently evaluating whether these later occupations may have functioned less as venues of year-round habitation and more as locales for short stays and quick tasks. Additional density maps, auger data, and temporal refinement from a recent radiocarbon assay will be employed for further analysis.

Four auger units were also excavated from the northeast edge of MRN-114 in the summer of 2007 as a means to identify the extent and depth of this site, to adopt an appropriate sampling strategy, and to test whether surface artifacts are a useful indicator of subsurface deposits. Each auger unit was excavated in 20 cm levels and screened through nested 1.3 cm
(1/2 in), 6 mm (1/4 in), 3 mm (1/8 in), and 1.5 mm (1/16 in) screens. Fire-cracked rock was weighed and returned to the unit, while the collection of shell followed a similar procedure as the surface collection. Sterile soils were encountered at 130 cm in the middle of the site and at 40 cm near the edge of the site. Compared to the surface collection, we recovered very little flaked stone, and obsidian artifacts seem to be restricted to the upper 20 cm of MRN-114. So far, auger sample units complement surface data and appear to be a reliable indicator of subsurface deposits.

Archaeological testing of MRN-114 continued in the fall of 2007. In total, 29 auger units were sampled including the four auger units from the summer of 2007 (Figure 3). Of these, soil samples from six auger units were collected in their entirety for flotation. The remaining units were screened in 20 cm increments through nested 6 mm (1/4 in) and 3 mm (1/8 in) screens with each fraction bagged separately. Artifacts include identifiable shell fragments, charcoal, animal bone, fire-cracked rock, obsidian and chert flakes, and historic artifacts.

A similar sampling method is planned for MRN-328. Areas of this site will be surveyed using a magnetometer and, possibly, a soil resistivity device to be able to identify and test subsurface anomalies. After completing this survey, we plan to sample MRN-328 using the auger sampling strategy as described for MRN-114. For now, neither geophysical surveying nor intensive augering are planned for MRN-115. Collections from Meighan’s excavations at MRN-115 are currently stored at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology. These materials hold great promise for reconstructing Meighan’s excavations and for making comparisons between the three sites. However, as many artifacts from MRN-115 are missing provenience information, a controlled excavation of a portion of one of the house depressions will likely yield important diachronic data for understanding Coast Miwok residential practices during California’s colonial period.

Figure 3. Augering at MRN-114, China Camp State Park.
The North Wall of Fort Ross

The Russian-American Company established Colony Ross in 1812 in the heart of the Kashaya Pomo’s ancestral homeland, Metini. Often described by historians and ethnographers as the gentler form of colonialism (Barrett 1908; Farris 1989; Lightfoot 2005), the Russian mercantile outpost was nevertheless a colonial center with a rigid social and ethnic hierarchy that depended upon the labor of the colony’s Native Alaskan (Alutiiq, Unangan, Tlingit, and Tanaina) and Native Californian (Kashaya Pomo, Southern Pomo, and Coast Miwok) workers in order to fulfill its economic and agricultural goals. Referred to as California’s first multiethnic community, the highest class Russian managers and employees reserved the stockade complex for their residences, while the majority of the colony’s diverse residents lived in a series of ethnic neighborhoods surrounding the fort (Lightfoot et al. 1993:161). These included the Native Alaskan Neighborhood, Native Californian Neighborhood, and Russian and Creole Neighborhood (Figure 4).

Figure 4. The multiethnic colony of Fort Ross.
Many of the company’s Russian, Creole (people of mixed Russian and indigenous ancestry), and Native Alaskan men formed marriages or relationships with local Native Californian women and established interethnic households within the Native Alaskan Neighborhood and the Russian and Creole Neighborhood. Understanding these intimate colonial relations is a fundamental part of envisioning the nature of colonial entanglements within and between Colony Ross’s ethnic neighborhoods, the Russian-American Company and local indigenous communities. Proximity in this case not only refers to the residential patterns of the company’s indigenous workers and outlying Native Californian villages but also to the daily familial, economic, and sexual relations constructed within the colony’s ethnic neighborhoods and within individual houses. Considering the prevalence of interethnic unions, to what degree did these intimate relations structure household and community organization, alter patterns of labor at the colony or shift the residential patterns of local Kashaya Pomo villages? These questions are at the forefront of previous archaeological work at the Native Alaskan Village (within the Native Alaskan Neighborhood), the Native Californian Neighborhood, and now at the North Wall community.

Previous archaeological work at the Native Alaskan Neighborhood, and specifically the Native Alaskan Village site located directly south of the Russian stockade, indicates the importance of a microscale understanding of colonial entanglements (Lightfoot et al. 1997). It was in these households that Native Alaskan men and their Native Californian spouses negotiated their social identities and potentially transformed and created new understandings of self and community. The daily patterns of refuse disposal, foodways, and community spatial organization revealed that members of these households maintained traditions within their shared domestic space. Traditional Alaskan and Californian foods were consumed in the households, albeit prepared in a manner consistent with Kashaya cooking methods. Likewise, traditional crafts such as bone tool production (associated with both communities), the creation of gut skin parkas (kamleikas) and bird skin parkas (associated with Native Alaskans), and the recycling of obsidian, glass, and ceramic materials for tool production (associated with both communities) are represented at these households, indicating that both men and women were maintaining material traditions unique to their communities of origin. In the case of recycling obsidian debitage and European goods to make tools, residents created innovations to deal with changing social and material worlds that were the result of the establishment of Colony Ross and nearby Spanish California.

The spatial organization of households at the Native Alaskan Village highlights the diverging outcomes and experiences of indigenous peoples living in close proximity to a colonial center. While the organization and layout of neophyte villages at the Spanish missions may have been closely regulated, the Russian-American Company imposed few regulations upon the forms of buildings or organization of households. At the Native Alaskan Village site, houses appear to be arranged in a linear fashion along a bluff overlooking Fort Ross Cove, the landing location for the hunters’ skin boats (baidarkas). This residential pattern is consistent with the layout of traditional communities on Kodiak Island, which were typically set out in a linear pattern along a beach or coastal strip (Lightfoot et al. 1997:414) and oriented towards a view of the ocean. The location of the village on the bluff is a significant departure, perhaps due to the company’s desire to keep the village in view of the Fort; however, the rectangular structures depicted in historic illustrations and described by Tikhmenev (1978:134) are consistent with Kodiak villages at the time, indicating continuity with Native Alaskan worldviews concerning residential space.

The interethnic households at the Native Alaskan Village represent only one of many relationships established among the colony, its workers and indigenous
communities. In addition to establishing households at the Native Alaskan Village and possibly at Metini, a Native Californian village located a short distance north of the stockade, Native Californian women also shared households and relations with the company’s Russian and Creole workforce. These “marriages,” like those shared between Native Alaskan men and Native Californian women, were transient though not as prevalent. These relations provide another opportunity to investigate the nature of colonial marriage and its intersection with the company’s ethnic and social hierarchy, labor patterns, religious life, sex, and gender.

As in Spanish colonial settings (Voss 2000) and elsewhere (see Plane 2000 for an account of regulation of marriage in New England), marriage and sex were regulated by the Russian-American Company. For example, the company exerted administrative control over Indian women, labeling them as either “allowed” or “released” to return to home communities after a dissolved union with a company employee. In the case of Native Alaskan men’s partners, women were labeled by the Russian-American Company as “collateral,” or “secondary,” wives, indicating a unique status within the colonial apparatus (Istomin 1992: 6). This label is in contrast to the label of “woman,” which was used to describe a local indigenous female attached to a Russian or Creole employee. This designation suggests a more informal arrangement; however, it may be a direct result of the status of Russian and Creole men within the colony (Fedorova 1975:11). The highest class of company workers, referred to as “honor-able,” were entitled to receive their yearly wages in a single cash payout, while lower class Russian and Creole employees, referred to as Promyshlennik, typically received their wages in the form of store credit. However, Promyshlennik men who were officially married and had a family were eligible to receive wages in one lump sum. By not labeling unions between Russian and Creole men and Native Californian women as marriages, the company was therefore able to avoid its obligation to pay wages to its lower class Russian and Creole employees in a single cash payout. Recorded but unofficial marriages were thus a way for these men to have female companions without a financial burden being placed upon the Russian colony.

There are parallels here to the case of colonial sexual relationships in New France. As Spear (2003) has noted, the economic contexts in which these relationships occurred are critical for understanding the nature of relationships and the control exerted over them by colonial apparatuses. Unions between French men and indigenous women in Louisiana were relatively unregulated, while those between French men and African or Creole women (of mixed African and French ancestry) in the French colony of Saint Domingue were highly regulated and controlled by both Church and state. The difference, Spear noted, was the economic context; in Louisiana forced labor of indigenous people was outlawed in 1799, while in Saint Domingue the forced servitude of slaves necessitated separation between estates and the creation of rigid boundaries between master and slave. In the case of Louisiana’s colonial relationships, authorities encouraged such unions, but also tried to keep them informal so as to regulate rank among the French colonists themselves.

The informal unions between Native Californian women and Russian or Creole men may have operated similarly, as the majority of these relationships involved Promyshlennik, lower class workers, who were only entitled to their wages in cash if they were officially married. This practice ensured that higher class or honorable Russian employees maintained a distinct economic status within the colony, a status that was unaffected by the sexual and familial unions created between Promyshlennik and Native Californian women. The colony was thus able to benefit from the familial, community, economic, and residential ties that were constructed as a result of interethnic unions between Promyshlennik and Native Californian
women, while also preserving company rank for male employees.

The Russian Orthodox Church did become concerned with these illicit but company sanctioned relations and in 1818 began to exert more control over marriage in the Russian-American colonies (Fedorova 1975). At Fort Ross a priest was only in residence for a short period of time, and consequently, many of the interethnic marriages remained unofficial and outside of Church control. Nonetheless, participation in the Russian Orthodox Church was an important means of status for women in the colony, and it is important to understand how their participation in the Church intersected with other aspects of their lives. This participation is indelibly recorded in excavations at the Fort Ross cemetery, where the majority of people interred were women and children (Goldstein 1995; Osborn 1997). Given the high percentages of Native Californian women present at the colony (of all women, 59.3 percent in 1820, 63 percent in 1821 and 54 percent in 1836 and 1838), it is possible that some Native Californian women who were baptized are represented at the cemetery. Although the censuses from the 1830s recorded a decline in the overall number of Native Californian women living at the colony, participation in the Church is evident in an increase in the number of unattached, baptized Native Californian women at Fort Ross. The presence of a cohort of 15 to 20 single women as heads of household in the late 1830s suggests a different status for women in the colony, one that is tied to religious practice and identification.

Why did Native women become involved in interethnic households and how did their status change over time at Fort Ross? In the early years of the colony, tribal chiefs supposedly offered their daughters to colonial men as part of a broader process of alliance formation. Women’s relationships with employees may have created important points of access, creating kin ties between local communities and the colony, and opening up new opportunities for social, familial, religious and economic interactions. That an overwhelming number of the initial interethnic relationships were with Native Alaskan men may be related to the role that they played as cultural “buffers” in early colonial entanglements at Colony Ross and their reputation as good hunters (Martinez 1998:63-64, 176). There are strong feelings, however, among the Kashaya Pomo today that many of these women were forced against their wills to live with colonial men (Lightfoot 2008:277).

Why some Native California women converted to the Russian Orthodox faith in the 1830s and established their own households at Fort Ross is not clear. However, Sleeper-Smith’s (2001) case study of the French fur trade in the Great Lakes region provides interesting insight into the intersection between religious life, women, and colonial marriages. For indigenous women, their conversion to Christianity and participation within the Catholic Church was a way for them to garner alternate status within their home community. It is possible that conversion to Christianity at Fort Ross provided Native women with a new kind of colonial status that was not dependent on fickle relationships with foreign men.

In order to better understand the range of interethnic and Christian women households at Fort Ross, an archaeological investigation of the North Wall area (CA-SON-190) was undertaken in 2006 and 2007. CA-SON-190, both the trinomial for the Russian stockade and the archaeological deposits located along the North Wall of the stockade, is an historic multiethnic village with a Native Californian component. The site was occupied during the Russian period (1812-1841) and possibly at different points during the Mexican (1841-1846) and American (1846-1903) periods. Existing archaeological and documentary information suggests that the site was the location of either a Native Californian village inhabited by laborers of the Russian-American Company or the residence of the colony’s Russian and Creole workers.
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...and their Native Californian spouses (Ballard 1997). Historic illustrations of the colony by Duhaut-Cilly in 1827 (Figure 5) and Voznesenskii in 1841 depict standing architecture in the style of Russian plank houses and enclosed fields.

Originally named Indian Site Number 1 by Treganza (1954:18) and described as “immediate to the entire north wall of the Fort, extending to the back of the chapel and including two white cottages owned by Mr. Call,” the site has been archaeologically tested a number of times. The majority of these projects were designed to mitigate the impact of the stockade’s multiple reconstructions and other construction related activities. Despite this heavy disturbance, portions of the site contain intact cultural deposits that, along with the previously unreported material excavated from the site, can be used to settle several unresolved issues about the North Wall area such as its occupational history and use and relationship to other residential spaces at the colony. Excavation data also suggest that these deposits are potentially related to the structures depicted in illustrations by both Duhaut-Cilly (Figure 5) and Vozensenskii.

The question of who used the site and when is still contested. Treganza (1954) indicated that Indian Site Number 1 was a manifestation of an earlier occupation of the stockade by the Kashaya Pomo that was displaced by the Russian settlement and later occupied by Native Californians after the Russians left. Others have asserted that the co-occurrence of historic materials such as a large number of creamwares and pearlwares and worked ‘black’ glass, which are in association with traditionally Native artifacts such as worked shell and lithics, indicate Native Californians lived alongside the stockade during the Russian and Mexican periods. However, illustrations do not depict

Figure 5. View of the Ross settlement as depicted by Auguste Duhaut-Cilly in 1827. The chapel is in the center of the picture; the houses and garden plots built along the North Wall of the stockade complex are situated to the right of the chapel. (Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.)
Native Californian structures, traditionally circular. This does not preclude a Native Californian occupation of the area during the Russian period; the illustrators could have intentionally omitted these structures, or Native Californians could have resided in the plank buildings. Glenn Farris, for example, has suggested that one of the larger buildings in the paintings could have been a barracks for Native Californian male laborers (Ballard 1997). The North Wall area could also have served as the residence of the colony’s Creole workers and their wives, some of whom were Kashaya, Coast Miwok or Southern Pomo. It is also possible that Indian women who had converted to the Russian Orthodox faith lived here in their own households in close proximity to the chapel.

New investigations as well as analysis of unreported materials from previous excavations can help define the history of occupation along the North Wall area. Combining obsidian hydration dates with dates from diagnostic historic materials, as Silliman (2005) has shown at Rancho Petaluma, is also an effective strategy for determining Historic period chronology. At Fort Ross, it is also a way for us to test whether or not the obsidian artifacts and debitage are the result of new use, recycling of old materials, or of bioturbation.

The relationship between the North Wall and Metini Village (CA-SON-175, the Kashaya village located north of the stockade wall) is also poorly understood. This is complicated by the naming of the North Wall area as Indian Site Number 1, Metini, Mad-Shui-Ny (an incorrect spelling of the Russian word for Metini) Med-Zhi-Ny, and CA-SON-190. Reanalysis of previous excavations in the space between the North Wall area and Metini village are currently underway, and it is hoped that the boundaries between these different residential spaces can be better determined. Previous archaeological investigations at Metini Village also provide an important baseline of information from which to compare household activities between these different colonial and ethnic neighborhoods. If the households located along the North Wall were indeed the residences of the company’s Russian and Creole workers and their Native Californian spouses, such a comparison potentially illuminates the varied strategies and organizations of household and residential communities by Native Californians living at the Russian colonial center.

In order to help refine our understanding of the North Wall area and its households, an intensive site survey and surface collection was undertaken in 2006. Using a 4 percent stratified random unaligned sample, the field team conducted a surface collection in 157 1 x 1 m surface test units. A preliminary analysis of the materials indicated a wide range of both European and Native Californian manufactured items including the following: beads (shell, glass and ceramic); artifacts made from shell, bone, glass, and ceramics; sherds from historic ceramics and glass; Russian brick; coal; shellfish and faunal remains; fire altered rock; ground stone artifacts; square cut and forged nails; obsidian bifaces anddebitage; and chert debitage. These artifacts are currently being analyzed and will be used to create artifact densities across the site. The information from this analysis is being used in conjunction with information gathered through a geophysical survey of the site using a cesium gradiometer to pinpoint potential activity areas and households for further testing (Gonzalez and Lightfoot 2007).

Based upon the 2006 site and geophysical survey, areas of the site were identified for test excavations in the summer of 2007. Nine units were opened for excavation, and all materials were screened through 3 mm mesh. Soil samples were also collected from levels with high concentrations of shell and charcoal. Artifacts recovered from these units are consistent with materials collected during the site survey, and notable finds included chert and obsidian drills; spire-opped Olivella shell beads; clam shell disc beads; sea mammal (possible dolphin) vertebrae; and worked, circular ceramic pieces. In addition to these finds, seven of the
units associated with three different magnetic anomalies revealed rich shell midden deposits overlying rock rubble.

During the Russian period, most colonial structures were either timber frame or plank style houses, timber frame being the earliest building technique used at the Ross Colony. The archaeological signature of a timber framed house is the presence of rock rubble foundations, which have been discovered both inside the fort and at the Native Alaskan Village Site (Lightfoot et al. 1997). Based upon the similarities between the rock rubble features uncovered along the North Wall and these other residential spaces, it is likely that the aforementioned units contain architectural features related to the earliest building periods at the fort. Whether or not these architectural features date to the Russian period or later is yet to be determined. Future field work will attempt to resolve the chronology of the deposits, conduct further investigations of the rock rubble features, and complete a resistivity survey of the area so as to gain a better understanding of the area’s intra- and inter-household spaces (Figure 6).

**Conclusion**

In this paper we outline a spatial model for examining different kinds of archaeological contexts where Native people negotiated their encounters with foreign intruders in colonial California. The spatial dimension of colonialism involved diverse residential options for both California Indians and colonial workers who might have lived and worked in colonial centers or their peripheries. We argue that detailed investigations of these diverse spatial contexts may provide important insights into the varied strategies and coping mechanisms employed by Native people in their social interactions and entanglements with colonists. How Indian men and women engaged with colonial people may have varied tremendously within colonial centers, in proximal zones, and in the outlying hinterlands, especially in the interspaces between colonial regimes.

We have initiated a regional research program in the greater San Francisco Bay Area to examine differential Native responses to Spanish, Mexican, and Russian colonialism. Our current work is focusing on two very
different kinds of spatial contexts. One is examining residential sites in the interspaces of the Russian and Spanish colonial regimes that may have been the abodes for Native refugees. We are examining the possibility that former indigenous villages in the hinterland of Franciscan missions may have been reused as meaningful residential places imbued with memories and significance by fugitive neophytes or by ex-neophytes following the secularization of the mission system in the 1830s. Specifically, field work is being undertaken at three shell mounds in China Camp State Park to evaluate this possibility. The other spatial context under study is that of interethnic residences in colonial centers that were the abodes of colonial men and Indian women, as well as households headed by Native women who had converted to Christianity. Fieldwork is ongoing along the North Wall of the Russian stockade at the Ross settlement to locate and study the remains of such households reported in archival sources. We believe that the eventual comparison of these two different spatial contexts may provide new insights into the diverse strategies employed by local Native people to negotiate and survive the colonization of their homelands.

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