

# Food Politics of Alliance in a California Frontier Chinatown

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**Abstract** Archaeological investigation of Mono Mills (1880–1917), a pluralistic community in California’s mining frontier, is beginning to reveal how immigrants mobilized or mitigated power inequalities through identity expression, community cohesion, and labor relations. Archival records, coupled with the archaeology of household foodways in the Chinatown neighborhood, reveal how social inequalities, labor organization, and identities reflect the impacts of racialization and strategies of resistance. Multicultural objects and aspects of cuisine were intimately entangled in the practices of laborers’ daily lives. The research highlights impacts of late nineteenth-century legislation to discriminate against Chinese immigrants, the agency of marginalized groups, and the long-term effects of discrimination.

**Keywords** Social identities · Foodways · Chinese-American · Discrimination

## Introduction

The end of the nineteenth century was an era of great social change. While miners, prospectors, and merchants of European descent found opportunity to be self-made in the Golden State of California, immigrant populations from China, Native Californians, and African Americans were relegated to a non-white category of exclusion in the racial hierarchy of the European American social world (Aarim-Heriot 2003, p. 9). New images of life in communities of the post-Gold Rush era may be glimpsed through joint consideration of material and documentary evidence for experiences of all groups within eastern California’s mining frontier. These perspectives elaborate how pluralistic communities thrived in California’s Gilded Age as well as how residents mobilized or mitigated power inequalities through their daily experiences of identity expression, community cohesion, and labor relations. Interethnic coalitions were a vital strategy to build economic and cultural ties across ethnic boundaries and increase opportunities for

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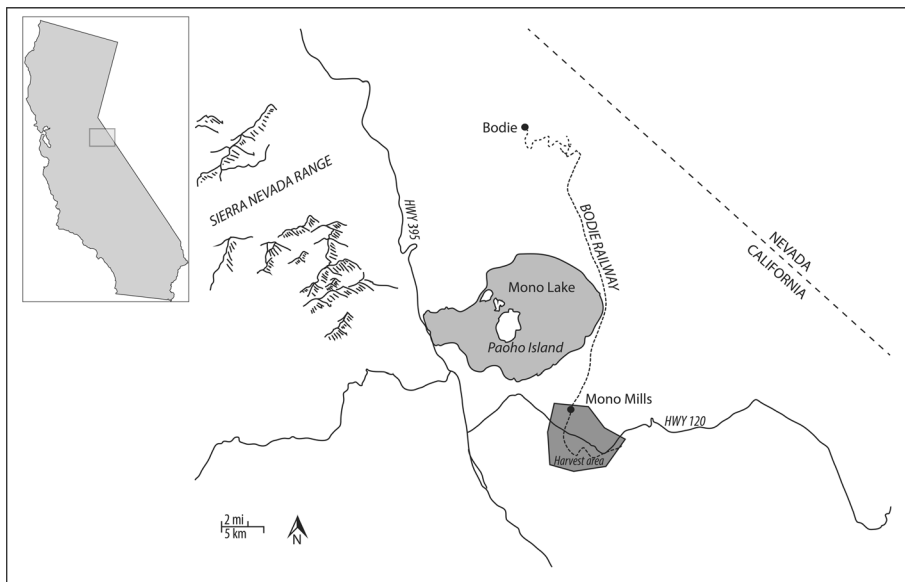
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groups who would otherwise have been spatially, socially, and economically isolated on the mining and urban periphery of frontier towns.

Occupied from 1880 to 1917, Mono Mills was a town expressly founded to supply the gold mining operations of Bodie with critical wood for construction, mining timbers, and fuel (Fig. 1).

Its short occupation and admixture of communities thrown into a dynamic labor situation make Mono Mills a unique window to the historical and material investigation of pluralistic communities and race relations. The town of Bodie, now a California State Historic Park, boasted riches and lawlessness to rival all other Wild West towns as it experienced a population boom coinciding with large ore discoveries. A sudden influx of people increased the demand for construction lumber, timber, and fuel from 20 cords per day to 90 (Sprague 2003). Because local lumber supplies were totally inadequate to meet Bodie's voracious need, a railroad was built to transport wood from the Jeffrey pine forests south of Mono Lake. Along with the development of the Mono Mills sawmill and a railroad connecting it to Bodie, a town grew around this enterprise to accommodate the 50 workers (McIntosh 1908) and their families in a new community of about 200 people (Canton and Canton 2011). This settlement included an "enormous steam-powered sawmill...railroad yard, blacksmith shop, machine shop, commissary, saloon, two [general] stores, company buildings that quartered workers, and 30 small houses" (Piatt 2003, p. 35; see also Wedertz 1969, p. 161). The residents of Mono Mills included Mono Lake Kutzadika'a Paiute as well as European American and Chinese immigrants or children of immigrants, and their experience in labor and community-making provide a picture of life in the Gilded Age that is likely characteristic of many California company towns. The historic outcry of anti-Chinese sentiment in Bodie and subsequent relocation of many Chinese workers to Mono Mills suggest the intensity of persecution experienced by individuals in this population.



**Fig. 1** Bodie, Mono Mills, and vicinity

Archaeological examination of the debris of daily life in the Mono Mills Chinatown neighborhood reveals strategies families used to create alliances and community amidst labor tensions in this new home.

### Archaeologies of Interethnic Interactions

The opportunity to manipulate and define one's identity (through ethnicity, class, gender, and race) in the Gilded Age by signaling affiliation or difference within a community was vital to the survival and success of many people on the mining frontier. Identities, including fluid categories of class and ethnicity (Lightfoot et al. 1998; Silliman 2001; Wurst 1999, 2006), were unfixed and negotiated through material culture production and interactions (Harrison 2002). In this way, multiple aspects of complex social identities—such as ethnicity, gender, and class (Casella 2005; Voss 2005b)—were determined by group interactions and, in turn, affected interactions in this pluralistic town. Hybridity of material culture was a possibility as new practices, traditions, and material signals are brought to the social arena.

The archaeology of interethnic interactions has historically focused on consumer behaviors and how shared material culture reflect interactions and agency. Camp's (2009, 2011) investigation of employees' households at the Southern California Mount Lowe resort suggest interactions, or at least shared material experiences, between Chinese and Mexican workers. Fosha and Leatherman's (2008) study of Deadwood, South Dakota focused on the intercultural relationships among townfolk and the resulting intermixing of Chinese and European American material culture. This theme of shared material culture as indicative of interethnic interactions has been largely extended to consider the context of American-made goods in immigrant households. Some see the consumption of American-made goods as a means for nonwhite communities to gain benefits of citizenship and assimilation. Such manipulation of symbols of Victorian culture allowed a Chinese merchant in Sacramento to manipulate his social status (Praetzellis and Praetzellis 2001) and negotiated acceptance into white society for Chinese-born Jim Mahoney in Guerneville, CA after he adopted middle-class American tastes in clothing, entertainment, and social life (Praetzellis et al. 1988). Similarly, selective consumption of western material culture by Inuit laborers structured their socioeconomic relationships as they adopted only those goods that fit with their social action goals (Cabak and Loring 2000).

Certainly, some immigrants did not buy into this consumption of American identities. Legally white Mexicans in early twentieth-century Los Angeles rejected consumerism as a means to be accepted into society, and although they did comply with some material symbols of middle-class American culture they did not necessarily support the ideology behind these artifacts (Camp 2011). Further, some objects in Mexican households would traditionally be ascribed as "Chinese," suggesting that Mexican workers perhaps sought to create an identity that departed from the social trappings of their racialized and class-based status. While these Mexican immigrants did not see material consumption as a gateway to social acceptance like has been argued for some other racial groups, they exemplify the use of agency to negotiate one's social status and historical cases of identities in motion and flux (Camp 2011).

Mullins (2008) argues that the archaeology of Overseas Chinese communities does not paint a clean picture of assimilation and resistance, but more complicated divisions of class, gender, and race. The resulting archaeologies of collective identity and difference complicate the ideas of assimilation to focus more on the Chinese participation in a multicultural society, and on the blend between persistence of cultural tradition and navigation of American society through agency (Mullins 2008). At times this navigation of society may include emphasis on material culture familiar and comfortable to immigrants, especially those in first-generation settings in America (Michaels 2005). Overall, archaeologies of interethnic interactions must consider agency by nonwhite communities to actively shift their social opportunities and to exploit fluidity that existed in identity representation and perception.

### **Material Lives on the Mining Frontier: Social Identity and Practice**

Foci for the study of multiethnic interactions include opportunities for cultural interaction through economics and food sharing or gift-giving (Mauss 1967) and the power relations in labor (Cusick 1998), as well as the social possibilities of creolization and transformation through hybridization (Dawdy 2000; Deagan 1996) or ethnogenesis (Voss 2005b). Most critically to the study of pluralism, food describes a social environment and “community of culture” (Barth 1969, p. 16) generated by material interactions. Foodways, as culturally constructed aspects of materiality related to meal selection, preparation, consumption, and disposal, are daily practices structured by habitus (Appadurai 1981; Ashby 2002; Lightfoot et al. 1998; Montón-Subías 2002). As practice, food can simultaneously symbolize homogeneity and connection along with heterogeneity and delineation (Appadurai 1981; also see Twiss 2007; Vallianatos and Raine 2008). Foodscapes of human relationships show how food can “signal rank and rivalry, solidarity and community, identity or exclusion, and intimacy or distance” (Appadurai 1981, p. 494). Fluidity of identities and shifting opportunities for cross-cultural interactions may result in foodscapes that are not static over time and across various contexts. This perspective illustrates how new foods are used in traditional ways (Diehl et al. 1998) to investigate interaction and boundary maintenance (Barth 1969).

The plurality and fluidity of identities in the Gilded Age is a prime setting for the study of cross-cultural interactions and labor inequalities, yet identifying dynamics of social identities and power inequalities is not a straightforward assessment archaeologically. It is certainly not expected that one can dig up class or ethnicity, as analytical concepts, yet there is expected to be a strong material expression of the social relations which structured class and constructed ethnic identity. Previous approaches assessed categories by direct association of distinct material correlates: what they ate, what plates they used, houses they lived in, and so on (see critiques in Cusick 1998; Lightfoot et al. 1998; McGuire and Reckner 2002; Silliman 2001, 2006; Wurst 1999). More constructively, identification of the social and material relations involved in the production, distribution, and manipulation of material through labor (Silliman 2001) and the habitual activities structured by conventional cultural orderings allow archaeological interpretation of identities (Lightfoot et al. 1998).

Thinking about the role of materials in labor and pluralistic settings, including the types of materials and their spatial context, may provide clarity about the possible meaning or use of items. Silliman (2001) shows that this approach helps avoid ascriptions of class or ethnic-affiliations to items which might have had different meanings among individuals depending on their labor role, gender, and other axes of identification. Beyond the types of materials and their spatial context, an object's uses and reuses, and the means of its production or distribution through exchange relationships (Appadurai 1981) elucidate signifying roles of materials as identity markers. This is particularly relevant in communities that are both pluralistic and have the potential for multiethnic households (Deagan 1983; Lightfoot 2006; Lightfoot et al. 1998; Voss 2008), such as Mono Mills. The material debris in workers' households reflect the "ways that those laboring accommodated, resisted, made use of, and lived through labor situations" (Silliman 2006, p. 149) and reveal how townsfolk constructed their identities and built community within the historical context of Mono Mills.

### **Historical Context: Local Expression of Chinese Exclusion**

Just as the Chinese Exclusion movement in California was due to the general economic downturn in the West following the initial Gold Rush and Transcontinental railroad completion, local exclusion in Bodie coincided with the decline of the silver and gold mines in 1881–82 (Sprague 2003). Rail workers for the Mono Mills line were paid \$1.25/day compared to the \$4.00/day expected in the mines (Sprague 2003, p. 105), yet many down-on-their-luck miners and unemployed Bodieites signed up for the job. After ground was broken for the new railroad to Mono Lake on May 23, 1881 (San Francisco Bulletin 1881a), 68 Chinese laborers were hired to construct the grade near Mono Lake (Sprague 2003, p. 105) while 260 white workers worked on the more visible terminus at Bodie and other points along the line (Watson and Brodie 2000).

Local miners in Bodie met in the Miners' Union Hall to discuss the situation of job decline in light of Chinese employment for the Bodie and Mono Lake Railway Company. The end result was a formal request to Superintendent Holt of the Company to discharge Chinese workers in its employ. The mob enlisted 60–70 men to raid the Chinese camp 20mi (32 km) south along the rail line (San Francisco Bulletin 1881b), yet only 40 of these men were motivated on the day of the riot to arm themselves and begin "A Raid on Chinese" (Omaha Herald 1881; also see Philadelphia Inquirer 1881).

Prior to an attack from this mob, the Company sent warning to their Chinese workers and organized the move of the whole outfit and supplies to the middle of Mono Lake on Paoha Island. This relocation allowed them to successfully wait out rioters who were unprepared for a long siege (Omaha Herald 1881), and the Chinese happily taunted the miners with their tasty rations and sea gull eggs cooked in hot springs (Sprague 2003). These miners returned to town with the plan to raise funds to provide provisions and return to the shore, but quickly were derailed from this goal and abandoned the cause. The result was "And the Chinese Didn't Go" (Salt Lake Tribune 1881) and quickly the Chinese were back to work with no effect on their jobs. The rare dissenting statement by Bodieites twisted this sentiment, proclaiming "The Chinese must go—[ahead]—and make money when their American brethren are loafing about

the streets seeking for work and praying they may not find it” (quote from *Bodie Morning News*, July 22, 1880 as cited in Sprague 2003, p. 93).

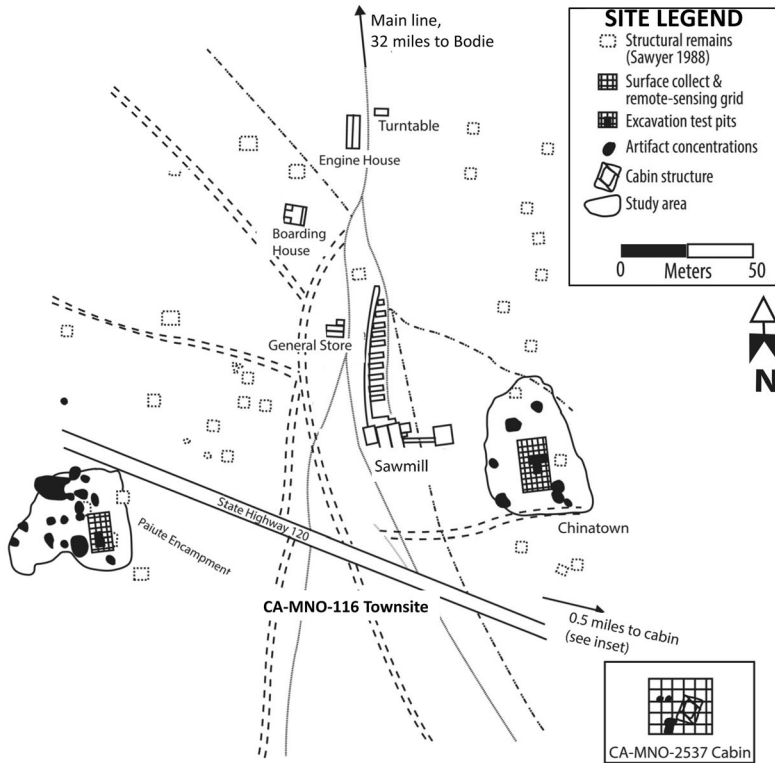
Following this incident the Chinese railroad and mill workers began building a community at Mono Mills where they had been funneled after the employment hostilities escalated. Few Chinese were left in Bodie, yet anti-Chinese sentiment was again vocalized in March of 1882 as more Bodie European Americans experienced unemployment. The elite townsfolk drafted a resolution for Washington, DC to stop admitting Chinese into the country, and of the 1,200 votes cast regarding this resolution all but two were anti-Chinese (Sprague 2003, p. 113). The particularly hostile environment of European American miners and settlers in Mono County provides an important context to the experience of Chinese individuals in Mono Mills. Much-needed perspective on the textures of daily life in this rural periphery may develop from exploring the ways in which groups of workers reacted to or catalyzed economic change in this town as well as the similarities or differences among daily life experiences for ethnic groups or households.

### **Foodways in the Mono Mills Chinatown**

Excavations at the Mono Mills Chinatown (site CA-MNO-116) by the US Forest Service Passport in Time Project of 1988 and a San José State University field school in 2012 provide a sample of materials for the investigation of daily life in this neighborhood. The 2012 excavations at the Mono Mills townsite (Fig. 2) recovered materials from discrete middens in households of the Paiute neighborhood, Chinatown, and a cabin at the edge of the Chinatown neighborhood. Intensive surface survey characterized the area around the households while excavation and remote sensing focused on test areas in each locale. The townsite’s (CA-MNO-116) Paiute neighborhood was excavated in 11 units to depths of 0.3 m and the Chinatown household was excavated in 11 units to a maximum depth of 1.1 m, while the area in and around the cabin at the edge of Chinatown (CA-MNO-2537) was excavated in 15 units to approximately 0.4 m. Much of the recovered debris are evidence for foodways, including ingredients used and food dishes made, tools used to process or prepare foods, and items associated with food consumption.

The remains of meals and food ingredients were primarily recovered during the 2012 excavation of discrete midden deposit associated with households in Chinatown and in the Paiute neighborhood. The Chinatown deposit included a large cache of over a hundred pine nuts (Fig. 3) carefully acquired from prime stands of local pinyon, shelled, and parched for household consumption; several items likely acquired from the company general store, including canned fruit and bottles of medicine and beverages; brown stoneware vessels used to store cooking ingredients; and cuttlefish and vertebrate faunal remains. The Nga Hu and Tsao Tsun stoneware vessels identified in the Chinatown deposit are those that traditionally were used to transport and store soy sauce, black vinegar, peanut oil, and liquor used for cooking and drinking. A cabin located to the east end of the Chinatown neighborhood (site CA-MNO-2537) contained Fut How Nga Peng vessels, traditionally associated with tofu, sweet bean paste, beans, pickled vegetables, shrimp paste, sugar, and condiments (Hellmann and Yang 1997).





**Fig. 2** Features in Mono Mills townsite (adapted from Sawyer 1988) and 2012 excavation areas

Preliminary analysis of the faunal remains from the Chinatown household indicate that the dominant meats consumed were cuts of beef and pork, waterfowl, chickens,



**Fig. 3** Cache of pine nuts recovered from the Chinatown household

and fish, along with caprines and leporids (Table 1). These taxa suggest a diet composed of domesticated meat cuts available across the West from both local and broader regional supply chains. These were supplemented with locally available wild game, fowl, and fish. The beef cuts evident at the site include costly short loin, sirloin, and ribs and less-expensive short ribs and fore- and hindshanks (after Lyman 1987). Pork-based dishes likely included pork loins and hams as well as spare ribs and dishes flavored with pigs' feet (after Diehl et al. 1998; Levie 1963). Research team transcriptions of ledger records from a local supplier at the Hammond Station store suggest that local ranchers and butchers could have supplied much domestic stock to Mono Mills' kitchens. However, evidence of powered saw marks far outnumber those chop and handsaw patterns that might be expected from cottage industry butchery operations (Fig. 4). These marks suggest that national, railroad-based chains of supply and centralized redistribution from larger processing centers factored larger in provisioning the camp.

Food processing and consumption tools include flaked lithic and glass cutting edges and ceramics made in Britain and China. Both bottle glass and obsidian at the Chinatown neighborhood show evidence of knapping to create a cutting edge. Small flakes of obsidian (Fig. 5) and colorless bottle glass (Table 2) were commonly identified from the Chinatown neighborhood, yet the only finished tool was a point made of bottle glass found near the Paiute neighborhood and main boarding house (Fig. 6). Given the preponderance of mechanically processed meat discussed above, the daily labor of hand cutting and preparing meals closer in to the culinary performances of serving and eating are implicit in this small assemblage of cutting edges. Not only do these artifacts reflect smaller scales of expert labor, but they also suggest an intimacy between neighborhood practitioners that extended to experimentation with materials, as hinted at by an in-process button blank of obsidian at the Chinatown cabin (CA-MNO-2537). Could it be that Kutzadika'a master flintknappers were sharing their familiar obsidians with new neighbors? Other foodway-related toolkits suggest that such sharing was a two-way street.

Chinese-made porcelain bowls were recovered from both central Chinatown and nearby cabin (CA-MNO-2537). The bowls have decorations of Four Flowers and Bamboo designs (Fig. 7) and are associated with celadon bowls and cups. White ironstone plates were also present in the Chinatown, including a sherd with the British

**Table 1** Taxa identified in preliminary analysis of fauna from the Chinatown household (Total NISP=368)

Domesticated Taxon	NISP	MNI	Wild Taxon	NISP	MNI	Less Identifiable Taxon	NISP
Bovidae (bovids)	1		<i>Odocoileus hemionus</i> (deer)	3	1	Mammalia (mammals)	85
<i>Bos taurus</i> (cow)	49	2	Rodentia (rodents)	1		Artiodactyla (ungulates)	15
Caprinae (sheep/goat)	21		Sciuridae (squirrel)	1		Camivora (carnivorans)	1
<i>Ovis aries</i> (sheep)	2	1	Leporidae (rabbits/hares)	5		Aves indet. (birds)	4
<i>Sus scrofa</i> (pig)	48	2	<i>Lepus californicus</i> (jackrabbit)	14	2		
<i>Gallus gallus</i> (chicken)	10	1	<i>Sylvilagus</i> sp. (cottontail)	1	1		
<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i> (turkey)	2	1	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> (Mallard duck)	1	1		
			<i>Anas</i> sp. (ducks)	2			
			Pisces indet. (fishes)	102			





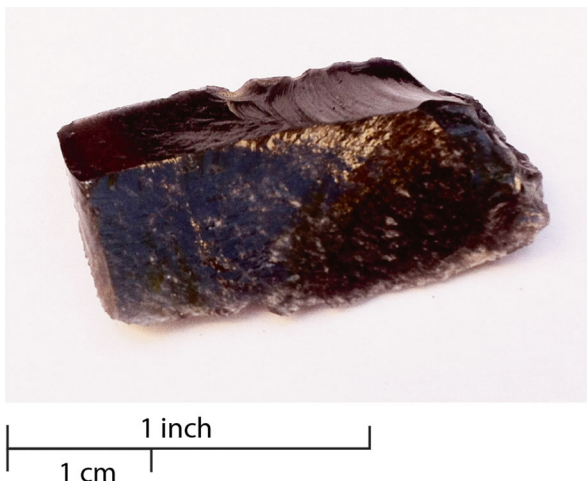
**Fig. 4** Saw-cut bones from Mono Mills Chinatown: (left) pig femur; (right) cow thoracic vertebra

maker's mark of Pinder, Bourne & Co. (Kovel and Kovel 1986, p. 13). Notably, the nearby Paiute neighborhood also contained Chinese-made ceramics, including a porcelain flat-bottom spoon with Four Flowers design (Fig. 8).

Ethnographic photographs of similarly constructed Paiute woven spoons (Fig. 9, Wheat 1977, pp. 86–87) allude to culinary performances familiar to both communities where such shallow implement styles would be at home.

### Labor, Economics, and Foodways at Mono Mills

Given the local and national exclusion they faced, the Chinese experience at Mono Mills reveals social and economic agency to build community despite openly racist sentiment against their presence. While labor opportunities of Chinese were structured by their ethnicity and class, their ability to ally themselves with other marginalized groups created new and diverse social and economic opportunities. Between people



**Fig. 5** Flaked obsidian recovered from the Chinatown household

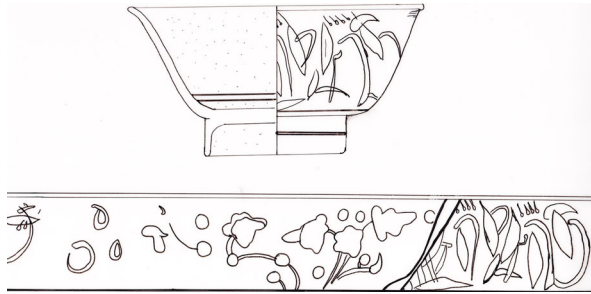
**Table 2** Flaked bottle glass recovered from Mono Mills locations in USFS and SJSU excavations

Site	Count	Wt (g)	Glass colors
CA-MNO-116 Townsite	2	12	Amber, Aqua
CA-MNO-116 Boarding House	1	4	Amber
CA-MNO-116 North (Chinatown)	3	1.5	Amber
	2	2	Amethyst
	13	9.3	Colorless
	1	10	Green/blue green
	3	20.2	Olive green/amber
CA-MNO-2537 (Chinese cabin)	2	1	Amber
	1	<1	Amethyst
	1	1	Aqua
	5	5	Olive green/amber

who expressed different ethnic affiliations, interactions were likely centered on workplace dynamics, broader economic ties, and residential patterns. At the finer scale of household foodways, some relationships were reflected in the exchange of ingredients, tools, and likely ideas about food and interaction. Outside of work settings, the Chinese built relationships with their Paiute and European American neighbors which influenced foodways.

Details of intercultural relationships are documented in stories of camp events. Memoirs written about Mono Mills provide other evidence for food sharing and access to food ingredients to supplement the material evidence recovered in this study. In a story told by the railroad superintendent Billeb (1968, p. 127), an incident was recounted in which a Chinese boarding house cook named Tim was fired after feeding boarders squirrel stew daily in place of the quality beef cuts that he stole and gave as gifts to his Paiute friends. Although the negotiations of costly meat cuts are not visible

**Fig. 6** Finished bifacially flaked tool recovered near the Paiute neighborhood



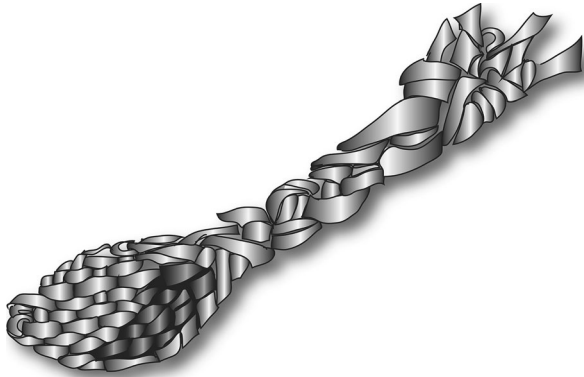
**Fig. 7** Bamboo porcelain bowl (above) with highlighted decoration (below) recovered from cabin just east of Chinatown district (CA-MNO-2537). (Artifact illustration by Rebecca Spitzer.)

archaeologically beyond the presence of cuts that were among the most expensive of the day, the sacking of Tim from a job that offered relative prestige and autonomy in a logging camp (Conlin 1979) is testament to the gravity of his alleged gifting choices.

Archaeologically visible evidence for interactions rely on ingredients and tools used in foodways. The presence of locally available pine nuts is interesting in the Chinatown household, given that the sale of pine nuts is widely believed to be a main source of income for Paiute households during the historic era (Calhoun 1984) as well as a primary food supply during the winter (Fletcher 1987). Further, this household's use of this ingredient is an outlier, as many other studies of Chinatown households across the West do not mention the presence of pine nuts (e.g., Becks 2012; Costello et al. 2008; Costello and Maniery 1988; Diehl et al. 1998; Fosha and Leatherman 2008; Greenwood 1996; Jack et al. 1984). Similar to the pine nuts, the presence of flaked obsidian may reflect economic interactions with the Paiute, who had quarried and processed nearby Casa Diablo obsidian long before Mono Mills was built. The Four Flowers porcelain flat-bottom spoon found in the Paiute neighborhood may also be testament to economic interactions between Chinese and Paiute residents, but its association with this neighborhood is interesting more broadly. The inclusion of this object of non-



**Fig. 8** Four Seasons porcelain spoon recovered from Paiute neighborhood



**Fig. 9** Woven reed spoon noted in ethnographic research with Paiute. (Adapted from Wheat 1977, pp. 86–87.)

Paiute manufacture in daily life is interesting given the similarity of shape between it and woven reed spoons used among the Mono Lake Paiute (Wheat 1977, pp. 86–87).

The mobilization of economic networks, foodway strategies, and alliance building would fit within expected interactions of groups targeted by California legislation. Pfealzer (2008, p. 20) notes that the Karuk of the Northern California coast hid and protected the Chinese from white oppressors, likely from a sense of shared vulnerability during Indian extermination period and Chinese exclusion. Lightfoot (2005) identifies interethnic unions as strategies to build political alliances, provide sex partners, and provide intermediaries in pluralistic colonial contexts. While Lightfoot specifically examined these strategies employed by California Natives peoples through Spanish and Russian colonial periods, it is possible (if not probable) that the Chinese used this strategy after California passed anti-miscegenation laws outlawing Chinese-white marriage after 1880. Investigation of how community and identity were created, negotiated, and performed within frontier contexts cannot ignore interactions among marginalized groups at Mono Mills and other urban peripheries.

By considering the “small-scale daily activities of individuals negotiating, appropriating, living in, and suffering through particular labor regimes,” labor here is thought of as practice (Silliman 2001, p. 381). As practice, labor is more than economic and is a form of social action and a vital medium of agency and resistance (Silliman 2001, 2005). Resistance and agency in the context of labor inequalities may be seen at Mono Mills through the mundane economic interactions and exchange of food and material items between Chinese and Paiute workers.

### **Making the Past Relevant**

Preliminary analyses of Mono Mills suggest that Chinese, Paiute, and European American objects were “intertwined in the material practices of daily life” (Voss 2005a, p. 432). Foodways particularly were part of interethnic material interactions, as shown by pine nuts and obsidian use in the Chinatown household, a porcelain Four Seasons spoon in the Paiute neighborhood, and stories of gifted prime cuts of meat.

Beyond the existence of these interactions, little is known of the role such relationships or coalitions played in the histories of these groups and in the development of towns on the late nineteenth-century mining frontier.

As research on the archaeological collection from Mono Mills continues, these preliminary interpretations will be re-examined. It is expected that Chinese and Paiute cultural practices were more complex than can be traditionally described by historical archaeology models of acculturation (see Voss 2005a), and an archaeology of Mono Mills is positioned to address questions regarding the arenas of ethnic, gendered, and class identities and sociopolitical context of labor dynamics in California. Comparisons of material practices among households in each of these neighborhoods will further elaborate suites of economic and social strategies and show differences among members of an ethnicity. Along with these material traces for subaltern coalitions at Mono Mills, topics for further study include: how cultural practices of various groups (including ethnic, class differentiated, or gendered groups) participated in ongoing production of identities and communities; the degree of homosociality in mill and railroad workers' neighborhoods; the influence of Paiute and Chinese workers on the regional economic system; and migration patterns of workers to and from Mono Mills as work availability changed.

As “nonwhites,” Chinese were socially and politically marginalized along with African-Americans and Native Americans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1939, Elmer Sandmeyer argued that Americans felt the Chinese were responsible for their lot in life because of their resistance to acculturate into Anglo society (Aarim-Heriot 2003, p. 3)—this view may also loosely contextualize California's historical policies against Native Americans since the secularization of the Franciscan missions. Evidence for cohabitation, economic or social cohesion, intermarriage, and regional social networking for job opportunities suggest vital coalitions among these groups. Further, alliances to withstand European American social exclusion may expand our understanding of the attitudes and alliances between groups following the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), California Indian extermination campaigns (1850s), and other exclusionist legislation. As a testimony to this painful past, Little (2007) suggests that archaeology plays a significant role in rewriting documentary history to include multivocality from historically marginalized communities.

The archaeology of the Chinese and Paiute experience on the mining frontier of the Gilded Age is poised to present such a perspective of agency amidst repressive social and economic policies. The parallel histories of discrimination against Native peoples and Overseas Chinese mar this past but must not be relegated once again to a hidden history. In light of the past 150 years of California anti-immigrant politics (Gendzel 2009), archaeologists and historians must consider the impact these policies had on California's diverse communities. Current immigration policies and politics of belonging in California are in no small measure the continuing reverberation of these issues. From the author's perspective, stories of discriminatory legislation are not complete unless they also include discussions of how legislation historically structured action and agency within and between targeted populations, and the archaeological telling of the story of Mono Mills aims to do just that.

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