Asian American Studies in Historical Archaeology

Edward Staski

Introduction

In this chapter, consideration is given to the history and current state of the historical archaeology of Asian Americans. The chapter begins with a discussion of how Asian American historical archaeology got started in the 1970s. This discussion is followed by a review of how this field has developed through the decades, up to the present day. Developmental trends in Asian American historical archaeology are identified. These include the emergence of increasingly sophisticated methods that have allowed for more useful comparative studies; a growing interest in theoretical matters, making it possible for historical archaeologists to not only describe but also explain Asian American experiences; and the growing primacy of assimilation studies among historical archaeologists studying Asian Americans, only to be very recently challenged by a growing postprocessual interest in individual agency, resistance to accommodation, and other postmodern concerns.

A number of future directions and developments are then recommended. First, there is the need to expand our geographic and temporal horizons by implementing diverse research strategies both in places where Asian Americans originated and in places where they settled. Second, advances in methods are required to better identify and interpret the Asian American archaeological record. Finally, it is always imperative to evaluate critically and advance competing theoretical perspectives so that the best possible explanations can be made.

E. Staski e-mail: estaski@nmsu.edu

Historical archaeology is defined here in its broadest sense to include all contexts for which there are both material remains and documents available for study. All Asian American experiences fall within the purview of historical archaeology. Most Asians could write about their experiences in America, and most of the people they found in America could write about them. Thus, there are available material remains and documents from "both sides" of the contact that occurred. Few of the participants originated from prehistoric or protohistoric societies. Those that did were members of various Native American societies, and contact between them and Asian Americans appears to have been limited. Studying Asian Americans is not an exercise in prehistory or even ethnohistory. It is, by its nature, a most suitable topic of investigation by historical archaeologists.

The Beginnings of Asian American Historical Archaeology

The emergence and early growth of Asian American historical archaeology mirrors the emergence and early growth of archaeological studies of ethnicity in general (Staski, 1990). These were originally inspired by the larger political and social climate of the 1960s, which resulted in civil-rights legislation, calls for affirmative action and other mitigating measures, related social unrest across the country, and a universal expansion of scholarly interest in ethnicity. Almost all of the earliest studies of ethnicity in historical archaeology came about as part of the dramatic expansion of the discipline itself, however, which occurred in the 1970s and

T. Majewski, D. Gaimster (eds.), *International Handbook of Historical Archaeology*,
DOI 10.1007/978-0-387-72071-5_20, © Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2009

1980s because of the legal mandates of cultural resource management (CRM) (cf. Ayres, 1994:483). Before the 1970s, there was little archaeological interest in ethnic group experiences in the United States, and it is doubtful that much interest would have developed without the legal requirements that relatively recent historical times and experiences be explored.

Early Asian American historical archaeology, like much CRM work, emphasized certain methodological concerns (e.g., recognizing Asian American material remains) and description (which was often limited to the material reflections of diet and drug use). The distinctive nature of Asian American assemblages was noted, though there was minimal theoretical concern about why these assemblages were so distinct. Little theory of any kind was developed, and research efforts were not coordinated. As a result, various descriptive schemes (e.g., artifact classifications) were produced that could not be compared easily with one another. Efforts were limited to a rather narrow range of contexts and site types, including urban Chinatowns, mining camps, railroad camps, and some fishing or agricultural areas. Almost no attention was given to Asian Americans other than the Chinese.

A few pioneering works, however, suggested that Asian American historical archaeology had greater scholarly potential. In the 1970s, Roberta Greenwood published a number of innovative studies that later researchers would emulate (Greenwood, 1975, 1976). Then, in 1980, Robert Schuyler compiled and edited a collection of diverse articles on Asian American (and African American) historical archaeology, the first of its kind to be published (Schuyler, 1980). Two years later, Randall McGuire offered a theory-focused synthesis of then-current investigations of ethnicity in general (McGuire, 1982). These studies of ethnicity in historical archaeology, including studies of Asian Americans, started to mature.

Recent Concerns

Asian American historical archaeology has become more sophisticated in recent years, as have all archaeological studies of ethnicity. Methodological concerns and descriptive studies have continued, of course, though these have become more standardized and thus more comparable (e.g., Chung and Wegars, 2005; Cohen, 2000; Layton, 2002; Wegars, 2003a, 2003b; see especially Wegars (1994) for a discussion of her pioneering efforts in this arena). Communication among historical archaeologists studying Asian Americans has increased and become more productive. (Certain other limitations, however, have continued; see the recommendations section below.) There has also been a growing interest in theoretical matters, as scholarship on Asian history and anthropology has been increasingly incorporated into the research designs and interpretive studies of archaeology (e.g., Cassel, 2002).

Most recently, a number of historical archaeologists have applied postprocessual perspectives in their attempts to interpret and explain ethnic identity and experiences (e.g., Jones, 1997, 1999; Lydon, 1999). Inspired by other postprocessual archaeologists (e.g., Hodder, 1986; Preucel, 1991, 1995; Shanks and Tilley, 1987) and certain other scholars who study Asian Americans (e.g., social constructivists such as Min [2002]), these historical archaeologists focus on individual agency, dissention and resistance to change or accommodation in the face of culture contact, and the related methodological challenge of observing and measuring such phenomena in the archaeological record. Their critique of classic assimilation studies in archaeology and in scholarship generally (e.g., Alba and Nee, 2003) raises the question of how best archaeologists might study ethnicity and ethnic identity.

Assimilation

Despite these inroads by the postprocessualist thinkers, the nature of assimilation among Asian Americans remains the primary theoretical and methodological issue in Asian American studies in historical archaeology. For a sampling of recent, germane assimilation studies in the social sciences, see Alba and Nee (2003), Krysan and Lewis (2004), Lee and Zhou (2004); Min (2002), and Rumbaut and Portes (2001). Ways of recognizing, recording, measuring, and interpreting degrees of assimilation, in both the archaeological and documentary

records, have become the major concerns. This development reflects the continuing assumption that Asian Americans maintained much more ethnic separation than most other groups who immigrated to the western hemisphere.

Historical archaeologists have found it difficult to explain this apparent high degree of ethnic separation. Attempts to define such basic concepts as *ethnic group* and *assimilation* have turned out to be problematic. To be useful, the definitions must be consistent with the views of anthropologists, historians, and other social scientists who have studied ethnic phenomena. They must also be designed with a clear understanding of the inherent strengths and weaknesses of historical archaeology (e.g., the ability to observe and measure only a limited number of sociocultural experiences in the archaeological record).

This task has not been straightforward. Over the past several decades, various definitions for ethnic group and assimilation have been proposed. Available ethnic group definitions, for example, stress such diverse factors as (1) patterns of ecologic–economic interdependencies (Abruzzi, 1982; Barth, 1969:7–38); (2) psychological identification and a shared sense of "peoplehood" (DeVos, 1975; Gordon, 1964:24–29; Royce, 1982:17–50); (3) the quest for political and social power through exploitation of ethnic identity (Aronson, 1976; Krysan and Lewis 2004; McGuire, 1982; Min 2002; Vincent, 1974); and (4) the sociobiological importance of extending kinship ties and altruistic behavior (van den Berghe, 1981). As a result of this diversity of opinion, the very concept of "ethnic group" remains multifaceted and to some degree unclear. Deciding what factors should be emphasized in historical archaeological research has not been accomplished easily.

A definition potentially useful to historical archaeologists is one that recognizes the ethnic group as a special kind of social group, one serving two related functions (Staski, 2002a). A social group can be defined as a "collectivity whose members share common beliefs, values, attitudes, standards of behavior, as well as symbols that represent that group" (Henry, 1987:360). What makes an ethnic group distinctive is that it provides members with a symbolically ascriptive and exclusive subculture with which to identify and allows members to confine primary relationships to others within this subculture.

"Ascriptive" means that members must be born into the group, while "exclusive" means that group membership is fixed. In truly ascriptive and exclusive groups—a caste is a good example—membership is determined by sociocultural criteria that cannot be easily manipulated by individuals. These groups have clear, firm boundaries, and attempts to move from one group to another can often prove futile. The ascriptive and exclusive qualities of ethnic groups are strictly symbolic, however, and individuals are often provided with opportunities to change the groups with which they are identified. They can consciously manipulate the symbols of ethnicity and, when successful, can use these symbols to claim or reject ethnic group membership.

As mentioned, the second function of ethnic groups is to allow members to confine primary relationships to others within the symbolically ascriptive and exclusive group. Primary relationships are those that are personal, intimate, informal, face-to-face and require the involvement of the entire personality (Gordon, 1964:32). Identification with the ethnic group serves to establish these relationships with others who claim the same identification and, by doing so, appears to enhance social integration. Ethnic groups also provide familiar settings and economic support to individuals through the process of networking (Praetzellis et al., 1987). Finally, traditional culture, religion, language, and a sense of common origin are often kept vital within ethnic groups, a characteristic that distinguishes them from social clubs and occupational associations. All of these functions of ethnic groups are especially useful among immigrants in large, complex societies, for whom the external sociocultural system can be quite impersonal and unsupportive (Helms, 1978).

A useful definition of assimilation must logically follow from this definition of ethnic group (Staski, 2002b). "Assimilation" is therefore defined as a process that, if completed, eliminates the need for and the operation of the two ethnic group functions described previously. Acculturation, it should be pointed out, is merely one aspect of this process, the one that eliminates particular behavioral and material patterns that symbolically distinguish those individuals who are members from those

who are not. The balance of the assimilatory process involves structural changes necessary to alter patterns of primary relations. These include structural assimilation, a pivotal process by which primary relationships are rearranged (Gordon, 1964:61–81).

Historical archaeologists have emphasized acculturation in their studies at the expense of all other aspects of assimilation. It is easy to see why. Studying patterns of behavior and patterns of material culture is, after all, what archaeologists do. Other aspects of assimilation are not so easily observed archaeologically. Unfortunately, these other aspects are significant and meaningful to both the people undergoing assimilation and others interacting with them in the context of culture contact and change (Gordon, 1964, 1978). They need to be understood if the nature and the history of assimilation are going to be grasped in any important sense. This is particularly true of structural assimilation.

Some methodological suggestions on how archaeologists might study structural assimilation are presented by Ennes and Staski (1995). They focus on how Hispanics and other Euroamerican people have interacted in the southern New Mexican town of Las Cruces. It is argued that the relative placement of graves in historical-period cemeteries (for which there are grave markers reflecting date of death and ethnicity) is a measure of the degree to which primary relationships were maintained among ethnic group members. Both acculturation *and* structural assimilation seem to have increased through time, in this case.

What appears so outstanding about Asian Americans is that they experienced little of either acculturation or structural assimilation. The seeming resistance to all forms of assimilation has been observed by historical archaeologists in several realms.

Spatial Separation

The spatial separation of Asian Americans from non-Asian Americans is the most obvious of these various realms, and so it is considered first. In urban areas, spatial separation was maintained by the establishment of Chinatowns and similar insular neighborhoods. In rural areas, segregated Asian American camps and settlements were the norm. Domestic and occupational activities were often restricted to these places. Asian Americans, apparently, did not spatially mix with other people very much (Dubrow, 2000).

Internally, these neighborhoods and settlements were distinctive in several spatial senses, further symbolizing the resistance to assimilation. Residents of Chinatowns were compelled to occupy structures designed and built (and often previously occupied) by non-Chinese. These residents were almost always too poor to own the structures and could only rent from absentee landlords. Thus, they had little influence over architectural form and layout on a grand scale. Asian Americans in rural settlements also appear to have had limited influence, though in these places spatial arrangements were dictated more by occupational demands. Still, it is notable that many minor (and some not so minor) spatial alterations were achieved, giving Chinatowns and other settlements across North America a distinctive spatial sense.

Domestic and occupational spaces were often contiguous, or even overlapping. This was especially true in crowded urban settings occupied by Asian Americans, and it continued well after the time when these spheres had been separated in other neighborhoods (Rothschild, 1990). Diverse activities were concentrated behind structures—in private, enclosed places hidden from general view. Floor plans were nevertheless often long and narrow, so that there could be numerous openings directly onto the public street (Greenwood, 1996:141). Of course, these and several other spatial characteristics might more directly reflect economic conditions rather than ethnic distinctions.

However, the principles of *feng shui* were possibly followed to varying degrees, though historical archaeologists have found it difficult to determine how, or how much (Greenwood, 1993:384–386; Sisson, 1993:38–39). These principles influenced structural location, form, and orientation in an attempt to bring human action into harmony with the natural world. A structure should be located to the north of a calm body of water, for instance, its front directed toward the south (i.e., overlooking the water). It should be square or rectangular, as should the settlement in which it is located. The entire settlement, ideally, should be oriented along the north–south axis.

These and other *feng shui* principles might be reflected at certain Asian American archaeological sites, though, as mentioned, it is likely that many of the observed spatial patterns (including many not even remotely related to *feng shui,* though potentially of ethnic significance) are more the result of economic expediency. Indeed, economic conditions seem to have resulted in a wide array of distinctive spatial characteristics. Chinatowns were crowded because most Chinese immigrants were poor. Alleyways and streets were filled with animals and surplus goods because residents could not afford to keep them elsewhere. Refuse accumulation was a constant problem because many government and other authorities failed to provide adequate sanitation services to these poverty-stricken neighborhoods.

Sociocultural Separation

Sociocultural separation was maintained by Asian Americans by the transference of traditional organizations to America (e.g., family associations, district societies, and the tongs) and by the establishment of insular leadership hierarchies that paralleled those of the dominant, Euroamerican society (e.g., the election of "mayors" and "aldermen" within Asian American communities, independent of American politics and law). There were also very few biethnic marriages among Asian and non-Asian Americans, despite a general absence of Asian women during the first several decades of Asian American history (cf. Greenwood (1993, 1994, 1996:20–21), who points out correctly that there were relatively few women of *any* ethnic identity on the American frontier; see also Hardesty (1994) and Wegars (1993) on Asian American women). By these means, Asian Americans sustained a level of cultural self-sufficiency that might have been greater than that enjoyed by other immigrant groups.

The experiences of Chinese Americans in El Paso, Texas, reflect this ability to be culturally self-sufficient, despite certain difficulties (Staski, 1985:24–31; also see Staski, 1993). Edward Rhoads's (1977) innovative study of grave markers in the Chinese section of Concordia Cemetery suggests that almost all of the Chinese in El Paso came from the "Four Counties" region of Guangdong Province, with over half from Taishan, about one-third from Kaiping, and the remainder from either Enping or Xinhui. Although these locales are near one another, the rigors of emigration and, specifically, the absence of women and other kin made it impossible to maintain previous sociocultural ties. In their place, the overseas branch of the revolutionary Triad Society (the Chee Kung Tong) gradually became a central institution of the El Paso community. By 1892, a decade after the settlement began, almost half of the city's Chinese belonged to this ritual brotherhood. Its influence, particularly its role in giving economic support to members (see below), continued to grow throughout the remainder of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Rhoads, 1977).

By the end of the nineteenth century, the cultural self-sufficiency of El Paso's Chinese community had reached a degree that "they even had their own unofficial but universally recognized 'mayor,' who in the period around 1910 was the cafe owner Mar Wing Kee" (Rhoads, 1977:13–14). This "mayor" was undoubtedly the agreed-upon leader of the community, a recognized position of authority commonly found in Asian communities across America (Light, 1972; Staski, 1985:29).

Economic Separation

Great efforts were made by Asian Americans to maintain economic ties to their homeland, especially so that traditional materials and commodities could be acquired. Additionally, particular occupations were preferred among Asian Americans. Many of these occupations could be practiced within the Asian community, contributing to segregation at the workplace. While many Asian American men came to the United States in order to make more money than they could at home, they did not want to become active or permanent participants in the American economy.

In El Paso, growing economic self-sufficiency within the Chinese community is obvious in both the documentary and archaeological records. A number of Chinese merchandise stores, carrying goods from China and other Asian nations, were

in operation several years after the establishment of Chinatown. Three of these stores existed in 1886 (Farrar, 1972), seven by 1892, and eight by 1907 (Rhoads, 1977). It thus appears that El Paso's Chinatown enjoyed increasing economic self-sufficiency through time, as ties to the west coast and China became stronger.

Archaeological data support this view. However, it appears that a portion of the Chinese community preferred certain non-Chinese materials during the later years of the community's existence, despite the increasing availability of Chinese goods (see Staski (1985:96–243) for methodological details). The data suggest that just over half of all ceramic materials used by *all* associated Chinese residents were coming from China during the early 1890s. By the late 1890s, this figure had climbed to over 60%. Then, by the early twentieth century, over 85% of the ceramics used by *some* of these Chinese residents were manufactured in China. It seems that the growth of economic self-sufficiency in El Paso's Chinese community is archaeologically observable.

Yet, as mentioned, only some members of the community were depending on Chinese ceramics to a greater extent as availability improved. Only certain early twentieth-century deposits contain about 85% Chinese ceramics and 15% non-Chinese ceramics. Other contemporary deposits suggest a concurrent decline in dependence at this time (down to about 10% Chinese ceramics and 90% non-Chinese ceramics). Thus, the overall temporal pattern is one of initial overall increase of dependence followed by a growing range of dependence on Chinese goods. These complex data might reflect a degree of acculturation among certain members of the community.

Behavioral Separation

Studied by historical archaeologists since the beginning of Asian American research, behavioral separation was maintained in a number of ways. These included the relatively successful preservation of distinctive patterns of diet and dress. Archaeologists are, of course, uniquely qualified to study patterns of behavior, though they should not do so at the expense of other issues. With particular relevance to this discussion, we should not limit ourselves to studying the lack of significant acculturation and ignore the lack of assimilation in general (see elsewhere in this chapter). A certain amount of assimilation (i.e., acculturation) nonetheless occurred among Asian Americans, even in the more traditional behavioral arenas of diet and dress, and the evidence for it deserves mention (cf. Fong, 1980:5–6).

Dietary patterns are most often inferred from the highly distinctive traditional Asian ceramics, ubiquitous at Asian American archaeological sites. These patterns are also evident in the unique macrobotanical and faunal assemblages to be recovered (e.g., Diehl et al., 1998). Chinese ceramics can be placed in two broad functional (and stylistic) categories: (1) brown, stoneware vessels used to transport and store foodstuffs, including food jars of various sizes, soy sauce jars, and wine jars and (2) porcelain tablewares of various forms (e.g., tea cups without handles, spoons, bowls from which food was eaten, larger bowls from which food was served) and styles (e.g., Double Happiness, Bamboo, Celadon, and Four Seasons types). These have all been described in detail elsewhere (Frierman, 1983; Greenwood, 1996:67–86; Olsen, 1978). The abundance of the stoneware vessels is commonly used as evidence for the heroic efforts immigrants made to maintain their traditional diet, while the presence of the porcelains is thought to reflect the continuation of the traditional table service.

Evidence for acculturation nevertheless appears with the presence of Euroamerican and other non-Asian ceramics within many contexts of almost all Asian American archaeological sites. The ceramic assemblages unearthed in downtown El Paso, described previously, are not uncommon.

Acculturation is also suggested in patterns of dress. Certain Asian American men appear to have worn a significant amount of western clothing, though not all the time. This clothing supplemented rather than replaced traditional Asian attire. Men would wear it when they were in contact with the non-Asian American community, when it served their cultural and economic purposes to do so (i.e., when it would minimize discrimination and maximize cultural and economic returns), and when it was practical (e.g., when harsh working conditions

required it). Viewed this way, the use of western clothing by Asian American men appears to be more adaptation than assimilation (Lyman, 1976; see below). Regardless, the archaeological record from Asian American contexts is replete with leather shoe parts, buttons from western shirts and other articles of clothing, and other durable items of men's haberdashery (e.g., Greenwood, 1996:87–91).

Linguistic Separation

Many Asians did not learn English, Spanish, or any other language when they immigrated to America. The cultural and economic self-sufficiency enjoyed in many of their communities, combined with the desire among most immigrants to be temporary residents only, made linguistic assimilation unnecessary. The general isolation of these same communities together with the ubiquitous hostility exhibited by non-Asians made it difficult.

Still, a certain degree of emerging bilingualism is evident in both the archaeological and documentary records. Certain recovered glass and ceramic vessels, originally holding a variety of products, exhibit embossed writing or labels in more than one language (usually Chinese and English). The fact that many of these vessels formerly contained proprietary or other medical products suggests that health practices involved a degree of assimilation unseen in other arenas (see also Greenwood, 1994, 1996:109–116).

Two glass bottles recovered from El Paso's Chinatown illustrate bilingual usage. The label on one American-made beer bottle advertises in Chinese a "wine" considered by some to be useful in promoting male virility (Fig. 1 [from Staski, 1985:Fig. 9.1]). The brand name, type of alcohol, and supposed results of its consumption are all described. The other artifact, a familiar Dr. J. Hostetter's Stomach Bitters bottle, has a Chinese label advertising some sort of liquid useful for the cleaning of clothing (Fig. 2 [from Staski, 1985:Fig. 9.2]). What is most remarkable about these two bottles is that their labels bear both Chinese and English writing.

The beer bottle clearly has the word "CHINA" written near the top. The Hostetter's bottle has a portion of the English statement ". . . moved to 513 Sixth . . ." written along the side. Additionally, of course, they both contain a fair amount of information in Chinese. It is unquestionable that these bottles, and the contents within them, were intended for Chinese American consumers, and so a degree of linguistic assimilation is suggested.

Fig. 1 An American-made beer bottle recovered from downtown El Paso, Texas. The Chinese writing on the label advertises a "wine" that promotes male virility (from Staski, 1985:Fig. 9.1)

Summary

Historical archaeologists have tried to explain why there was so much resistance to assimilation among Asian Americans. They have suggested a combination

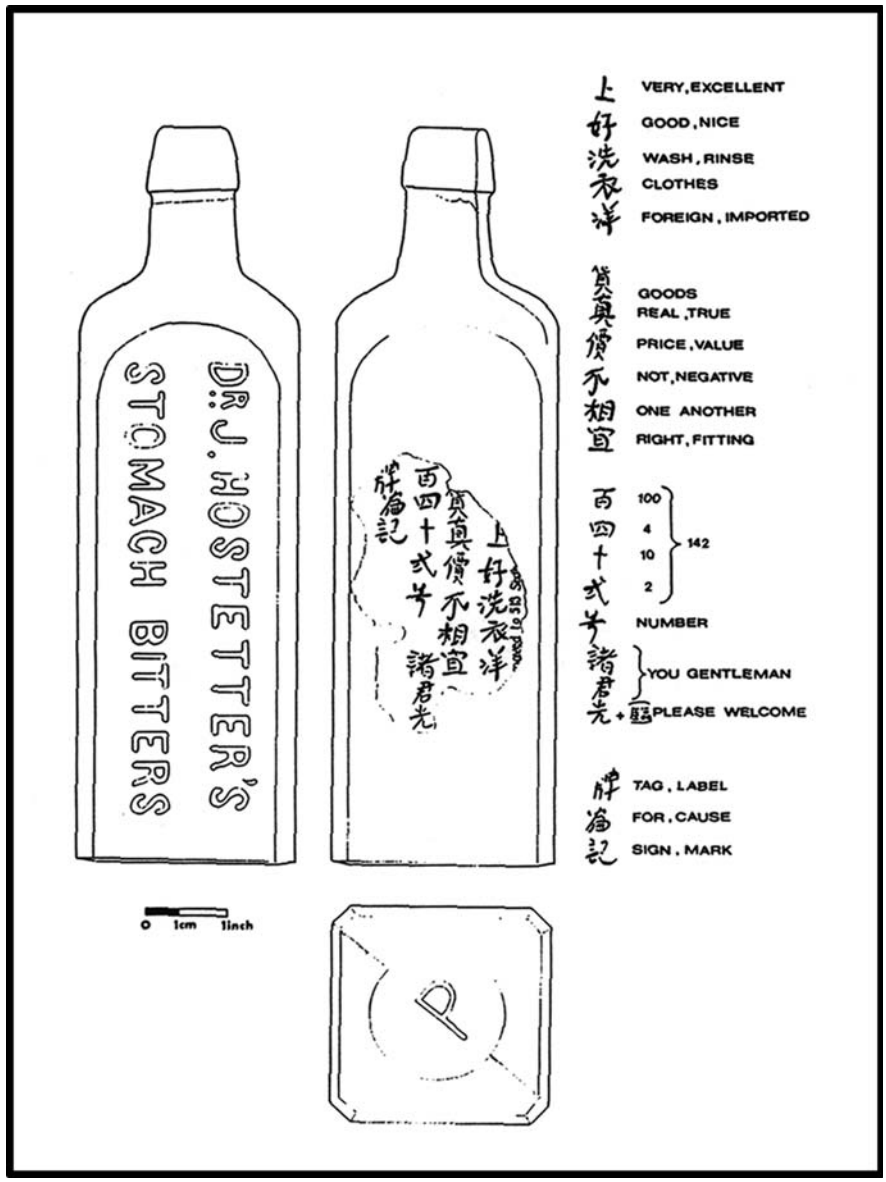

Fig. 2 A Dr. J. Hostetter's Stomach Bitters bottle recovered from downtown El Paso, Texas. The Chinese writing on the label advertises a product useful for cleaning clothes (from Staski, 1985:Fig. 9.2)

of internal and external factors. The former include the general Asian American desire to stay in the United States for a short time only (at least during the early history of immigration), while the latter include the widespread discrimination imposed by the greater society. These and other factors seem to have had a dramatic impact on the Asian American experience.

Greenwood (1994) offers some cautions regarding the uncritical acceptance of this scenario. She correctly argues that Asian Americans as a population might have been less homogeneous throughout their history than is often assumed (see also Fong, 1980:12). Their experiences and reactions to these experiences were varied, too. Indeed, the evidence for assimilation might be better explained as a reasonable, necessary adaptive strategy carried out by a minority in a foreign land who nevertheless maintained a degree of ethnic separation (e.g., Lyman, 1976). Thus, much of it was "acculturation only" (Gordon, 1964), exhibited only when it was culturally or economically useful (the use of western clothing is a possible example; see above). Further

consideration of this possibility will undoubtedly result in a more precise understanding of the issue.

Future Directions and Concerns: Recommendations

Asian American historical archaeology has not reached its full potential in a number of important ways. Several recommendations for future directions and developments can be preferred [see a similar discussion in Greenwood (1993)].

Expanding the Horizons

First, there is a need to conduct comparable historical archaeology in Asia, in those areas from where Asian Americans originated. Doing so would supply "baseline" data reflecting the conditions of life among those who emigrated. Material culture as well as documents originating from the emigrants should be investigated. There is also a need to conduct ethnoarchaeology in Asia. Although admirable ethnoarchaeological research has been done (e.g., Longacre and Skibo, 1994), none of it has been designed to address questions regarding Asian emigration to the western hemisphere. Studies of this kind could be very informative.

There is also a need to conduct additional, comparable historical archaeological research (along with ethnoarchaeology) in all those places where Asian emigrants settled. Research should once again be designed to address issues of emigration. At this time, most projects have been located in the western United States. Only a handful of studies have occurred elsewhere, and some of these are only marginally related to American historical archaeology. Locations include Africa (e.g., Sassoon, 1978; Woodward, 1974), New Zealand and Australia (Bell 1996; Jack et al., 1984; Ritchie, 1983, 1986, 1993), and Canada (e.g., Kerr, 1979; Kerr and Bugslag, 1978). Almost all of the Asians studied in these places were not Asian *Americans*, of course. Learning more about their experiences would, nonetheless, help clarify Asian American history. Understanding the Asian immigrant experience worldwide would help illuminate that experience in any particular place.

Finally, there is a need to conduct ethnoarchaeological studies among current residents of Asian American communities. Oral history, providing an additional avenue of inquiry into the recent past, should be an integral part of such research. Many Asian American settlements, especially the numerous Chinatowns formerly present in so many American cities, survived well in the twentieth century. Those that persist today exhibit cultural and behavioral continuity with the Asian American past and are thus settings for potentially fruitful research.

Methodological and Substantive Advances

There is a need to develop better temporal controls over Asian American material culture assemblages. Without them, the comparative study of changing Asian American experiences will remain unsophisticated. Historical archaeologists generally have data that can precisely date the material remains of interest (e.g., documents and certain formal characteristics on artifacts that reflect manufacturing technology and use). The nature of Asian material culture, however, has resulted in certain unique dating problems. Many technological and stylistic traditions appear to have survived over long periods of time, and certain items (e.g., coins) are known to have been reused over decades and even centuries. Precise dating has thus been unattainable at many Asian American sites and will remain so until better strategies are developed (see Greenwood, 1993, 1996).

Similarly, there is a need to develop better methods of artifact and feature identification, and better systems of classification (see, e.g., Steele, 1993; Stenger, 1993; Wegars 2003a, 2003b). It is especially important to create meaningful, informative ceramic classifications that reflect historical and cultural reality (ethnoarchaeology might be very useful in accomplishing this task; see previous discussion). These classifications should be designed so that they can be used uniformly at the greatest number of Asian American sites possible, so that comparative studies can be undertaken (Greenwood, 1993, 1996).

Additionally, there is a need to investigate a greater range of historical and cultural contexts. A rather limited number of contexts have been focused upon to date (e.g., urban Chinatowns, mining camps, railroad camps, and some fishing/agricultural areas). Certainly, Asian Americans lived in other settings that, perhaps as a result, have escaped archaeological attention. There is also a need to study categories of material culture (and related behaviors) beyond the ceramic and faunal remains that have received so much scrutiny. Architectural forms and general issues regarding the Asian American landscape deserve more study. Items of personal adornment, such as clothing and jewelry, should be investigated further. Botanical remains reflect so much of the Asian American diet and should be given as much (if not more) attention as animal bones. The material correlates of mortuary practices need to be researched extensively (Chung and Wegars, 2005).

More interdisciplinary work on the Asian American experience should be conducted. Historical archaeologists must more thoroughly incorporate the scholarly contributions of historians, sociologists, cultural anthropologists, geographers, and others. A number of valuable contributions from these disciplines are now available (e.g., Anderson, 1988; Barth, 1964; Daniels, 1988; Chang, 1977; Chen, 1980; Great Basin Foundation, 1987; Knapp, 1986; Krysan and Lewis, 2004; Mark and Chih, 1982; Min, 2002; Spier, 1958a, 1958b; Takaki, 1989). Interdisciplinary work coordinated by historical archaeologists would result in many more, of even greater value. Academic departments of Asian Studies would be good places to begin coordination efforts.

Finally, there is a need to broaden our focus, from an almost exclusive concern with Chinese Americans to a broader and more representative concern with Asian Americans of all national and ethnic identities. In a related sense, it is important to stop viewing Asian Americans (or Chinese Americans, or even Chinese Americans from Guangzhou) as a monolithic, tradition-bound, universally impoverished group that has exhibited neither variation nor change (see Stapp, 1993, and Greenwood, 1993, for enlightened views). Asia, the largest and most populous continent on earth, has for millennia exhibited enormous sociocultural and economic diversity. People from many ethnic and economic backgrounds immigrated to America and elsewhere over the past centuries. Historical archaeologists need to investigate the Asian American experience in the broadest possible historical and cultural contexts.

Theoretical Advances

There is a need for additional archaeological research into the nature of ethnic identity, culture contact, assimilation, and the various other ways Asian Americans have responded to their circumstances. Historical archaeologists must demonstrate to themselves and other scholars that they can make important, unique theoretical contributions. Admittedly, this argument has been made ad nauseam, it seems, for at least 40 years; and yet, little has changed. The seemingly never-ending image of archaeology as a "strategy of last resort," a "handmaiden to history" that is somehow not as theoretically rigorous as other intellectual endeavors must finally be put to rest.

In summary, there is great potential for Asian American historical archaeology. The venues and topics explored could (and should) be expanded. Methodological, substantive, and theoretical advances must continue, resulting in more mature and rewarding scholarship. There is little question that this expansion and advancement will occur. Interest in the Asian American experience is being expressed by a growing number of historical archaeologists, and there is no apparent reason why this interest will diminish.

Conclusions

Asian American studies in historical archaeology continue to thrive and mature. The primary theoretical and methodological concern remains the recognition and interpretation of ethnic identity and assimilation. These studies are becoming more impressive, though it is clearly the case that improvements are possible. It is likely that these improvements will result in a clearer, more precise understanding of the Asian American experience.

They might even result in a fundamental reassessment of some basic assumptions.

Indeed, perhaps in the final analysis, Asian Americans will be viewed as not so very different than other immigrant groups to the western hemisphere. Perhaps they resisted (and were discouraged from) assimilation to about the same degree as others. Nearly all immigrants to America, after all, have found it distasteful and difficult to reject their heritage in order to accommodate the host society. In turn, the host society, no matter when and no matter what its ethnic composition is at the time, has made a concerted effort to keep immigrant ethnic groups separate, so that they could not shape "mainstream" culture in any manner whatsoever. Members of the host society—earlier immigrants—have shared a belief that they assimilated relatively easily when compared to the experiences of current immigrants, but this has never been the case. The particular ethnic groups involved in this dynamic relationship have changed through time; the myth has remained constant.

The history of certain ethnic group relations in North America is revealing. From Colonial times to the mid-nineteenth century, English residents in the east resisted the influences of Irish, Welsh, and German immigrants, among others. Then, from the mid-nineteenth through the early-twentieth centuries, residents of English, Irish, Welsh, and German ancestry acted in unison (as if they had by then become the mainstream) to resist the influences of eastern and southern Europeans, and Asians, who were by that time arriving. Finally, from the early twentieth century until today, there has been growing resistance among the most recent version of the mainstream (including descendants of English, Irish, Welsh, German, eastern and southern European, and many Asian immigrants) to the influences of Hispanic and other immigrants (see Levine, 1996:121–131). The long history of Hispanic influences in the west is, of course, another story altogether. And all along, Native Americans and African Americans resisted giving up those aspects of their heritage that they could maintain, while the host society kept them marginalized.

In reality, the ethnic composition (and thus the cultural fabric) of the American mainstream has experienced constant change. All ethnic immigrants have resisted total assimilation. To a surprising degree, they have succeeded and, by doing so, have reshaped American culture despite the best efforts of the mainstream. When studying ethnicity, historical archaeologists need to sufficiently recognize the ever-changing nature of this culture, this mainstream of numerous currents that are always being introduced, if they are to contribute significant insights into American history.

Acknowledgments Thanks to Teresita Majewski for asking me to write this chapter. Thanks also to various people in the Department of Community and Human Development, City of El Paso, Texas, for giving me a chance to excavate El Paso's Chinatown, my introduction to Asian American historical archaeology. I am especially grateful to Roberta Greenwood, recognized leader in this area of inquiry, who has been an inspiration for more than two decades.

References

Abruzzi, W.S., 1982, Ecological Theory and Ethnic Differentiation among Human Populations. *Current Anthropology* 23:13–35.

Alba, R., and Nee, V., 2003, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Anderson, E.N., 1988, *The Food of China*. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

Aronson, D.R., 1976, Ethnicity as a Cultural System. In *Ethnicity in the Americas,* edited by F. Henry, pp. 9–19. Mouton, The Hague.

Ayres, J.E., 1994, The Archaeology of Chinese Sites in Arizona. In *Origins and Destinations: 41 Essays on Chinese America,* pp. 483–489. Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Barth, F., 1969, Introduction. In *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries,* edited by F. Barth, pp. 7–38. Little Brown, Boston, Massachusetts.

Barth, G., 1964, *Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850–1870*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Bell, P., 1996, Archaeology of the Chinese in Australia. *Australian Historical Archaeology* 14:13–18.

Cassel, S.L., editor, 2002, *The Chinese in America: A History from Gold Mountain to the New Mellennium*. AltaMira, Walnut Creek, California.

Chang, K.C., 1977, *Food in Chinese Culture*. Yale University Press, New Haven, Connecticut.

Chen, J., 1980, *The Chinese of America*. Harper and Row, San Francisco, California.

Chung, S.F., and Wegars, P., editors, 2005, *Chinese American Death Rituals: Respecting the Ancestors*. AltaMira, Walnut Creek, California.

Cohen, A., 2000, *Introduction to Research in Chinese Source Materials*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

Daniels, R., 1988, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850*. University of Washington Press, Seattle.

DeVos, G., 1975, Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation. In *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change,* edited by G. DeVos and L. Romanucci-Ross, pp. 5–41. Mayfield, Palo Alto, California.

Diehl, M., Waters, J.A., and Thiel, J.H., 1998, Acculturation and the Composition of the Diet of Tucson's Overseas Chinese Gardeners at the Turn of the Century. *Historical Archaeology* 32(4):19–33.

Dubrow, G.L., 2000, Asian American Imprints on the Western Landscape. In *Cultural Landscapes in America,* edited by A.R. Alanen and R.Z. Melnick, pp. 143–221. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland.

Ennes, M.J., and Staski, E., 1995, Archaeology and the Study of Assimilation: Some Suggestions and a Case Study. *North American Archaeologist* 16:303–316.

Farrar, N., 1972, *The Chinese in El Paso*. Southwestern Studies Monograph No. 33. Texas Western Press, University of Texas, El Paso.

Fong, L.M., 1980, *Sojourners and Settlers*. The Chinese Experience in Arizona and Northern Mexico, vol. 1, edited by T.A. Row, pp. 1–30. Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

Frierman, J.D., 1983, Chinese Ceramics in the New Melones Area. In *Review and Synthesis of Research at Historical Sites,* compiled by R.S. Greenwood and L.H. Shoup, pp. 175–200. Final Report of the New Melones Archaeological Project, California, vol. 7. Coyote Press, Salinas, California.

Gordon, M.M., 1964, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Gordon, M.M., 1978, *Human Nature, Class, and Ethnicity*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Great Basin Foundation, 1987, *Wong Ho Leun: An American Chinatown*. 2 vols. Great Basin Foundation, San Diego, California.

Greenwood, R.S., 1975, *3500 Years on One City Block: San Buenaventura Mission Plaza Project Archaeological Report, 1974*. Submitted to the Redevelopment Agency, City of San Buenaventura, California. Greenwood and Associates, Pacific Palisades, California.

Greenwood, R.S., 1993, Old Approaches and New Directions: Implications for Future Research. In *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese,* edited by P. Wegars, pp. 375–403. Baywood, Amityville, New York.

Greenwood, R.S., 1994, News from the Underground: History and Archaeology Meet at the Station. In *Origins and Destinations: 41 Essays on Chinese America,* compiled by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, pp. 477–482. Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Greenwood, R.S., 1996, *Down by the Station: Los Angeles Chinatown, 1880–1933*. Monumenta Archaeologica 18. Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles.

Greenwood, R.S., editor, 1976, *The Changing Faces of Main Street*. San Buenaventura Mission Plaza Project Archaeological Report. Submitted to the Redevelopment Agency, City of San Buenaventura, California. Greenwood and Associates, Pacific Palisades, California.

Hardesty, D.L., 1994, Class, Gender Strategies, and Material Culture in the Mining West. In *Those of Little Note: Gender, Race, and Class in Historical Archaeology,* edited by E.M. Scott, pp. 129–145. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

Helms, M.W., 1978, Discussion: Ethnicity and the State. In *Interethnic Communication,* edited by E.L. Ross, pp. 134–146. University of Georgia Press, Athens.

Henry, S.L., 1987, Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior in Turn-of-the-Century Phoenix, Arizona. In *Consumer Choice in Historical Archaeology,* edited by S.M. Spencer-Wood, pp. 359–381. Plenum, New York.

Hodder, I., 1986, *Reading the Past*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Jack, I., Holmes, K., and Ken, R., 1984, Ah Toy's Garden: A Chinese Market-Garden on the Palmer River Goldfield, North Queensland. *Australian Journal of Historical Archaeology* 2:51–58.

Jones, S., 1997, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present*. Routledge, London.

Jones, S., 1999, Historical Categories and the Praxis of Identity: The Interpretation of Ethnicity in Historical Archaeology. In *Historical Archaeology: Back from the Edge,* edited by P.P.A. Funari, M. Hall, and S. Jones, pp. 219–232. Routledge, London.

Kerr, A.W., 1979, The Architecture of Victoria's Chinatown. *Datum* 4:8–11.

Kerr, A.W., and Bugslag, J., 1978, Some Basic Observations Concerning the Architecture of the Chinese in B.C., Canada. *Datum* 3:8–11.

Knapp, R.G., 1986, *China's Traditional Rural Architecture: A Cultural Geography of the Common House*. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.

Krysan, M., and Lewis, A.E., editors, 2004, *Changing Terrain of Race and Ethnicity*. Russell Sage Foundation, New York.

Layton, T.N., 2002, *Gifts from the Celestial Kingdom: A Shipwrecked Cargo for Gold Rush California*. Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, California.

Lee, J., and Zhou, M., editors, 2004, *Asian American Youth: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity*. Routledge, New York.

Levine, L.W., 1996, *The Opening of the American Mind: Canons, Culture, and History*. Beacon, Boston, Massachusetts.

Light, I.H., 1972, *Ethnic Enterprise in America*. University of California Press, Los Angeles.

Longacre, W., and Skibo, J.M., 1994, *Kalinga Ethnoarchaeology: Expanding Archaeological Method and Theory*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

Lydon, J., 1999, Pidgin English: Historical Archaeology, Cultural Exchange, and the Chinese in the Rocks, 1890–1930. In *Historical Archaeology: Back from the Edge,* edited by P.P.A. Funari, M. Hall, and S. Jones, pp. 255–283. Routledge, London.

Lyman, S.M., 1976, The Chinese Diaspora in America, 1850–1943. In *The Life, Influence, and the Role of the Chinese in the United States, 1776–1960: Proceedings/ Papers of the National Conference Held at the University*

of San Francisco, July 10, 11, 12, 1975, pp. 128–146. Chinese Historical Society, San Francisco, California.

McGuire, R.H., 1982, The Study of Ethnicity in Historical Archaeology. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 1:159–178.

Mark, D.M.L., and Chih, G., 1982, *A Place Called Chinese America*. Keneall/Hunt, Dubuque, Iowa.

Min, P.G., editor, 2002, *The Second Generation: Ethnic Identity among Asian Americans*. AltaMira, Walnut Creek, California.

Olsen, J., 1978, A Study of Chinese Ceramics Excavated in Tucson. *The Kiva* 44:1–50.

Praetzellis, A., Praetzellis, M., and Brown III, M., 1987, Artifacts as Symbols of Identity: An Example from Sacramento's Gold Rush Era Chinese Community. In *Living in Cities: Current Research in Urban Archaeology,* edited by E. Staski, pp. 38–47. Special Publication No. 5. Society for Historical Archaeology, Pleasant Hill, California.

Preucel, R.W., 1995, The Postprocessual Condition. *Journal of Archaeological Research* 3:147–175.

Preucel, R.W., editor, 1991, *Processual and Postprocessual Archaeologies: Multiple Ways of Knowing the Past*. Occasional Papers No. 10. Center for Archaeological Investigations, Carbondale, Illinois.

Rhoads, E.J.M., 1977, The Chinese in Texas. *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 71:1–36.

Ritchie, N.A., 1983, Archaeological Research on Nineteenth-Century Chinese Settlement in the Cromwell Area. *Courier* 29:2–18.

Ritchie, N.A., 1986, Archaeology and History of the Chinese in Southern New Zealand during the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Acculturation, Adaptation, and Change. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

Ritchie, N.A., 1993, Form and Adaptation: Nineteenth Century Chinese Miners' Dwellings in Southern New Zealand. In *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese,* edited by P. Wegars, pp. 335–373. Baywood, Amityville, New York.

Rothschild, N.A., 1990, *New York City Neighborhoods: The 18th Century*. Academic Press, San Diego, California.

Royce, A.P., 1982, *Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana.

Rumbaut, R., and Portes, A., editors, 2001, *Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Sassoon, C., 1978, *Chinese Porcelain Marks from Kenya*. BAR International Series (supplementary) 43. British Archaeological Reports, Oxford.

Schuyler, R.L., editor, 1980, *Archaeological Perspectives on Ethnicity in America: Afro- American and Asian American Culture History*. Baywood, Farmingdale, New York.

Shanks, M., and Tilley, C., 1987, *Reconstructing Archaeology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Sisson, D.A., 1993, Archaeological Evidence of Chinese Use along the Lower Salmon River. In *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese,* edited by P. Wegars, pp. 33–63. Baywood, Amityville, New York.

Spier, R.F.G., 1958a, Food Habits of Nineteenth-Century California Chinese. *California Historical Society Quarterly* 37:79–84,129–136.

Spier, R.F.G., 1958b, Tool Acculturation among 19th-Century California Chinese. *Ethnohistory* 5:97–117.

Stapp, D.C., 1993, The Documentary Record of an Overseas Chinese Mining Camp. In *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese,* edited by P. Wegars, pp. 3–31. Baywood, Amityville, New York.

Staski, E., 1985, *The Overseas Chinese in El Paso*. Beneath the Border City, vol. 2. University Museum Occasional Papers No. 13. New Mexico State University, Las Cruces.

Staski, E., 1990, Studies of Ethnicity in North American Historical Archaeology. *North American Archaeologist* 11:121–145.

Staski, E., 1993, The Overseas Chinese in El Paso: Changing Goals, Changing Realities. In *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese,* edited by P. Wegars, pp. 125–149. Baywood, Amityville, New York.

Staski, E., 2002a, Assimilation. In *Encyclopedia of Historical Archaeology,* edited by C.E. Orser, pp. 32–34. Routledge, London.

Staski, E., 2002b, Ethnicity. In *Encyclopedia of Historical Archaeology,* edited by C.E. Orser, pp. 181–184. Routledge, London.

Steele, H., 1993, The Manganese/Cobalt Ratio in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Asian Porcelain. In *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese,* edited by P. Wegars, pp. 307–314. Baywood, Amityville, New York.

Stenger, A., 1993, Sourcing and Dating of Asian Porcelains by Elemental Analysis. In *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese,* edited by P. Wegars, pp. 315–331. Baywood, Amityville, New York.

Takaki, R., 1989, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. Penguin, New York.

van den Berghe, P.L., 1981, *The Ethnic Phenomenon*. Elsevier, Amsterdam.

Vincent, J., 1974, The Structuring of Ethnicity. *Human Organization* 33:375–379.

Wegars, P., 1993, Besides Polly Bemis: Historical and Artifactual Evidence for Chinese Women in the West, 1848–1930. In *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese,* edited by P. Wegars, pp. 229–254. Baywood, Amityville, New York.

Wegars, P., 1994, Hidden Heritage: Chinese Historical Archaeology and the Asian American Comparative Collection. In *Origins and Destinations: 41 Essays on Chinese America,* compiled by the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, pp. 491–499. Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Wegars, P., 2003a, *Chinese Artifact Illustrations, Terminology, and Selected Bibliography*. Asian American Comparative Collection Publications, Moscow, Idaho.

Wegars, P., 2003b, *Japanese Artifact Illustrations, Terminology, and Selected Bibliography*. Asian American Comparative Collection Publications, Moscow, Idaho.

Woodward, C.S., 1974, *Oriental Ceramics at the Cape of Good Hope 1652–1795: An Account of the Porcelain Trade of the Dutch East India Company with Particular Reference to Ceramics with V.O.C. Monogram, the Cape Market, and South African Collections*. A.A. Balkema, Cape Town.