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Benson: *The Noontide Sun: The Field Journals of the Reverend Stephen Bowers, Pioneer California Archaeologist*

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The Noontide Sun: The Field Journals of the Reverend Stephen Bowers, Pioneer California Archaeologist. Arlene Benson. Ballena Press Anthropological Papers No. 44, 1997, xiii + 288 pp., 57 figs., 2 tables, 2 appendices, references, index, \$36.00 (hard cover).

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The challenge facing a writer who fashions a biographical and anthropological work is to deftly interweave the parts. Benson has brought forward a work of separate elements—and leaves the task of integration largely to the reader. It is part detective yarn, part history, part biography, and part treatise on Chumash intravillage organization.

The book's greatest anthropological contribution is its discussion of village organization. The reader will benefit by reading the sections on intravillage organization first—before dipping into the life and words of the Reverend Stephen Bowers. I also suggest *Time's Flotsam* (Blackburn and Hudson 1990) as a companion reader, since questions over the fate of the artifacts are a certain response to the scope of Bower's energetic antiquarianism and assiduous collecting.

The story of the gradual surfacing of the Bow-

ers notes and related documents is entertaining. It reminds us of the hard work and occasional sheer good luck that prompts the discovery of original historical documents. The notes survived water, fire, and sometimes indifferent curation to arrive, neatly compiled and nearly complete, in our laps. Benson has made a significant contribution in bringing forward these long-awaited notes, interpreting them in terms of their historical context, and deriving from them useful archaeological information.

I found myself wishing for a more substantial biography of Bowers and for less of a firewall between his life and his work. Bowers seems to have sprung fully developed from Indiana (via Oregon) with a B.A. from Indiana University, a Ph.D. of uncertain origin, a religious epiphany, and convictions of Caucasian superiority. The biography begs the simple and complex questions readers may have as they confront Bower's very personal notes. How old was he? Where was he born? We are told he left the ministry. Well, what was that all about? Was it the untimely death of his wife, Martha? Was it an unresolved conflict between religious faith and the demands of science?

The notes themselves are more revealing of his qualities; they yield biographical information to those curious about the man himself. Bowers was industrious, a natural historian of note, a gifted and sometimes humorous observer, and a man of opposites. Bowers and his band of assistants and supporters maintained an awesome field schedule. He organized field programs of long duration, succeeding under conditions that would turn most of us around. The mass of recovered artifacts is measured in tons and the volume is measured in bushels. What inspired him to this level of effort? His driving forces were probably many, but one stands out: the competitive and nationalistic race to secure the national treasure. His competitors were chiefly the foreigners Schumacher and DeCessac/Pinart. The race was intense. Bowers notes in several cases that sites

had been excavated by others in the brief period between his visits. But he clearly outmaneuvered his competitors in the amount of work done, the number of sites investigated, and the sheer volume of recovered material.

Intriguing personal contradictions emerge from his daily writing. Benson notes an interesting conflict: the stress between Biblical ideas of creation and the evidence of science. She points to the development of Bowers' theory of dual creation in 1895, long after the end of his archaeological career, as evidence of the resolution of this conflict later in life.

Divides appear in other areas as well. Bowers was a self-described lover of nature. His avidity for nature is apparent in the indelible images of natural beauty that surprise the reader at several points in the diary. On the other hand, he and his followers were very tough on wildlife, shooting seemingly everything that moved, including snakes, sheep, plovers, eagles, skunks, deer, squirrels, mountain lions, coyotes, boars, and sea lions. Sometimes these shooting events seemed to be more execution than hunting. On July 30, 1877, Bowers wrote, "Went to the west end of [San Miguel Is.] today. Barnard and Hayden took their guns to shoot sea lions. Two or three were shot, but we will have to wait a day or two for them to float ashore" (p. 101).

By his own admission, Bowers tended to be undemonstrative and closed in personal relationships. It is difficult to find emotional content in his notes at all—indeed, they are marked by a cloaking economy of expression only rarely dispensed with. After wife Martha's death, apparently from a stroke, and after the briefest possible mourning period and most painfully concise expression of loss, he decamps for Point Mugu to recommence excavations. But hidden in the notes is evidence of another side of his persona that is pleased to be with his family. Longingly he wrote, "I wouldn't give the society of my loved ones at home for all the deer on the Sisquoc" (p. 137).

But for years he foreclosed normal family society and pursued a strenuous life in search of artifacts. It is facile, from our modern vantage, to cast Bowers and his compatriots as marauding vandals, buccaneering for artifacts between the Channel Islands and the coast. But to an extent, this is true—by my conservative count, Bowers exhumed over 900 burials, 200 in one day alone on Santa Rosa Island. The true number he excavated will probably never be known, for he often accounted for a day's exhumations with such nonspecific phrases as "a vast number of skeletons" (p. 55). One thing is certain; the primary desideratum of his search was the cemetery. That he went about this search with energy and dedication is undeniable. Bowers dug a substantial furrow through the prehistoric cemeteries of Santa Barbara County.

There is little doubt that the Chumash living at the time objected to his work. While excavating at Kalawashaq', Bowers stirred up the local Chumash:

The Indians, around 40 in number, live within about three miles of this place, . . . As soon as they found out what I was doing they began to show some ugly signs. But it was too late. I had finished and was on my way up the river before they could . . . attack me [p. 213].

Benson believes that Bowers felt no remorse for all this digging in graves (p. 31). I have to agree. In one remarkable sequence of events, Bowers excavated six skeletons near Ojai on a Saturday and on the following "holy Sabbath day" spoke on the immortality of the soul at a local church. It seems he comfortably straddled an immense cultural divide—one foot in the church, the other in the cemetery.

But around the edges of his major chore of excavating burials, Bowers made important observations about the internal organization of Chumash villages and commented intelligently about variability in the patterns of organization among villages of the islands, coast, and interior valleys. He observed features that are rarely seen today. Benson (p. 163) writes that Bowers

[s]aw house floors, sweathouse floors, earthen mounds, stone paved courts and dance floors, rock and earthen enclosures, and cemeteries still marked with rock slab gravestones, whalebone, and wooden planks.

It is to these features that Benson devotes her attention in the final chapter. Benson develops a six-point model of the internal structure of a typical protohistoric and historical Chumash village. The model is based primarily on Bowers' many observations and on those of other early investigators, including Schumacher and Font. The model includes suppositions concerning the relative arrangement and topographical positioning of dwellings, cemeteries, and ceremonial complexes.

Benson compares the model to information developed from later archaeological sources, including D. B. Rogers and a variety of published and unpublished reports. She finds a comparatively close fit, with several notable exceptions, between the model's predictions and the findings from excavated protohistoric and historical sites on the mainland coast. A much poorer fit is found between archaeological information from inland sites and the model. She discusses a number of important issues in detail, in particular the variability in the size of sweathouses and the nature of the mounds and earthen enclosures that Bowers observed only at interior sites.

Benson has provided to our research community a valuable service and we should be grateful. She diligently sought out original documents, ably edited, annotated, and cross-referenced the notes, and developed a useful model to guide future archaeological work and the reinterpretation of existing data. The work would have been improved by a greater effort at integrating the book's various parts. But the notes are a starting place. Serious investigators will need to consult the original notes, since important information has been redacted in the interest of site security.

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Many California history buffs, and even a number of studious researchers, betray a misperception of the state of our knowledge of Spanish colonial California, especially the early years. In fact, readily available primary and secondary sources for the period are largely restricted to two subjects: (1) accounts of missionaries, mission foundings, and mission affairs, and (2) accounts of military/political leaders and their activities in support of missions or in carrying out explorations. By the time of Mexican Independence (1821), missionaries and military men were losing their primacy in Alta California affairs. Soldiers and Indians were taking back seats in the local economy and in local politics.

The emerging demographic force in the area was made up of *gente de razón*, Hispanic secular folk, who served neither church nor state, although many were descendants of the soldiers and mission servants who powered the Spanish conquest carried out in 1769 and the decade or two thereafter. By the 1830s and 1840s, when Americans and other foreigners arrived on the