

BOOK REVIEWS



Afetna Point, Saipan: Archaeological Investigations of a Latte Period Village and Historic Context in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Boyd Dixon, Cherie Walth, Kathy Mowrer, and Danny Welch. Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing, 2019. 186 pp., 106 figures, bibliography. Paperback US \$58, ISBN 978-1-78969-176-4; E-book free from publisher, ISBN 978-1-78969-177-1.

Yellow Beach 2 after 75 Years: The Archaeology of a WWII Invasion Beach on Saipan and its Historic Context in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Boyd Dixon, Brenda Tenorio, Cherie Walth, and Kathy Mowrer. Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing, 2019. 127 pp., 88 figures, bibliography. Paperback US \$45, ISBN 978-1-78969-258-7; E-book free from publisher, ISBN 978-1-78969-259-4.

Reviewed by James M. BAYMAN, *Department of Anthropology, University of Hawai'i at Manoa*

The companion monographs *Afetna Point, Saipan* and *Yellow Beach 2 after 75 Years* offer a significant perspective on the history of a modest parcel of land on a small island in a remote corner of the Pacific. Although much of the parcel in San Antonio, Saipan had been disturbed by a deep sand mine, historic preservation officials for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) had identified the area as having high potential for significant archaeological and historical resources, both pre- and post-contact (including a WWII American invasion beach). The archaeological project conducted by Boyd Dixon and his colleagues vindicates the wisdom of CNMI in anticipating the significance of the project area. That the research for this project was realized within the framework of a Cultural Resource Management (CRM) compliance project adds value to this investigation in setting a high standard for ongoing archaeological work in the region. The acceleration of economic development on Saipan (and elsewhere in the region) challenges archaeologists to develop flexible and innovative approaches for researching the past on relatively small land parcels in increasingly urbanized and

segmented landscapes. The success of Dixon and colleagues in meeting the challenge of developing a meaningful research program in a highly disturbed setting distinguishes this project. The researchers on this project met this challenge by leveraging their prior experience and analytical assets to construct substantive research questions. The authors and their staff aligned unit excavations along a linear and parallel axis to construct a cross-section for characterizing the cultural and pre-cultural sequence of stratigraphy on the property. Their investment in a suite of specialized analyses (e.g., radiocarbon, microfossil, pollen, phytoliths, and starch) along with more conventional analyses of material culture (e.g., ceramic, stone, shell, historic) strengthened their research.

The first of the companion monographs, entitled *Afetna Point, Saipan: Archaeological Investigations of a Latte Period Village and Historic Context in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*, focuses on a Latte Period village. Particularly notable is the presentation of metric and nonmetric data from the analyses in no less than 52 tables in a total of 9 chapters. This is particularly constructive because academic publishing venues such as

journals typically prohibit the presentation of large primary datasets. Equally valuable is their inclusion of 106 figures, including unit and feature plan views and profiles, high-resolution photographs of artifacts and osteological materials, and diagrams of pollen, phytolith, and starch frequencies. The presentation of such data ensures that this project will be an enduring contribution. It will provide other researchers the opportunity to develop a comparative perspective on their findings from elsewhere in the Mariana Islands, much as these authors did themselves. Indeed, I have already benefitted from consulting (and citing) this volume in my own scholarly writing.

In the first four chapters, Dixon and coauthors summarize the research design, historic context, and methods used to recover and analyze the material culture and human osteological remains. A majority of the features and cultural assemblages are from the Latte Period, which offered the investigators an opportunity to consider whether or not the distribution of middens, features such as subsurface ovens and hearth complexes, and burials correspond to the locations of domestic residences, that is, *latte* structures. The ability to identify the former locations of *latte* structures on the basis of their architectural features (e.g., *haligi* [post or pillar], *tasa* [cup or cap atop a post]) is a daunting challenge in Marianas archaeology because so many of their surface-visible manifestations have been disturbed beyond recognition.

Thankfully, the authors of this study illustrate how an approach proposed by Bath (1986) can be applied to ascertain the likely locations of *latte* structures that are no longer evident in their surface-visible manifestations. In brief, the authors confirmed the presence of an almost continuous zone of food-production features and cultural materials located seaward of a probable *latte* village. The area proved to be exceptionally rich in cultural materials that included (but were not limited to) organic midden soil, shell food, shell tools, basalt, slingstones, and Latte Period ceramics. The authors' conclusion that the spatial distribution of various middens and their associated features and assemblages likely correlates with the (presumed) locations of

probable *latte* structures within a larger village is promising. It offers future field projects in Saipan and elsewhere in the Mariana Islands an important and ready-made research question. Investigation of *latte* village layout begs attention from archaeologists and this project offers an example of how such research may be undertaken at highly disturbed archaeological sites.

Chapter 5 offers a detailed documentation of features and material culture from the Latte Period. The descriptions of food preparation features such as ovens and surface hearth feature complexes provide some of the much-needed baseline information that is so often lacking in scholarly publications. The analyses of these features and their faunal assemblages illuminate the variety of plant and animal foods that were potentially gathered and consumed or otherwise used at the site. Interestingly, microfossil remains of food plants (e.g., taro) were only recovered from deeper ovens that also yielded large amounts of food shell. Consequently, Dixon and coauthors hypothesize that the absence of microfossil food remains from two hearth feature complexes (Feature 1 and Feature 2) hints that they were possibly used as kilns for firing ceramics. The precise technology that was used for firing ceramics in the Mariana Islands is a nagging question, so the hypothesis that at least some surface hearth features were used for this activity warrants additional investigation. The documentation of ceramic-firing practices is a profoundly important and unanswered question for Marianas archaeology.

Careful documentation of additional cooking features further enabled the authors to distinguish the different functions of such facilities. For example, complexes of relatively small surface hearth features were likely used on a frequent, perhaps daily, basis, whereas larger and deeper ovens were presumably used for less frequent (though undoubtedly significant) communal feasts (or *fiestas* in Spanish). Detailed documentation of the distribution of such features might seem mundane to some archaeologists who work in other areas of the Pacific (e.g., Hawaiian Islands) that witness more frequent publication of field research. Publication of

substantive field research in the Marianas is generally less frequent, however, so the description and ages of cooking features and their assemblages is still needed to better understand the spatial organization of gendered labor in domestic contexts. Such features must be investigated and reported in detail to gauge the importance of communal feasting in the region and the role it potentially played in the political economy of ancient society in the Mariana Islands.

Interpretations of traditional lifeways in the Mariana Islands are often informed from translations of seventeenth century Spanish documentary sources or ethnographic accounts from the mid-twentieth century. Such accounts are important, yet archaeology is better suited to discerning longitudinal changes in traditional practices among multiple sites, villages, and islands in the archipelago. Documentary sources that emphasize the matrilineal structure of traditional society offer tantalizing hypotheses that can be evaluated with the archaeological record. The accumulation of information on foodways, specifically in Saipan and for the Marianas more generally, offers the promise of developing a comparative perspective on this phenomenon across the greater Pacific. Comparing the archaeological signatures of foodways among island groups that were structured differently with respect to social organization (e.g., matrilineal versus patrilineal) promises new insights. This volume is an important step in that direction.

Chapter 6 focuses on the osteological analysis of human remains excavated during the CRM project. Fortunately, there is a relatively rich body of scholarly literature on human osteology in the Marianas and so the need for baseline information is less acute than the need for information on foodways. Still, the publication of this literature does not diminish the significance of the report by Dixon and colleagues. Rather, the authors of this volume take full advantage of existing literature by contextualizing and comparing their findings with respect to published research by other scholars. In brief, the population at Afetna Point compares well with other Latte period populations from Guam and the CNMI with respect to overall health and life expectancy. Although the

population in the project area was relatively healthy, it nonetheless exhibited various afflictions that were common elsewhere during the Latte period, including osteoarthritis, degenerative joint disease (DJD), treponemotosis (yaws), and unknown infectious lesions.

The authors revisit their research questions in chapter 7. Chapter 8 sketches a comparison with a recent project at the Anaguan site in Garapan. While the documentation of the two projects was quite different, the authors illustrate an honorable approach to the extraordinarily challenging geopolitical landscape of CRM archaeology in the Mariana Islands.

The second volume by Dixon and colleagues, entitled *Yellow Beach 2 after 75 Years: The Archaeology of a WWII Invasion Beach on Saipan and its Historic Context in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*, focuses on the archaeological materials in the project area that remain in the wake of WWII. The first four chapters in this volume echo the context and background of the project as it was described in the first volume on the Latte Period. This was necessary so the second volume could be easily consulted by readers who are specifically interested in Saipan's role in WWII. Chapter 6 focuses on archaeological materials and chapter 7 on osteological remains from the WWII period. The descriptions of American and Japanese weapons such as "pineapple" hand grenades, machine guns, and mortars in chapter 6 and the osteological analysis of four Japanese soldiers in chapter 7 offer stark reminders of the horrors that transpired on the invasion beach.

Chapter 8 provides concise summaries of oral interviews with five individuals (three men and two women) who are either present or former residents of the project area. As Dixon and his coauthors note, a goal of this chapter is to consider whether memories of WWII and the early postwar years have remained vital in the shared heritage of the local community. Recollections of how discarded materials were repurposed demonstrate the resourcefulness of Saipan's community in the early postwar years. Accounts such as the fabrication of women's underwear with remnants of flour sack fabric and strips of tire inner tubes underscore the fact that archaeologists should be ever mindful in interpreting

the function(s) of ancient or modern artifacts. The compilation of narratives from these five individuals illustrates a novel way of documenting and preserving cultural heritage. Not surprisingly, the five narratives recall both positive and painful memories about a bygone era in the project area (i.e., San Antonio village) in the 1940s.

Chapter 9 is the final part of the second volume. Here, the authors reflect on the research questions that were delineated in chapter 4. As the authors note, the geographic location of the project area (i.e., San Antonio) was not particularly suitable for settlement during the Spanish, German, and Japanese periods. The village was a considerable distance from the major port of maritime commerce and, although it was used for farming during the Latte Period, it was ill-suited for German coconut farming (to produce copra) and the subsequent introduction of sugarcane farming by the Japanese. As the authors note, the general dearth of archaeological evidence in the project area prior to the construction of Japanese defenses in the late 1930s is unsurprising. However, an abundance of American-made munitions and other military hardware (e.g., howitzer shell casings, hand grenades, canteens, mess kits, and .50 caliber bullets) confirm that the area witnessed significant combat during the 15 June 1944 invasion of Saipan to expel Japanese forces. The project also documented evidence of military construction (e.g., Coast Guard Loran Station) near the end of the war and into the subsequent decades of the Cold War.

In sum, the publication of this project as companion volumes in the Access Archaeology series of Archaeopress Publishing (Oxford) is laudable. The overwhelming majority of archaeological research projects are undertaken in the region within the context of economic development stemming from tourism. Because such research is often unavailable from published and accessible venues, important fieldwork goes unnoticed except by those who are employed in the profit-driven CRM industry. The authors of these two volumes should be commended for the time and energy they committed to the production of these monographs. The publication of archaeological research is a professional obligation and the availability of these companion volumes in both open-access and print venues ensures that their project findings will be widely disseminated. Indeed, it would be most helpful if sponsoring agencies and institutions, both in the private sector and governmental, were to invest resources in supporting more publications of archaeological research in like manner. Open-access publication enlarges the readership of scholarly work by both professionals and the general public, including the indigenous peoples whose ancestral heritage is often the focus of archaeological investigation. When the lead author, Boyd Dixon, was recently given a CNMI Humanities Council Lifetime Achievement Award, the adoption of these two volumes by educators in the local schools was mentioned as one of several hallmarks of his storied career in the islands.

The Affect of Crafting: Third Millennium BCE Copper Arrowheads from Ganeshwar, Rajasthan. Uzma Z. Rizvi. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2018. 176 pp., 53 figures, 13 tables, extensive catalogue (black and white throughout). Paperback £32, ISBN 978-1-78969-003-3; E-publication £16, ISBN 978-1-78969-004-0.

Reviewed by Peter JOHANSEN, Department of Anthropology, McGill University

Uzma Rizvi's book provides a critical new perspective on an important regional archaeological landscape that has largely been

marginalized as a somewhat enigmatic frontier backwater of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC). Northeastern Rajasthan during the