

REFERENCES

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Senewélets: Culture History of the Nanaimo Coast Salish and the False Narrows Midden, by D. V. Burley. Victoria: Royal British Columbia Museum, 1989. Pp. 132. Illus. \$8.00.

This is a highly commendable volume, and the Royal British Columbia Museum is to be applauded for reinstituting a publication series that brings to the public the kind of valuable substantive information that is contained in this volume and that is so hard to get published in other well recognized outlets.

Burley's work is a valuable contribution to the prehistory of the Gulf of Georgia region because it publishes an important site that otherwise might have been stored away indefinitely. The volume provides an extensive and well described comparative collection that other researchers will no doubt find most useful, and it places the various assemblages within the collection in their chronological position. It is always difficult to work with data collected by others, and Burley is to be congratulated for working so well within the constraints imposed by the False Narrows data base. Collecting archaeological materials from highly stratified shell midden deposits such as False Narrows using only the arbitrary level technique is not adequate by present standards or by those of fifteen years ago, when Burley first examined the collection. The resulting imprecision must have been as frustrating for the author as for his readers. Also, the absence of any faunal analysis severely limits the interpretations that can be made about site function, season and duration of occupation, the role of the site in the adaptive strategies of aboriginal Gulf of Georgia populations over the last 2,000 years, and the exact position of the site in the regional culture-historical sequence. Systematic collection of faunal remains was not a field procedure at the time of excavation, however, and, through no fault of Burley's, the report suffers as a result. Backhoe excavation of two trenches added a con-

siderable number of artifacts and features to the collection without much contextual information about them, thus creating a "softness" in the report with which Burley was nonetheless obliged to deal. The volume is well organized and clearly presented so that there is no difficulty in following the report as it develops and no difficulty in referencing specific portions of the analysis. The photographs are generally clear enough for comparative analysis, most line drawings are properly documented, and the tables are unambiguous.

There are also areas where the report could be improved. These range from picky editorial items to logical and philosophical issues. Most of the editorial items are meaningless to the content of the report (e.g., improper placement of quotation marks after the citation of Mitchell 1967: 7 on page 16; the quotation "dumping of refuse" with no citation; abrupt changes of voice from third person impersonal to first person active), but they imply that the editorial process, either at the author's end or at the publishers, is letting details escape. Of more consequence are the substantive editorial oversights that occur. For instance, figure 10 lacks horizontal and vertical co-ordinates, thereby limiting its usefulness; also, the mean lengths for triangular and excurvate chipped stone points (p. 70) are larger than the recorded maximum lengths. Potential confusion also exists when there are terminological inconsistencies. For example, a component is defined as a single assemblage on page 26, but on page 33 Component II consists of several assemblages.

Another general area in which there seems to be a problem is quantification of the data. Where artifact measurements are concerned, there are no compelling reasons presented for taking some and omitting others, nor is there any use made of them once they are recorded. Their presence implies a potential use as comparative data for other typological studies, but even here caution must be exercised. Calculation of statistics such as the mean cannot be considered very reliable when the sample size is only three or four. The biggest quantification problem, however, lies in the use of Pearson's r correlation coefficient. As a parametric statistic, it assumes a number of conditions in the data, few of which are ever met by archaeological collections, and certainly none of which are met at False Narrows. In addition, the r statistic by itself does not indicate the probability of the relationship in question occurring by chance alone; thus table 4 has limited utility for judging the relationships between components. Also, in the discussion of table 4 there is no clear separation of the strengths of the relationships between components, as suggested by the matrix of r coefficients, from the chronological relationships of the components. If the degree of

correlation, as indicated by r , were an indicator of the relative age of components, as Burley implies, then one would not expect to see essentially the same degree of correlations between FN₁/FN₂ and FN₂/FN₄. On the basis of intuitive judgement alone, Burley's assessment of the relationships may be correct.

The issue of artifact classification also merits some discussion. The discussion of the classification (p. 19) is unnecessary because there is no taxonomic rigour in the system that is used. While introductory textbooks talk of formal, functional, historical, and cultural types, the system used in this volume is most accurately described as "Gulf of Georgia Traditional," it being a widely used mixture of formal, functional, and cultural criteria. Related to this issue is the concept of diagnostic artifacts. This is a normative, outdated concept that is no longer tenable beyond providing rough guidance in the field, and it is particularly incongruous when juxtaposed against probabilistic analyses such as those using Pearson's r . Further, the unresolved opposition of these approaches to data analysis indicates a lack of theoretical rigour in the conceptual framework underlying the analyses.

The last area of discussion involves what could be termed logical issues, and there are two of these. First, the temporal relation of FN₁ to FN₂ is argued to be sequential, but the deposits assigned to FN₁ do not lie stratigraphically under those assigned to components 2, 3 and 4. Evidence in support of the earliest culture historical positioning of FN₁ includes subjective comparison between FN₁, FN₂ and other lower mainland middle Marpole assemblages, quantitative comparison between False Narrows components (already discussed above) and unclear arguments that the distance from the beach or elevation above present sea level is necessarily related to the antiquity of the deposits. It could just as easily be argued that, during the Marpole culture type time period, the higher rear portion of the site was used primarily for refuse disposal and burial of the dead, whereas the front, lower part of the site was used primarily for everyday living. Variation in the assemblages would thus be the result of differential use of areas within the site. Unfortunately, the paucity of absolute dates from the site as a whole, and their absence from FN₁, in particular, leaves the proper chronological positioning of this component in question.

The term "transitional," used to describe FN₂, also seems to be a logical issue. Elsewhere in the volume, the continuity between components is noted, but, given that continuity is indeed an aspect of the Gulf of Georgia prehistoric record, how can one part of a continuum be transitional? Again, the confusion between a normative and a probabilistic approach is evident. Setting aside the difficult issue of how to divide up a continuum, less con-

notative labels like the standard “early,” “middle,” and “late” might be more conceptually appropriate.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the analysis in this volume is what is tangentially raised but not addressed. The site is without question very distinctive and important, and it is these qualities that raise the question of exactly what kinds of cultural behaviours resulted in its formation. There are many seasonally occupied resource extraction sites that do not possess the same elaborateness in their assemblages, nor are they the same size, as False Narrows. Unpublished excavations on Newcastle Island in Nanaimo harbour, for instance, did not produce the same richness of artifacts, yet the site is in Departure Bay, where Nanaimo winter villages are recorded to have been. Does the presence at False Narrows of ritual paraphernalia usually associated with winter spirit dances indicate that all possessions were transported with the group wherever it went? If so, how does one explain the sites that lack elaborate items altogether? What settlement system model could account for these variations? Has the position of False Narrows changed over time in the local settlement system? The settlement pattern analysis in this volume would have been enhanced if such issues had at least been raised. Similarly, recognition of the same pattern of raw material exchange (copper, obsidian, dentalia, and possibly nephrite/jade) at other sites in the Gulf of Georgia, e.g. Deep Bay, would have broadened and supported Burley's discussion.

In sum, Burley is to be commended for his presentation. It is a valuable substantive contribution to Gulf of Georgia prehistory. There are some areas that are stronger than others, but the merits far outweigh the drawbacks. Some of the topics raised in this volume and pointed out here (e.g., the need for faunal and lithic analysis at the site, the need for more comprehensive dating of the deposits, and the need for a comprehensive analysis of both community patterning within the site and the role of the site in the local settlement system over time) are ones that students of the area could profitably investigate.

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