

ANTHROPOLOGIE PHYSIQUE ET ARCHÉO-CHRONOLOGIE DE LA POPULATION PRÉHISTORIQUE DE L'ÎLE ST. LAURENT, ALASKA. BAND IV, ST. LORENZ INSEL-STUDIEN BERNER BEITRÄGE ZUR ARCHÄOLOGISCHEN UND ETHNOLOGISCHEN ERFORSCHUNG DES BERINGSTRASSENGEBIETES.

HANS GEORG BANDI AND RETO BLUMER (EDITORS), 2004. ACADEMICA HELVETICA 5, BERN. HARD COVER, 173 PAGES, 95 FIGURES, 43 TABLES, 74 PHOTOGRAPHS, 1 MAP. ISBN 3-253-06720-1, EUR 45.00 ; ORDER ONLINE FROM <WWW.HAUPT.CH>. 4 PAPERS IN FRENCH, 1 IN ENGLISH, ABSTRACTS IN GERMAN, FRENCH AND ENGLISH.

Reviewed by Owen K. Mason,

Geoarch Alaska, PO Box 91554, Anchorage, AK 99509 <geoarch@ptialaska.net>

Many American scholars and students labor in ignorance of the prodigious efforts of pioneering Swiss archaeologist Hans Georg Bandi on St. Lawrence Island. This despite several papers in various languages (French, German, but rarely in English, cf. Bandi 1984a, 1995) and the high quality and well produced volumes (Bandi 1984b) of his *St Lorenz Insel Studien* [St Lawrence Island Studies] of which this volume is the fourth and final. Unlike some retirees, Dr. Bandi has continued his writing and research, enlisting a younger generation to extend his grasp, specifically Yvon Csonka and Reto Blumer. Dr. Csonka inaugurated a series of Russian-Canadian-Swiss investigations at Ekven. Mr. Blumer has analyzed a house that Bandi excavated at Kitngipalak, as well as assessing and calibrating the four dozen ¹⁴C dates collected by Bandi from the Gambell cemeteries, the few from Collins' (1937) efforts and the ages from archived museum samples submitted by Lewis (1995) and Dumond (1998).

Hans Georg Bandi was inspired by the prodigious discoveries of Soviet archaeologists within the Cape Dezhneva cemeteries in the late 1950s and sought to uncover the burial grounds near Gambell that had eluded Henry Collins in the 1930s. Dr. Bandi, now in his mid-eighties, is the scion of the European cadre of arctic specialists, schooled in Greenland by Therkel Mathiassen and lured to Alaska by Helge Larsen. Bandi commenced his research in the vicinity of Gambell in 1967, focusing on excavating burials south of Mayughaaq. The archaeological campaigns of the Swiss/University of Alaska team represent one of the last scientific enterprises of traditionalist and pioneering archaeology in Alaska, conducted from 1967 to 1974—four seasons of excavation (1967, 1972, 1973 and 1974) and two of survey (1969 and 1971).

In total about 100 graves were located, preservation was adequate for detailed forensic analyses.

The Fourth volume of the St. Lawrence Island series presents the results of the physical anthropological studies, including a lengthy photographic essay of the cemeteries in the Gambell region; these photographs alone render the volume of great significance. The presentation of data, in plan view and in line drawing, is a hallmark of the Swiss research effort and partially transcends the language disability of many American readers. Another strength of the Swiss effort is on radiocarbon dating of burials, >40 ¹⁴C ages, a project not matched until recently by the Russians or Americans. The weakness of Bandi and his collaborators has been on synthesis; a deficiency partially remedied in this volume, with the enlistment of the prodigal Reto Blumer who synthesizes all the radiocarbon ages from St. Lawrence Island and systematically defines a reasonable chronology for its various “cultures.” Bandi and Blumer also co-authored a comprehensive summary of all the results on the project; ten offering sites (“dense accumulations of animal bones in small spaces”) scattered about the Gambell graves deserve to be appreciated as a significant part of mortuary activities at Sivuqaq—as important as the burials.

While the volume offers important results, its value is diminished in that several of the most important contributions, about half the volume, have appeared earlier in other contexts, the anthropological papers of either the University of Oregon or Alaska (Bandi and Blumer 2002, Blumer 2002, Scott and Gillispie 2002)—all published in English and, thus, more accessible for the majority of anglophone arctic specialists. However, the paper qual-

ity and the figure quality is considerably higher in this Bern Museum volume—for some this might justify purchase of the official version. In the case of the French contributions, it may be that certain subtleties of meaning are better expressed and appreciated in the language of the author.

Speaking as a devotee of ^{14}C age calibration, the significance of Blumer's contribution cannot be underestimated and needs to be emulated in many other places before archaeologists truly understand prehistory. Blumer acknowledges his debt to the efforts of Dumond (1998) and Lewis (1995) in greatly supplementing the ^{14}C data base of the Sivuqaq region. The contribution by Blumer (in Bandi 2004, this volume) offers a too brief critique of a competing effort in dating and reorganizing St. Lawrence Island prehistory, the dissertation of Michael Lewis (1995), completed at the University of Alaska, still unpublished. Briefly, Lewis (1995) sought to recast the entirety of Bering Strait archaeology through a program of statistical objectivity, purging it of a concentration on aesthetic characteristics (i.e., Old Bering Sea styles) that could not be proven to be stratigraphically based. Lewis had also undertaken a chronological analyses of St. Lawrence Island ^{14}C ages. With candor uncommon in American research, Blumer (2004:120-121) dismisses some of Lewis' assumptions as simplistic and showing ignorance, concluding that descent cannot be proven between OBS and Birnirk and that evidence is lacking for an Okvik or Ipiutak amalgam with OBS, or for the gradual appearance of Punuk from two hypoethical groups. Further, Blumer (2004 :120) argues, Punuk, « est une culture à part entière, probablement la mieux définie de la région ». ¹ Blumer remains undecided if the ^{14}C chronology reinforces Collins' (and Bandi's) belief that Punuk arose in Chukotka or from within St. Lawrence Island. One loose end remained unplumbed by Blumer, who lacked Staley's ^{14}C ages, available in Staley and Mason (2004).

Blumer (2004:120), nonetheless, accepts that Lewis (1995) established empirically that Collins' (1937) scheme does not explain cultural evolution on the island. I cannot quite agree with Blumer that Lewis's chi square tests have proven anything, in that the stratigraphic and taphonomic limitations of the Collins' data remain: “garbage in, garbage out” in computer parlance. In trying to replace style with function, Lewis (1995) refused to name new archaeological categories: to change discourse, one must invent words. In addition, his sizable sample of harpoon heads (n=1614) derived predominantly from the

youngest levels of Kukulik, late prehistoric (78%) the late prehistoric or Punuk (15%) (Lewis 1995:167).

The most noteworthy—and hitherto unpublished effort—within the volume is that of E. Leemans-Stojković who synthesizes the physical anthropology of the three cemeteries in the Sivuqaq region. The associated maps and figures provide firm and accessible data on the spatial distribution of graves and the sex of the internees. From this work, the following demographic profile of Sivuqaq prehistoric residents can be offered: a considerable number of men and women lived to older ages—if one can believe the age estimates, into their seventies and eighties!

Several non-metric traits of the cranium, studied by Arnaud and Arnaud (2004) provide insights into the genetic history of St. Lawrence Islanders, at least those around Gambell. The large growths or tori on mandibles occur even in young people within the burial population, proof very likely of a genetic origin. Most of the abnormalities on the bones derive from afflictions and occupational stresses, although a number of bones show the effects of infection and even of malignancies.

The 20 pages of photographs of grave features serve as coda for a lost standard of reportage; each image speaks for itself and should occasion much reflection. The appendix to the volume contains a brief notice on an array of exquisite objects extracted from an elaborate Old Bering Sea grave by “subsistence diggers” apparently in the presence of the renowned visual anthropologist and controversial art collector, Edmund “Ted” Carpenter of New York City. This (unfortunately) undated grave contained one of the most elaborate sets of grave goods ever documented in the vicinity of Mayughaaq and Gambell (Staley and Mason 2004). Some idealistic and/or ethical purists will aver strenuously about publishing this material. However, sooner or later, archaeologists will have to acknowledge the returns from unsupervised digging—if for no better reason, than the fact that the collections will be purchased or willed to institutions as *objet d'art*.

Although no scientific research has been conducted in the Gambell area since Bandi's efforts, cultural resource management requisites in the last 20 years have nearly tripled its cemetery data base. Unfortunately, Bandi apparently never has encountered the CRM reports produced by David Staley in the early 1990s and of Mark

¹Punuk “is a fully-fledged culture, probably the best defined in the region.” Blumer believes that the unity of Punuk as a culture is self-evident, although the basis for this view is restricted to the work of Collins (1937).

Pipkin in the late 1990s; these are on file at the Office of History and Archaeology of the State of Alaska and are available to qualified researchers. The burials encountered during CRM monitoring since 1974 were as poorly preserved and contained about the same low amounts of grave goods as those excavated by Bandi and were also largely from the time attributed to the “Punuk” archaeological culture; these data were synthesized by Staley and Mason (2004).

A persistent undercurrent in any discussion of St. Lawrence Island archaeology is its inchoate and incomplete nature. Unfortunately, Henry Collins penned his premier *opus magnum* too authoritatively: *The Archaeology of St. Lawrence Island*, as does H.G. Bandi in his *St. Lorenz Insel studien*. The reality is that comparatively little of the archaeology of St. Lawrence Island was revealed by the efforts of either expedition. Further, Collins (1937) had not even completely analyzed his own material from Kiyaligaq (Southeast Cape) and his work preceded Rainey’s (1941) description of the Okvik site. Both Collins (1937) and Bandi (this volume) spent little effort comparing Sivuqaq with Kukulik (Geist and Rainey 1936). The 1979 survey of Crowell (1984) documented the far-flung extent of large sites around St. Lawrence Island. Sadly for archaeologists, the history of St. Lawrence was more complex and productive than Bandi (or Collins) discovered, if the objects arriving in private hands, from the spades of subsistence diggers, are any measure (Julie Hollowell, pers. communication, 2004). Nonetheless it is the great fortune of archaeologists that Hans Georg Bandi has both lived long and achieved what few ever do, complete their work in their retirement.

REFERENCES

- Bandi, Hans Georg and Jost Bürgi
1971/ 1972 Gräber der Punuk-kultur bei Gambell auf der St. Lorenz Insel, Alaska. *Sonderbruck aus dem Jahrbuch des Bernischen Historischen Museums*, 51/52: 41-116.
- Bandi, Hans Georg
1984a Archaeology of St. Lawrence Island. In *Beringia in the Cenozoic Era* [Translation of *Beringiya v Kainozoe*], edited by V.L. Kontrimavichus, pp. 631-638, Akademiya Nauk SSSR, Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Published for the United States Department of Interior and National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C., Amerind Publishing Co, New Delhi.
- 1984b *St. Lorenz Insel-studien*. Vol. 1. Berner beiträge zur archäologischen und ethnologischen erforschung des Beringstrassengebietes. Band I. Allegemeine Einführung und Gräberfunde bei Gambell am Nordwestkap der St. Lorenz Insel, Alaska. *Academica Helvetica* 5, Bern and Stuttgart. [Partial translation by Stefanie Ludwig, manuscript in possession of the author].
- 1995 Siberian Eskimos as Whalers and Warriors: In *Hunting the Largest Animals: Native Whaling in the Western Arctic and Subarctic*, edited by A.P. McCartney, pp. 165-184, Studies in Whaling No. 3, Occas. Paper 36, Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta, Edmonton.
- Bandi, H.G. and R. Blumer
2002 Investigations by Swiss Archaeologists on St. Lawrence Islands. In *Archaeology in the Bering Strait Region: Research on Two Continents*, edited by D.E. Dumond and R.L. Bland, pp. 25-60, *University of Oregon Anthropological Papers* No. 59.
- Blumer, Reto
2002 Radiochronological Assessment of Neo-Eskimo Occupations on St. Lawrence Island. In *Archaeology in the Bering Strait Region: Research on Two Continents*, edited by D.E. Dumond and R.L. Bland, pp. 61-106, *University of Oregon Anthropological Papers* No. 59.
- Collins, Henry B.
1937 Archaeology of St. Lawrence Island, Alaska. *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* 96(1).
- Crowell, Aron
1984 *Archeological Survey and Site Condition Assessment of Saint Lawrence Island, Alaska*. Report submitted to the Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. and Sivuqaq, Inc., Gambell.
- Dumond, Don E.
1998 The Hillside site on St. Lawrence Island: An examination of collections from the 1930s. *University of Oregon Anthropological Papers* No. 55.
- Geist, Otto and F.G. Rainey
1936 *Archaeological Excavations at Kukulik, St. Lawrence Island, Alaska*. Volume II, Miscellaneous Publications. University of Alaska, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.
- Lewis, Michael
1995 Technological Development and Culture Change on St. Lawrence Island. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.
- Rainey, F.G.
1941 *Eskimo Prehistory: The Okvik site on the Punuk islands*. Anthropological Paper No. 37, part 4. American Museum Natural History, New York.

Scott, G. Richard and Thomas E. Gillispie

2002 The Dentition of Prehistoric St. Lawrence Island Eskimos: Variation, Health and Behavior, *Anthropological Papers of the University of Alaska*, New Series 2(1):50-72.

Staley, David P. and Owen K. Mason

2004 A Punuk Whale Bone Grave from Sivuqaq, St. Lawrence Island: Evidence of High Social Standing, AD 775-1020. *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* 2(1-2):126-136.