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Review of *What This Awl Means: Feminist Archaeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village* by Janet D. Spector

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What This Aul Means: Feminist Archaeology at a Wahpeton Dakota Village. Janet D. Spector. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1993. Graphs, maps, photographs, illustrations, epilogue, appendixes, sources, and index. vii + 161 pp. \$32.50 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

In the summer of 1980, Janet Spector began to conduct a University of Minnesota archaeological field school at Little Rapids on the Minnesota River, forty-five miles southwest of Minneapolis. The site was occupied in the early to mid-1800s by a Wahpeton Dakota summer village. Her challenge was not only to teach archaeology but constructively to combine evidence from the ground with documentary data from missionaries and others who had written about Native people and communities in the area.

In the next six seasons, the project became constructive and pathbreaking in ways not foreseen at the outset. For Spector, it was also a personal journey.

The need for and potentialities of an archaeology more deeply informed by feminist perspectives already had drawn her attention. A feminist sensitivity to voices and silences in existing records and in standard narratives of the past proved to serve her well in another sphere. In the early 1980s, Native concerns about archaeological activity were increasing. Becoming aware of their views and interests, Spector undertook serious efforts to consult with Dakota people and to integrate their knowledge and memories into the study that resulted.

The process led to a greatly enriched understanding of the site, or of "*Inyan Ceyaka Atonwan*," as the Dakota called it. The researches in the ground, in documentary records, and with Dakota elders produced a detailed portrait of a community which, in Dakota terms, was a summer planting village. Here, the women's growing of corn and every family's harvesting of other local flora and fauna provided a diversified subsistence base, supported by the trading of useful tools for furs. For a few generations, until the terrible disruptions of Minnesota Sioux life in the mid-1800s, Dakota people in such villages as this maintained a relatively stable existence, more sedentary too, than that portrayed in stereotypes of buffalo horsemen, and more profoundly based on the contributions of women as well as men.

Spector provides the basic information needed to help general readers understand the site and its people. She also does more, offering thoughtful reflections on issues that she has faced as a professional archaeologist, and on the ethical problems that confront the field, given its past lack of communication and dialogue with the peoples whose histories it has excavated and appropriated.

This book may break the trail for a new genre of archaeological site report. Reading it, I was led to reflect on my own first summer field school experience, and on the report that our director ultimately published. I recall vividly the human experience of those ten weeks, the intense hands-on learning and immersion in an entirely fresh subject. It was exciting, and the crew all felt like equals, pursuing a common goal. But no Native people appeared on-site (to our knowledge) or in the report. Its author, unlike Spector, would not have thought to list all his field crews by name at the end. And his acknowledgments too reflected his times; a long list of names followed by thanks to "all of these gentlemen." I left the field of archaeology. I am glad that Janet Spector did not. **Jennifer S. H. Brown**, *Department of History, University of Winnipeg*.