



Grave Matters: Excavating California's Buried Past

By Tony Platt

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What do we find when we dig up the past?

Whether by curious Boy Scouts and "backyard archaeologists" or competitive collectors and knowledge-hungry anthropologists, the excavation of native remains is a time-honored practice fraught with injustice and simmering resentments.

Grave Matters is the history of the treatment of native remains in California and the story of the complicated relationship between researcher and researched. Tony Platt begins his journey with his son's funeral at Big Lagoon, a seaside village in pastoral Humboldt County in Northern California, once O-pyuweg, a bustling center for the Yurok and the site of a plundered native cemetery. Platt travels the globe in search of the answer to the question: How do we reconcile a place of extraordinary beauty with its horrific past?

Grave Matters centers around the Yurok people and the eventual movement to repatriate remains and reclaim ancient rights, but it is also a universal story of coming to terms with the painful legacy of a sorrowful past.

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Review

"This is how social and cultural history should be written." --George Lipsitz, author of *How Racism Takes Place*

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"An original, haunting, and necessary tour de force of a book." --Orin Starn, professor of cultural anthropology and history at Duke University and author of *Ishi's Brain: In Search of America's Last "Wild" Indian*

"In graceful, seamless prose, a story worthy of the epic poets." --North Coast Journal

About the Author

Tony Platt is the author of ten books and more than 150 essays and articles on race, inequality, and social justice in American history, among them *Bloodlines: Recovering Hitler's Nuremberg Laws, From Patton's Trophy to Public Memorial*, and *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency*, which was reissued as a fortieth-anniversary edition in 2009. Platt, now a professor emeritus, taught at the University of Chicago, the University of California, Berkeley, and California State University, Sacramento, where he received awards for teaching and scholarship. He has been a visiting professor at Chuo University, Tokyo, and at Queen's University, Belfast, and was a visiting researcher at the Huntington Library and the National Museum of American History. Platt has written for the *Los Angeles Times*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Truthdig.com, the History News Network, *Z Magazine*, *Monthly Review*, and the *Guardian*, and his commentaries have aired on NPR. His publications have been translated into four languages. Tony Platt lives in Berkeley and Big Lagoon, California.

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