

THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

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This section consists of abstracts of newly finished theses and dissertations on Arctic anthropological research relevant to Alaska. The goal of this section is to highlight new circumpolar research by students. In this issue, there are six dissertation and thesis abstracts addressing archaeological, cultural anthropological, and literary research topics from Indiana University, University of Alaska Anchorage, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and University of Mississippi. Charlton examines the continental United States' view of Alaska through literary and media history. Cropley explores the involvement, understanding, participation, and goals of an archaeological culture camp through the perspectives of stakeholders and youth participants. Fuqua's thesis is a morphological analysis of the variation of Northern Archaic tradition notched stone projectile points from Alaska. Gundlach-Graham researches the influence of U.S. and Russian educational systems on the identity of Kodiak residents from 1836 to 1900. Hilman's faunal analysis focuses on the Healy Lake Village Site upper component assemblage that dates from the late nineteenth century to mid-twentieth century. In the final abstract, Johnson uses archaeological excavation and analysis to explore segregation at the Shepard Point Cannery.

Contact Monty Rogers to submit an abstract of a recently completed thesis or dissertation that deals with topics of interest to *AJA* readers.

ALASKA AND THE ARCTIC IN THE U.S. IMAGINARY

Ryan Charlton

PhD dissertation, 2019, Department of English,
University of Mississippi

ABSTRACT

Popular narratives of Alaska have long relied on the region's mythical status as the "Last Frontier," a perception that enfolds Alaska into a continental narrative of U.S. expansion. This frontier image has foreclosed our ability to appreciate the profound instability that the 1867 Alaska Purchase brought into national discourse at a time when Americans were eager to adopt a fixed national identity. In the three decades following the purchase, Alaska would resist incorporation into the national imaginary, challenging the coherence of U.S. national identity and calling into question foundational myths of the United States as a continental and agrarian nation. Rather than bolstering

a vision of Manifest Destiny, nineteenth-century Alaska required Americans to contemplate national futures that stood in stark contrast to that which was seemingly unfolding in the West. While these Arctic visions were often troubling, they also offered Americans an opportunity to rethink their assumptions about the nation. By unmooring the United States from the continent and unsettling the seemingly fixed trajectory of U.S. expansion, the Alaska Purchase enabled Americans to imagine alternative national configurations and social structures. To recover a sense of both the uncertainties and the possibilities that the Far North came to represent, this dissertation analyzes the narrative strategies Americans used to rationalize the U.S. possession of noncontiguous Arctic territory in the postbellum era. This study explores an array of media—including fiction, newspaper editorials, political cartoons, travel narratives, souvenir postcards, and more—to theorize the impact of the Alaska Purchase on U.S. discourses of nation, region, gender, and race.

ARCHAEOLOGY IN CULTURE CAMPS: ENCOURAGING ALASKA NATIVE YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR PAST

Fawn Crole

Master's thesis, 2019, Department of Anthropology,
University of Alaska Anchorage

ABSTRACT

This research focused on the archaeology component of Susten Culture Camp on the Kenai Peninsula and what it provides to its campers. My research questions are: (1) How do different stakeholders define and understand the goals of the camp and are the goals being met? and (2) What do youth gain from participating in culture camps both in terms of archaeological and cultural knowledge and other benefits? My research and analysis revealed two domains, categories that best captured the information collected from my research results: Goals of Camp and Youth Experiences. Camp coordinators, educators, and advocates want to provide youth the opportunity to develop life skills and friendships and to learn about their culture in a safe, substance-free environment. Relationships and partnerships at all levels help in achieving these goals. Analysis also revealed that as youth are able to participate in archaeology and their culture, some feel more connected to their ancestors and are able to make connections about the past and the present. Some campers also developed new thoughts and feelings about archaeology. I observed that the connections made about the archaeological work being conducted and about local heritage depended on campers' level of involvement in the archaeological process. Attending culture camp provides youth with numerous learning opportunities outside a formal school curriculum. Culture camp is successful in meeting its goals based on its youth experiences, and having an archaeological component at camp encourages campers to participate in and learn from their past.

A STUDY OF VARIATION AMONG SIDE-NOTCHED BIFACES FROM NORTHERN ARCHAIC SITES IN ALASKA

Kaitlyn Fuqua

Master of Arts thesis, 2020, Department of Anthropology,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

ABSTRACT

The Northern Archaic tradition (~6000–1000 cal BP), an Alaska archaeological tradition, is often identified based on the presence of side-notched bifaces. Variation among these bifaces, commonly referred to as projectile points, is not well understood. This study examines morphological and functional variability among a sample of 209 notched bifaces from 63 Northern Archaic sites in central and northern Alaska. The nature and extent of variability were examined on several scales, including (1) across ecological regions of Alaska, (2) throughout the mid-Holocene (6000–1000 cal BP), and (3) within a single site (Ratekin, HEA-187).

Morphological variation was examined using metric and nonmetric variables, including length, width, thickness, and raw material type. This study also employed 2-D geometric morphometric landmark-based methods, which provide a less subjective view of variation in tool morphology. The side-notched bifaces in the sample show a large degree of variation, both across sites and within the Ratekin site. There are some differences in shape among bifaces from polar and boreal regions of Alaska, which may indicate morphological regional varieties. There appears to be some variation in the degree of standardization in side-notched biface production over time; between 4000 and 2000 cal BP, there is decreased variability in the majority of metric shape variables, suggesting a greater degree of standardization.

Functional variability was assessed using two lines of evidence: breakage patterns and macroscopic usewear. Sixty percent of the side-notched bifaces in the sample exhibit some breakage, most of which were transverse/lateral breaks located on the shoulders and neck of the tool. Biface tips show evidence of use and frequent rejuvenation. Similar breakage and use patterns were found across ecological regions, throughout the mid-Holocene, and within the Ratekin site sample. This indicates that, despite the shifts in morphology identified at regional and temporal scales, side-notched bifaces served the same functional use at all scales examined.

Variation in the side-notched bases was considered from the perspective of human behavioral ecology, focusing specifically on risk management and how strategies for mitigating risk may be reflected in lithic assemblages (through invention, innovation, and standardization). Other risk management strategies employed by the Northern Archaic may include communal hunting, subsistence diversification, and high residential mobility. Within this framework, the increased standardization among side notched bifaces during 4000–2000 cal BP may be a reflection of a risk-averse behavior, supported by evidence of subsistence diversification at Northern Archaic sites around 4000 cal BP.

EMPIRE AND IDENTITY: COLONIAL EDUCATION IN KODIAK, ALASKA, 1836–1900

Abigail Gundlach-Graham

PhD dissertation, 2019, School of Education,
Indiana University

ABSTRACT

In this study, I argue that between 1836 and 1900, residents of Kodiak, Alaska, learned elements of identity under specifically colonial circumstances. Both Russian and U.S. colonial powers relied on the educative processes of Othering—creating “us versus them” mentalities—to maintain the stability and productivity of their colony. In the course of the transition from Russian to U.S. governance, identities among Kodiak residents changed in dramatic and subtle ways as a result of changes in colonial education. Conceiving of education as the teaching and learning of beliefs and information, behavior, and identity, the study examines educational processes shaping four elements Kodiak identity: race and class, sexuality and gender, religion, and national identity. Distinct educational narratives are revealed when the same circumstances are considered through different educational lenses. Importantly, the people of Kodiak—Native, European, and Euro-American—experienced these educational processes together, at times in conflict and at times as coordinating colonial forces.

FAUNAL ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORIC COMPONENT AT HEALY LAKE VILLAGE SITE, INTERIOR ALASKA

Hilary Hilmer

Master's thesis, 2019, Department of Anthropology,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

ABSTRACT

The historic period in Interior Alaska was a dynamic time that led to many cultural changes for Native Alaskan communities across the state. Starting in the early 1700s, Russian and Euro-American explorers began interacting with Native Alaskan groups living on the coast, and by the end of the eighteenth century/early nineteenth century, Interior Alaskan groups were being directly affected. Due to Western influences, Native groups such as the Upper Tanana Athabascans began to rely on a cash economy, causing them to settle in year-round villages, trade with the Euro-Americans for nonlocal goods (e.g., flour, guns, buttons, glass, and nails), and work on construction projects in order to provide for their families. All of these changes appeared to cause a division between the traditional way of life and the new Euro-American way of living.

Healy Lake Village site (XBD-00020) is a multi-component site with occupations spanning the terminal Pleistocene into the Holocene. It is located approximately 100 miles southeast of present-day Fairbanks on the shores of Healy Lake in the Upper Tanana Athabaskan territory. The village was a summer fishing camp until ~AD 1910; it became a year-round village soon after the construction of a trading post at Healy Lake.

The well-preserved faunal remains excavated from the Upper Cultural level (dating to AD 1880–1946) at Healy Lake Village site provide a significant opportunity to address fundamental questions relating to subarctic hunter-gatherer subsistence economies. This research examines zooarchaeological patterns in the data through human behavioral ecology and world-systems theory to address questions of taphonomy, human procurement, and processing decisions, as well as historic period land-use strategies and trade practices. In this thesis, I explore the possibility that the residents at Healy Lake Village site were affected by Euro-American influences, specifically in regard to their subsistence economies. However, the results suggest that hunting practices were not drastically altered. The residents still relied heavily on local game as their primary source of subsistence with minor inclusions of Western goods, such as canned meat and flour.

**ARCHAEOLOGY OF TWO SEGREGATED
MESS HALLS AT SHEPARD POINT CANNERY
NEAR CORDOVA, ALASKA**

Norma Johnson

Master's thesis, 2019, Department of Anthropology,
University of Alaska Anchorage

ABSTRACT

Starting in the state over 130 years ago, the salmon industry remains an important part of the Alaska economy today. Salmon canning began on the shores of California in 1864 and moved rapidly north. To facilitate the rapid growth of the industry, ethnic immigrant workers were hired. Shepard Point Cannery was one of many small independent salmon canneries in the Pacific Northwest that reportedly only operated with the use of Chinese workers. Historical research has reported many canneries were ethnically segregated, with separate living, dining, and eating quarters maintained to keep the peace between the different ethnic groups. Shepard Point Cannery operated from 1917 to 1945 with two segregated mess halls. The Euro-American Mess Hall (COR-00428) and Asian Workers' Mess Hall (COR-00429) of Shepard Point were examined through archival records, mapping, excavation, and artifact analysis from summer 2018 to spring 2019. Data recovery at Shepard Point resulted in 252 catalog entries of artifacts, some of which were of Asian origin. Though the ethnic segregation at Shepard Point was not apparent by the archaeological record, it did reveal that Japanese workers were also present.