

REVIEW

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF NORTH PACIFIC FISHERIES

Edited by Madonna L. Moss and Aubrey Cannon, 2011. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks. Paper, 320 pages, photos, line drawings, maps, tables, index. ISBN: 978-1-60223-146-7; \$45.00

Reviewed by Michael A. Etnier

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As the editors of *The Archaeology of North Pacific Fisheries* point out in their introduction (p. 6), zooarchaeological analysis of fish remains is a relatively young field of study, with only a few decades of specialized attention in the eastern North Pacific. The contributions to this volume, though just a sampling of the work currently being conducted around the eastern North Pacific, highlight the depth and range of approaches that characterize the state-of-the-art in the zooarchaeological analysis of fish remains.

For better or for worse, many of the papers retain their conference-presentation flavor—generally long on introductions and background, short on data and interpretations. But this is part of what makes the contributions to this volume so appealing—they offer concise glimpses of each contributor's particular research interests, some of which have been developing for decades. Each chapter has its own list of references, which allows for easy follow-up and cross-referencing.

Zooarchaeologists are still struggling with fundamental issues that have plagued fish bone analyses from day one: density-mediated destruction of bone, recovery bias, and taxonomic identification. Many of the chapters in this volume detail innovative approaches to these challenges. Smith, Butler, Orwoll and Wilson-Skogen (Chapter 4), for instance, add an important body of data that allows for an evaluation of survivorship of cod (*Gadus macrocephalus*) bones relative to those of salmon (Salmonidae). In my opinion, the possibility of density-mediated destruction of bone should be evaluated for every assemblage analyzed, regardless of the apparent state of preservation. As more

and more taxa are added to the list for which we have bone density data, our ability to understand how time has structured our assemblages will only improve.

Of course, none of this matters if we continue to use recovery methods that we know (and have known for decades) significantly bias against smaller-bodied taxa and against small skeletal elements of large-bodied taxa. Recognizing that we cannot use the same excavation and recovery strategies to sample for all classes of faunal remains, Cannon, Yang and Speller have developed a sampling protocol that uses bucket augers to recover large spatially and temporally representative samples of fish bones from shell middens (Chapter 5; see also Cannon 2000; Caldwell, Chapter 14; Brewster and Martindale, Chapter 15). Cannon et al.'s approach seems to solve many of the problems associated with traditional excavation and recovery methods, providing a nice balance between cost-effectiveness, degree of site destruction, and recovery of faunal remains. However, I think that a combination of intensive sampling for fish and extensive sampling for other classes, such as mammals, will ultimately be necessary for understanding the full range of subsistence activities represented at any given site.

With these relatively recently developed tools for (a) recovering a representative sample of an assemblage and (b) evaluating the degree to which density-mediated attrition of bone has structured that sample, there still remains the problem of species-level identification—a problem felt most acutely in the analysis of salmon remains. Several approaches are advocated in this volume,

ranging from circumstantial evidence based on locations of sites (e.g., Prince, Chapter 7), to combinations of metric, radiographic, and isotopic analyses (Orchard and Szpak, Chapter 2; Orchard, Chapter 8), to the relatively expensive, but extremely effective use of genetic analyses (Cannon et al., Chapter 5).

None of these approaches is perfect—the analyses advocated by Orchard are not 100% reliable, and the uncertainty appears to be higher in areas geographically distant from where Orchard developed and tested the approach. And while DNA-based identifications can be expected to be reliable when they are derived in meticulously maintained ancient DNA labs, it is not feasible to submit a full assemblage for such analyses. As with Cannon et al.'s balanced approach to sampling midden sites for fish bones, a combination of the approaches described here will probably yield the most consistent and reliable results.

Even if we some day reach a point where we can identify the majority of fish remains with certainty, I think it is unlikely that zooarchaeologists will ever be able to divine the subtle and sophisticated nuances of fish selectivity documented by Elroy White in his interviews with Heiltsuk elders (Chapter 6). Not too long ago, fish biologists discouraged archaeologists from even *looking* for salmon remains, because of the mistaken belief that the cartilaginous nature of much of their skeletons would ensure their complete destruction in burial contexts (Moss and Cannon, Chapter 1). Of course, we now know that the remains of even strictly cartilaginous fishes, such as ratfish (*Hydrolagus collieri*) and spiny dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*), are routinely recovered from archaeological sites (Monks, Chapter 9; Caldwell, Chapter 14; Trost, Schalk, Wolverton and Nelson, Chapter 16), along with the nearly ubiquitous assemblages of salmon vertebrae and cranial bones. Who knows what sorts of questions we will be able to address with fish bones if we simply devise new ways to look for the answers?

Although much of the general public is not yet aware of it, I think it is safe to say that archaeologists working in the eastern North Pacific have finally found the correct prescription for overcoming decades of collective “salmon-opia” (cf. Monks 1987). However, we still have a long way to go. First and foremost, all of the chapters in this volume share a general goal of developing a deeper understanding of the cultural, spiritual, and caloric importance of fish to peoples both ancient and modern living on the Pacific Coast. Efforts by Betts, Maschner and Clark (Chapter 11) and Moss, Butler and Elder (Chapter 17) clearly show the potential of archaeofaunas in general, and fish remains in particular, to contribute to a larger goal of informed natural resource management. The potential for zooarchaeology is still growing and at an unprecedented pace, as the contributions to Moss and Cannon's *The Archaeology of North Pacific Fisheries* demonstrate.

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REVIEW

ULTIMATE AMERICANS: POINT HOPE, ALASKA, 1826–1909

by Tom Lowenstein, 2008. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks. Paperback, xxx + 351 pp., three maps, 38 figures, three appendices, index; ISBN 978-1-60223-038-5; \$36.95

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Tom Lowenstein's edifying and eloquent *Ultimate Americans: Point Hope, Alaska, 1826–1909* is the third in a series of presentations resulting from his 1973–1989 oral historical and archival research into the social, spiritual, technological, material, and historical milieu of the traditional Northwest Alaska Iñupiaq Eskimo whaling culture as seen from the environs of Point Hope (see also Lowenstein 1992, 1993). Known as Tikigaq in its pre-European days, this millennia-old settlement on the Chukchi Sea coastline was a perfect resource extraction locale for traditional subsistence hunting of the bowhead whale and for subsequent industrial harvests in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries following decimation of whale populations by commercial pelagic whalers in the western Arctic fishery. This well-illustrated, ably researched, and plainly written volume walks us through a history of the place from initial direct Iñupiaq and European contact in the early nineteenth century, through sustained Iñupiaq/EuroAmerican social and material relations in the mid-late 1800s, and into early twentieth century events figuring prominently in building contemporaneous and near-future historical landscapes.

Lowenstein understands local manifestations of the triumvirate of EuroAmerican colonialist agents: the state, commerce, and missions (e.g., Fabian 1990). In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Point Hope, the state was represented by the U.S. Bureau of Education, which imposed a Native Alaska schooling plan managed by Christian missions and introduced and managed the Native reindeer industry, and by the U.S. Revenue

Cutter Service, which provided American law and order in this recently acquired colony. The role of commerce was played by the numerous commercial shore whaling and trading entities at the nearby shore whaling enclave at Jabbertown, which employed regional (but not local) Iñupiat as shore whaling crews and offered an enormous variety of EuroAmerican manufactured goods for trade and as partial remuneration for Native labor. Mission involvement was provided at Point Hope by the Episcopal Church and its Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, and in Alaska more generally by Sheldon Jackson, the Presbyterian missionary appointed by the federal government to plan and direct Alaska Native education and reindeer herding programs.

In Point Hope (and elsewhere in contemporary Northwest Alaska), the intermingling of these institutional agents could be remarkably convoluted. The Episcopal Church was contracted by the Bureau of Education in 1889 to operate the new school. Dr. John Driggs was the Episcopalian missionary in Point Hope from 1890 to 1908; this medical doctor was also the schoolteacher, a trader running a shore whaling crew, and a gold prospect claimant. The Revenue Cutter *Bear* patrolled the coastline, managing order amongst the cosmopolitan Jabbertown whaling crowd, meting out justice and supplies, as appropriate. (These circumstances are reminiscent of the long tenure at Point Barrow of Charles Brower, a whaler, trader, and federal appointee, and Driggs' contemporary.)

While institutional colonial agents endeavored to bring social and behavioral Americanization to the people

of Point Hope, local Inupiaq forces served to maintain a traditional community in the face of colonial development. This included maintaining traditional Inupiaq structures of power and the control over people and resources held by shamans and *umialiit* (whaling captains). The powerful Point Hope *umialik* Atajauraq, together with shamans, forbade shore whalers to establish stations in Point Hope proper, hence the founding of Jabbertown. Atajauraq profited handsomely through trade with commercial operators and retained his local Native whaling crews. Point Hope people refused to work for Jabbertown whalers (but they worked for other American whaling interests in the region, such as Brower's outfit). Local *qalgi* (traditional "men's houses") used in spiritual and subsistence whaling tasks were sustained (thanks in part to a sympathetic Driggs; they were destroyed after Driggs' 1909 removal and subsequent replacement by the generally unsympathetic Rev. Hoare). Inupiaq actions vis-à-vis EuroAmerican state, mission, and commercial interests in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Northwest Alaska present a fine historical example of social agency.

Lowenstein is a writer of poetry and spirituality and music; he is not a trained professional historian or anthropologist. This permits two observations. On the one hand, his grasp of historical materials and the scale and scope of the work are all the more remarkable given a background that does not ordinarily include such discipline-specific skill sets. On the other hand, his occasional editorial commentary and conjecture on historical goings-on are readily forgiven. As readers, we are aware that Lowenstein has the requisite research, compilation, and composition abilities, we know his sources, and we take his presentation not as *the* authority but as *one among a few* well-conceived and reasonably approached histories of the time and place.

Ultimate Americans is of interest and substantive use to professional, student, lay, and stakeholder audiences. Practitioners in Native studies, sociocultural anthropology, northern and maritime history, ethnohistory, and archaeology will appreciate its historical depth and breadth and the numerous and detailed primary source references. Lay readers will appreciate the book's fascinating topic and historical context and benefit from its clear prose and organization. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a local and regional Inupiaq readership will gain from Lowenstein's consistent invocation and extensive use of oral histories conducted with a now-departed generation of Inupiaq elder knowledge bearers about this transformative period in the history of Point Hope in particular and

of Northwest Alaska in general. Useful and broader historical context for Point Hope and the Northwest Alaska region can be gleaned from reading *Ultimate Americans* in conjunction with Lowenstein (1992), Bockstoce (1986), Burch (1982), VanStone (1962), Larson (2004), Rainey (1947), Chance (1990), Brower (1994), Sheehan (1997), and Cassell (2000, 2004). *Ultimate Americans* is a good read, a worthy source, and a must-have addition to any serious Alaska history library.

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REVIEW

GWICH'IN ATHABASCAN IMPLEMENTS: HISTORY, MANUFACTURE, AND USAGE ACCORDING TO REVEREND DAVID SALMON

By Thomas A. O'Brien, 2011. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks. Paperback, xxxii + 133 pages, 112 figures, two appendices, index. ISBN 978-1-60223-144-3; \$45.00

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Gwich'in Athabascan Implements is the product of the fruitful collaboration of Reverend David Salmon with Tom O'Brien, who worked with Salmon for over ten years until Salmon's death in 2007 at the age of ninety-five. Born in 1912, Salmon was raised in the bush-land of the Wood River country by his father, William Salmon, who was concerned that life in the nearest village, Salmon, some hundreds of miles away, would prove too dangerous for his son during a time when contagious diseases ravaged the Alaska Interior.

Thus, for many years of his life, Salmon made a living with his father by trapping in a sparsely populated region where "my father tell me the story. We have no radio, we have no TV. Only I listen to my father... the only one talking all winter long for eighteen years. And I learned..." (p. xxix). As a result, Salmon was well-informed about his ancestors' traditional culture when he embarked on his own life in the modern Alaska that was emerging in the 1940s and 1950s.

Beginning in 1994, Salmon made a set of traditional Athabascan tools based on the teachings of his father and other elders. The tool set eventually grew to include implements associated with hunting, fishing, gaming, and manufacturing, as well as special purpose items. Thirty-eight of these tools, fifteen of which are arrows, are described in the text. The descriptions are based on a close examination of their morphological characteristics and supplemented by life-size drawings by O'Brien. The construction and contextual use of each artifact is further elaborated upon in the accompanying text, which was drawn directly from

a series of taped discussions with Salmon that were recorded by O'Brien in 1997.

In constructing the text, O'Brien "intentionally refrained from interjecting [his] own assumptions or citing comparative references from other sources," seeking only "to present this detailed body of knowledge solely reflecting the information as conveyed to me by Rev. Salmon" (p. xix). On the one hand, this approach allows for a respectful acknowledgement of Salmon's personal knowledge, but for some it will represent a major failing in that it represents a single, idiosyncratic perspective lacking traditional comparative ethnographic context.

I do not find this to be a major problem; many of the implements are well-known to Athabascan scholars and documented in traditional ethnographic sources. It is precisely Salmon's intimate knowledge of the implements that makes the book useful and interesting. His personal knowledge is extensive, including not only technology and construction techniques, but also the social context of the implements—who may make the object, who may use it, when and under what circumstances, and a description of the associated social norms and taboos. I particularly liked the account of the Grizzly Bear Spear; the description of how it was used to dispatch this dangerous northern resident was both chilling and awe-inspiring.

The main text is preceded by a short introduction to the Gwich'in Athabascan homeland, Salmon's life history, and reflections on the creation of the artifacts and the collaboration between O'Brien and Salmon. The five-page index is entirely adequate.

Many readers of the *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* will recall that in 2001 both O'Brien and Salmon were keynote speakers at our annual conference, held that year in Fairbanks and sponsored by the Tanana Chiefs Conference. O'Brien has thoughtfully chosen to include the text of Salmon's address that year, "A Clean History: How I Work with Other People." A wonderful example of Athabascan English oratory, Salmon reminded us of the unique collaborative relationship that typifies much of the interaction between Natives and non-Natives in the North, how through our shared history, Natives, traders, prospectors, trappers, and contemporary residents—including anthropologists—helped each other to survive in this sometimes harsh environment, creating "a clean history." Salmon also noted that "Indian too was anthropologist, you know from the early days. They study the people, they study the life of the animal, people through living things" (p. xxxii), an instructive observation that encourages me in the continued pursuit of this cross-cultural endeavor to which we devote ourselves.

REVIEW

ELDORADO! THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF GOLD MINING IN THE FAR NORTH

Edited by Catherine Holder Spude, Robin O. Mills, Karl Gurcke, and Roderick Sprague. 2011. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln. Paper, 376 pages, B&W photos, maps, tables. ISBN: 978-0-8032-1099-8; \$55.00.

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The image that comes to mind, probably for most people, when thinking of a gold rush miner is a bearded old sourdough sporting a flannel shirt, suspenders and floppy hat. Implied in this picture are the affiliated characteristics: tough as nails, antisocial, and dependent on no one. *Eldorado!* attempts to change this image by demonstrating the extensive transportation and supply network that the miners were dependent on, yet at the same time contributing to. The book focuses on placer mining sites and is divided into five sections.

The first section grounds the reader in the history, theory, model, methods, challenges and opportunities presented by gold rush archaeology. Robert L. Spude hooks the reader with the story of stamper Mattie Wilson and calls for a revision of the current understanding of the gold rush promoted by sensational writers such as Jack London and Robert Service from a lawless male-oriented frontier to one that includes families, order and economic networks. Hardesty's theoretical chapter identifies frontier mining as a cross-cultural type of community characterized by rapid change and flexibility in social structures, ideologies and technology.

Catherine H. Spude shares a multiple linear regression method helpful in determining the type of site using its artifact assemblage and comparing it to collections from other representative sites, such as saloons, brothels and family homes. Although she acknowledges that complex statistics are easy to "use, abuse and misunderstand" (p. 74), her words of advice to archaeologists are that "complex statistics are here to stay. It behooves the

researcher to learn them and what they can do for him or her" (p. 53). Spude's method is used by several authors in the volume. Purser discusses how information gained through gold rush archaeology can contribute to research outside the state of Alaska and the field of archaeology by providing information about how gender, class, ethnicity and transience played out during the gold rush.

The remaining sections are divided into the site-type categories proposed in Mills' model of gold rush archaeological sites (Part I, Chapter 3). Part II starts with three chapters on what the model identifies as transfer and supply points, Skagway and Dyea. The main purpose of these types of sites is to move people and supplies through the network. Thornton begins by uncovering the story of Tlingit gold rush participation at Chilkoot Pass. When the stampedeers arrived, the Tlingit were one of the wealthiest hunting and gathering societies in the world. They controlled a network of trails monopolizing trade with Natives in the interior. The Tlingit effort to maintain control of their trails resulted in the Packer War of 1888, during which a Tlingit chief was killed and control of the trails lost. Thornton also tells the story of Skookum Jim, the Native co-discoverer of gold in the Klondike, who straddles two worlds and is admired in each for different reasons. In the white-man world, he is appreciated for playing by their rules, wearing their clothes and living in their kind of house. In the Native world, he is appreciated for his traditional commitments to his family.

Cooper and Spude compare household collections in Skagway. Their findings include a priest who supported

Prohibition yet drank in secret; an interracial household that attempted to alleviate the stress of trying to integrate by consuming unusual amounts of “medicine”; a surprise military habitation revealed through multiple regression analysis, which instigated historical research confirming the archaeological evidence and demonstrated that the African American soldiers living there stole gunpowder from the military. The evidence from these assemblages points to people acting in accordance with their assigned gender and class roles. Huelsbeck uses a consumer-behavior approach to analyze eleven faunal assemblages from Skagway. He uses the type and amount of meat represented by the bones, price categories, and cooking methods to demonstrate that wealth and class played out as expected, at least in relation to beef consumption, and that people probably responded to price fluctuations by consuming more or less mutton.

In contrast to the discussion of coastal sites in Part II, Part III discusses interior transfer and supply links in the network. Griffin and Gurcke cover the thirty-year international effort to document the blanket of artifacts along the Chilkoot trail by archaeologists from Parks Canada and the U.S. National Park Service. They lament the paucity of prehistoric sites found in spite of the known history of Native use. Both agencies are trying to address the difficulties related to having two countries place their borders in the middle of a Tlingit trail that is an essential part of Native identity. “Canyon City,” by Hammer, is an analysis of a company town and how it controlled the resident employees’ lives whether on the clock or off. The layout of the town was highly structured, even to the organization of the wall tents, unlike other gold rush sites. The company maintained a monopoly over all available resources, causing the employees to be totally dependent on the company for food and shelter.

Part IV focuses on settlements that also serve as transfer and supply points but in addition provide essential services, such as shopping, medical, legal and recreational, to adjacent mining districts, identified in the model as Central and Secondary Distribution Settlements. C. Spude, Weaver, and Kardatzke look at five saloons and demonstrate how class and wealth are illustrated in the archaeological assemblages. Brand discusses how imported food was essential to the transient population living in tents on the hillsides of Dawson City because “there were insufficient natural resources in the Yukon to sustain a population the size of Dawson City during the boom years” (p. 215). Mills uses the example of Coldfoot

to demonstrate how one community changes through time and cycles through different site types of his model. Smith, Mills, and C. Spude analyze the small settlement of Tofty, significant because it was the first excavation of its model site type in either Alaska or Canada. The authors used Spude’s multiple linear regression analysis and found a midden composed entirely of liquor bottles and a cobbler’s home/workshop illustrating social and economic interconnectedness at this remote location.

The last section concentrates on actual mining sites. Saleeby analyzes over one hundred placer sites documented in a decade-long survey. No matter the type of dwelling recorded, whether a tent frame, cabin, or bunkhouse, her research found an amazing consistency in the types of artifacts at each site, illustrating the miners’ dependence on a recently industrialized economy with limited choices available. King’s contribution demonstrates that Alaska Natives, as well as whites, participated in the gold rush. He focuses on the Ahtna Athabaskans mining at Valdez Creek. Initially starting out as laborers for other miners, they acquired the necessary mining skills and eventually began leasing claims to mine themselves.

Higgs and Sattler illustrate how the differences between a prospector and a miner play out in the archaeological record at Fish Creek, an Extraction Camp site type near Fairbanks. The first site, a small roofless log structure containing rustic, hand-made furniture, is interpreted to be a prospector’s tent frame cabin that was only occupied for a season or less, during which time the occupant appears to have chewed more tobacco than food. The second site had a known occupant who lived there for possibly two decades. He constructed a slightly larger, more substantial cabin with additional features such as a privy, cold cellar, windows, and a porch. He participated in a wider variety of activities, from mining to baking. What the authors point out is that whether temporary or permanent, both cabin occupants relied on the industrialized food system for sustenance.

The authors succeed in their goal of pushing what is known about the gold rush out of the gray literature and into the mainstream. The book is widely available and accessible for someone without an archaeological background who is interested in the topic, although the authors could have expounded a little more on field-specific terminology without compromising scientific integrity. Aside from some redundancy regarding the model description, minor errors and some odd chapter placement, this book is overall an important contribution to the gold

rush literature. It will be a useful cornerstone for current and future historical archaeologists.

Like most characters who are mythologized, crusty sourdoughs did exist, but they were likely the exception rather than the rule. After reading *Eldorado!*, the image of the gold rush miner morphs into someone younger, better educated, and a bit wealthier, who had a fleeting presence in the state, simultaneously dependent on and contributing to a vast economic web.

Boreal Imagery



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Artifact scanning/photography

High resolution film
and document scans

High quality prints from negatives and digital files

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Map and profile
drawing



