U.W.O.A.S. Symposium Abstracts 2004
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On Coe’s Prophecy and the Future of Maya Archaeology

M. Gordon Blainey

The field of Maya archaeology is currently undergoing a massive and slow paradigm shift from an approach that ignored the hieroglyphic script to one where glyphs are increasingly involved in surveys of Mayan sites. The first phase of this shift has already occurred, represented by the widespread acceptance of the conjunctive approach, but the second phase has yet to be realized. This second phase involves the implementation of a requirement of glyphic comprehension for all Mayanists, especially those concerned with the Classic period. This paper examines the different reasons for the current conflict and offers a proposal for the future of the discipline: Maya archaeology can no longer operate with this rift among scholars and only by training future literate scholars according to the conjunctive approach can there exist a harmonized and efficient field of professional Mayanists.

Laser Ablation in Stable Isotope Analysis of Diagenetically Altered Archaeological Material

Allyson Brady

Post-depositional alteration or diagenesis of skeletal material is a problem that has long plagued isotopic analysis of archaeological material. Specifically, microbial diagenesis has the potential impact of altering isotopic signatures in skeletal material through decomposition by soil microorganisms. The objective of my thesis has been to identify diagenetically altered areas within bone and determine to what extent the isotopic signals have been altered. These results not only further our knowledge of the process of biodegradation but allow for more accurate isotope analysis of archaeological material through the creation of a diagenetic profile within skeletal material resulting from microbial diagenesis.

The Skemp Site (47-Lc-480): Implications for the Late Paleoindian occupation of western Wisconsin

Dillon Carr (UWO)

Analysis of diagnostic Late Paleoindian artifacts from the Skemp Site (47-Lc-480) are presented and suggest the site functioned as a retooling/camp station focusing on the exploitation of local chert resources during an Agate Basin occupation. The site is placed within a larger regional context and used to examine patterns of lithic raw material procurement and the development of Late Paleoindian social boundaries in western Wisconsin. Differences in raw material procurement are observed with one population exploiting Hixton Silicified Sandstone cyclically while another relied more heavily on the exploitation of local chert resources. Differences in stylistic traits on projectile points are also observed and correlate to the differences in raw materials utilized. This suggests the presence of a social boundary between culturally affiliated populations during the Agate Basin occupation of western Wisconsin.

Metabolic Bone Disease in Ancient and Contemporary Populations: A Case Study in Osteopenia

Lindsay Foreman (UWO)

Bone loss, or osteopenia, is a major concern among postmenopausal women and elderly individuals of both sexes in many contemporary populations. The underlying
biological mechanisms responsible for the increase in bone loss and reduction in bone density that characterize these individuals remain the focus of many modern clinical studies. Recent research has documented that prolonged periods of metabolic instability in bone tissue compromises both bone structure and strength, increasing bone fragility and the risk of fracture. In an attempt to enhance our current knowledge of the epidemiology of postmenopausal and age-related bone loss, I have undertaken a research project that examines the prevalence of osteopenia in five prehistoric and historic human populations. This presentation will describe the development of a methodological protocol for diagnosing and examining osteopenia in past human skeletal remains using four analytical techniques: gross morphology, conventional radiography, densitometry, and histology using light microscopy.

Oral Traditions and Archaeology: Complementary or Conflicting?
A Case study of Tsimshian Oral Traditions and Archaeology on the NW Coast

Andrew Pawlowski (UWO)

This presentation will investigate the use of First Nation oral traditions in an archaeological context. The Tsimshian First Nation on British Columbia's NW Coast will be used as a case study to exemplify the sometimes conflicting and complementing issues between the oral and archaeological record.