

Book Reviews

Transitions in the Practice of Archeology

Archaeological Researches in Retrospect. GORDON R. WILLEY, Ed. Winthrop, Cambridge, Mass., 1974. xx, 296 pp., illus. Cloth, \$9.95; paper, \$5.95.

With characteristic reticence, or perhaps distrust of any position of advocacy, the editor neutrally concludes that this collection of retrospective papers delineates "a series of transitions in the practice of archaeology over the past few decades." It is less in some respects than this bland assessment suggests, but also much more. The diversity of viewpoint among the contributors defeats any attempt to aggregate their accounts of their past undertakings into a systematic statement concerning trends in the development of the discipline. But a close reading powerfully evokes a sense of its social organization as a loose, occasionally uneasy clustering of partly opposed and only partly overlapping perceptions, strategies, and methodologies. And while continuities with the past are shown to be important, the guidance of the trajectory also is clearly shown to rest with a changing, expanding group. Thus the volume formalizes the more or less willing adaptation to new demands and accelerating changes by a representative group of the field's outstanding spokesmen.

Mindful that archeology is "now going through a phase of critical self-examination," Willey asked the contributors to describe their original motivations, strategies, and perceptions of success "from the vantage point of the immediate present." He also invited them to consider how, with the benefits of hindsight, they might think and act in pursuing similar research undertakings today. The responses are predictably self-critical and certainly do not minimize the profound changes that have occurred in the field. The "new archeology"—which Willey succinctly defines as an explicit framework of

cultural evolutionary theory, "a strong ecological bias," statistical procedures applied to data drawn much more extensively from the natural sciences, and in general an emphasis on "the elucidation of cultural process"—is at least an implicit standard as the authors recount the evolution of their own viewpoints. Yet it is interesting that, as Willey asserts, none of the papers, with the exception of P. S. Martin's somewhat overdrawn contrast between his early work in the American Southwest and the largely programmatic shift in his thinking during his last years, is "fully within the scope of the 'new Archaeology.'" Indeed, not a few of the papers lead one to wonder whether the new archeology is as distinctive a position as Willey—not to speak of many of its adherents—apparently feels. Exclusive boundaries, and even marked differences in emphasis, turn out to be difficult to define except as they are connected with highly personalistic polarities.

This is well illustrated in the closely argued paper by H. L. Movius, Jr., on his studies of the French Upper Paleolithic over approximately the past two decades. New recording techniques, Movius asserts, permit and compel us to deal with the changing characteristics of prehistoric social groups as a central problem. New behaviorally oriented, nonclassificatory ecological approaches alter our simplistic explanations in terms of Pleistocene climatic oscillations and substitute a more differentiated, complex, interactive system in which man is no longer merely a passive participant. The classic "type fossil" concept as applied to ancient stone tools gives way to "true clusterings, or real types" within an assemblage, based on detailed attribute analysis procedures establishing ranges of variation as well as norms. Microscopic analyses of wear and reconstructive techniques based on waste materials

permit functional typologies representing patterns of use and processes of manufacture rather than merely finished forms. And to pursue these approaches, statistical methods are no longer "just peripheral aids to archaeology; they are vital to its very basis." It is only by virtue of personal (or generational) associations that Movius, with views like these, has sometimes been included among the "traditionalists." (For a general discussion of such groupings in social science, see R. K. Merton, *The Sociology of Science*, University of Chicago Press, 1973, pp. 55–58).

Papers by W. C. Haag, R. F. Heizer, R. S. MacNeish, Martin, and Willey himself trace intellectual journeys in New World archeology. Martin's spans parts of five decades; Haag's recounts massive, WPA-aided projects of the '30's in the southeastern United States; Heizer's concerns work in California during the '30's and '40's; Willey's describes his contribution to a study of coastal Peru shortly after World War II; and MacNeish's briefly outlines his search for the origins of maize agriculture in Mexico during the '50's and '60's. In spite of this temporal and geographic range of experience, the authors make essentially the same criticism of their earlier research outlook. One aspect of this outlook was an overriding, sometimes almost exclusive, concern with descriptive objectives: "forays into a complete void without a sense of problem" (Heizer), "dig now, analyze later" (MacNeish). Closely associated with this was "a drive for extreme accuracy in the recovery of archaeological materials" and the concomitant focusing of attention on "trait lists" of artifacts rather than on their functional associations and ecological or sociocultural settings (Haag).

G. Clark, who describes his work on the economic basis of prehistoric Europe during the '30's and '40's, encountered similar but less uniformly prevailing attitudes of "object fetishism." Apparently less constrained by disciplinary isolation and autonomy, he, V. G. Childe, and others consciously sought, well in advance of most of their American colleagues, to break away toward a more contextual account of prehistoric social life. Clark was led, like Movius, to an early stress on functional rather than purely typological categories. And functionalism, he goes on to insist, requires us to think "not merely of material use, but of social, symbolic use."

In addition to Movius and Clark, Old World contributors include R. J. Braidwood on excavations of early agricultural villages in Iraq during the '40's and early '50's, and P. L. Shinnie on investigations of the Sudanese Iron Age that began in the mid-'60's and are still continuing. Finally, Willey chose to break the prevailing retrospective pattern with a somewhat more "prospective" paper from a younger contributor, C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, summarizing his recent excavations at a deep, stratified mound that was an important center of protohistoric trade in southeastern Iran and suggesting what other, related fieldwork is still to ensue from them.

Apart from Clark's and Movius's, the Old World papers exhibit much less uniformity of outlook than do the New World papers. Part of the difference may stem from greater diversity in training and background, including generally greater although varying degrees of exposure to the more "humanistic" approaches of history, art history, and philology. But it also reflects the enormously varying political and logistic conditions to which many Old World archeologists have had to adapt. Braidwood and Shinnie both allude to the problems of coping with the remains of prehistoric urban civilizations with problematical supply lines and limited technically qualified personnel in relation to the vast areas to be tested and the large numbers of untrained laborers seeking relief from agricultural underemployment. The path to responsible archeological accomplishment may take a different direction under these conditions. Braidwood rather reservedly evaluates American priorities as favoring "the career development of individuals rather than . . . long-range commitments to the completion of all responsibilities for a given site." Lamberg-Karlovsky's formulation reflects a similar ambivalence. Contrasting "site optimizing" and "problem optimizing" approaches, he describes himself as having "rejected the rigidities of both."

A different kind of connective theme arises from the linkage of Old and New World undertakings through a common objective and research strategy. Braidwood and MacNeish provide perhaps the best example to be found anywhere, both having pioneered in the development of interdisciplinary cooperation for the study of agricultural origins. Similarities abound in their accounts of the defects in their original

conceptualizations of the problem, and of the slow, sometimes painful process by which teams of natural and social scientists become effective in advancing our understanding of it. Their gradually emergent awareness that regions were interdependent and complex, rather than fixed zones restrictively bounding ancient human activities and corresponding cultural variations, parallels similar shifts in the thought of Movius and Haag.

Only three papers comment at any length on the relationship of archeology to ethnology or sociocultural anthropology. Clark's use of ethnology was by way of library sources, relying on suggestive if hardly definitive cross-cultural comparisons that acquired greater cogency when they "were made within the same environment and when there was clear evidence of historical continuity between them." Lamberg-Karlovsky, noting the rapid rate of sedentarization and industrialization in Iran, cites the neglect of "ethnoarchaeological research" within his region as what may well turn out to be his "most enduring failure."

Willey's experience was different, no doubt in considerable part because of J. H. Steward's integral involvement in the planning of a multifaceted investigation of the contemporary as well as the ancient Virú Valley. He too, however, acknowledges that his work may be called "archaeologically self-contained," with insights into the organization of the canal irrigation regime, for example, having come to his attention only from ethnographic research published years after the conclusion of his own fieldwork. Steward's influence in the mid-'40's, in short, failed to lead Willey to genuinely interdisciplinary cooperation with sociocultural anthropologists. It did persuade him, to be sure, "to say something about the forms, settings, and spatial relationships of the sites themselves and what all this might imply about the societies which constructed and lived in them." But even that broadening of perspective may not have been obtained wholly without cost. "I must accuse myself," he writes in the preface, "of having been obsessed with the social dimensions of culture to the detriment of ecology."

Willey's paper is particularly insightful in its attempt to grapple with the changing climate of archeological thought. He does not merely record the successive appearance of new themes,

retrospectively formulated from the vantage point of the present and hence inexplicable in their apparent distinctiveness and suddenness. Instead he probes for the tentative, frequently abortive movements that preceded them: "There was talk of 'functional interpretation' and of 'process,' although the distinction between the two never came in some of this exploratory archaeological writing. We wanted to 'recover' more of the past, to understand it better, to explain it; but just how we were going to do this was not explicit." Similarly, it is with a rich and revealing sense of irony that one reads of his pacing the stony surface remains of Virú and thinking he had been misled by Steward and dealt a marginal hand by his colleagues. For his work in Virú is of unique and enduring importance, in spite of the fact that awareness of the "centralizing, integrative potential" of a settlement pattern survey came later, if indeed he has fully accepted it now.

In spite of occasionally mordant overtones, "gaps" in coverage, and rather capriciously selected illustrations, there is a "centralizing, integrative potential" to this volume also.

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Populations of Man

The People of America. T. D. STEWART. Scribner, New York, 1973. x, 262 pp., illus. + plates. Cloth, \$10; paper, \$3.95. Peoples of the World Series.

The Pacific Islanders. WILLIAM HOWELLS. Scribner, New York, 1973. xviii, 300 pp., illus. + plates. Cloth, \$12.50; paper, \$4.95. Peoples of the World Series.

With *The People of America* and *The Pacific Islanders* Charles Scribner's Sons has launched a series of books tracing the ancestry and development of the human inhabitants of various geographic areas. The series is under the editorship of Sonia Cole, who has attempted to find authors competent to "turn a mass of scientific data and statistics into a readable and stimulating book of real value for serious students and at the same time appealing to non-specialists." The choice of Stewart and Howells sets a high standard for the series.

The People of America is not a book