MORMON ARCHEOLOGY IN THE 197s: A NEW DECADE, A NEW APPROACH.

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Both within and without the LDS Church Latter-day Saint archaeologists traditionally have been regarded as scriptural archaeologists. Although this was probably accurate through the 1950s, in the past decade a new generation of Mormon archaeologists has appeared espousing a new archaeology. This new archaeology is sometimes referred to as "Processual Archaeology" since its focus is on the anthropological understanding of the processes of human behavior rather than a simple historical documenting of events. This does not deny the historically oriented scriptural archaeologists either their interests or approaches. It only emphasizes that other archaeological interests have now become a legitimate part of archaeology as explored by Latter-day Saints. The purpose of this article is to illustrate the development of these trends in the last decade, to acquaint the reader with the particular scientific orientation of processual archaeology, and

to demonstrate some of the contributions which processual archaeology can make to Mormon culture.

I shall begin by discussing three areas which have had major impact on the formation of processual trends among LDS archaeologists. This will be followed by a discussion of some of the individuals and organizations within the Church which are contributing to this development. Finally a few words will be advanced about prospects for the 1970s.

Those Latter-day Saints who are currently active professional archaeologists and whose research and thinking most closely coincide with processual archaeology received their early impetus in this direction at BYU. Dr. M. Wells Jakeman, while primarily trained as a historian and whose best work is historically oriented,[1] nevertheless encouraged his students to seek the broader perspectives of anthropology. Dr. Ross T. Christensen, Jakeman's colleague, conveyed a spirit of enthusiasm for archaeology essential to all good students of the discipline. In addition, both men laid important foundations in general archaeology on which their students have built. The important anthropological background was provided by Dr. John L. Sorenson whose theoretical insights and breadth of knowledge were essential to those undergraduates who went on to successful graduate training.

A second area of importance was the research opportunities provided by the Brigham Young University New World Archaeological Foundation (BYU-NWAF). In the early 1960s President David O. McKay appointed Elder Howard W. Hunter chairman of a Church Archaeological Committee. This committee was called to supervise the activities of the BYU-NWAF which had been organized several years earlier by Thomas S. Ferguson of Orinda, California. The foundation has as its goal the investigation of the rise of Preclassic cultures in Mesoamerica (Central and Southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras) and has received a warm reception by American archaeologists due to its scholarly work and prompt publications.[2] Many of us who were at BYU during the 1960s received important and necessary field training through the auspices of the Foundation and under the expert and patient guidance of its long-time director, Dr. Gareth Lowe.

The third development of importance was a change within the discipline of archaeology itself. This change occurred during the 1960s, a period when most of us who now espouse processual archaeological models received our graduate training. Archaeology began as an historically oriented study interested in time and things and has evolved into a sub-discipline of anthropology interested in cultural evolution and process. The essential focus of archaeology is no longer on *who, what,* and *when* but on *how* and *why*. This is not to say that *who, what,* and *when* questions are not important, but only that their importance has diminished in terms of archaeological interests. They furnish valuable frameworks but are not the end products of research.[3] This trend in American archaeology became evident at least as early as 1958 with the publication of Gordon Willey and Philip Phillips' landmark book entitled *Method and Theory in American Archaeology,* in which they state:

> It seems to us that American archaeology stands in a particularly close and, so far as theory is concerned, dependent relationship to anthropology. Its service to history in the narrower sense, i.e. as the record of events in the past with the interest centered on those events, is extremely limited.[4]

The weaning of archaeology from the narrow time and event focus of history to the broad man-oriented science of anthropology became an accomplished fact in the 1960s. For example, James Deetz in his 1967 publication, *Invitation to Archaeology*, said:

> We cannot define archaeology except in reference to anthropology, the discipline of which it is a part. Anthropology is the study of man in the broadest sense, including his physical, cultural and psychological aspects, and their interrelationships. Archaeology concerns itself with man in the past; it has been called the Anthropology of extinct peoples.[5]

Concomitant with the introduction of processual theory in archaeology, a change occurred in approaches to field work and a renewed emphasis on training in anthropological theory and ethnographic data was generated. Archaeologists are anthropologists and their excavation techniques should reflect this training. As Lewis R. Binford has stated:

> The field strategy executed within the framework of the research design must be directed by a well-trained anthropologist capable of making interpretations and decisions in terms of the widest possible factual and theoretical knowledge of general anthropology, and the types of questions must be drawn up which his data may be useful in solving.[6]

Thus the modern archaeologist must not only be a capable field technician, but more importantly he must have at his command the theoretical tools necessary to operate within the scientific framework of anthropology.

The following is a summary of what a modern processual archaeologist is and does: First, by training he is an anthropologist which means that he has the theoretical constructs and scientific approach necessary to delve into the past on a basis designed to produce information about the cultural evolution of man. Second, he formulates scientifically testable hypotheses about the nature of man as a culture bearing animal. Third, he engages in archaeological field work including survey and excavation utilizing anthropologically formed models to guide his technique toward the testing of the hypotheses formulated in step two. Fourth, he analyzes the results of his field work, again within the framework of the scientific models which he has chosen, bringing into play the numerous new laboratory techniques now available. Fifth, he interprets the results of his excavations and laboratory analysis in light of his hypotheses and with an eye toward continued hypothesis formulation and modification, always keeping in mind his research design and theoretical models. And sixth, he publishes the results of his investigations paying particular attention to their value for the elucidation of cultural evolution both within the framework of the specific culture under investigation and for mankind as a whole.

These six steps—1. anthropological training, 2. hypothesis formation, 3. hypothesis testing in the field, 4. hypothesis testing in the laboratory, 5. interpretation, and 6. publication—are carried out not as isolated entities, but rather as an integrated approach bound together by science as the method and anthropological theory as the vehicle for hypothesis testing about the whole cultural background of man.

As we have already indicated a new generation of anthropological archaeologists committed to the approach outlined above has arisen in the Church. Foremost in institutional reflections of support for this approach is the BYU-NWAF. The Foundation has made several important contributions to the culture history of southern Mexico especially through its work at Chiapa de Corzo in the High-

lands of central Chiapas and at Izapa, an archaeological site on the Pacific Coast near Guatemala. At Chiapa de Corzo the Foundation has established a cultural sequence from before 1000 B.C. to the present. This sequence now serves as the major reference point for most of the archaeology conducted in southern Mexico and has implications for the study of various cultural traditions throughout the rest of Mesoamerica. One seldom sees a publication in Mesoamerican archaeology anymore which does not refer to the Chiapa de Corzo sequence and to Dr. Lowe and others of his staff. While the Izapa material is just coming into print,[7] enough is already known to insure the importance of the work there, especially in terms of the early developments of Maya culture and art and the influences which the earlier Olmec culture seems to have had on this development.

The BYU-NWAF has also investigated the very early village cultures of the Mesoamerican Preclassic period. Two sites, Padre Piedra and Altamira have already been reported[8] and additional investigations are presently underway. Dr. Lowe's summary discussion of these two sites is a good example of the anthropological approach to archaeology. He focuses on the evolution of culture in Chiapas during the Preclassic period without neglecting the important ramifications for other areas, especially the Olmec heartland. He also discusses the implications for the development of classic Maya civilization demonstrating a concern for community and religious development, ecology, social organization and other aspects of non-material culture.[9] Due to Dr. Lowe's work at Altamira the time sequence for this early village Preclassic period has been pushed back at least as far as 2000 B.C.

A number of other projects have also been undertaken by the Foundation during the past few years including an extensive site survey of the Central Depression of Chiapas, considerable excavation at the site of Mirador on the La Venta River, a number of excavations in the Mal Paso Dam area and along the middle reaches of the Grijalva River as well as some limited testing at a number of other sites including El Cayo on the Usumacinta River. Finally, the recent work of the foundation in Campeche, Mexico, should be mentioned. These investigations have been conducted under the direction of Dr. Ray T. Matheny, Associate Professor of Anthropology at BYU, and include preliminary testing at the sites of Santa Rosa Xtampak, Dzibilnohac, and Xcalumkin. Extensive excavations at Edzna are underway with Dr. Matheny testing the site's important canal system and ceremonial center. In addition, his ceramic report on Aguacatal, a classic site on the Gulf Coast of Campeche, has been published.[10]

In the field of Historical Archaeology LDS archeologists have been most active in Nauvoo. Initial investigations were conducted by this writer during the summer of 1962 on the temple site.[11] We succeeded in removing most of the rubble down to the level of the outside basement rooms but only probed the font room although we did discover a large stone drain for the font.[12] Since then Nauvoo Restoration, Inc. has completed excavation of the temple site as well as many other structures in the Mormon portion of the town, including the home of Brigham Young and the *Times and Seasons* building. An archaeological report on the Nauvoo Temple excavations has been published by Nauvoo Restoration, Inc.[13]

Recently under Dr. Dale L. Berge, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, BYU, excavations have widened to include sites in New York such as the Peter Whitmer

farm house where the Church was organized in 1830.[14] While publication of most of the investigations is still awaited, the results are already affecting our understanding of Church history as well as our views of cultural development within our own society and on the American Frontier.

A few years ago the Brigham Young University Administration organized a new department of Anthropology and Archaeology with Dr. Merlin Myers, a social anthropologist, as its head. This move, along with the hiring of Dr. Berge and the retaining of Dr. Matheny, both of whom are anthropological archaeologists, made it possible for the BYU archaeology student to receive the kind of training which will ground him in scientific method and anthropological theory as well as provide the field experience necessary to apply classroom principles.[15] BYU archaeology students now have opportunities for field experience in at least four different culture areas providing broad time ranges, but more importantly there are now available a wide variety of theoretical problems all of which will greatly contribute to our understanding of man and his cultural background, especially in the New World.

Cooperation with the BYU-NWAF and Nauvoo Restoration Inc. allows students the privilege of working in Mexico and with early Mormon materials as outlined above. In addition, the department provides some work in the Desert and Fremont cultures of central Utah. Recently excavations have been conducted on Fremont period mounds near the shores of Utah Lake and at Spotten Cave in Goshen Valley.

Establishment of a summer field school by the department has enabled students to work with the Anasazi culture of southeastern Utah on an extended basis. Involvement on Cedar Mesa, Elk Ridge, and the field school operation in Montezuma Canyon presently cover archaeological sequences from Archaic through Pueblo III or a time period roughly from 6000 B.C. to 1300 A.D. The important anthropological questions being investigated include prehistoric settlement patterns and demography; cultural continuity and change, especially in light of modern Hopi ethnography; a variety of ecological problems including land use, deforestation, horticultural practices, and water control; as well as trade and diffusion studies both within and without the Anasazi cultural sphere. Some tend to look at Anasazi cultural development from the perspective of the grand sites such as Mesa Verde, Hovenweep, or Chaco Canyon, when in fact most of the people were living in the smaller villages scattered throughout the Four Corners area. Excavations by the BYU Anthropology Department over the next several years should do much to augment our understanding of how these people lived and their relationships to the greater centers.

Since the above programs have reached their present stages of development only in the last few years, publication of the results is still premature;[16] however, we can anticipate, as with Nauvoo Restoration Inc., that in the 1970s a great deal of new information will be made available through the combined efforts of LDS anthropologists.

Based on the above foundation what can we anticipate from LDS archaeology during the next decade? If present trends continue, we forsee in Mexico a continuing emphasis on the Preclassic investigations already underway, especially along the southern Chiapas coast at a number of very important early village sites. Dr. Matheny's investigations in Campeche should also receive some atten-

tion, especially Edzna and perhaps other sites such as Dzibilnohac or Santa Rosa Xtampak. In addition new investigations may be undertaken in some of the remote jungle regions of Chiapas. Publications, especially the important series on Izapa, will continue to win friends in the profession.

In historical archaeology, Nauvoo may continue to see some excavation but will not hold the entire stage as it has for the past few years. More emphasis may be placed on Church origins in New York with some attention given to the Ohio and Missouri periods as well. In addition, we can anticipate excavations in various parts of Utah. Our pioneer heritage has largely been conceptualized in terms of its religious motivation and by numerous museum artifacts. By the end of the decade we should have almost overcome the inertia of the "time and things" approach to the point where Mormonism can be viewed in the larger framework of its contributions to the evolution of culture. A new generation of LDS historians influenced by processual models is already beginning to make their influence felt in this direction along with the archaeologists.

Brigham Young University will produce a new core of well-trained students as well as a publication series of its own embodying the results of present and future research in the Fremont and especially the Anasazi culture areas. Near the end of the decade we might even anticipate some contributions in the areas of theory and model building, although trends in this direction have not fully emerged. As an aside, we look for the BYU Anthropology and Archaeology Department as a whole to develop a better balance between social-cultural anthropology and archaeology, with perhaps even some interest in applied anthropology developing.

In addition to the institutions mentioned above, several independent contributions by LDS anthropologists can be expected. We would anticipate important contributions by Dr. Sorenson who has already completed an archaeological synthesis of the Mesoamerican Preclassic period. Dr. Lowe, who has already contributed more to archaeology than any other Latter-day Saint, will continue to publish important work on Mesoamerica. In addition, a number of other individuals such as Evan I. DeBloois, U. S. Forest Service Archaeologist, Region 4; Bruce Warren, completing a Ph.D. at the University of Arizona; this writer and several students in graduate school can be expected to make their presence felt on the LDS archaeological scene.

In summary, it may be said that the past decade has produced within the Church a new generation of archaeologists dedicated to the furtherance of the scientific goals of anthropology. These goals are focused on man not solely in the present but in the past as well; a past which has much to teach us about how the cultural institutions of man have developed on this planet and the implications of that development for solving the problems of today and the future. We believe that these anthropological goals are in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ and that both work for the better understanding of the human condition and the cultural universals which make all men brothers and children of God. We believe that both have much to offer in this regard and that a constant striving for truth through a wedding of theology with science is preferable to warfare between them. In the coming decades we anticipate that LDS archaeology with its anthropological perspectives will make important contributions to the broad goals of human understanding based on the important foundations laid in the 1960s.

NOTES

[1]See especially *The Origins and History of the Mayas* (Los Angeles: Research Publishing Company, 1945), *The Ancient Middle-American Calendar System: Its Origin and Development* (Provo: Brigham Young University Publications in Archaeology and Early History, No. 1, 1947), and *The Historical Recollections of Gasper Antonio Chi* (Provo: Brigham Young University Publications in Archaeology and Early History, No. 3, 1952).

[2]The BYU-NWAF publication series now has over 30 titles in print, all of which report and interpret straight from archaeology without ever mentioning the Book of Mormon. The series has received consistently good reviews in the professional journals, and the Foundation has the best reputation for prompt publication in the profession.

[3]Stewart Struever, "Problems, Methods and Organization: A Disparity in the Growth of Archaeology," *Anthropological Archaeology in the Americas* (Washington, D.C.: Anthropological Society of Washington, 1968). "As general anthropological theory has advanced, new and exciting problems have been conceptualized for archeology. Chronology building is an initial step to the solution of broader problems, not an end-result of research. The introduction of cultural ecology, general systems theory and more sophisticated evolutionary concepts have made the quest of cultural process, not a slogan but an operational problem for archeologists" (p. 131).

[4](Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 1.

[5](New York: Natural History Press, 1967), p. 3.

[6]"A Consideration of Archaeological Research Design," *American Antiquity*, (April 1964), 441.

[7]Susanna M. Ekholm, "Mound 30a and the Early Preclassic Ceramic Sequence of Izapa, Chiapas, Mexico," *Papers of the New World Archaeological Foundation*, Number 25 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1969).

[8]Dee F. Green and Gareth W. Lowe, "Altamira and Padre Piedra, Early Preclassic Sites in Chiapas, Mexico," *Papers of the New World Archaeological Foundation*, Number 20 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1967).

[9]*Ibid.*, pp. 53-79.

[10]Ray T. Matheny, "The Ceramics of Aguacatal, Campeche, Mexico," *Papers of the New World Archaeological Foundation*, Number 27 (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1970).

[11]Dee F. Green, "The Beginnings of Excavation at the Nauvoo Temple Site," *The Improvement Era*, 65 (June 1962).

[12]Dee F. Green, "Successful Archaeological Excavation of the Nauvoo Temple Site Project," *The Improvement Era*, 65. (October 1962).

[13]Virginia S. Harrington and J. C. Harrington, *Rediscovery of the Nauvoo Temple: Report on Archaeological Excavations* (Salt Lake City: Nauvoo Restoration Inc., 1971). (Reviewed in *Dialogue*, 7 [Spring 1972], 122-123.)

[14]Richard L. Anderson, "The House Where the Church was Organized," *The Improvement Era*, 73. (April 1970), 16-25.

[15]Those students who may wish to pursue scriptural archaeology may still do so under Drs. Jakeman and Christensen.

[16]Ray T. Matheny, *An Archaeological Survey of Upper Montezuma Canyon, San Juan County, Utah* (Provo: Privately Published, 1962); Dee F. Green, *Archeological Researches on Cedar Mesa, Southeastern Utah, Second Season 1969* (Ogden: Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Weber State College, 1970); and Ray T. Matheny and Dee F. Green "A Pueblo II Structure, San Juan County Utah," *Utah Archaeology*, 18 (March 1972), 9-14.