

EDITORIAL

For the past four years responsibility for the editorial content of *American Antiquity* has rested in my hands. When I became Editor, American archaeology was caught in a ferment of controversy over new and explicitly scientific approaches. This New Archaeology had burst forth most expressively in *American Antiquity* while it was guided during four crucial years by my predecessor, Ed Wilmsen. New Archaeology with its ringing calls to sweep out the old and bring in the new was widely, and in some instances wildly, heralded as a movement that would simultaneously make archaeology scientific and relevant. Philosophy of science and statistics were called upon to replace analogy and taxonomy. Scientific explanation and explication rather than historical explanation and description; prediction of the past rather than its discovery, were the new goals.

Many archaeologists failed to hear these clarion calls; others were offended or bewildered. And not a few reacted, sometimes through parody and verse, to the prose that seemed to characterize New Archaeology. Nevertheless, the effect of the deluge of publication and public address was to drive under cover a sizeable part of the archaeological community. Many sat back and waited to see what New Archaeology would contribute of lasting value; others launched what eventually became a vigorous backlash movement; and some continued, oblivious of all, to do what they had always done.

When I was elected there was a strong feeling among members of the Society that the journal should take a more balanced position than it had during Wilmsen's tenure. Perhaps the chief reason I was elected was that I had not been strongly identified with either New or Old Archaeology. After my election at the Annual Meeting in 1973, I held an open discussion of editorial policy with members to learn what directions they thought I should take. I was told by many that *American Antiquity* had become unreadable, that it had been converted into a journal of jargon and mathematics, and that many subscribers were going to drop their membership if the course were not changed.

Another group, no less enthusiastically, argued that unless I continued to tip the balance in favor of New Archaeology all that had been gained would be lost and most of the younger archaeologists would drop their memberships. There was talk of establishing a new journal to speak to the modern issues.

After weighing the various arguments I made the decision that would have guided me had I not had the gratuitous advice: to publish the best that is submitted regardless of its point of view. However, I felt strongly then, and do today, that unless an article advances our knowledge or makes a real contribution to theory or technique, it is not worth publishing. I felt further that whatever is published ought to be in a language that most readers can understand, and that economy of expression is a virtue.

Throughout my tenure as Editor, I have sent manuscripts to two reviewers who were asked to judge the pieces for accuracy and relevance to a particular topic and decide whether there was enough general interest to warrant publication in *American Antiquity*. The system is not perfect. Perhaps it is not even good. Editors are fallible. Reviewers often have axes to grind or they may be uncritical. Nevertheless, the system has many advantages. It allows the Editor to call upon colleagues who are more expert than he on particular matters. It provides a useful service to authors who may not have had the advantage of testing their ideas prior to submission of a manuscript. And it enables the Society to draw its members into a network of responsible professional activity.

Authors often find the reviewers' comments or my actions on a manuscript offensive, and they tell me so. I have been accused of many things as Editor, but most notably that I have failed to give due accord to the work that New Archaeologists are performing on the frontiers of the field. One of my most vocal critics over the years has been Michael Schiffer. I felt that he had a legitimate concern so I offered him the opportunity to assemble a special issue of *American Antiquity* that would contain articles that

represent the best of method and theory. It seemed to me that such a collection, explicitly solicited and published as a unit, would have far more impact than any attempt on my part to give fair and equal treatment on a regular basis to the large number of archaeologists whose chief concerns are theoretical. Schiffer accepted my offer and he has assembled the articles in this issue. It is interesting to compare these with the articles in the special issue edited by Brian Fagan and Barbara Voorhies. That issue dealt with progress that archaeologists have made in recent years, whereas the present volume deals with directions of the future. In each case all editorial decisions and all copy editing were done by the editors of the issue.

These two issues were experimental and, I think, successful. They represent a great deal of work by the editors who had to solicit articles, have them reviewed and see them through to final copy. Of greatest significance, however, is that most of the authors of articles in these two issues had not submitted anything to *American Antiquity* during my tenure as Editor. It is clear, therefore, that one can obtain quite different material upon request than when it is offered only on speculation. Perhaps archaeologists respond more enthusiastically to a defined structure such as is presented by a thematic issue. It is a matter that my successor, Jerry Sabloff, will certainly be able to advance and I wish him the greatest success as he guides the journal through the next three critical years.

I should like to conclude with a personal statement that reflects my attitudes about archaeology and its future. Many things have been said about what archaeology is and what it should be. These statements have come mostly from the viewpoints of archaeologists and they reflect to that degree a selfish personal interest. But what of archaeology to the rest of the society? What is it that captures imaginations, that fires enthusiasm, that generates public support? Quite simply it is human history. Where we've been (our roots), how we differ from others, what the achievements in arts, technology, and philosophy have been. The story of our creation as humans and as civilizations.

It seems to me that whatever directions we may take in method, theory, technique, era or area, we must keep in mind the central idea that we are dealing with and trying to understand the human experience. Insofar as we are able to communicate this enthusiasm and write about it clearly and persuasively our humane science will prosper.

FRANK HOLE

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