

ARCHAEOLOGISTS AS ANTHROPOLOGISTS: THE QUESTION OF TRAINING

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In spite of the massive changes our profession has undergone in the past 30 years, the way we train archaeology students has remained essentially the same as it was 30, 40, or even 50 years ago. That is, within anthropology departments, which continue to produce the vast majority of the archaeologists working in this country, students are trained first as anthropologists, and only secondarily as archaeologists.

The relevance of the traditional four-field (i.e., archaeology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, and physical anthropology) approach to the training of archaeologists has been questioned, particularly for archaeologists heading for nonacademic positions. It has been noted that much of what is taught in the four traditional subfields (*including archaeology*), has little or no utility to the practice of archaeology today. The core of this argument appears to revolve around the perception that teaching courses in linguistics, cultural anthropology, and physical anthropology takes up valuable time that would be better spent imparting more useful information and skills to our students.

Subsumed within this is the fundamental question, "Should archaeology remain within anthropology?"—that is, do archaeologists need to be trained as anthropologists? That much of the subject matter that is taught in many anthropology courses today is perceived as trivial, arcane, or otherwise irrelevant to many practicing archaeologists is unquestioned. That archaeology in this country is now increasingly practiced by people whose primary graduate training has been a field other than anthropology, such as American studies, classics, geography, history, or some other related discipline, also is undeniable, and further negates the position that training in anthropology is essential to doing archaeology.

The counter-argument, that anthropology is relevant in archaeological training, has been perhaps best expressed by Kent Flannery (1982), in his classic "Golden Marshalltown" article. In this paper, Flannery argued that the concept of culture (encompassing all four subfields) was an essential unifying framework for scholars responsible for finding, documenting, and interpreting the remains left behind by past cultural systems, and produced by a wide range of behaviors. Anthropology teaches a holistic view of human behavior, and some exposure to the discipline is probably essential to the training of an effective archaeologist. You can indeed find employment in archaeology without any training in anthro-

poloogy, but you can do archaeology better if you have been educated within an anthropological framework.

Specific Training Options

Given this situation, and the exigencies of real-world academic politics, it is likely that a middle-ground approach might work best, involving the development and teaching of courses, as McGimsey (1994) has suggested, in subjects such as "Linguistics for Archaeologists," "Physical Anthropology for Archaeologists," "Cultural Anthropology for Archaeologists," and even "Anthropology for Archaeologists." Such an approach might help reduce the anomie felt sometimes by archaeology students when forced to learn the nuances of generative-transformational grammar, cognitive anthropology, or human genetics. I would suggest that archaeologists are themselves not free of sin in the teaching of their own subject matter. Many of us could benefit from a course or two on the application of archaeological theory to real-world field, analysis, and reporting situations.

In revamping the academic curricula for archaeologists, there are additional areas where change might be profitably made. For example, when scholars need to acquire a foreign language, they are likely to learn it without being required to do so. The elimination of the language requirement at the master's level might free up time for more archaeology courses. In addition, specific courses that could be offered to archaeologists could include preservation law and management, GIS/computer applications, statistical analyses/quantitative methods, business management skills, and technical writing. Likewise, archaeological ethics must receive a high priority, with an emphasis on our obligations to the archaeological record, to reporting our findings responsibly, and to our subjects and audience, including the descendants of the peoples under study.

Stewardship, public education and outreach, and the widespread dissemination of our findings are also areas that must receive greater emphasis in a revitalized archaeological program. As McGimsey and Davis note in this volume, "public archaeology IS archaeology," and we might as well start educating students in that fact. That is, what we do must be better understood. A majority of the people employed in archaeology in the United States today are involved in resource management/stewardship, at a great cost of public and private funds. This fact, however, is not well reflected in the contents of our journals or even in opinion polls, news coverage, or PBS specials about what it is that archaeologists do. What we do is much more than a high-tech way to find neat things, yet that is the perception of our field among much of the general public.

Accordingly, perhaps the single most important thing we must teach, particularly in our introductory courses, is the value of archaeology itself. At the introductory (i.e., undergraduate) level, our subject matter



must be presented in such a way that we attract and create advocates, not bore them into antipathy. Our subject matter is inherently interesting to a great many people, and we should take advantage of this fact.

How do we inform the general public about what it is archaeologists do and why it is important? We can make a good start by using our introductory courses as proselytizing as well as educational forums. The authors of good fiction about our field such as Piers Anthony, Jean M. Auel, and Michael and Kathleen Gear have introduced more people to life in the past than most professional archaeologists ever will. Their works could be introduced and (critically but favorably) discussed in our courses. We thus need to support the accurate popularization of our profession, as the SAA's Public Education Committee and the various state archaeology day/week/month coordinators are doing so well.

At the advanced undergraduate and graduate level, the education of archaeologists needs to be made relevant to real-world concerns. We need courses that can teach us how to excavate sites to maximize information recovery and write up the results; to develop realistic and achievable research designs and historic preservation plans; to deal with the ethical dilemmas raised by life in the moneyed world of big-business cultural resource management (CRM); and to understand why it is critical to take and curate good notes, photographs, and analysis records along with artifact collections.

Good CRM reports need to be held up as examples to students, who in turn need to be taught how to produce such documents. More of us need to know where the money that is spent on archaeology really comes from, so we can shape what is available and how it gets spent. More students need to be interns in CRM firms, state historic preservation offices, or government agencies, and many educators could benefit by the same exposure. We need people who can understand how systematic shovel testing can yield information important to understanding past cultural systems. We need to develop people who can quickly take threatened sites apart and learn important things from them, not just trowel out the levels in 1-meter squares or neatly wash and label artifacts.

In the years ahead, we will need to deal with threatened sites on an unprecedented scale. We need people who aren't afraid to make hard choices in the field—the literal triage of sites and features—to maximize information recovery. Far too often the hand excavation of block units is considered effective mitigation on sites of all sizes and with all kinds of deposits. Use of heavy equipment to expose large numbers of features, however, is more preferable than having a few scattered telephone booths, with no real clue about the kind of site these units passed through.

We need to develop a greater preservation ethic about where and how we do our work. Too many field schools and research projects are



conducted on protected sites, recovering trivial bits of data while major sites are going under all around. More efforts should be devoted to threatened sites, to quickly and efficiently recover large quantities of data of relevance to major research questions.

Besides educating and training in doing CRM itself, we need to be producing people capable of the monitoring and peer review necessary to ensure that high-quality work occurs. Many agency and SHPO reviewers need training in how to review—that is, learning how to focus on what is important, such as do the conclusions and recommendations follow from the data, what can we learn from these sites, and what is the best way to collect this kind of information? Management recommendations coming from CRM work should be directed to either preserving sites or maximizing information recovery. It is usually far cheaper to stabilize sites than to excavate them, but this option is rarely taught. Fieldwork must be based on information return, not employment potential. The importance of sound curation, specifically artifact and records management, also must be emphasized in our courses.

Instituting Change

To institute change will requires action on the part of a great many individuals; collective action is, after all, the sum of individual actions. In revitalizing the teaching of archaeology, having the SAA and other leading bodies of our profession endorse a call for change is an essential step, but that will not be enough. Change will have to come class by class and department by department, and will require individuals to make stands about what will be taught, who will be hired, and how promotion will occur. We must all be agents for change; the situation is not one in which we can afford to sit back and let others carry the burden.

The hiring and promotion of good people is critically important. Departments need to hire people who will teach practical, real-world skills in their courses, who understand what modern archaeology entails and can impart this knowledge to their students. We need to reward with tenure those who do this well. Likewise, we need to reward faculty members who undertake public service and education efforts, or who produce major contributions to knowledge rather than large numbers of articles. A good site report is used forever, while a good theoretical article has a half life of about five years at best. At present, however, someone who writes the latter will get tenure, while the author of the former will likely get the street.

The impact of hiring and promotion policies, of course, operates in a Darwinian fashion and over a period of many years. Well-trained students will be hired, the poorly trained ignored. As awareness of these basic facts of life spread, enrollments in departments will rise or fall. Change may come if we work towards it, but it will not always occur



quickly or easily. Changing our educational system is thus in many ways akin to the way paradigm shifts occur in science...through the conversion or replacement of personnel.

Effecting change also requires political astuteness, the ability to sell a point of view to people. In this regard, some training in politics is essential, not only to effect change at the national level, but also within our own professional and academic communities. If we wish to sell our case for change to our anthropological colleagues, one way to do this is by emphasizing what's in it for them, namely continued enrollment and possibly even departmental survival. Co-opting rather than confronting our colleagues, and showing respect for and value in what they do, is likely to be a more effective strategy than challenging their subfield's very relevance. That is why a middle-ground approach will work best, taking what is relevant from our anthropological heritage, rather than divorcing ourselves from it completely.

Making Archaeology Relevant

Anthropology, and archaeology within it, needs to rise to the challenges facing the modern world if it is to remain credible, just as earlier generations of anthropologists like Boas, Benedict, and Kroeber pursued the big questions, and argued passionately against racism and injustice and for cultural relativism. Archaeology can take a leading role in such activities. Major issues that need addressing include climate change and its impact on human society, genocide and racism, the recognition and protection of cultural diversity, and sound resource management (stewardship). We need to explore these issues wherever possible in our research and writings, and teach them to our students.

Archaeology can contribute greatly to understanding the effects of environmental degradation and climate change on human society. Using dendrochronological data, for example, it is possible to compare recent weather patterns with those for the past thousand or more years in the southeastern and southwestern United States, and how annual rainfall variation affected both crop production and political stability in a wide range of local societies. Examining the impacts of the mid-Holocene warm interval may help us better understand what we might have to look forward to given global warming, and finer scale analyses may help resolve the effects of El Niño and other periodic climatic fluctuations on human societies.

As a profession we also need to confront and reject our sometimes paternalistic/colonialistic attitudes. Archaeology is not intended to be confrontational, the teaching of benighted or ignorant peoples a "true" history of the past, capable of replacing (implied) illusory traditions. People have every reason to react strongly when their core beliefs are challenged, and archaeologists have to moderate their arguments about



what it is they do. Alternative ways of perceiving time and the past are important ways of being human that should be championed, not denigrated. How time, space, and place are perceived, parenthetically, no doubt also profoundly shaped the archaeological record, and offers another way to approach an understanding of it.

We thus need to have better relations with the people whose past we study, be they black, white, red, or yellow. We must come to respect and educate each other about our goals and values, however, rather than lamenting or casting recriminations back and forth. Recognizing that some repatriation and reburial of remains is going to occur, we need to redouble our analyses of existing collections. Many of the classic assemblages in southeastern archeology, particularly materials gathered during the Mound Exploration work of the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of Ethnology, for example, have never been adequately described or illustrated. Our students need to be taught that digging isn't all that we need do to legitimize ourselves as archaeologists; there are many honorable specializations to choose from, including curation, records management, and the analysis of earlier collections.

As archaeologists we study the causes of long-term change in cultural systems, of which organizational change has been something of a hot topic in recent years. Now is the time to apply some of the lessons we have learned. We must continue to emphasize solutions and problem solving wherever possible, lighting candles rather than cursing the darkness. The future is ours to shape.

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