

**Gordon R. Willey and American Archaeology: Contemporary Perspectives.** *Jeremy A. Sabloff and William L. Fash*, eds. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007, 256 pp., 34 black-and-white illustrations. \$34.95, cloth.

Gordon R. Willey is universally regarded as one of the most important archaeologists of the twentieth century. His substantive and substantial contributions to the culture history of North, South, and Middle America have stood the test of time. Moreover, Willey's students, who transcend the paradigm of culture history, must also be considered a great legacy. Several of these students, as well as others deeply influenced by Willey's thinking, have contributed chapters to this book. The goal of the volume is not merely to honor Willey, but also to assess the impact of his writings on Americanist archaeology. To this end, each of the ten chapters examines one of Willey's critical works. Several contributors take this task literally, while others use Willey's writing as a point of departure to discuss contemporary discoveries and debates. A short Introduction (by Fash) and Conclusion (by Sabloff) focus on Willey himself.

Chapter One, by Jerald Milanich, examines the importance of Willey's *Archaeology of the Florida Gulf Coast* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1949) and concludes that it is still widely cited because "Willey had data, he organized and interpreted those data correctly, and he got the results right" (p. 22). Chapter Two, by Michael Moseley, considers Willey's formative years on the Virú Valley Project and concludes with a new, climate-driven interpretation of change in settlement patterns. Chapter Three, by Wendy Ashmore, also examines Willey's methodological legacy of settlement pattern studies, but from the perspective of archaeological research in the Belize and Copán valleys. She emphasizes that this work not only became a model for future scholarship but also "stimulated others to think in new ways" (p. 54). Chapter Four, by Richard Leventhal and Deborah Erdman Cornavaca, considers the impact of *Method and Theory in American Archaeology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), coauthored by Philip Phillips. Leventhal and Erdman argue that this work: (1) helped set the groundwork for the cultural evolutionary models that followed; (2) responded indirectly to the criticisms of Clyde Kluckhohn and Walter Taylor; (3) formed the basis for the first and only paradigm in Americanist archaeology; and hence, (4) was revolutionary.

Chapter Five, by Joyce Marcus, is the most stimulating in the collection. It considers the role that "great art styles" play in complex chiefdoms. Drawing on a wealth of comparative archaeological (Olmec, Chavín, Coclé) and ethnographic (Maori) data, Marcus demonstrates that the purpose of chiefly art was not the spread of religious cults. Instead, she argues that it played a central role in governmentality by demonstrating the supernatural authority and power of the chief and by sowing fear. Chapter Six, by Jeffrey Quilter, examines "what could have been" had Willey continued his important work on early ceramic cultures of Panama and other societies of the Intermediate Area. In Chapter Seven, Gair Tourtellot and Norman Hammond discuss the Altar de Sacrificios and Seibal projects conducted in the Pasión Valley of Guatemala. They emphasize the changing and surprising nature of the data collected by Willey and his team, and how an archaeologist "with

predefined hypothetico-deductive nomothetic paradigm-seeking tests of . . . initial ideas . . . might have quit and moved early on” (p. 136). What is not explicitly mentioned in this chapter is the vigorous, undoubtedly unpleasant, yet ultimately fruitful debate with Lewis Binford (certainly the processualist alluded to in the above quote), who challenged the historical narrative of collapse proposed by Sabloff and Willey. That argument led to one of the clearest descriptions of how an archaeological explanation must be formulated. But, in the end, it was solid culture history (i.e., exacting and careful ceramic analysis of the sort that Willey championed) that resolved, at least for now, the puzzle of invasion. Forty years after the debate, it is easy to see how both sides were correct about the big picture: how to learn and think about the past.

Chapter Eight, by Prudence Rice, examines Maya warfare by building on a few enigmatic passages in Willey and Demetri Shimkin’s masterly synthesis of *The Classic Maya Collapse* (T. Patrick Culbert, ed. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973). She concludes that Maya armed conflict was rarely expansionist or territorial in nature, that it was localized rather than endemic, and that there is little reason to suspect that conflict was scheduled according to celestial events. Instead, she argues that city walls and destructive termination events may have been tied to the “geopolitical cycling of ritual capitals.” Like Willey and Shimkin, Rice argues for a nuanced understanding rather than single-factor explications of the end of Classic Maya kingship. Chapter Nine, by David Freidel, Héctor Escobedo, and Stanley Guenter, discusses new archaeological data from El Perú, Guatemala, and the importance of trade, merchants, and political economy. The final chapter, by Patricia McAnany, examines the spread of the world religion focused on the feathered serpent, and considers Willey’s notion that “Ce Acatl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl may have represented an instance of ideological transcendence that rocked the foundations of the status quo” (p. 226).

The authors in this volume all stress that Willey worked hard “to get it right.” In that spirit, I question Leventhal and Erdman Cornavaca’s depiction of Willey as a paradigmatic revolutionary. Rarely if ever do revolutionaries become great synthesizers. Throughout his long and illustrious career, Willey was a culture historian. Moreover, he was not the first one; his methodical work built on and refined existing notions of the variation of form over space and time. But he certainly was among the best culture historians, and the body of Willey’s work—published in its entirety during his lifetime—serves as a paradigm-as-achievement. *Method and Theory in American Archaeology* codified the culture history program, yet also signaled its eventual end through the paradigm-patching made necessary by critique. It is therefore more correct to understand Willey’s great contributions as normal science at its very best. And that is quite a fine thing.

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