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# Proceedings of the Conference on Northeastern Archaeology

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**Proceedings  
of the  
Conference on  
Northeastern Archaeology**



**Edited by  
James A. Moore**



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But money by itself doesn't make anything happen; it takes people. The success of the conference is based on the unselfish donation of time and effort by the graduate students of the University of Massachusetts Department of Anthropology. A few of these individuals deserve to be singled out for special mention. Dolores Root shared most of the organizational headaches with me, and is entitled to a share of the credit for the overall format of the conference. Elise Brenner, Elena Filios, Dorothy Krass, and Claudine Scoville dealt with much of the day to day organizing; and showed a raw talent at twisting arms when there was a need for labor.

Throughout the conference we have been using Richard Will's rendering of the Hadley pipe as a logo. We have once again used it. This time for the cover of this volume.

The preparation of the conference proceedings in many ways has been a more difficult task than the original organizational work. Throughout the production of the manuscript Bonney Deres, Nancy Handler, and Ruth Kuchyt have given advice, criticism, and assistance; each in its appropriate proportion. Without the advice and encouragement of Martin Wobst, this report would have been completed months ago. Dolores Root has proved an invaluable friend, and again shared much of the tedium of the final steps of production. Finally, Kate Pfordresher has stood the yeoman's service. She has helped with the proofreading, editing, and scheduling throughout this long process.

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## INTRODUCTION

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Our problem, in other words, was not a scientific one  
but a muddle felt as a problem.

-Wittgenstein in the Blue Book.

To an outsider the problems of northeastern archaeology appear arcane and enigmatic. Who are the "red-paint people?" Is the presence of Susquehanna types an indication of diffusion or migration? When did coastal subsistence strategies develop? These are not ~~problems~~ which can only be tamed by adepts: these are calls for empirical and categorical observations. Simply put, these are not problems, they are muddles calling for definitions. Scientific problems on the other hand call for the development of concepts and relations which can be stated in terms of relational questions. Did sedentism lead to increases in population? Did the destruction of estuarian habitats by rising sea level force a more intensive use of upland zones? Did the establishment of European trade change political relations to such an extent that "gunboat chieftains" appeared among the aboriginal population? These are a different sort of question. And so the archaeologists of the northeast often find themselves asking two very different sort of questions. As an intellectual community, the archaeologists of the Northeast fail to agree about what it is they want to know, what they need to know, how to go about documenting this knowledge, and why they desire this knowledge. This is no small weakness.

Many factors have contributed to the development of this condition in northeastern archaeology. With the growth of Cultural Resource Management, there has been a rapid increase in the number of students and professionals active in northeastern archaeology. Yet the channels of

communication and interaction have remained unchanged; personal contacts and the small, poorly integrated and thus ineffective regional association are no longer sufficient for the volume of exchange which is required. In addition, the rapid growth of the discipline in the Northeast, coupled with the lack of communication has lead to both a divergence of goals, and, oddly, much repetitive research. We felt that a conference would help overcome these difficulties. We were partially right, and totally naive.

#### Conference Organization and Goals

The standard conference procedure of formal paper presentations followed by informal gatherings of friends at the local bars did not seem to us to address the real difficulties. For this reason the conference was designed to run according to a somewhat unorthodox format. The first day's activities centered on a series of twelve papers presented to the conference as a whole. Six of the papers were presented by individuals who are active in northeastern archaeological research, the remaining papers were delivered by archaeologists with different areal specializations. These two groups were faced with somewhat different tasks. Each northeastern archaeologist was asked to develop a prospectus for Northeast archaeology. The basic questions to be addressed were: Where is archaeology headed in the Northeast? What directions will their own research take in the future? This was the insider's view of the Northeast. While reading the papers of Snow, Dincauze, Worrell, Engelbrecht, Ceci, and Dekin, take note of the image of northeastern archaeology which is presented. Snow argues that the Northeast is undergoing a paradigm shift, and with it a change in constituency. Dincauze takes another tack as she suggests that archaeology's flirtation with research designs has constituted a concern for the form of science rather than its substance. Problems (substance) are logically prior to research design (form). Tired of attempts at fine tuned analysis of subsistence and settlement, Engelbrecht wants to move on to the issue of social organization. In the context of historical archaeology, Worrell finds the problems and methods of general archaeological research somewhat confining. Dekin is concerned that the massive amount of survey work done under CRM is inefficient: the techniques of measurement and the recording procedures are not comparable, and are of limited value for research. Ceci's research into the contact period on Long Island reveals that for some problems the basic conception of the Northeast as an analytic region is itself in error. Common to all of the papers is a dissatisfaction with the present condition of archaeology in the Northeast, and at the same time uncertainty over its future direction.

It was the task of the non-northeastern archaeologists to reveal how northeastern archaeology is viewed by other archaeologists. It was hoped that in route these individuals would offer a contrast to the goals, assumptions, and approaches shared by those enculturated into the society of northeastern archaeologists. But this was not to be the case. The concerns of the non-northeastern archaeologists were not significantly different. Wilmsen warned that archaeologists too often yearn for



detailed description when what they are really after is understanding. The implications of the discovery of dense archaic settlements in areas previously thought to be only sparsely inhabited were discussed by Chapman. Jochim reported on the growing awareness that Europe during the Late Glacial and Post Glacial periods was much more variable in terms of climate, flora and fauna than previously believed. The similarities of the midwestern and northeastern Woodland ceramics are, according to Braun, attributable to the functionally similar uses of the vessels and not to retarded stylistic diffusion. Each of these conclusions calls for revision of existing models. The prehistory of the Southeast, the Midwest, and Europe are all more complex than we had thought.

The conclusion to be drawn from the first day of the conference was somewhat unexpected. Maybe northeastern archaeologists were not the direct descendents of Job carrying an unfair burden of God's archaeological wrath. Maybe things are tough all over. Whatever the case, the presentations revealed an unexpected depth of common difficulties, and concerns. The position of northeastern archaeology was not as unique as many had believed.

The second day of the conference was devoted to topically oriented work sessions. The participants of each work session were asked to develop a five year plan (or research agenda) which would contribute toward the solution of the major problems related to the topic. The work sessions lasted a full day and, for the most part, participants remained with the same work session from beginning to end. Beforehand, it was felt that the work sessions would be the central feature of the conference, and comments received at the conference bear this out. The discussions and personal contacts, developed during the day long "give and take" involved in the construction of the research agenda, proved rewarding. The future may see an increased exchange of research plans and data among the archaeological community of the Northeast. On the final day of the conference, the participants met once more in plenary session to share the results of the work sessions.

There are three observations to be made about the work session reports as they are presented in this volume. First, the reports present the session results in a much more coherent fashion than what actually took place. Not all participants spoke the same dialect of archaeology, and the degree to which we spoke past each other is greatly under-reported. Second, the reports generally give the impression that some sense of closure was reached in the work sessions. This was also not the general case. Most work sessions ended when the participants exhausted either their energy or patience. The closure reported for the work sessions is a literary convenience: much remains to be discussed. Finally, it should be pointed out that few of the work sessions actually developed research agendas. The suggestions contained in the reports for the most part call for greater exchange of data among institutions, or call for standardization of archaeological techniques. The participants found it difficult to discuss the significance of the archaeological problems, and even more difficult to rank the various problems. An agenda of research problems did not emerge.

An index to northeastern archaeologists is included in this research report. This is done with the hope that the information contained in the index will help those with similar interests to establish contacts. During registration participants were given an index questionnaire. Of the approximately 250 registered participants, half filled out and returned the index form. The index questions were open-ended, and the responses to the questions concerning research interests and on-going research projects are transcribed in full.

### Some Observations

With this understanding of the inspiration and organization of the conference as background, several observations need to be made of the behavior of the participants and the state of the discipline. The presented papers, the work sessions, and the discussions at the conference underscored the breadth, diversity and confusion which characterize the archaeology of the Seventies. The confusion is a confusion over goals. With archaeology attempting to serve three masters--Cultural Resource Management, Anthropology, and the internal logic of archaeology itself--this confusion is understandable. In the past decades, the relationship of ethnology and archaeology has changed as the goals of anthropology have shifted. As a result archaeology no longer looks primarily to ethnology for concepts, problems or theory. Without ethnology serving as an anchor, the goals of anthropological archaeology have grown more diffuse as the development of "new," "processual," "ecological," and "social" archaeology testify. The relation of CRM to the discipline is also an area of confusion. This can be attributed to the parallel confusion concerning the goals of CRM, and the goals of anthropological archaeology. The cause of the confusion is worthy of further discussion.

### The Goals of Anthropology

There was a time when the purpose of archaeological investigations was clearly defined within the disciplinary matrix of anthropology. Anthropology was founded on the uneasy alliance of archaeology and ethnology. The study of European prehistory, and contemporary non-European societies was to shed light on the ascent of Europe to the pinnacle of cultural achievement and, implicitly, legitimize the claims to this position. There is little need to belabor this point: we no longer live in such a world, and archaeology and ethnology no longer share these imperialistic goals. And with this shift in goals the disciplinary metaphor of extant stages and extinct ages has begun to break down. The goals of the ethnologist no longer seem quite as lucid to the archaeologist, and the wisdom of pursuing archaeological ethnography is questioned. Ethnography with a shovel, as practiced in its original form in the Southwest, had as its immediate goal the description of "ethnographic facts." Yet after all is said and done, one has the inkling that most archaeologists don't know why they want to know about residence rules, or about even more elusive entities such as lineality. Ethnographic questions dealing with subsistence and

settlement are no less descriptive, and are not much more effectively answered by archaeologists. What are the functions of task-oriented tool kits? It is a descriptive question that both Boas and Kroeber would appreciate. Contemporary ethnologists, however, see little of value in the archaeological reiteration of ethnographic abstractions. Until the anthropological question is asked, the ultimate use of "ethnographic fact" is unclear.

Disciplines are organized around concepts, problems, and values. The culture history approach to archaeology provided a unity of purpose among archaeologists. It was the goal of the archaeological community to map out through time and space the development of cultural traditions. While the regionalism which grew out of the approach tended to balkanize the interests of archaeologists, the commonality of method and purpose remained. Research which was significant to the discipline was defined easily and clearly in its ability to contribute to space-time distinctions, or to aid in mapping cultural traits.

For many reasons, the questions of the jigsaw puzzle of time and space have been challenged as the defining characteristics of archaeology. This challenge has been mounted by the "new" or "processual" archaeology. Yet processual archaeology is only poorly defined. The study of the changing articulations of systems of activities which compete for human time and energy, the study of what makes cultures change or stay the same, or the study of behavioral variability are all more synonyms of the processual approach to archaeology rather than definitions of its goals. During the late 1960's, processual archaeology began to take on a definition established by a rather open-ended set of problems--the relations among demographic characteristics, the manipulation of ecological systems and the socio-political requirements of this manipulation. It was the relation to this problem set which defined research as significant.

Since then, however, these processual studies have become more diffuse--covering a wider range of topics, methods, and approaches. With this breadth has also come a loss of direction. The goals of processual archaeology have not been resolved. Yes archaeology should employ the scientific method; but to what end do we use this method? This is the question which many archaeologists have yet to ask themselves.

#### The Goals of Cultural Resource Management

Although there was no mention of Cultural Resource Management in the call for papers or in the work session topics, its specter hung over the conference. There was no intent to focus attention on the issues of CRM, but the topic was nonetheless dominant. Archaeological survey was discussed in terms of CRM projects and management policy. When asked to develop a research agenda, participants tended to list those research topics which could be investigated within a CRM framework: a number of individuals spoke of CRM as a research interest. We have reached a situation where it is no longer archaeology that determines which cultural resources are important and require management. It is the CRM

policy which increasingly determines what is important for archaeology. The CRM tail wags the archaeological dog. It may not be long before some historian of the discipline will be able to write, "archaeology is CRM, or it is nothing."

Unfortunately, this should not be surprising. It is not simply the case that once again the source of funding is directing the course of the discipline. The Public Works archaeology of the Thirties did not run contrary to the goals of the discipline at that time. The funds aided in the collection of data which led to the development of more finely tuned space-time distinctions for North American culture history. The problem of CRM's dominance over archaeological research is a symptom of a more profound malaise. Archaeology failed to direct the development of CRM policy because archaeologists have found themselves filling the opposing positions of advocate, bureaucrat, manager, and researcher.

On their most superficial level, cultural resources exist in space and time, and so it seems reasonable to expect that these dimensions will provide an organizational and management framework. That is, archaeological cultural resources can easily use a systematics based on culture history. For the manager, CRM regulations state that the primary purpose of CRM survey is to locate cultural resources and to evaluate their significance in relation to management objectives. Again, for the CRM manager, the low cost approach to management involves assessing spatial and temporal significance of the cultural resources.

For the research archaeologist, culture history is not the only framework, nor is it even a desirable one. One of the fundamental debates of the late Sixties and early Seventies concerned the emergence of general problem orientations which stood largely independent of the specifics of local or regional culture histories. The outcome of this debate was a recognition of the significance of general problem orientations and nomothetic solutions.

It is at this juncture that the roles of the Cultural Research Manager and the Research Archaeologist come into direct conflict. Hypothesis testing is a costly research strategy which does not lend itself directly to management practices. Furthermore, there is a difficulty in translating general problem orientations into management policies. For, while all archaeological resources can be placed into a space-time organization, not all archaeological resources are relevant to any single problem orientation. And multiple problem orientations, while discussed in the literature, are complex, and (by a corollary of Murphy's Law) ineffective management tools. Finally, lest anyone forget, the goal of CRM is management; and while the goals of research archaeology are presently confused, I would argue that it is not the general goal of research to make management easier.

### Conclusion

The difficulty which the participants at the workshops had in developing a consensus about the core problems of each topical area was

enlightening. I have made much out of the confusion which exists among the goals of archaeology because this confusion affects the quality of archaeological research. Archaeologists cannot define problems, because the goals and central concepts of the entire discipline are no longer clearly defined. Archaeologists feel comfortable suggesting methodological difficulties which need to be resolved, and can easily suggest what techniques need to be developed to facilitate analysis. But in terms of the goals of the discipline and the problems defined by these goals, most archaeologists would only venture a general, vague, but familiar answer. The answer is straight out of almost any introductory archaeology text: we study the past to better understand ourselves. Few of us take the answer seriously any longer, yet there may be less sophistry to the answer than appears at first sight. Archaeological methods do not lead us to an understanding of the past; our visions of the past are abstracted reflections of our attempts to understand the present.

The goal of using archaeology could be to inform our observations about the world around us. The goal of using archaeology to understand ourselves offers a route out of the limitless and endless task of describing change, stability, adaptation, and variation; it provides criteria to define significant problems. But what is it that we want to know about ourselves and our society? We are no longer dealing with the questions which arise from the discipline, and as a result the questions are less comfortable to confront. How do populations deal with periodic scarcity? (oil?) How do political hierarchies develop? (Khomeini?) Under what conditions do political hierarchies fail? (Somoza, the Democratic Party?) What are the social implications of a no growth economy? (??) These are questions asking and challenging us to understand ourselves and our society. These are not questions limited to archaeologists or ethnologists. Our society has economic, political and social problems, and the public is interested in solutions.

What have Red-paint People done for you lately?