Recensions — Book Reviews

An Introduction to Prehistoric Archaeology. By Frank HOLE and Robert F. HEIZER. Holt, Rinehard and Winston, Inc., New York; 1965. x, 306 pp., 28 Figs. $7.70.

This remarkable and estimable book is sorely needed and one of its kind is long overdue. In no other single volume can laymen, students, and practising archaeologists find such a wealth of guides to, and considered comment on, the technical literature of prehistoric archaeology. It is not encyclopedic for the inevitably doctrinaire layout of a text book of method and technique precludes its being so. However, in spite of a few deficiencies, its scope, organization and content are catholic to the extent that the catechumen and the science writer alike can refer to it with confidence and one may hope that his colleagues in geology, biology and the social sciences would do so as well. The book should do much to dispell the apparently widespread notion that archaeological tenets come to archaeologists as revelations rather than as results of disciplined research. Anyone who plans to own a half dozen or more books on archaeology should consider this one seriously, whatever his interest in the field may be.

The book has already been reviewed by two distinguished archaeologists, Stuart Piggott in the British Journal *Antiquity* and J.B. Griffin in the American journal *Science*. Both men gave it the praise it deserves. The volume has seventeen chapters grouped in four parts; One, Introducing the Study of Prehistory; Two, Acquiring the Facts of Prehistory; Three, Dating the Events in Prehistory; and Four, Describing and Interpreting Prehistory. A Preface briefly states what the authors perhaps would like to have seen on the dust jacket; they commend it to the intelligent layman and beginning and advanced students. The dust jacket itself bears a short, colorful paraphrase of the Preface. There is an impressive forty-page bibliography and a very good index of thirteen pages. In general the book leans heavily on a spate of recent collected works on technical aspects of archaeology, most of them edited by British archaeologists. It also draws on a number of well-known volumes edited by Heizer but the mature archaeologist will find in the text references to important papers in journals seldom read by North Americans.

The book surely will go to a second edition very quickly. With this welcome prospect in store it behooves a reviewer to draw attention to those sections of the book that might readily be improved. The discussion of culture on pages eight and nine apparently presupposes that the reader has taken an introductory course in anthropology, in which the authors' concept of culture

has been explored fully. This will not always be the case and because proper understanding of some of the authors' views requires this knowledge, I think it would be desirable to devote considerably more space to their definition of culture and to an examination of the relation of archaeological evidence to cultures. I particularly take exception to the unsupported, unexplained statement "the artifact is the smallest cultural unit of concern to archaeologists." This implies that artifacts have the elegant integrity and simplicity of phonemes or atoms, which is certainly not the case. If any class of archaeological objects is to be ascribed this virtue, it should not be that of artifacts; perhaps modes or attributes but not artifacts.

Parts of this and other sections of the book seem to have been styled for the instruction of an eager, malleable, obedient fourteen year old, with more mechanical aptitude than ability to think in abstract terms. For example on page 68, near the beginning of a chapter on Preservation, we find a paragraph beginning with the statement "Man's world is animal, vegetable, and mineral." Such defects of writing style (there are others) are further compounded by lapses in consistency which might have been eliminated by more careful editorial review. On page 87 we find a statement "most sites are found when someone walks over them," then on page 89 a further statement "aerial (photographic) survey is one of the most useful means of finding sites." We must wonder if it is good didactic practice to state, as is done on page 103 in the section on Excavations, "Rectangular pits may be dug into the site wherever an archaeologist thinks they will give him useful information." Granted that an archaeologist must depend on his judgement in the field but why must pits be rectangular? I quite agree that they should be rectangular because flat, vertical faces gives much the best picture of stratigraphy but we are not told this anywhere in the text.

Thus it is my impression that the style and the organization of many of the chapters are not compatible with their scope and intensive coverage: the authors tend to depreciate their generally excellent product both by talking down to the reader and by neglecting to insure that arbitrary statements are more or less congruent with one another. But lest I give the erroneous impression that the entire book is painfully pedantic or gauche, let me quote a refreshing statement from page 122, "Most archaeologists assume that they are doing a good job and that other archaeologists understand what they are doing. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. A person who wants to sum up the results of many excavations must himself handle the material or at least be sufficiently familiar with the excavators and their techniques to make judgements about what they report. Too often synthesizers overlook the extremely variable quality of reporting; this in addition to the very variable quality of excavation." Such elementary truths are all too rarely recognized in the professional literature and I do not recall ever having run across this one stated elsewhere in anything resembling a text book.

Not all readers will agree, but I would like to see the distinctions between archaeology and history in the first chapter honed a little finer. It seems to me that prehistoric archaeology shares with history only interests

in humanity and in the passage of time. Prehistorians are akin to geologists in their concern with time beyond memory or record and with natural environments of the past. In their concern with groups of people rather than with personalities, they resemble biologists and sociologists. One hesitates to suggest an affiliation for them as evolutionists but their bravura, at least, is occasionally matched by astronomers. In part the paucity of the archaeological record forces them to adopt techniques and generalizing habit of science, but at the same time they are led by their fellow anthropologists and their academic training to take a holistic view in which they ignore neither the sciences nor the ephemeral realities of art historians, nor for that matter, the actuarial niceties of archivists. At least, we may wish that this were so.

In chapter 9, "Technical Analyses", some sections are disproportionately short. In the Analysis of Pottery, two pages give some of the variables of paste and surface finish and refer us to other authors, primarily Shephard, 1956. There are but 9 other references in this chapter, and no comment on the special utility of or the restrictions imposed by this plastic subject, nor mention of the fact that in much of the New World it was made only by women. In contrast, 4 pages on Analysis of Plant and Animal remains give a broad cross-section of studies (31 references, most to works on mammalian fossils but also some to the study of copralites from which "surprisingly rich results have been obtained" (page 138). Plants are not covered adequately; there is no direct reference to agriculture in this section or to works primarily concerned with agriculture nor are there any but indirect references (via copralites, Huaca Prieta and Tehuacan) to wild or possibly wild plants used as food.[1] The "analysis of metal and stone" gets but little more than half a page on which seven authors are cited. Although the chapter on Classification and Description treats this subject and pottery as well, nowhere is there discussion of the problems of recognizing or of describing the attributes of manufactured articles. The reference to Binford's 1963 paper on Attributes of Projectile Points comes as close as any in the book to meeting this need but the utility of Binford's approach is questioned by the authors and students are encouraged to consult it only as an object lesson in over-elaboration.

Most of the foregoing deficiencies, if deficiencies they be, probably are inevitable concomitants to the tremendous amount of organization that has gone into this pioneering work. The fact that I am able to find fault with some aspects of the book and therefore urge that it soon be revised, in no sense reflects on the abilities or diligence of the authors. Rather it is a measure of the enormity and importance of a task which they have carried to one stage of completion with signal success.

[1] Three pages are given to palynology in Section 12 on Methods for Dating, using plant and animal remains. An intriguing reference to Kurten Vasari, 1960, identification of pollen from Choukoutien, Locality 1, as indicative of a cold climate and hence the second glacial date is not documented in the bibliography. Although dendrochronology is discussed in the same section, no explicit reference is made to the use of this technique outside the southwest United States.

This book is attractively turned out and adequately illustrated with photographs and line drawings of artifacts and archeological sites. The price is reasonable. The authors may legitimately feel that they have contributed to attainment of their objective as stated on the final page: "In a sense this book is a plea for a long-range approach to archaeology, even though its major emphasis has been on what archaeology is and what some of the techniques for doing it are."

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Sculpture Sénoufo. B. HOLAS. Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, Centre des Sciences Humaines, 1964, 24 pp., 46 pl.

Dans ce volume l'Auteur étudie la sculpture sur bois, à caractère sacré, des Sénoufos. En raison de la complexité du sujet l'Auteur se borne à analyser les prototypes les plus significatifs. L'étude d'une vingtaine de pages est suivie d'un "Index des termes vernaculaires", d'une "Orientation bibliographique" et d'une série de 46 planches de très belle qualité.

J.T.

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Knowing the Gururumba. Philip L. NEWMAN, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965. x-110, illustrations. $1.50.

This is another of the Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology produced under the general editorship of George and Louise Spindler. In reviewing this type of monograph, then, it is always necessary to consider the audience for which it is intended. While I am in favor of the series in general I still feel that there are certain implicit dangers. Foremost among these is the fear that many undergraduates may acquire a false perspective of the task of the ethnographer and his productions. For example, I can conceive of generations of undergraduates acquiring only a superficial acquaintance with the Kapauku Papuans and no realization or appreciation of the fact that the study is backed up by two very thorough and substantial contributions. Secondly, there is a danger for the professional anthropologist as well who by proffering a short monograph in this manner delivers to his colleagues what may well be his last word on the subject. This criticism points to the fact that the professionnal anthropologist can utilize these compact ethnographies only in a very limited fashion, but he must do so since he has no assurance that the same topics will be more fully treated by the same author elsewhere. What I am intending is that the professional anthropologist must not let a contribution to this series become, in his own mind, a substitute for a more thorough treatment of the same topic. But then, of course, the series was not designed for this use which makes the criticism a bit awkward.