

Paul Minnis' study of the Rio Mimbres region addresses these problems within the format of a doctoral thesis. Combining ethnographic information with biological models of stress, Minnis decided to test the hypothesis that non-stratified societies react to food stress by employing a series of responses in order of inclusiveness. In other words, responses involving a greater number of social groups occur after those involving fewer groups are attempted. His objective was to illuminate the processes or conditions under which food stress becomes important in socio-cultural evolution.

Choosing the Rio Mimbres provided opportunities and problems. Good tree-ring sequences provided accurate dating and dependable information on climate and rainfall, and helped to demonstrate the value of an ecological approach to archaeology. By choosing an area in which cultures eventually became extinct, Minnis risked finding only negative support for his hypothesis. Put another way, the choice of site promised to tell more about how people did not cope than how they did.

This caveat aside, Minnis' study is a model for demonstrating both the potential and some limits of the New Archaeology. Fleshing out data about stress from scarce skeletal material, he estimated caloric productivity during different stages of development by matching land availability against climatic data. Ethnographic analogy allowed him to calculate population and rate of growth by using numbers of rooms and persistence of use. Matching productivity to population, he convincingly identified periods of food stress, then sought evidence of increased socio-political integration and expanded economic exchange. Unfortunately, the Rio Mimbres region yielded only scanty information about social organization. While some changes in organization of ritual accompanied earlier food shortages, intensification of exchange outside the area — the inclusive response — did not occur.

Minnis' cautious assessment of the problems involved in determining food stress is impressive and useful in sensitizing readers to the many variables involved in responses to food stress. Of particular interest is his attempt to predict the direction of change for specific kinds or degrees of such stress. Failure to uncover increased integration in Rio Mimbres does not invalidate the hypothesis, since Rio Mimbres culture became extinct, but Minnis' inability to recover measurable sociocultural data was disappointing. Both model and methodology are worthy of further testing in sites where evidence of sociocultural phenomena may be more adequately documented.

Tribes on the Hill: The U.S. Congress — Rituals and Realities

J. McIver Weatherford

South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey, 1985 (originally published in 1981 by Rawson Associates, New York). xvi + 300 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), \$14.95 (paper)

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Dr. Weatherford was one of the first anthropologists to work in Congress under programs established by the American Anthropological Association and the Amer-

ican Association for the Advancement for Science. Of these, Weatherford is the first to publish a major monograph stemming from his experience. His book presents an anthropological perspective on Congress, but it also demonstrates the problems involved in studying élite political institutions in a modern society. An anthropologist in Congress is first of all a working member of a staff with regular duties. The more successful the anthropologist is in carrying out these duties, the greater the degree of exposure to a range of representative activities. These duties conflict with the time needed to simply observe and record observations. Furthermore, participation in a Congressional office is limited to those who are professionally competent and willing to be loyal to the member they serve. As Weatherford puts it, "A staffer without a patron is without a job."

Weatherford has resolved this potential ethical problem by reporting on Congress in general rather than on the functioning of the office in which he worked. This allows him to present an excellent, readable book without violating the confidentiality of a specific office. But by describing Congress in such general terms, it is uncertain to what extent anthropological methodology contributed to the final product. This is not to question the rich detail in his descriptions, or the importance of participant observation, but simply to note that most of his data seemingly comes from secondary sources rather than direct observation. Is there any specific methodology or approach that an anthropologist might use as opposed to that of a journalist, or a political scientist or an articulate observer from any discipline? The book does not demonstrate any. After all, political scientists have been doing participant observation in Congress for years.

What is primarily anthropological about the book is what might be called an anthropological perspective. As Weatherford states, "I saw more parallels, contrasts and analogies with the ancient Aztecs, the Byzantines or the Pygmies than with modern parliaments." By applying such a perspective, Weatherford has produced a fascinating book full of specific comparisons between the U.S. Congress and political processes from the anthropological literature. He raises thoughtful questions about the degree to which Congress is a victim of individual power building and ritual elaboration. The reprinting of this book four years after its initial publication was proof that Weatherford has produced a popular and meaningful overview of Congress. It is gratifying to us as anthropologists that some of this interest results from the use of anthropological data and perspectives. But the book is in some respects an extended analogy appealing more to a popular audience than to scholarly audiences. The general terms in which the book was written possibly demonstrates more about the limitations anthropology has in studying modern, complex institutions than it reveals about Congress. Weatherford deserves special credit for achieving what other anthropologists who worked in Congress have been unable to do: provide the first anthropological view of a major U.S. political institution.