Fall 2006

Book Review of *Archaeology as a Process: Processualism and Its Progeny* by Michael J. O'Brien, R. Lee Lyman, and Michael Brian Schiffer

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The field of archaeology incorporates a confusing assortment of ideas and approaches to the record. With studies ranging widely in ideology and goals, from strict descriptive materialism to sociological interpretation, language used to communicate key concepts (not to mention which concepts are key) also varies widely, resulting in low levels of mutual interest and intelligibility across the discipline. Archaeologists commonly ignore the majority of available literature as a result, further widening intellectual chasms.

O’Brien, Lyman, and Schiffer, themselves of somewhat differing perspectives, provide a tool for navigating the confusion, explaining historical connections behind the diversity of today’s discipline. They make an excellent contribution to the discussion of the history of archaeological theory, turning lenses commonly used to interpret the record on the development of the discipline itself. Instead of concentrating on the positions promoted by the various schools of thought, the authors focus on explaining the rise in popularity of given schools or individuals, largely invoking concepts drawn from evolutionary theory to do so.

The authors use Lewis Binford’s call in the early 1960s for a paradigm shift as a conceptual pivot point, outlining factors that contributed to its impact on the field. His timing, skill in promoting his ideas, choices of venues and targets, and the sheer quantity of his transmission attempts resulted in the broad dissemination of his ideas. The book traces waves of impact through the following decades, again and again illustrating the role of trait transmission in the ultimate intellectual success of ideas and individuals. Binford and other key players are used to illustrate the long-range impacts of given actions such as mentoring graduate students, publishing in select journals, or challenging other key players.

The development of the field of archaeology, especially during and since the 1960s, is an incredibly complex topic, and the authors help make sense of it for the reader. They cannot remove all confusion, making cross-references back and forth between chapters, and must backtrack chronologically in order to include key turns of event. They also have to make choices about which contributors and geographic areas to highlight, confining much of their discussion to ideas disseminating from a few choice universities. Unfortunately, practitioners in the Great Plains are not mentioned in the book (with the fleeting exception of Strong and Wedel in relation to the Direct Historical Approach). Whether this omission is the result of an unintended oversight or a perceived lack of theoretical impact generated from the Plains is not known, but it underlines their point about intellectual fitness. The individuals and concepts highlighted illustrate the role of timing and placement of interactions in determining ultimate impact on archaeology.

Regardless (or because) of this feature, this book offers an even-handed means of examining the various perspectives in archaeology and is an excellent read for anyone interested in a comprehensive view of the field. It places current schools of thought into historical context, helping readers better understand their own relation to other practitioners across the discipline. Dawn Bringelson, Midwest Archeological Center, National Park Service.