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**Review of *The Archaeology of Regions: A Case for Full-Coverage Survey* by Suzanne K. Fish and Stephen A. Kowalewski, eds.**

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#### REVIEW

### The Archaeology of Regions: A Case for Full-Coverage Survey.

Suzanne K. Fish and Stephen A. Kowalewski, eds.

Smithsonian Series in Archaeological Inquiry, No. 3.

Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990. 294 pp. \$39.95 (cloth).

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The goal of this volume is "to expand the explicit rationale for [full-coverage survey], to affirm it as a practicable technique, and to illustrate its superiority as a basis for archaeological inference" (p. 2). Full-coverage survey (FCS) involves "the systematic examination of contiguous blocks of terrain at a uniform level of intensity" (p. 2), but stipulates no minimum areal extent and no special intensity of coverage. This volume argues that justification for expending limited resources on FCS lies in its potential to capture settlement patterns, which somehow reflect settlement systems and which cannot be approached by sample survey.

S. Fish and Kowalewski introduce the theme of the book, which is that of a general reaction to sample survey studies. Eight substantive chapters provide examples of FCS from a variety of archeological contexts, covering areas 50 to 2,150 sq km in extent. The regional archeological pictures from the Basin of Mexico (Parsons), the Valley of Oaxaca (Kowalewski), and the Kur River Basin of Iran (Sumner) are depicted. Wilson updates settlement-pattern studies in coastal Peru, the home-hearth of such work. P. Fish and Gresham describe the survey of a defoliated reservoir-take area from the vegetated Georgia piedmont. In arid North America, survey results from Long House Valley, Arizona (Dean) and the northern Tucson Basin (S. Fish, P. Fish, and Madsen) are presented. Also, Whalen compares simulated sample-based projections with those obtained through FCS of the Hueco Bolson (Texas), thereby duplicating findings of similar 1970s exercises. He introduces his endeavor with a thoughtful section on the why behind full-coverage survey.

Appropriately, these chapters feature maps of site distributions with, as the auctioneer said about the Navajo rug, "a lot of pattern." In general, interpretations for the settlement system are derived from the maps "as is," with some supplemental geographical analysis. Rank-size graphs and maps of sherd densities are also included, but since the utility of such analytic tools also extends to data obtained through sample survey, they do little to further the case for full-coverage survey. Settlement-system interpretations for complex system examples appear undersupported so as to be in competition with equally compelling interpretations. In contrast, Fish, Fish, and Madsen provide welcome detail to support their interpretations for agricultural features in the Tucson Basin.

Commentary and summation fill out the volume. Kintigh and Cowgill call attention to the importance of survey intensity. F. Plog, the principal sample-survey advocate, provides an insightful critique of the case for full-coverage survey. Kowalewski and S. Fish conclude with a reflective summary.

Various contributors observe that interest in generating estimates for numbers of sites (the forte of sample survey) has waned; understanding settlement systems requires more than frequency data. Herein lies the potential for full-coverage survey. In this volume, regrettably, this potential is unfulfilled, although still tantalizing. Ten years ago, Ammerman highlighted the need to understand the relationship between settlement patterns and settlement systems (in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1981). This vacuum of knowledge still yawns wide, and until it is filled our understanding of settlement systems will continue to be fairly ad hoc. It cannot be filled by more data; many of the authors who propose corrective research recognize this. Only Wilson, however, touches on how critical definition of the basic unit of observation, the site, is to the entire undertaking. Unfortunately, no one ponders the assumed relationship between site contemporaneity, at scales of fifty to thousands of years, and site interrelatedness. Nevertheless, students of archeological methodology and settlement-pattern studies should invest in this book.