

## VI. Book reviews

**Terry A. Barnhart 2005.** *Ephraim George Squier and the Development of American Anthropology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. xvii, 426 pp., illus. ISBN 0-8032-1321-2. \$59.95

Reviewed by *Melody Herr*, Northern Illinois University Press

Today, the name Ephraim George Squier (1821–1888) probably doesn't ring bells, even for Americanists, unless it is paired with the name Edwin Hamilton Davis. But together the names Squier and Davis call to mind the pioneering book on the indigenous earthworks of North America: *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (1848). If the portrait Terry A. Barnhart draws in this recent biography of Squier accurately depicts his character, this is certainly not the way he wanted to be remembered.

As a young man, Squier dreamed of becoming a famous writer. After a brief stint as a school teacher, he worked as an editor for literary magazines then as an editor for politically-oriented newspapers. He tried his hand at writing Romantic poetry and lecturing to laboring-class gatherings on self-improvement and social progress, but he found his ideal subject when his career in journalism took him from New England to the Midwest. In 1845, he accepted an editorship at a newspaper in Chillicothe, Ohio, where he met Davis, a physician and antiquarian with an unsurpassed knowledge of local archaeological sites. Recognizing an opportunity to achieve the fame he craved, Squier joined Davis in an ambitious investigation of the earthworks in the Scioto River Valley.

With a finger on the pulse of American society, Squier correctly estimated the popularity of archaeology. The nineteenth-century Romantic movement stirred a fascination with the ancient and the exotic. At the same time, a rising nationalism inspired pride in American antiquities in particular while it sought justification in anthropological science for the belief that the United States – i.e., white, Anglo-Saxon citizens of the U.S. – were destined to rule the American hemisphere. The secretary of the new Smithsonian Institution, Joseph Henry also recognized the manifold significance of American archaeology and invited Squier and Davis to publish a report on their work as the inaugural volume of the *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*.

Barnhart provides an insightful critique of Squier and Davis's masterpiece *Ancient Monuments*. Published in 1848, their work represented state-of-the-art field techniques of the time; even today, archaeologists find the empirical data valuable. The authors' interpretations of that data has not stood up as well, although Barnhart avoids anachronistic judgments as he places those interpretations in the context of contemporary anthropological thinking and identifies the seeds of ideas that would develop in Squier's subsequent writings. Barnhart also notes character traits revealed during the publication of *Ancient Monuments* which would continue to infect Squier's professional relationships, for he showed himself egomaniacal and unwilling to give collaborators due credit.

As Squier had predicted, the book was well received in Europe and England as well as in the U.S. To his disappointment, however, he had overestimated the availability of funding for archaeological research. With a small grant from the Smithsonian and the New York Historical Society, he spent a few months investigating sites in the western part of that state and again published the results through the Smithsonian. Eager to investigate the

archaeology of Central America, in 1849 he finagled a one-year diplomatic appointment in Nicaragua. (Such posts offered with the understanding that the appointee would pursue extracurricular exploration were not usual for the time.)

Squier's assignment was to negotiate an international agreement for the building of a canal across the isthmus, but his political ineptitude and strident nationalism jeopardized the mission. That same nationalism inspired him to write *Nicaragua: Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal* (1853) in an attempt to convince his compatriots of the economic and strategic importance of Central America. When the canal proposal foundered, he leapt upon a scheme for a railroad. As secretary of the Honduras Interoceanic Railway Company, he published *The States of Central America* (1858) and numerous other books promoting colonization of the region. In his travels, he visited major archaeological sites and collected information on the languages, customs, racial relations, and geographic distribution of indigenous peoples. Barnhart gives an excellent assessment of Squier's anthropological work during these years, although the reader longs for a map identifying the sites mentioned in the text.

The railroad scheme proved short-lived, but in 1863 Squier obtained a diplomatic appointment, this time as a claims commissioner to Peru where he undertook a large scale, costly archaeological investigation of the Inca. Upon his return to the U.S. in 1865, he published a handful of articles and launched a series of lectures on his findings. As ambitious for fame as ever, he downplayed collaborators' contributions; he even alienated the photographer who accompanied his expeditions. But then mental illness, triggered by a hostile divorce, delayed publication of his definitive report and essentially ended his public career.

Thanks to the assistance of a brother, who cared for Squier until his death in 1888, *Peru: Incidents of Travel and Exploration in the Land of the Inca* finally appeared in 1877. Given contemporary anthropological thought, some of Squier's interpretations are rather surprising. Noting evidence of pre-Inca cultures, he pointed to a long history of civilization in Peru. The Inca empire itself had amalgamated several different peoples. There could be no doubt, he contended, that New World sites were indigenous creations, made by ancestors of the peoples whom the Spanish explorers encountered.

This proposition flew in the face of the theory that Old World immigrants had brought the arts and architecture to the Americas. Yet it fit well with the key concept Squier had been developing since *Ancient Monuments*, the concept of the "unity and distinctiveness" of the so-called "American race". That is, American cultures were related to one another, but distinct from Old World cultures. According to Squier, linguistics, ethnography, archaeology, and physical anthropology provided evidence of organic connections among American peoples. Whereas he admitted that New World and Old World cultures showed many similarities, he attributed these similarities to the psychic unity of human beings and the fact that all societies passed through identical stages of development. In a word, New World languages, religions, and monuments were analogous to – but not derived from – Old World counterparts.

Barnhart allows little space for Squier's explorations and instead devotes most of the book to his writings. This allotment makes good sense in the biography of a man who spent more time behind a desk than in the field. Indeed, Squier seems to have cared about his studies of religious symbolism, American Indian legends, and Spanish documents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as much as he cared about his archaeological field work. Throughout the biography, Barnhart is to be commended for placing Squier's nationalist polemics in the context of nineteenth-century American imperialism in order to give a fair

evaluation of his empirical contributions, both to contemporary anthropology and in the light of recent research. Today, the enduring value of Squier's work rests upon his original research and his efforts to collect and organize data systematically.

No, the name Squier alone is unlikely to spark recognition. With the publication of this excellent biography, however, the pairing that will make Americanists and historians of archaeology take note is Squier and Barnhart.

## VII. Resources

From David Browman:

### History of Bolivian Archaeology: New Sources

One of the continuing problems for students of the history of our discipline is the tendency for retrospectives to identify and discuss the same 'big names' in the field, as if these individuals were the only 'players' or 'actors' involved. Thus in Bolivia, for example, a list of prominent archaeologists working in the mid-20th century often gets limited to Europeans such as Stig Ryden and Heinz Walter, Americans such as Wendell C. Bennett and Alfred Kidder, and Bolivians such as Arturo Posnansky and Carlos Ponce Sangines. With respect to the in-country Bolivian contributors, then, one comes away with the impression that the baton passed rather seamlessly from Posnansky to Ponce.

#### Edwin Pinto Cuellar

2000 *Textos Antropológicos* 11: 11–22

*p. 11* Max Portugal Ortiz (1943–1999). Began working at Tiwanaku in 1960 with his father.

*p. 12* Had started in 1959, taking a course in Antropología Aplicada at the Ministerio de Educación. And took courses in anthropology at UMSA in 1960–1961, then 1962–1963, Escuela de Estudios Turísticos, with licenciatura "La Arqueología del Río Beni" in History dept UMSA in 1976, later published as book 1978. From 1963–1974, was an assistant archaeologist at CIAT. 1974–1979, Director and founder of the Archivo Histórico de La Paz, Casa de la Cultura. 1979–1985, Director Museo Nacional de Arqueología. 1985–1988, jefe of CIAT.

*p.14* 1989–1992, excavations at Pumapunku and other Tiwanaku locales.

Particularly interested in Pa-Ajanu and Pokotia sculptures style of formative; altiplano-Amazon linkages; transition from Formative to Classic Tiwanaku, Tiwanaku III to IV at Kallamarka and other locales.

Helped organize the group of students who ultimately put out "Textos Antropológicos" and helped 1989–1995.

#### Max Portugal Ortiz

2005/1992 Reseña de la obra del profesor Maks Portugal Zamora. *Nuevos Aportes* 2: 3–13 (reprint of article first published in *Nuevos Aportes* 1, 1992)

*p. 3* Maks Portugal (1907–1983) was one of the main players with Carlos Ponce Sangines and Gregorio Cordero Miranda in setting up the Primera Mesa Redonda de Arqueología Boliviana in 1953.