

community archaeology of Ludlow and the history of conflict that the archaeological research brings back to life. Of particular importance were the honest and on the whole successful attempts made by the archaeologists to listen to the community (many of whom had direct connections to the place and its people), and to give something concrete back to the people of Colorado. Stripped of all the theoretical and pretty self-conscious huffing and puffing that bookends this work, *The Archaeology of Collective Action* contains much that is both brave and true.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/bha.17209>

Jeremy A. Sabloff and William L. Fash (eds) 2007. *Gordon R. Willey and American Archaeology*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. xii, 252p. ill. Hardcover. ISBN 9780806138053.

Reviewed by Tim Murray

Although Kent Flannery no longer writes fables populated by Great Synthesizers, Real Mesoamerican Archaeologists or indeed Skeptical Graduate Students, and today's graduate students may well regard *The Early Mesoamerican Village* (1976) as being hopelessly out of date, reading about Gordon Willey makes you wonder whether they still make them like that anymore. Almost everything about Willey was exceptional – his range of archaeological field areas, his theoretical and methodological influences, the scale of his intellect and the level of his productivity.

The idea behind this excellent book is a simple, yet very effective one. Sabloff, Fash and their contributors want to celebrate Willey's memory and of the (obviously positive) influence he had on their lives as archaeologists. Nothing particularly novel in this, given the large number of *festschriften* that populate the stacks of our libraries. Much more novel was the idea of taking ten of Willey's most famous and influential papers and having contemporary archaeologists, expert in the relevant areas, provide reactions to them. It is fascinating stuff as we witness a re-exploration of core issues of method and theory using materials from sites right across the Americas. Fash's introduction and Sabloff's conclusion top and tail the uniformly interesting and mostly excellent contributions.

There is another excellent reason to buy this book. The editors close their acknowledgements with: "The royalties for this volume will go to the endowment for the Gordon R. Willey Award of the Archaeology Division of the American Anthropological Association. We believe this to be a fitting destination because Willey served as the association's president and because the award is given to archaeologists whose writing and research enhance our profession".

Brian M. Fagan 2007. *Return to Babylon. Travellers, Archaeologists, and Monuments in Mesopotamia* (revised edn). Boulder, Co.: University Press of Colorado. xx, 386p. ill.; maps. ISBN 9780870818677.

Reviewed by Tim Murray

Like many students of the history of archaeology I read the first (1979) edition of *Return to Babylon* as much for pleasure as for instruction. Fagan's relaxed style suited the material, which was a potent cocktail of romance, mystery, skulduggery, and at times (especially when it came to the inimitable Henry Creswick Rawlinson) sheer genius. It was, and remains still, epic stuff that provided many of the high points of archaeological achievement from decipherment to an understanding of the history of civilization. All the pre- World War II highlights were there: Ur, Babylon, Nineveh, and the strong sense that these foundations in the dust (to paraphrase Seton Lloyd) were the foundations of civilization in the sense that Gordon Childe meant it. These were the years when Mesopotamia was part of the Turkish Empire and later to be briefly an adjunct to an already failing British Empire.

This second edition retains all these great stories and updates the narrative with some new information

and some newer perspectives. The book is very sensibly divided into chunks of narrative neatly arranged chronologically. Part I: Lost Kingdoms and Biblical lands; II: Consuls and cuneiform; III: Palaces of kings; IV: Tablets and tells, and V: Science and nationalism. The story unfolds gently and we see the central theme of the work – the growth of scientific archaeology from the activities of enthusiasts, tomb-robbers and adventurers to an archaeology conducted scientifically and for the interests of the Iraqi. While we still have very little discussion of post World War II archaeology – especially of the work of such giants as Braidwood and Adams (nor indeed of the fierce debates about agricultural origins or the origins of empires), we now have a very significant discussion concerning the recent fate of archaeological remains (both in the field and in the National Museum) in contemporary Iraq. This is an important statement from Fagan about what he rightly calls a catastrophe – the looting of the National Museum and other sites around the country, and the dispersal of many of their most important treasures into the shadowy world of the illegal antiquities trade. Fagan's analysis is direct and uncompromising – this is a catastrophe that was avoidable. The fact of the looting is something that diminishes us all. Fagan perfectly captures the enormity of our loss in the closing paragraph:

Does archaeology have a future in a world obsessed with celebrity, profits and immediate gratification? In Mesopotamia, the scene of so many scientific triumphs, we are witnessing the past vanishing as if it had never been. Essentially, we have returned to the freewheeling days of the nineteenth century. Will this scenario of destruction and virtually uncontrolled looting be allowed to continue? Will there ever be a new generation of archaeological research that builds on the solid accomplishments of earlier scholars? (p. 342).

VI. Forthcoming publications

Oxford University Press has agreed to publish a reader on the history of archaeology (edited by Tim Murray and Chris Evans) during 2008.

VII. Announcements

La Tène, 1857–2007: a reevaluation

Funded by the Swiss National Foundation, this new, collective research project aims at an exhaustive reevaluation of the documentary corpus of the site of La Tène (Lake Neuchâtel, Switzerland). As a matter of fact, the celebrity of this emblematic site and the current practices of exchange in the nineteenth century led to a considerable dispersion of the archaeological material, as well as the pertaining documentation (drawings, photographs, etc.). Under those circumstances, *we shall be looking for all possible information in various museums and archaeological institutions*, in Europe and on the American Continent. In a second step, we shall analyze the specific role of the weapons represented in La Tène, in the context of Celtic Europe of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC.

This will provide the necessary basis for a reinterpretation of La Tène and its function. Actually, the project is in response to the reiterated requests from all specialists of Celtic archaeology, providing opportunities for future studies. All colleagues ready to contribute to the constitution of the database will be given access to it.