

Grahame Clark and American Archaeology

BRIAN FAGAN

GRAHAME CLARK ONLY VISITED THE AMERICAS on a few occasions, not out of a lack of interest in New World archaeology, but because he worked in a very different archaeological environment than that of today. Until the late 1950s, relatively few American archaeologists worked in the Old World or travelled widely to conferences or excavations far from home. By the same token, European prehistorians like Vere Gordon Childe tended to ignore American archaeology and confine their teaching and their syntheses to familiar turf. Today, we live in a different scholarly environment, where there is constant interchange between archaeologists all over the world. An explosion in higher education and in archaeology everywhere, in tourism and museums, and in international travel of all kinds, has led to a massive intellectual cross-fertilization between Old World and New since the advent of the jumbo jet and effortless electronic communication.

Grahame Clark did his most important work on the threshold of the jet and electronic era, at a time when multidisciplinary research was a new concept and radiocarbon dating a relative novelty. However, his influence on American archaeology was enormous, especially in the context of the theoretical furore and ardent debates of the 1960s, which catapulted New World archaeology and prehistory generally into a new, far more demanding paradigm.

Until the late 1950s, American archaeology was predominantly the study of culture history. To a great extent, this was a product of the direct historical method, pioneered by Alfred Kidder and others in the early years of this century (Willey and Sabloff 1990). The obsession with culture history also stemmed from a lack of accurate chronometric dating methods, except for dendrochronology, which provided a precise and reliable timescale for the last 2000 years of south-western archaeology. Elaborate seriations and complex stratigraphic sequences were the order of the day, many of them developed during the major river basin surveys in the 1930s. This preoccupation with culture history culminated in Gordon Willey and Philip Phillips' brilliant *Method and Theory in American*

Archaeology (1958), which laid out a hierarchy of archaeological units that is still widely used today. However, *Method and Theory* was ultimately a work of descriptive rather than explanatory archaeology, a vital foundation for the new generation of researches that was to follow in the 1960s. Willey and Phillips themselves wrote: 'So little work has been done in American archaeology on the explanatory level that it is difficult to find a name for it' (1958, 5–6).

By the time Willey and Phillips wrote their classic work, a few voices were already expressing concerns about the sterile applications of culture history that had proliferated in North America. For example, Walter Taylor's *A Study of Archaeology* (1948) was a forthright critique of established methods, which evoked often strident criticism. Only a handful of American scholars were following developments in Europe and the Near East, notably Gordon Willey and Robert Braidwood. Willey had completed an ambitious settlement study in Peru's Virú Valley (1953), which showed the potential of aerial photographs and foot survey in the study of ancient settlement and landscape, an approach foreshadowed by the English archaeologist Cyril Fox before the Second World War. Fox developed settlement distributions for different prehistoric periods in the Cambridge region, chronicled in his *Archaeology of the Cambridge Region* (1925), which, however, could not take account of long-term environmental change, as there was no available evidence such as pollen diagrams from the Cambridgeshire Fens at the time. Braidwood organized one of the first multidisciplinary field projects in south-western Asia, where he caused a sensation with his skilled excavations and environmental researches in the Zagros Mountains of Iran (Braidwood & Braidwood 1983).

Willey and Braidwood's students were among the first American archaeologists to become aware of Grahame Clark's seminal work on human adaptations and subsistence in prehistoric Europe from the 1930s to 1950s. Everyone was familiar with Gordon Childe's culture historical syntheses of Europe and south-western Asia, where cultures acted like historical characters, and the Neolithic and Urban Revolutions became archaeological and historical canon (Childe 1936; 1952). Grahame Clark's researches were accessible to a far smaller audience. While Clark was gifted with a relatively fluent pen, his works did not cater to the kind of global readership Childe enjoyed, to the point that his syntheses became part of the world history of the 1930s to 1960s. Nevertheless, Clark wrote for both a specialized and wider archaeological audience, with a deep intellectual passion for both the minutiae of environmental adaptations and subsistence and the broad sweep of European prehistory. Until the 1950s, his pioneering work on the British Mesolithic and his seminal *The Mesolithic Settlement of Northern Europe* (1936) were known only to a handful of American scholars, notably Cambridge-trained Hugh Hencken of Harvard University, whom Clark (1989) himself credited with introducing him to the potential of wet sites with his research in Ireland. Then two books, published within two years of one another, established Grahame Clark in the American archaeological mind. The first was *Prehistoric Europe: The Economic Basis* (1952), the second *Star Carr* (1954), one of the classic monographs of twentieth-century archaeology.

To most European archaeologists of the 1950s, prehistoric archaeology was a form of history that used unwritten sources. Clark, after more than a quarter century of Mesolithic research, and strongly influenced by Scandinavian wet sites, espoused a multidisciplinary perspective, an anthropological approach which advocated the interpretation of archaeological finds in social, economic, and environmental terms. In all his post-Second World War work, he placed a strong emphasis on subsistence instead of artefacts and chronological sequences, calling *Prehistoric Europe* 'essentially an act of propaganda' (Clark 1989, 90). This remarkable book, which is still of value today, placed anthropology, ecology, and subsistence at the heart of archaeological research about a decade before this became a mainstream concern in American archaeology.

Prehistoric Europe was widely read in American universities, both because it offered a convenient and readable account of European prehistory from other than a Gordon Childe perspective, and also because it advocated research into environment, exchange, and subsistence using a multidisciplinary approach and carefully controlled ethnographic and folkloric analogy. The messages of the book were not lost on many American scholars, who were grappling with more than 10,000 years of pre-Columbian archaeology that unfolded against what appeared to be a highly complex backdrop of major, but still little understood, environmental change.

Clark wrote *Prehistoric Europe* when his Star Carr researches weighed heavily on his mind. In retrospect, he was probably one of the few archaeologists in the world who could have done justice to the Star Carr site in the late 1940s. This was because of his earlier work with the Fenland Research Committee, which had taken him across disciplinary boundaries in the early days of palynology at Cambridge University (Clark 1989). A Cambridge research team shouldered much of the Star Carr research and produced a portrait of a tiny hunter-gatherer site that was a model of its kind, right down to its emphasis on seasonality and identification of charcoals and pollens. Few American archaeologists were, or are, interested in the British or European Mesolithic. However, the Star Carr excavation transcended this narrow speciality, with its brilliant reconstructions and cogently argued descriptions not just of a tiny hunting stand, but of a 10,000 year-old site (one of the first ever radiocarbon dated) set in a wider environmental setting. The minute detail of the Star Carr excavations came as a revelation not only to European archaeologists, but to Americanists, many of whom had not fully realized the enormous value of palynology to archaeology, nor of wet sites to a fuller understanding of ancient native American societies. The methodologies employed at Star Carr exercised a profound influence on such important North American excavations as the Ozette village in Washington State's Olympia Peninsula (Kirk 1974).

The direct historical method, working back from the present into the past, and the strong intellectual foundations of American archaeology, have always placed the judicious use of ethnographic analogy at centre stage in the New World. An enormous literature surrounded the subject in the 1950s (Thompson 1956; Wylie 1985), and still proliferates in the 1990s. *Prehistoric Europe*, with its controlled use of such analogies, appeared at a

time of renewed interest in both primate studies and hunter-gatherer research, which culminated in the famous 'Man the Hunter' conference at the University of Chicago in 1966 (Lee & DeVore 1968). This now-legendary meeting stemmed in part from Richard Lee and Irven DeVore's precedent-setting researches among the Kung San of the Kalahari Desert (Lee 1970), which influenced an entire generation of palaeoanthropological and hunter-gatherer research. The combination of controlled ethnographic analogy, the study of living societies ('ethnoarchaeology'), and Clark's ecological researches were important catalysts for the theoretical ferment that burst on American archaeology in the 1960s. Clark's Star Carr monograph and his writings on ecological archaeology were essential reading to anyone interested in the canons of the new archaeology, with its insistence on ecological thinking and cultural systems.

Grahame Clark's most important work came at a time of quiet despair in many archaeological circles. In 1965, Stuart Piggott was moved to write: 'We have lost the confidence of the nineteenth century, and are children of an age of doubt . . . We must recognize that in archaeology . . . there are facts other than those which are . . . observational data' (1965, 4–5), a point that Grahame Clark had long realized. However, by this time both David Clarke in Britain and Lewis Binford and others in North America were moving archaeology in new directions. Grahame Clark's anthropological and ecological approaches played an inconspicuous, but critical, role in these new directions, in what became known, inaccurately, as the 'new archaeology'.

Lewis Binford's thinking about a 'new archaeology' developed from a matrix of anthropological, sociological, and scientific thinking that appeared in the late 1950s (Binford, 1983). Central to his ideas were the writings of Julian Steward and Leslie White, who were proponents both of multilineal cultural evolution and of cultural ecology. Steward in particular was a powerful theoretical force, for he added the environment to what had always been an essentially cultural evolutionary equation. He developed the notion of cultural ecology, which argued that similar adaptations could be found in different cultures in broadly similar environments, that cultures change in response to environmental change, differences and changes that can lead to great societal complexity or completely new cultural patterns. In many respects, Steward's ideas (1955) ran parallel to those of Grahame Clark, whose Mesolithic and more general European researches provided first-hand examples of how multidisciplinary field research could produce fine-grained reconstructions of exactly the kinds of environmental adaptations that Julian Steward observed in living societies. They had both done the same thing, Steward at a largely theoretical level, Clark by adding the environmental perspective to the researches of Cyril Fox and early Mesolithic scholars.

One can only call Grahame Clark's influence on processual archaeology enormous. However, Clark's thinking moved far beyond the frontiers of environmental adaptations. He always considered ancient humans social beings, who lived not by universal cultural rules, but by their own wits and decisions about situations that confronted them. Clark was strongly opposed to the mechanistic, often anonymous cultural processes which soon

masqueraded as explanations of the past in the most ardent processual literature. In his own writings, he foreshadowed the concerns of the post-processualists. 'There remain spheres of knowledge or awareness which . . . have been of supreme importance to individual men and as matter of fact, through their influence on social life have ultimately served to enhance biological effectiveness' (Clark 1961, 256).

As any of his former students will testify, Grahame Clark had a refreshingly eclectic perspective on archaeology. He himself had widened the horizons of Mesolithic research far beyond the narrow confines of Britain and worked closely with Scandinavian archaeologists. He also taught students for an undergraduate degree in Archaeology and Anthropology that had a long tradition of preparing Cambridge people for a career in the British Colonial Service, where, as another Cambridge lecturer, Miles Burkitt, would put it, 'your hand might by chance alight on a perfect Acheulian handaxe as you administered justice under a pawpaw tree' (Burkitt, pers. comm.). His predecessor as the Disney Professor, Dorothy Garrod of Mt Carmel fame, was the first to teach a course at the university entitled 'world prehistory' in 1946. Nevertheless the perspective of the Cambridge curriculum was still narrow and largely restricted to Europe and south-western Asia. Clark had developed a much broader vision as a direct result of many years of teaching undergraduates destined for administrative, and sometimes archaeological, careers overseas. His students included J. Desmond Clark and John Mulvaney, pioneers of African and Australian archaeology respectively. Once he was appointed to the Disney Chair in 1953, he strongly encouraged Cambridge archaeological graduates to find work in museums and universities overseas at a time when such opportunities abounded. As he himself has shown (Clark 1989), these Cambridge exports resulted in a quantum jump in new archaeological data from hitherto neglected parts of the Old World. Many of these graduates received a perspective on American archaeology from Clark's colleague Geoffrey Bushnell, which was to stand them in good stead in later years.

With the notable exceptions of Warwick Bray and Norman Hammond, few Cambridge graduates of the Clark years specialized in the Americas, so the influence of the Cambridge diaspora (and it is not exaggerating to call it this) was more indirect in the New World. However, more than a few Cambridge graduates began their careers far from the Cam, then moved across the Atlantic to teach in Canada and the United States during the massive expansion of higher education in the 1960s, notably J. Desmond Clark and Glynn Isaac. They brought with them refined versions of Clark's anthropological and ecological approach and their own researches in Africa, Central America, and Australia, to influence not only their American colleagues but new generations of fledgling archaeologists who would themselves specialize in hitherto little known or arcane aspects of world prehistory. Many of the Cambridge newcomers, this writer among them, arrived serendipitously just as the 'new archaeology' was rippling across the Americas and the world.

The development of radiocarbon dating was a seminal event in the history of archaeology, the more so because several eminent archaeologists of the day realized the enormous potential of the method as soon as Libby and Arnold published their famous paper

in *Science* in 1949 (Libby 1955). Robert Braidwood, Grahame Clark, and Gordon Willey, among others, were in the forefront of the radiocarbon revolution. With characteristic zeal, Clark realized the potential of radiocarbon dating and worked hard both at Cambridge and elsewhere to foster the establishment of dating laboratories. He was also one of the first to comprehend how carbon 14 would transform our ability to develop global chronologies, to date, for example, the origins of agriculture in different parts of the world and to embark on comparative studies at a level of complexity unimaginable at the time. Clark used radiocarbon dating himself—at Peacock's Farm, Star Carr, Hurst Fen, and other Mesolithic and Neolithic excavations of the 1940s and 1950s. But he also used the scatter of new dates and his increasingly far-flung travels as the blueprint for a seminal book, which finally established him on the international stage—*World Prehistory*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1961. It is no exaggeration to say that archaeology has never been the same since, for Grahame Clark drew archaeological researches in every corner of the world into a simple, easy-to-read synthesis of human prehistory that was accessible to specialist and general reader alike. Not only did he provide the first truly scientific framework for world prehistory, he drew Old World and New together archaeologically for the first time.

American archaeologists, like everyone else, tend to be specialists, a condition brought upon them by the long distances that separate them and the very nature of their work—a small trench in a remote part of Alaska or Illinois, a lifetime spent investigating a single Maya ruin, or an arcane specialization in zooarchaeology or ethnobotany. Inevitably, such narrow scientific perspectives a generation ago spilled over into thinking about the first settlement of the Americas or the rise of state-organized societies in Mesoamerica. *World Prehistory* took a much broader view. For example, Clark insisted that one could not understand the issue of the first settlement of the New World without looking at the controversy on a much wider cultural canvas. Thus, *World Prehistory* thought of Paleo-Indian phenomena like Clovis and Folsom as cogs in a much wider web of late Ice Age cultural interconnections, which stretched deep into Asia, perhaps as far as Eurasia. Clark firmly espoused a relatively late settlement date, opting for a crossing over the Bering Land Bridge 'during an interstadial of the late Ice Age' (1961, 212). With his encyclopaedic knowledge of northern latitudes and glacial phenomena, he rejected any thought of a migration during the height of the last glaciation. In the 1969 edition, he still argued for relatively late settlement, while taking note of putative earlier discoveries, which did not hold scientific water. While his discussion of the 'ice-free corridor' and of the High Plains as a focus of big-game hunting is somewhat dated, one of Clark's most important contributions was his insistence that the New World was part of world prehistory, not a prehistoric world unto itself.

Along the same lines, he argued convincingly that both Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations were of indigenous, native American origin, while keeping open the door to some cultural innovations from Asia (such as the celebrated, and now discredited, Jomon/Valdivia connection). A wealth of new data since the 1960s has resulted in universal

consensus as to the indigenous origins of pre-Columbian states. The sheer brevity of Clark's synthesis prevented him from giving anything more than a very generalized summary of New World civilizations, but the influence of his brief synthesis helped bring American archaeology into much wider focus.

Clark's world prehistories were exercises in comparative archaeology, an insistence that ancient civilizations in widely separated parts of the world shared many general similarities. *World Prehistory* is judicious in its comparisons, but leaves us in no doubt of the general similarities between, say, Maya and Mesopotamian civilization. These broad similarities came to the fore in a series of important researches conducted by American archaeologists in Mesopotamia and Mesoamerica in the 1960s, notably those by Robert Adams in ancient landscapes in Iraq (1966) and by William Sanders and others in the Basin of Mexico (1979). Adams (1966) in particular attempted comparisons between early civilizations in widely separated geographical areas. He pointed out that both early Mesopotamian and American civilizations followed a basically similar course of development in which the communal ownership of land by kin groups gave way to the growth of private estates owned by noble families. The eventual result was a stratified form of social organization rigidly divided along class lines.

Such comparisons would have been unthinkable in an era dominated by local archaeologies and culture history. Adams' work, inspired in part by Clark's syntheses, is a foundation of most modern theorizing on the origins of states. Clark himself called his global prehistory a concern 'not with bricks and mortar so much as with the building' (1961, 3). Thirty years later, we know that the building he tentatively erected was indeed a priceless starting point for people 'to view the histories of their own cultures in the broad perspective of world prehistory' (1961, 5). His vision of a global past influenced a generation of American archaeologists.

Grahame Clark was an anthropological archaeologist, who placed the study of culture at the forefront of all archaeological research. To culture he added adaptation and ecology, just as Julian Steward (1955) did at a theoretical level in the United States. The difference between Clark and Steward was that the former was already practising in the field on a day-to-day basis what only a handful of American scholars of the day saw as important. The 'new archaeology' was a startling confirmation that Grahame Clark in ecological archaeology, as in so many other things, was ahead of his time. More than anyone else, he placed American archaeology on a truly global stage. His legacy is the concept of world prehistory which is the ultimate conceptual foundation of all contemporary prehistoric archaeology.

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Our conclusion is that the boundaries of *Homo* should be reset so that it includes early African *Homo erectus*, or *Homo ergaster*, and excludes *H. habilis sensu stricto* and *H. rudolfensis*. This would mean that the manufacture of stone tools would no longer be restricted to members of the genus *Homo*. However, we would contend that this has been an untenable association ever since the realization that synchronic taxa have existed in East Africa for much of the early phases of hominin evolution for which there is also evidence of stone artefact manufacture.

JOHN PARKINGTON

Western Cape Landscapes

The Atlantic coast of the western Cape is host to a vast quantity of archaeological sites of the past 100,000 years. Ecological studies of Middle and Late Stone Age sites provide opportunities to explore the development of behavioural patterns. The multitude of painted shelters and caves in the western Cape allow us to glimpse the systems of belief that structured early societies.

RHYS JONES

Dating the Human Colonization of Australia: Radiocarbon and Luminescence Revolutions

Dating the early colonization of Australia has for long been at the forefront of prehistoric archaeological enquiries. This paper reviews the historical progression from conjecture to fact, amplified by increasingly sophisticated methods of dating, and identifies those sites now acknowledged to be of paramount importance to a greater understanding of human colonization of the continent.

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Grahame Clark exercised a seminal influence on American archaeology at a critical stage in its development. His ecological and subsistence researches in the Cambridgeshire Fenland and interest in settlement archaeology were known to but a few American scholars of the 1940s and 1950s. However, the publication of *Prehistoric Europe: The Economic Basis* (1952) and *Star Carr* (1954) came at a time when Americanists were turning from culture history to processual archaeology. Clark's analyses of environment and subsistence played a vital role in the formulation of some of the basic tenets of the so-called 'new archaeology' of the 1960s. His field researches provided a practical component to the influ-

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ential theoretical models proposed by American anthropologist Julian Steward and others as the new cultural ecology. Clark was a pioneer in the teaching of world prehistory. He trained a whole generation of Cambridge graduates whom he encouraged to work in distant parts of the world. Some of them eventually moved to the United States, bringing his anthropological and ecological approach with them. Grahame Clark's most influential book was *World Prehistory* (1961), which provided the first synthesis that incorporated both New and Old World archaeology into a single global whole. This work, over three editions, provided the conceptual basis for the much more sophisticated world archaeology of today and the inspiration for important comparative studies of early civilizations.

C.F.W. HIGHAM

Recent Advances in the Prehistory of South-east Asia

Prehistoric archaeology in south-east Asia has often lagged behind that of other regions because of its terrain, languages, and politics. Yet the record of human diversity and achievement in colonization, subsistence, and metallurgy is now exceptionally well-documented through a series of multidisciplinary projects. The paper presents an overview of recent field studies and notes the encouragement given by Grahame Clark to south-east Asian archaeology.

LARS LARSSON

Settlement and Palaeoecology in the Scandinavian Mesolithic

Professor Grahame Clark devoted special interest to the Scandinavian Mesolithic, and his research in the area was to serve as a model for several generations of Mesolithic scholars in northern Europe and an encouragement to extend the forms of analysis. The aim of this paper is to follow up certain themes that Grahame Clark considered to be of particular interest, and also to add information from some current research efforts.

As regards the transition Late Palaeolithic–Mesolithic, important new investigations have given us a better knowledge of the deglaciation phase and have also shown that the Ahrensburg culture had a previously unrecognized spread along the west coast of Scandinavia, and it is in connection with this that we can trace the material change to a typical Mesolithic context.

Investigations in marine archaeology in recent years have given us some, albeit fragmentary, knowledge of submerged coastal settlement in southern Scandinavia in the Early Mesolithic. Work on the bottom of Öresund, the sound between present-day eastern Denmark and southern Sweden, shows how extensive this coastal settlement was. The results mean that we must reconsider earlier models of the relation between coastal and inland settlement.