

HIS6E01-PRINCIPLES AND METHODS OF ARCHAEOLOGY MODULE-2 TERMS & CONCEPTS

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SITE

- An **archaeological site** is a place (or group of physical sites) in which evidence of past activity is preserved (either prehistoric or historic or contemporary), and which has been, or may be, investigated using the discipline of archaeology and represents a part of the archaeological record.
- Sites may range from those with few or no remains visible above ground, to buildings and other structures still in use.
- the **smallest unit of space** dealt with by the archaeologist
- it be fairly continuously covered by the remains of former occupation, and the general idea is that these pertain to a single unit of settlement- the basic unit for stratigraphic studies
- It is in effect the minimum operational unit of **geographic spaces**.
- A site is any place, large or small, where there are to be found **traces of ancient occupation or activity**.
- characteristics of a site are defined by its formal content and the spatial and associational structure of the population's cultural items and features present.
- provides the framework for recording artifact provenience and usually serves as a sampling frame at some level in most fieldwork and, by default serves as **the unit of artifact association**.
- Site is usually depicted as **a basic unit of archaeology**.

- A distinct **spatial clustering** of artifacts, features, structures, and organic and environmental remains—the residue of human activity.
- any **place** where object, features, or ecofacts manufactures or modified by human beings are found
- **Any material remains** of the past which offer potential for archaeological investigation and analysis as a means of contributing to the understanding of past human communities **activity areas and rubbish**. That is where people have done things in the past and left some residue of having done something
- An archaeological site is **a place** in which evidence of past activity is preserved and which has been, or **may be, investigated using the discipline of archaeology** and represents a part of the archaeological record

SITE FORMATION PROCESS

- Site Formation Processes is a core concept in archaeology, developed by Michael Brian Schiffer in the 1970s
- Site formation processes are “the factors that create the historic and archaeological records”.
- These factors include both natural and anthropogenic (caused or made by humans) forces operating in different depositional environments (place in which sediments are deposited) and contributing to post-depositional disturbances.
- Formation processes affect the spatial integrity of both artifacts and sites, and they affect cultural deposits in different ways depending on the site’s age, geomorphic (natural features of earth) setting, sediments and soils, climate, and type and the complexity of occupation .
- Schiffer stressed that the reconstruction of human behavior must be inferred from the archaeological context, which he defined as the three-dimensional spatial patterning of individual artifacts, features, and other debris (remains) on a site.
- However, before archaeologists can reach meaningful conclusions about human behavior from the archaeological context, they must know how it was created.

SITE FORMATION PROCESS

- In archaeology, the term Site Formation Processes—or more simply formation processes—refers to the events that created and affected an archaeological site after its creation
- Two classes of formation processes are recognized: culturally created (C-transforms) and naturally created (N-transforms).
- C-transforms that might have affected an assemblage at an archaeological site include purposeful and accidental discard of objects or burning and demolition of structures.
- N-transforms could include earthquakes or rodent burrowing or vegetation growth or normal decay.

ARTIFACT

- **Artifact** or **artefact** is "something made or given shape by man, such as a tool or a work of art, especially an object of archaeological interest."
- In archaeology, an **artifact** or **artefact** is any object made or modified by a human culture, individual or group.
- Often the artifact—or object—is recovered long after the time it served its purpose, through an archaeological endeavor or even by accident or chance.
- Examples of artifacts from various time periods would include stone tools such as projectile points, pottery vessels, metal objects such as buttons or guns, and items of personal adornment such as jewelry and clothing.
- Other examples include bone that show signs of human modification, fire cracked rocks from a hearth, or plant material used for food.

- Artifacts can come from many different sources such as: Grave goods (those personal items Buried along with a body), Hoards, Votive offerings, From any Archaeology feature such as a pit, wall, ditch, a Midden (dump for domestic waste)
- Artifacts are often called *finds* when handled during archaeological excavation.
- Artifacts are related to the archaeological record by their position defined by the Archaeological context they are discovered in
- This is important for Seriation and relative dating analysis, and is closely related to work post excavation

ASSEMBLAGE

- An **assemblage** is an archaeological term meaning a group of different artifacts found in association with one another, that is, in the same context.
- As defined by one of the standard contemporary archaeological textbooks (Renfrew and Bahn), an *assemblage* is a "**group of artifacts recurring together at a particular time and place, and representing the sum of human activities.**"
- Defined by in the archaeology text *Linking to the Past* (Feder), "**One can speak of the artifact assemblage for a particular site and by that mean all the artifacts. One can also refer to a specific type of artifact. For example, one can refer to the stone tool assemblage or ceramic assemblage, that is, the array of stone tools or ceramic objects found at a site, in a region, or dating to a particular time period.**"

- Assemblages of sites being destroyed was an issue in early archaeology.
- Archaeologists, being funded by rich donors or governments, would remove artifacts from their sites and bring them back to the archaeologist's country.
- By removing the artifact from the site the assemblage was destroyed because the artifact was being taken out of its context.
- Some pieces would even become parts of private collections, which would completely remove them from the public eye.
- If the artifact is looked at as a scientific component of its site it can be seen that the overall scientific understanding of the site would be compromised.
- As a whole, artifacts, or scientific components, can shed light on the behaviors of a particular place and time.
- An example of this is the tomb of Tutankhamen and the Egyptian government requiring that artifacts found within the tomb stay in Egypt. The government wanted each artifact to stay within the country, and therefore with its assemblage, instead of being removed and shown in museums or stored in private collections."

INDUSTRY

- It was previously accepted that assemblages represent cultures when they are found within a limited time period and area, but it is not as accepted anymore.
- Archaeologists know that it is nearly impossible to distinguish cultures and ethnic differences based on assemblages alone.
- Assemblages can be used to identify cultures, but they are not the most reliable indicators by themselves. Where the content of the assemblages relates only to one product, they are more correctly termed an industry
- In the archaeology of the Stone Age, an **industry** or **technocomplex** is a typological classification of stone tools.
- It is not to be confused with industrial archaeology, which concentrates on industrial sites from more recent periods.

- An industry consists of a number of lithic assemblages, typically including a range of different types of tools, that are grouped together on the basis of shared technological or morphological characteristics.
- For example, the Acheulean industry includes hand-axes, cleavers, scrapers and other tools with different forms, but which were all manufactured by the symmetrical reduction of a bifacial core producing large flakes.
- Industries are usually named after a type site where these characteristics were first observed (e.g. the Mousterian industry is named after the site of Le Moustier).
- By contrast, Neolithic axeheads from the Langdale axe industry were recognised as a type well before the centre at Great Langdale was identified by finds of debitage and other remains of the production, and confirmed by petrography (geological analysis).
- The stone was quarried and rough axe heads were produced there, to be more finely worked and polished elsewhere.

CULTURE

- **Culture** can be defined in numerous ways.
- In the words of anthropologist E.B. Tylor, it is "**that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.**"
- Alternatively, in a contemporary variant, "**Culture is defined as a social domain that emphasizes the practices, discourses and material expressions, which, over time, express the continuities and discontinuities of social meaning of a life held in common.**"
- The *Cambridge English Dictionary* states that culture is "**the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time.**"
- culture is a series of activities and worldviews that provide humans with the basis for perceiving themselves as "person[s] of worth within the world of meaning"

- As a defining aspect of what it means to be human, culture is a central concept in anthropology encompassing the range of phenomena that are transmitted through social learning in human societies.
- The word is used in a general sense as the evolved ability to categorize and represent experiences with symbols and to act imaginatively and creatively. This ability arose with the evolution of behavioral modernity in humans around 50,000 years ago, and is often thought to be unique to humans, although some other species have demonstrated similar, though much less complex, abilities for social learning.
- It is also used to denote the complex networks of practices and accumulated knowledge and ideas that is transmitted through social interaction and exist in specific human groups, or cultures, using the plural form.

- Some aspects of human behavior, such as language, social practices such as kinship, gender and marriage, expressive forms such as art, music, dance, ritual, and religion, and technologies such as cooking, shelter, and clothing are said to be cultural universals, found in all human societies.
- The concept of material culture covers the physical expressions of culture, such as technology, architecture and art, whereas the immaterial aspects of culture such as principles of social organization (including practices of political organization and social institutions), mythology, philosophy, literature (both written and oral), and science make up the intangible cultural heritage of a society.
- Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.
- Culture is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.
- Culture in its broadest sense is cultivated behavior; that is the totality of a person's learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behavior through social learning.

CULTURAL EVOLUTION

- The term 'cultural evolution' (sometimes used interchangeably with 'social' or 'sociocultural' evolution), as commonly used by archaeologists and anthropologists, has traditionally referred to the history of what are conceived as the key long-term trends in human history: from foraging to farming; from farming to the origins of civilisation and the state; from agrarian civilisations to industrial and now post-industrial society; accompanied by such developments as increased population, greater social complexity and inequality, and more complex technologies.
- More recently the term has been used to refer to the idea that the processes producing cultural stability and change are analogous in important respects to those of biological evolution: in this view, just as biological evolution is characterised by changing frequencies of genes in populations through time as a result of such processes as natural selection, so cultural evolution refers to the changing distributions of cultural attributes in populations, likewise affected by processes such as natural selection but also by others that have no analogue in genetic evolution.
- The archaeological approach to studying culture from the newer perspective just described has become known as Darwinian archaeology and its ideas and implications will be presented under that heading.

- Cultural evolution” is the idea that human cultural change—that is, changes in socially transmitted beliefs, knowledge, customs, skills, attitudes, languages, and so on—can be described as a Darwinian evolutionary process that is similar in key respects (but not identical) to biological/genetic evolution.
- More specifically, just as Darwin described biological/genetic evolution as comprising three key components—variation, competition (or selection), and inheritance—cultural change also comprises these same phenomena.
- Yet while cultural evolution can be described as Darwinian in this sense, the details of the processes (e.g., how variation is generated, or how information is transmitted) are likely to be different in the cultural case compared to the details of biological/genetic evolution.
- Bearing these differences in mind, cultural evolution researchers have taken many of the same methods, tools, and concepts that biologists have developed to explain biological diversity and complexity and used them to explain similar diversity and complexity in cultural systems.
- These include phylogenetic methods to reconstruct “macroevolutionary” historical relations between cultural traits (e.g., languages or tools), ethnographic field studies to document and explain contemporary cross-cultural variation, laboratory experiments to determine the small-scale details of cultural “microevolution” (e.g., how cognitive biases favor certain ideas over others or whether we preferentially learn from certain people within a group), and mathematical models to explore the long-term and population-level consequences of those microevolutionary processes.

- Given this interdisciplinary breadth, it has been suggested that evolutionary theory may serve as a synthetic framework for unifying the social sciences, just as evolutionary theory synthesized the biological sciences during the early 20th century.
- Mesoudi, reviews evidence that cultural evolution is Darwinian by drawing an explicit analogy with Darwin's original argument in *On the Origin of Species* published in 1859. Mesoudi, then provides a more detailed overview of the field of cultural evolution, from phylogenetic analyses of cultural macroevolution to experimental and theoretical explorations of cultural microevolution.
- This overview is expanded in Mesoudi. Henrich and McElreath provides a similar brief overview of cultural evolution research, as does Richerson and Boyd .
- Laland and Brown provides an accessible overview of cultural evolution theory and research within the wider context of other evolutionary approaches to human behavior.
- A more detailed and empirically focused account of cultural evolution is provided by Durham .

TELL

- **Tell** - A mound, especially in the Middle East, made up of the stratified remains of a succession of settlements. When structures of a later period of occupation are built directly on top of an earlier layer, over time a settlement becomes raised above the landscape due to the buildup of layers.
- The shape of a tell is generally that of a low truncated cone.
- In ancient times, houses were constructed of piled-up mud (*pisé*), lumps of clay pressed together (adobe), or (later) sun-dried or kiln-baked bricks strengthened with straw, gravel, or potsherds.
- All mud structures, however, crumble easily when exposed to the elements, and that feature, combined with repeated wholesale destruction from man-made or natural causes, made repairs and rebuildings frequent.
- Earlier debris was simply leveled off, and new buildings were erected on top of it. Thus, most tells are stratified, with the lower strata usually being older than those above them.
- Two other terms, *höyük* and *tepe*, have almost the same meaning as *tall* and are often used by archaeologists when referring to ancient sites in parts of the Middle East.

MOUND

- A mound is the generic word for a type of earthwork found throughout the world. Whether they are called by a different name, such as barrow, tumulus, platform mound, rammed earthwork, even some earthen pyramids, mounds are works primarily built of soil, perhaps augmented by a stone or wood foundation.
- Some are small and barely noticeable rises on the landscape, particularly after the affects of hundreds or thousands of years of erosion. Others can clearly be classed as monumental architecture, requiring the collaborative work of many individuals working for many weeks, months or years. These structures may or may not contain human burials.
- The term is most frequently used to describe the Mississippian mounds of the central and eastern North American continent, but the tradition of raising earthworks may be found in one form or another in prehistoric cultures around the world.

CULTURAL PROCESS

- The concept of 'cultural process' has been of interest to anthropologists since the late 19th century.
- **Franz Boas** indicated that investigating cultural processes was central to anthropology, but he failed to define the concept.
- **A.L. Kroeber** provided a definition in 1948 and distinguished between short-term dynamics of how cultures operate and long-term dynamics resulting in cultural change.
- **Leslie White** conflated the two families of processes.
- Archaeologists working before 1960 focused on processes resulting in the diachronic evolution of cultures; many of these involved cultural transmission.
- Initially, processes involving the synchronic operation of a culture were conflated with diachronic evolutionary processes by processual archaeologists.
- In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Lewis Binford, David Clarke, and Frank Hole and Robert Heizer all discussed cultural processes within the framework of systems theory.
- Simultaneously, growing concern over the formational processes that created the archaeological record shifted attention from the original conception of cultural processes. Models of the temporal duration, scale, and magnitude of cultural processes illustrate their complexity and suggest avenues for further conceptualization.