

Archaeological Anthropology

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Perspectives on Method and Theory

Edited by James M. Skibo, Michael W. Graves, and Miriam T. Stark



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出版者:Univ of Arizona Pr

出版时间:2007-4

装帧:HRD

isbn:9780816525171

For centuries, the goal of archaeologists was to document and describe material artifacts, and at best to make inferences about the origins and evolution of human culture and about prehistoric and historic societies. During the 1960s, however, a number of young, primarily American archaeologists, including William Longacre, rebelled against this simplistic approach. Wanting to do more than just describe, Longacre and others believed that genuine explanations could be achieved by changing the direction, scope, and methodology of the field. What resulted was the New Archaeology, which blended scientific method and anthropology. It urged those working in the field to formulate hypotheses, derive conclusions deductively and, most important, to test them. While, over time the New Archaeology has had its critics, one point remains irrefutable: archaeology will never return to what has since been called its astate of innocence. In this collection of twelve new chapters, four generations of Longacre protA(c)gA(c)s show how they are building upon and developing but also modifying the theoretical paradigm that remains at the core of Americanist archaeology. The contributions focus on six themes prominent in Longacreas career: the intellectual history of the field in the late twentieth century, archaeological methodology, analogical inference, ethnoarchaeology, cultural evolution, and reconstructing ancient society. More than a comprehensive overview of the ideas developed by one of the most influential scholars in the field, however, Archaeological Anthropology makes stimulating contributions to contemporary research. The contributors do not unequivocally endorse Longacreas ideas; they challengethem and expand beyond them, making this volume a fitting tribute to a man whose robust research and teaching career continues to resonate.

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目录:

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