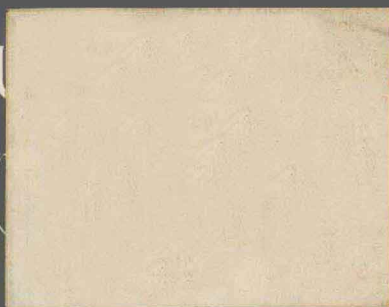


DISCOVERING OUR

A Brief Introduction to Art

SECOND EDITION



Wendy Ashmore ♦ Robert J. Sharer

DISCOVERING OUR PAST

A Brief Introduction to Archaeology

SECOND EDITION

Wendy Ashmore

Robert J. Sharer

University of Pennsylvania



MAYFIELD PUBLISHING COMPANY

Mountain View, California

London • Toronto

Copyright © 1996, 1988 by Mayfield Publishing Company

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means without written permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ashmore, Wendy

Discovering our past: a brief introduction to archaeology

/ Wendy Ashmore, Robert J. Sharer. — 2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 1-55934-521-7

1. Archaeology. I. Sharer, Robert J. II. Title.

CC75.A74 1995

930.1—dc20

95-3683

CIP

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

Mayfield Publishing Company

1280 Villa Street

Mountain View, CA 94041

Sponsoring editor, Janet M. Beatty; *production editor*, Julianna Scott Fein; *manuscript editor*, Dale Anderson; *art director*, Jeanne M. Schreiber; *text and cover designer*, Susan Breitbard; *manufacturing manager*, Randy Hurst. The text was set in 10/12 Janson and printed on 50# Finch Opaque by Malloy Lithographing, Inc.

Cover image: DeWitt Jones/Tony Stone Images.

Discovering Our Past

For Mary Grow



Preface



AS CHILDREN, MANY OF us learn to associate archaeologists with adventurous exploits and searches for long-lost civilizations in exotic places. As adults, our associations of archaeology with adventure are often strengthened when we see and hear stories in the media about fantastic archaeological finds. But what is it that archaeologists actually *do* on a normal work day in the field? This book corrects some of the popular myths about archaeologists and archaeology and explains what archaeologists really do, and how they do it.

We begin with a brief overview of archaeology, how it grew over the past few centuries, and how archaeologists today use various means to attempt to discover the past. The remainder of the book is organized to follow the steps of actual archaeological research. Beginning with the formulation of questions that define the goals of each research effort, we then look at the methods used to gather and analyze archaeological evidence, how archaeologists interpret this evidence, and how they present results to other archaeologists and the public. The book closes with a discussion of the challenges faced by archaeologists—how to reconcile the needs of archaeologists and other concerned groups who have an interest in the past.

The book is written specifically for introductory archaeology courses, especially surveys of human prehistory that include an introduction to archaeological method and theory. It derives from our more comprehensive text, *Archaeology: Discovering Our Past* (Second edition, Mayfield 1993). Both texts follow the same basic organization and share the same underlying philosophy—that archaeology is part of the broader field of anthropology with its concern for investigating all aspects of the human experience. Both books are also based on the premise that the evidence sought by archaeologists in their study

of the past represents a nonrenewable resource. This resource is fragile and especially precious, for archaeological evidence is the only means for us to discover most of our past. This doesn't mean that there is only one way to view our past—often there are several ways to study the evidence from the past. There is no single way for doing archaeology, and the best archaeology is that which uses the best methods available in each research situation.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

We have updated the text throughout to reflect the latest developments in archaeology. New coverage includes expanded discussions of Native American reburials (Chapters 1 and 10) and the issues involved in human skeletal analysis (Chapter 6). Dating methods and other laboratory analyses (Chapter 7) now include uranium series age determination and electron spin resonance. We have added new sections on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to Chapter 5. To underscore the importance of conserving archaeological sites, we introduce the tragic case of Slack Farm in Kentucky in Chapter 1 alongside the dramatic ongoing work at the Sipan tomb in Peru. Pseudoarchaeology and looting are included now in Chapter 1 so that readers can become more quickly aware of contemporary challenges to archaeological research.

The treatment of theoretical frameworks has been moved much earlier in the book (Chapter 3) and now includes a discussion of contextualism; the comparison of the approaches of culture history, cultural process, and contextualism should help readers understand the value of integrating them in archaeological research.

In addition to the extensive glossary and index, we've introduced several learning aids. To help readers better orient themselves, we have added maps of archaeological sites discussed in the text to the front of the book. For those readers who want more information on specific chapter topics, each chapter now ends with a guide to further reading, which is keyed to the bibliography at the end of the book.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In preparing this book we have been helped by many people. We are especially grateful to our colleagues who reviewed the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions for improvement: Kathryn Cruz-Uribe, Northern Arizona University; Paul Farnsworth, Louisiana State University; John W. Olsen, University of Arizona; Susan Riches, Fort Lewis College; and William A. Turnbaugh, University of Rhode Island.

The staff of Mayfield Publishing Company was both kind and helpful to us in all stages of preparing this book for publication. Jan Beatty was once again the spark that kindled the development of the book, and we add that her friendship is as important to us as is her expertise and professionalism. The essential copyediting was done by Dale Anderson, and Julianna Scott Fein oversaw the final production. We are very grateful to everyone for their time and effort.

Wendy Ashmore

Robert J. Sharer



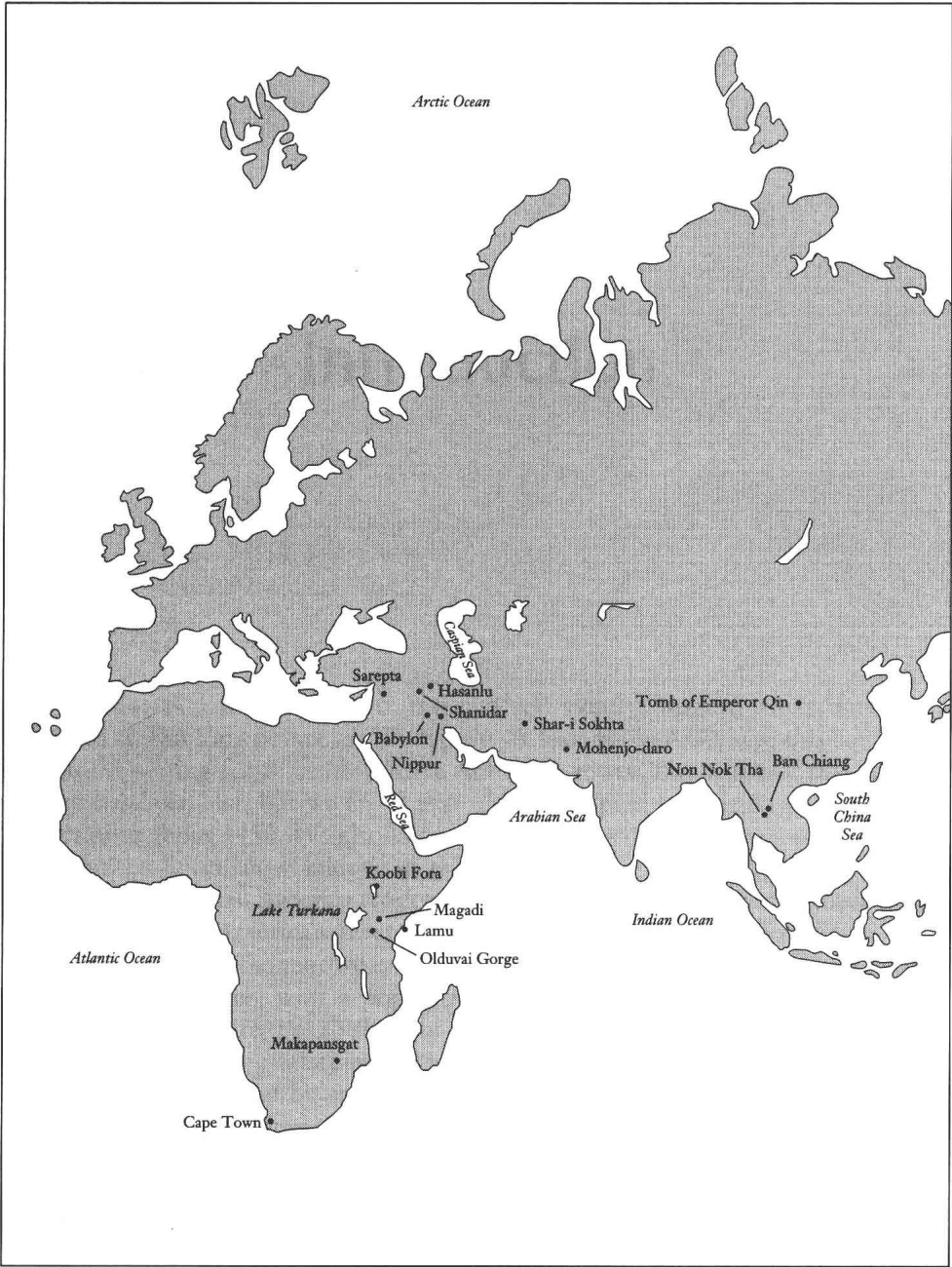
Archaeological Areas in North America and Mexico



Archaeological Areas in Central and South America



Archaeological Areas in Europe and North Africa



Archaeological Areas in Africa and Asia



Contents



PREFACE vii

GALLERY OF MAPS xiv

1

INTRODUCTION 1

Archaeologists and Archaeology 4

Archaeology as a Science 10

Archaeology and History 12

Archaeology and Anthropology 15

Archaeology as a Profession 17

Summary 20

For Further Reading 21

2

ARCHAEOLOGY'S PAST 23

The Origins of Archaeology 24

The Emergence of Modern Archaeology 30

Summary 34

For Further Reading 34

3

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO ARCHAEOLOGY 35

The Cultural History Approach 36

The Cultural Process Approach 41

The Contextual Approach 47

Summary 53

For Further Reading 54

4

HOW ARCHAEOLOGY WORKS 55

Archaeological Data 55

Deposition and Transformation 60

Acquiring Data 70

Research Design 72

Archaeological Research Projects 75

Summary 77

For Further Reading 78

5

FIELDWORK 79

Reconnaissance 79

Surface Survey 89

Excavation 94

Data Processing 104

Classification 107

Summary 111

For Further Reading 112

6

ANALYZING THE PAST 114

Artifacts 114

Ecofacts 129

Features 137

Summary 142

For Further Reading 143

7

DATING THE PAST 144

Seriation 146

Sequence Comparison 148

Stratigraphy 150

Geochronology	151
Obsidian Hydration	151
Floral and Faunal Methods	152
Radiometric Methods	155
Archaeomagnetism	161
Other Methods	161
<i>Summary</i>	162
<i>For Further Reading</i>	163

8

RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST 164

Analogy	164
Spatial Order and Behavior	173
<i>Summary</i>	194
<i>For Further Reading</i>	195

9

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST 196

Cultural History Interpretation	197
Cultural Processual Interpretation	204
Contextual Interpretation	212
<i>Summary</i>	216
<i>For Further Reading</i>	217

10

ARCHAEOLOGY TODAY 218

Looting and Antiquities Collecting	220
Destruction in the Name of Progress	224
Cultural Resource Management	224
Working with Ethnic Groups	229
The Responsibilities of Archaeology	230
<i>Summary</i>	231
<i>For Further Reading</i>	231

GLOSSARY 233

BIBLIOGRAPHY 245

INDEX 257



Introduction

FOR MANY GENERATIONS THE Slack family worked their farm in Kentucky. But long before any European set foot in the Americas, this land had been the setting for a sizable Native American town. The name of this settlement has been lost, but we know that it was occupied for some two centuries, beginning about 1450. We also know that these Native Americans were part of a great tradition, now known as the Mississippian culture, that dominated southeastern North America from about A.D. 900 to the time these people (and all other Native Americans) were overwhelmed by European colonists.

In size, the settlement we now call the Slack Farm site was similar to other Mississippian towns, with a population estimated at 300 to 500. Like other towns of this culture, the settlement was composed of houses and other buildings used by its living inhabitants and places of burial for the dead. Most of the houses were occupied by farming families, but there were also large earthen platforms that supported the more elaborate houses of powerful families, those of the chiefs. Other earthen platforms supported the temples that housed the gods worshipped by these agricultural people.

We know these things about the Slack Farm site because of what archaeologists have learned from careful excavation of other Mississippian settlements. But although archaeologists had known for decades that the remains of this Native American town existed on Slack Farm, it had never been excavated. Thanks to the care of the Slack family, this site had been preserved. This preservation was all the more remarkable since most other Mississippian sites, along with those of other Native American cultures, have been badly damaged or destroyed. Some of this destruction has been accidental—mostly due to



FIGURE I.1

This aerial view of Slack Farm illustrates dramatically the destruction wrought by looters: in just two months, ten men reduced this Native American site to a pitted wasteland, littered with pottery fragments and shattered human remains. (Kenny Barkley, Morganfield, Kentucky.)

European colonization and the expansion of modern society. But a great deal of destruction of Native American sites, and archaeological sites all over the world, is intentional. These sites are destroyed by **looters** who churn through the ground in their search for objects that have value—everything from souvenirs to treasure that can be sold for thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The Slack Farm site was the largest known Mississippian site that had escaped devastation by looters. All that changed in 1987, when the farm was sold out of the family. Its new owners immediately leased artifact-mining rights