# Antiquities compared

TIMOTHY A. KOHLER*

Whenever I pick up a copy of ANTIQUITY (which for purposes of clarity one of my colleagues refers to as *Un-American Antiquity*) I am struck by its contrast with the journal I edit. ANTIQUITY is more colourful (both literally, as of late, but also metaphorically, for some time now), more diverse in its subject matter and nationality of contributor, reflecting its world-wide scope; and more informal, especially of course in its editorials, but also in its format, including News & Notes, Notes, longer articles, short notes on new books, review articles, relatively standard book reviews, and even (it takes an editor to notice) a nice index. *American Antiquity* by contrast looks a bit *earnest* and perhaps even slightly stodgy — the greatest of ironies considering that Americans traditionally consider *Brits* to be stodgy! So perhaps these editorial stances are mere compensatory screens on both sides. (According to Fustel de Coulanges (1980 [1864]: 213), following the disastrous engagement of Sparta at Leuctra, relatives of those who survived had to show themselves publicly in tears, whereas those whose sons had perished were to be seen publicly 'with gay countenances'.) I want to use my allotted space to prospect a bit for the reasons behind these perceived differences — in case that explanation is either incorrect or incomplete — drawing on the education I received reading these papers.

Many of the contributors to this symposium make much of the fact that ANTIQUITY is not beholden to any institution or society. My own experience is that the responsibilities of *American Antiquity* to the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) are not very onerous; in over two years of editorship I have yet to be lobbied by the President or by the Chair of the Publications Committee (himself a former ANTIQUITY editor) to accommodate a 'Society viewpoint' on any issue, or to have my decisions on content in any way questioned. (That's not to say that individual members have not felt free to voice such opinions!)

The constraints, to the extent that they exist, are more subtle than that. One important factor in the differences between the journals is that they were founded with somewhat different mandates, and both have been fairly faithful to their respective founding visions. That of ANTIQUITY, as I understand it from Renfrew, Malone and Darvill, was to serve the needs of a then relatively small archaeological profession for a world-wide coverage, yes, but even more, to engage an educated non-specialist public around the world in the world of archaeology. And I mean that broadly: the editorials are full of little gossipy bits about famous figures in archaeology that *American Antiquity* would never dream of publishing. So ANTIQUITY speaks to the same wide public interest in archaeology and related exotic things that Barbara Pym knew existed when she set *Less than angels* (1955) in a community of anthropologists, or that Agatha Christie developed so well in a number of mysteries (e.g. Christie 1951) that profited from her intimate knowledge of the archaeology and archaeologists of the Near East.

By contrast, *American Antiquity* has never seriously tried to reach out to the general public, although one of the concerns at its inception in the mid 1930s (we are only 67 years old) was to provide a platform for cooperation between a large avocational archaeological community and a very small professional community. If ANTIQUITY, especially in the Glyn Daniel years, seems a trifle clubby to the American reader, we can perhaps see that the journal thrived in part by giving non-archaeologists (who would not aspire to be part of that club) the vicarious pleasures of a look *into* the club. *American Antiquity* would not want (or dare, if it did want) to take such a stance. Whether because of a more egalitarian American ethos, or because there really was not much of a club, the preferred vision was (and remains) one of a shared goal with amateurs in which the specific status of the participants was subordinated to the daunting tasks of preserving and interpreting the record. And, in fact, such 'amateur' archaeologists have served in many important capacities in the SAA over the years. Some change

* Editor *American Antiquity*, Department of Anthropology, Washington State University, Pullman WA 99164-4910, USA. tako@wsu.edu

ANTIQUITY 76 (2002): 1121–3

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00092024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

is evident through time, of course; for example, I suspect that the most important divisions now, for whom *American Antiquity* seeks to provide a 'trading zone' (Hutson 2001: 357), distinguish the academic from the privately employed CRM archaeologist.

This distinction between ANTIQUITY as a window into the world of archaeology, and *American Antiquity* as a platform within and largely for the community, helps explain another difference between the two that is only obvious after one has spent some time with each. ANTIQUITY revels in those things which makes archaeology peculiar, distinctive, and intriguing. The glamorous and the faintly bizarre are both welcome. The story about the remains of an earlier 'iceman', for example, has both (Lehner & Julen 1991): this poor soldier with his 16th-century weapons, coins and silver amulets fell into a crevasse near the Matterhorn and was rediscovered in the late 1980s.

*American Antiquity*, by contrast, seems filled with a longing to make archaeology more than it is: to escape the confines of the discipline. We talk a great deal about interdisciplinarity, and about how archaeologists can fill more central roles in knowledge production and use than is typical today. This happens to be an inclination I encourage (see, as an excellent example, van der Leeuw & Redman 2002). Nevertheless, settling down with a copy of ANTIQUITY is more of a comfort, like relaxing with an old friend who — you know by experience — has some good stories to tell.

Beyond these differences (entrained, or so I imagine, by our initial mandates and subsequent editorial traditions) I am struck by the potential importance of the differing length of editorial terms in generating differences between the journals. Disregarding the present editorial teams, I compute the average tenure of position for ANTIQUITY editors at a hair over 18 years; in our case it has been 3·8 years. Over the same number of years in which ANTIQUITY had three editors, *American Antiquity* ran through 12. (Do we have a tougher job?) Given that the first year of any *American Antiquity* editor is largely given over to working through decisions made by the previous editor, we have relatively little scope for personal control or moulding of the journal. This in turn has given rise to a practice in which much of the direction for the journal is generated from the bottom up — by the character of the submissions we get rather than by the commissions we make. I could not accurately glean from these papers the extent to which ANTIQUITY editors solicit materials *versus* the extent to which they depend on the mails, but I am willing to wager that the longer-run editors at least determined a great deal about the general direction of the journal. Certainly the sustained focus on landscapes in ANTIQUITY, as noted by Stoddart, suggests that this is true.

There are at least potential advantages to the bottom-up strategy of an *American Antiquity*. If it's working right, it ought to result in an exemplary but otherwise representative sample of the current activity and interests within a journal's metaphorical catchment. Strong editorial control, on the other hand, can either lead the wave, follow it or ignore it altogether. It is worth noting, as Darvill points out, that processual archaeology had to wait till 1973 to be authoritatively introduced to ANTIQUITY readers by David Clarke (1973), given that many of these same impulses had been announced a decade earlier in *American Antiquity* by Binford (1962; 1965).

I do not have statistics for *American Antiquity* that are completely comparable to those presented by Darvill for ANTIQUITY, where some 15% of papers focus either on method, theory or what we in the states would call 'cultural' resource management (CRM). My rough calculation, based on the seven most recent issues of *American Antiquity*, suggests that currently about 12% of our articles and reports have a primarily theoretical thrust, another 12% are primarily methodological and about 2% are concerned with the practice of CRM in particular. An analysis of *American Antiquity* content since its foundation by Jelmer Eerkens (2002) demonstrates that 'general' articles (those with no specific regional focus) were most common in the 1970s, when they reached almost 25% of our content, declining somewhat to about 20% in the last half of the 1990s. Thus, for some time now *American Antiquity* has given slightly more space to the theory and practice of archaeology than does ANTIQUITY. Perhaps our somewhat more generous page limits lend themselves to discussions of theory in particular.

These informal and non-systematic attempts to compare the sources of variability in the two journals suggest that 'founder effects' may be large for journals (ours at least have displayed considerable continuity of purpose). It is very clear to an editor that traditions, once estab-

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00092024 Published online by Cambridge University Press

lished, have a life of their own. The packages that arrive in our editorial office with new manuscripts not infrequently cite previous articles in *American Antiquity* on the chosen topic to demonstrate the plausibility of the present offering for publication. Moreover, institutional arrangements that might seem important (for example, sponsorship by a society) may be less structuring than practical exigencies forced on editors by things like length of term or even the page limits allowed papers.

As a whole, this collection of papers leaves no doubt whatsoever that ANTIQUITY has had a key role in the development of a world archaeology, and that its back issues are second to none as a record of the development of our discipline. Thus, as a closing point, I hope soon to hear a strategy to make those back issues available electronically and globally (perhaps, for example, through JSTOR, where they would join the back issues of *American Antiquity*, *World Archaeology* and *Current Anthropology*, to name a few). We on this side of the Atlantic hold this up to you as a challenge for the next few years, and at the same time we humbly take from you many lessons: archaeologists can make themselves understood without turgid, jargon-laden prose; technical points that are worth expressing can be articulated clearly; and finally, even editors are allowed to be witty, though few will rise to the standards set over the years by the editors of ANTIQUITY.

**References**


BINFORD, L.R. 1962. Archaeology as anthropology, *American Antiquity* 28: 217–25.

1965. Archaeological systematics and the study of culture process, *American Antiquity* 31: 203–10.

CLARKE, D. 1973. Archaeology: the loss of innocence, *Antiquity* 47: 6–18.

CHRISTIE, A. 1951. *They came to Baghdad*. London: Collins.

EERKENS, J. 2002. Trends in the geographic focus of American archaeology: an analysis of *American Antiquity* articles and Ph.D dissertations. Manuscript in possession of author.

FUSTEL DE COULANGES, N.D. 1980. *The ancient city: a study on the religion, laws, and institutions of Greece and Rome.* (Originally published 1864 as *La cité antique.*) Baltimore (MD): Johns Hopkins University Press.

HUTSON, S.R. 2001. Synergy through disunity, science as social practice: comments on VanPool and VanPool, *American Antiquity* 66: 349–60.

LEHNER, P. & A. JULEN. 1991. A man's bones with 16th-century weapons and coins in a glacier near Zermatt, Switzerland, *Antiquity* 65: 269–73.

PYM, B. 1955. *Less than angels*. London: Jonathan Cape.

VAN DER LEEUW, S. & C.L. REDMAN. 2002. Placing archaeology at the center of socio-natural studies, *American Antiquity* 67: 597–605.


# ANTIQUITY at 75


## BRIAN FAGAN*


I have been a reader of ANTIQUITY since I was an undergraduate, more years ago than I care to contemplate. It occupies a special place in my heart. The journal's pages have kept me in touch with a wider archaeological world when camped in Central Africa, at sea in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and on Alaska's North Slope — to mention only a few locations where it has reached me. Life without it is unthinkable. I rejoice at its 75th birthday and at the chance to offer a few thoughts on the subject.

The papers in this special section are a paean of praise for ANTIQUITY, for the vision of its founder and the acumen of the editors who succeeded him. This is as it should be for we are, after all, entitled to a modicum of self-analysis and self-congratulation on this auspicious occasion. After all, how many people would have predicted that Crawford's bold enterprise would have endured for 75 years, three-quarters of a century ago?

The same distinguished contributors have also analysed the content of the journal from diverse perspectives, among them American archaeology, method and theory, and British and European prehistory. But there has been surprisingly little talk of what lies ahead. Surely the future of ANTIQUITY is far more important than its past! I believe that our revered journal stands at an important crossroads on its 75th birthday.


* Department of Archaeology, University of California, Santa Barbara CA 93106, USA.



ANTIQUITY 76 (2002): 1123–5



https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00092024 Published online by Cambridge University Press