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  The Social Dynamics of Pottery Style in the Early Puebloan Southwest by Michelle Hegmon
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important is the recurrent underestimation by bureaucracies of the stability and capabilities of indigenous locally managed irrigation (what Sheridan called “the persistent failure of governments to recognize the enduring strengths of smallholder agriculture,” p. 34), and the generally disastrous results of bureaucratic meddling.

Canals and Communities is an example of some of the best contemporary work in human ecology, examining how cultural institutions adapt to the details of production within the framework of the local and supralocal political economy. The book highlights both the resilience and fragility of indigenous irrigation systems. It rightly pursues these issues across several disciplinary boundaries, and it is a book that I would recommend to more than a few geographers, economists, and cultural anthropologists. However, while much of the book’s material is relevant to archaeology—indeed, several chapters are by archaeologists—coverage of archaeological cases is quite limited.


Reviewed by María Nieves Zedeño, University of Arizona.

The reference list of over 180 entries that culminates Michelle Hegmon’s book illustrates anthropology’s extraordinary preoccupation with the interpretation of style in material culture, particularly in the last 30 years. This book offers a comprehensive overview of theoretical and methodological approaches to style, ranging from culture history to postprocessual studies of material culture.

Emerging from a rich tradition of ceramic design studies in the American Southwest, Hegmon steps beyond the passive interpretation of stylistic patterning and into a consideration of style as active mediator of social relations. Hegmon begins by asking the question, Why did people in the past devote so much effort to the elaboration of their things? The answer presupposes that material culture style is “meaningfully constituted and [has] a role in society and social relations” (p. 1). From this perspective, the author defines style as “a way of doing something . . . that involves a choice” and sets forth a theoretical “middle ground” in which both contextual and cross-cultural principles ruling the generation of stylistic variability may be found (p. 6). Explicitly eclectic, Hegmon promises a marriage of processual and postprocessual archaeologies and applies the resulting framework to ninth-century decorated ceramics from northern Arizona and southwest Colorado. The case study focuses on documenting the correlation between changes in style and changes in social dynamics during the Pueblo I period in the northern Southwest (p. 5).

Hegmon elaborates her definition of style in chapter 2, examining in detail various theories about style and concluding with a discussion on how to operationalize the study of active style in archaeology. Two concepts are introduced, structure and difference, which are essential for characterizing rules and choices, respectively. In chapter 3, the author discusses the changing role of style among mobile hunter-foragers and sedentary horticulturists, providing a cross-cultural background for the case study. The developmental history of ninth-century communities in Black Mesa, Arizona, and Dolores, Colorado, is synthesized in chapter 4. These early horticultural communities, with contrasting settlement patterns, demography, and architecture, constitute promising contexts for investigating the role of ceramic styles in mediating intensive vs. extensive social networks. Central to Hegmon’s argument is the expectation that stylistic diversity and differentiation among competing social groups would be more pronounced at Dolores, where aggregated settlements with well-defined architectural units and large-scale integrative facilities developed in the early A.D. 800s, than at Black Mesa, where stylistic similarity would have expressed solidarity and maintained links among smaller, more mobile social groups. Moreover, social units at Dolores may have asserted their identity by displaying highly visible decorated ceramics when participating in public activities (p. 90).

Hegmon develops her analysis in four chapters. Chapter 5 explains sampling strategies and describes the primary or control database and the secondary database. A very small primary sample reflects the paucity of decorated pottery in some assemblages included in the study (Table 6.3). Chapter 6 documents ceramic manufacture and circulation. In both areas, most white ware vessels were made by household potters at almost every settlement, while few of them circulated outside the production loci. Against a background of widely shared technological practices in each region, the author defines structure and difference in ceramic styles. Chapter 7 presents an excellent comparative analysis of design structure of Kana-a Black-on-white vessels from Black Mesa and Piedra Black-on-white vessels from Dolores. Chapter 8 introduces the statistical analysis of design attributes for each pottery type, examining both diversity between, and differentiation within, regional assemblages. The concluding chapter summarizes implications and relevance of the research.
Hegmon succeeds in confirming the correlation of diversity and structural variability in design styles with differences in community dynamics for each study area. Her attribute analysis demonstrates how swiftly style may change within a potter’s lifetime. Besides providing chronological refinement and defining gross patterns of stylistic variability in Mesa Verde, the results presented in chapter 8 disappoint, failing to reveal fine-grained intraregional stylistic differentiation, which the reader is led to expect throughout the book (compare pp. 5, 90, 193, 223, 231). Nonetheless, the author offers plausible alternatives for correlating the “somewhat problematic” lack of stylistic differentiation and decreased diversity in the Dolores assemblages dating to the occupation peak with specific community developments (p. 241). Emphasis on contextual interpretation is the greatest strength of her final discussion.

As a whole, the study does not provide archaeological correlates linking meaning and role to observed stylistic variability. Thus, the reader is left unconvincing, wondering whether to attribute the lack of fit with the model to the size and characteristics of the sample, the limited potential of the case study—short-lived early horticultural communities—for fulfilling all of the author’s expectations, or the incompatibility between concepts and methods framing the research. This weakness is endemic to most attempts at operationalizing the analysis of active style in prehistory and calls into question the ability of existing frameworks to provide information beyond that already known. It further underscores the need to develop alternative principles that could link archaeological variation to behaviors guiding the generation and use of material culture style and to build strong analytical cases for refining such principles.

Shortcomings notwithstanding, this book constitutes a commendable effort to integrate conceptual frameworks, an example of thorough ceramic analysis, and a compelling invitation to overcome narrow interpretations of style in archaeology. An index should be added to future editions.

Bandelier: The Life and Times of Adolf Bandelier. CHARLES H. LANGE and CARROLL L. RILEY. 1996. University of Utah Press, Salt Lake City. xiii + 263 pp., maps, photos, illustrations, appendix, sources, index. $34.95 (cloth).

Reviewed by James E. Snead, American Museum of Natural History.

Continuing their decades-long involvement with the legacy of pioneering anthropologist Adolf Bandelier, Charles Lange and Carroll Riley present the first book-length biography of Bandelier to appear in English. They thus provide a companion to their four-volume set of Bandelier’s southwestern journals edited together with Elizabeth M. Lange. The emphasis in the biography is more popular than academic, laudably so, since the interested public has limited access to the more technical studies of aspects of Bandelier’s career, which have been available to date.

Assessing the impact of Adolf Bandelier on the development of American anthropology presents a considerable challenge. His scholarly career, extending from the mid-1870s through 1914, witnessed the evolution of anthropology from a preoccupation of explorers and dilettantes into an institutionalized academic discipline. In an era of evolving professionalism, however, Bandelier was the quintessential itinerant scholar. While sponsored by many of the nascent museums and foundations that had begun to support anthropological research, he never achieved a lasting or influential position of his own.

Bandelier’s intellectual flexibility was thus in keeping with the times and his circumstances. An early enthusiasm for the social evolutionary theory of his mentor, Lewis Henry Morgan, evolved into relatively atheoretical ethnography and archaeology in his southwestern explorations. Similar transformations accompanied his subsequent work in Peru and Bolivia, amassing collections that now form the core of the Andean holdings at the American Museum of Natural History, and later translating colonial Spanish documents, which was the focus of Bandelier’s last productive period. Publication of The Delight Makers, his novel of southwestern prehistoric life, exemplifies yet other interests. While such breadth of scholarship was a significant achievement, it also meant the dilution of his impact on anthropology as a whole. With few common themes or theoretical precepts, the parts of Bandelier’s scholarly legacy may be of greater value than their sum.

Paradoxically, Bandelier’s documentation of the social and intellectual circumstances in which he functioned may be his greatest contributions to scholarship. An immigrant, largely self-taught, and a resident for most of his life of places far from the academic centers of the country, Bandelier was an outsider both in his work with indigenous peoples and within the small world of American scholarship in the Gilded Age. His journals and letters provide illustrations of the minutiae of daily life, the web of patronage through which research was conducted, and the process of fieldwork at a time when the conventions of anthropological practice were still being formulated. In the present day, when these conventions are being reexamined, Bandelier’s contribution has great value.

Lange and Riley focus their biography on