

The ability to multi-task is arguably a human capability, unmatched in the non-human realm. While in many of our previous weeks archaeologists have often focused on explaining the human-technology relationship as a one way road or a hierarchical series of steps, the readings from this week attempt to illustrate how humans dabbled with several parts of technology at once. At a general level these readings seemingly attempt to break away from our present day paradigms of capitalist economies and fractured social classes. Arguably, the human past, up until the Industrial Revolution, was quite dependent on not only local and regional economies, but also required a substantial deal of multi-tasking to relieve and meet with demand. In this short paper I will focus primarily on two of this week's readings, both dealing with South American contexts and problems.

The chapter by Shimada and Wagner entitled *A holistic approach to pre-hispanic craft production* is supposedly an attempt to break away from the common tendencies of technology in archaeology. In particular, their holistic approach claims to better illustrate craft production and associated technology. Rightfully so, the authors state that craft production and products played roles across many facets of human existence. In the pre-industrial world, technology and production was especially prone to criss-crossing the boundaries of production, rituals and the ideological. Therefore, the appeal towards craft production is that it promises to reveal effectively past lifeways. Yet, such archaeological studies have clearly either lost their innocence or quite the contrary are naively stuck in a perpetual 'Peter Pan' type of innocence. Amongst the latter, the lurking shadow of ethnoarchaeology, and ethnography at large, has encouraged the disparate, random transposition of so-called 'evidence' onto the archaeological record. While Shimada and Wagner do not quite draw a line in the sand as to how such ethnographic evidence should be introduced into archaeological studies, I feel that their supposed limited use of ethnographic evidence still falls in the same analogical traps. While perhaps places such as the pre-

hispanic Americas have the benefit of later textual observations, I wonder as to why we still have to argue about the serious pitfalls presented by ethnography, analogical reasoning and such biased archaeology. Aside from this hiccup, Shimada and Wagner rightfully observed that studies dealing with production have often times stopped short of integrating social and technological components. Indeed, often times, excavations dealing with such situations often resort to a 'laundry list' description of items that we expect, what I would call 'the usual suspects' (ex: pebbles-cores-debitage, vats-scraping implements-hide treatment). Furthermore, the authors believe that the comprehension of craft production can not simply rely on an analysis of finished products, particularly due to the restrictive and partial view such assemblages offer the archaeologist. Such mode of interpretation, as common as it is in the archaeological tradition, I believe should be rather re-negotiated to tackle the understanding and knowledge of the human-material relation, as evidenced by the production process. In contrast, the authors' holistic approach encompasses the entire spectrum of technology and organizational process, which then leads to a comprehension of a wide array of socially inclined perspectives. In my opinion, while the author's four part components is legitimate (and perhaps overly socially focused), I find benefit in their 2nd component. This component deals with the focused and contextualized excavation of production sites to better our comprehension of such spaces.

In his chapter on *Household multicrafting specialization at 9N8, Patio H, Copan* Widmer works on the component observed above. This case study situated in the Classical Maya region has the best of both worlds, elaborate rituals and the proof for it. Despite such situational advantages the author laments that in the past few loci of activity production have been properly documented in the Maya region. Interestingly, raw materials such as marine shells and greenstone were integrated within multiple spheres of production and use which means that even debitage was often recycled and combined to other elements, for example mosaics. If we combine this recycling activity, to the fact that production areas located in residential structures are often swept clean, then archaeologists are faced with a rather

limited part of the wider production spectrum. Also, several archaeologists seem to compulsively obsess over finished artefacts. It is particularly sad to me that, to this day, many in our field (Peter Pan type archaeologists) actually consider such finalized products as amenable to extracting productional information from such items. Returning to Copan, the investigators were particularly lucky in applying their holistic approach to an ideal situation, that is a structure with evidence of production areas that collapsed and left evidence of a situation 'frozen in time'. Since the inhabitants did not have time to clear out the structures, archaeologists were able to locate numerous production areas that overlapped or were localized to particular parts of structures. Through such information, Widmer illustrates how archaeologists can distinguish between not only the number of human agents involved but also the overlapping of numerous productional tasks. Returning to the issue of multi-tasking, the concentrated and overlapping lapidary activity at Copan is remarkable, and highlights how elites not only participated in producing socially relevant goods, but also how production was limited in its output flow and intent. Admittedly, this type of micro-mapping of domestic and productional situations appeals highly to me but I detect unsatisfying elements in this work that are worth going over quickly. The quintessential element of such studies clearly beckons the appropriate representation of remains recovered. Clearly, line drawings and contour maps of such archaeological scenarios do not do justice to such remains and the uses of geospatial technology is an imperative that cannot be avoided, especially nowadays. Secondly, the overlapping nature of such remains is such as to require an appropriate consideration regarding human agents and movement with such structures. While the author's attempt at justifying room use through the presence or absence of windows is logical, it would have been probably more holistic of the author to investigate why such far-flung parts of the structure complexes were earmarked as production areas. Finally, this work possibly hits a false step when iconographic data is introduced to the mix. While my limited knowledge of Maya archaeology seems to suggest the complexity of rituals, Widmer's argument for productional ritual processes at Copan is unsatisfying. Our archaeological obsession with rituals seems to ignore the wide encompassing nature

of production in pre-industrial societies. While I am not competent to criticize the excavator's interpretations at Copan, it seems ludicrous to me that such a holistic approach has to default to the duality of secular and sacred elite manufacture. My suggestion to such an author is to find sometime in his busy life to kneel down and work on such materials with others. Indeed, sometimes such productional activity can serve dual purposes at once: manufacture and also pleasure! After all is that not the essence of multi-tasking in human communities?

Finally, the 'beast of many names' I allude to in my title refers to the term 'holistic approaches'. It is becoming increasingly aware to me that archaeologists are incapable of keeping their terms standardized. The so-called holistic approaches stinks a lot like contextual archaeology, as proposed by Ian Hodder. While the two parties would probably enjoy nothing better than arguing semantics and splitting hairs as to why their individual approaches are better than their counterparts, I find myself increasingly strained with taking seriously such personalities. Also, the fact that archaeological traditions in many parts of the world still do not recover contextualized data is equally baffling and mind-numbingly painful. Nevertheless, the usefulness of holistic/contextual approaches is quite clearly illustrated by its unbiased high resolution recovery methods which in turn better our comprehension of overlapping spaces and the presence of multi-tasking in pre-capitalist societies.