Religion, as commonly understood, is a complex set of esoteric beliefs, origin myths, and doctrines. Given the almost exclusive reality of religion in the ideological realms, archaeology, with its focus upon the material aspects of human existence, is a particularly inappropriate method for its study. This conference is a rejection of this view. The goal of the conference is to compare divergent strategies employed in the archaeological investigation of religion. While necessarily including discussions of different theoretical understandings of religion, the conference is, at its heart, methodological. How do we, as archaeologists, employ the material remains of past societies to construct informed understandings of religion and ritual? Scattered throughout the archaeological literature are a variety of strategies intended to address this question. In many cases, they are highly contextual, read only by those who study the same region. In this conference I will bring together archaeologists from widely divergent geographic contexts in order to promote cross-fertilization between the studies of religion in different regions.

Last year two conferences addressed the archaeology of religion. The first was held at the Cotsen Institute at UCLA in January, 2004 (The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual: organized by Evangelos Kyriakidis). The second took place at the SAA's in Montreal in April 2004 (Faith in the Past: organized by David Whitley). As a participant in both, I came away excited by the potential of an archaeology of religion, but frustrated with the lack of any clear methodologies for its study. In both cases the papers tended to argue—in opposition to some of the proponents of New Archaeology—that religion was a valid subject for archaeological inquiry. Other discussions centered on the need for a clear definition of religion or, alternatively, the impossibility of ever arriving at such a definition. In short, both conferences tended to focus on larger theoretical issues at the expense of discussions of how specific religious practices in past societies could be best investigated.

In contrast, the proposed conference will focus on specific methodologies used by archaeologists from a variety of geographic areas to investigate specific religious practices in the past. I will not provide definitions of religion and ritual that other conference members will be expected to address. I will not identify particular approaches that I believe show the greatest potential for future development. Rather, participants will be given relatively free reign on subject-matter and approach. The only stipulation will be that the papers address the methods used to interpret the material remains of religion and ritual in any context the participants see fit. Each session will include lengthy discussion time to allow for the further investigation of these methods, and their potential usefulness in others' research.

Based upon my experiences at previous conferences, I have decided not to include discussants with a background in cultural anthropology or religious studies. Both disciplines have a long history of insightful research on religion. In the process they have created strongly nuanced and intricate theoretical understandings of the subject. However, their approaches tend to focus exclusively on symbolic and ideological perspectives on religion. While these perspectives are critical for the study of religion, the presence of these outside experts at previous conferences tended to promote more theoretical and definitional discussions. Simply put, the archaeologists at the conferences seemed to spend significant attention to justifying the value of a materially based approach for the benefit of the outside experts—skipping how archaeologists might examine ancient religions in any detail. The methodological focus of this conference is intended to overcome this problem.

Given the methodological focus of the conference, papers will be organized under loose groupings based upon research strategy rather than geographic location. For the purposes of the
conference, I have identified five primary approaches to the archaeological study of religion. These are ethnohistory and history, ethnoarchaeology, sacred architecture, sacred landscape, and iconography. In practice, most archaeologists studying religion combine multiple approaches in their research. For example, in my own research I employ Buddhist historical sources to assist in my investigation of landscape and architecture (Fogelin 2004, 2003, in press a, b, c). Nevertheless, by arranging the conference by approach rather than region, I hope to foster a focus upon the methods for investigating religion rather than studies of comparative religion.

Ethnohistory and History

Archaeological studies of religion have long employed historical and ethnohistorical sources. For studies of early Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other religions with large corpuses of literary sources, texts have often determined the nature and form of archaeological research (see Insoll ed. 2001). Archaeological remains were often inappropriately identified based upon expectations derived from historical sources. In many cases archaeology served only to provide names and locations for textually documented cities and events. In recent years, many archaeologists have challenged these uncritical uses of historical and ethnohistorical sources (e.g., Levy ed. 1995; Insoll ed. 2001). Despite this, these sources still remain important for the study of early religion. Numerous scholars, ranging from those studying the origins of modern world religions to those studying more locally prominent religious traditions are using historical and ethnohistorical sources in conjunction with archaeological investigations. Given the material focus of the conference, I will not invite participants who focus solely upon historic or ethnohistoric sources. However, as will be clear below, numerous participants employ these sources in their investigations of the material remains of religion and ritual. Together, these should provide examples of the productive interplay of archaeological, historical, and ethnohistorical research.

Sacred Architecture

Modern studies of sacred architecture follow two general strategies. The first focuses upon the symbolic or cosmological aspects of architectural layout and design. For example, studies of Maya civic/ceremonial architecture have increasingly identified the relationships between the pyramids, courts, and crypts with sacred mountains, caves, and springs (see Brady and Ashmore 1999). Through studies of architecture, iconography, and glyphs, archaeologists are identifying the cosmological symbolism instantiated in Mayan architecture. Underlying these studies is the presumption that manifestations of cosmological principles in architecture condition the beliefs of an individual who enters the space.

In recent years, the experiential aspects of sacred architecture have become an increasing focus of archaeological inquiry (e.g., Bradley 1998; Moore 1996; see also Tilley 1994). These studies emphasize patterns of visibility, sensory experiences, movement, and access in particular architectural forms. A valuable example is Moore's (1996) study of distance and elevation on the visual perception of ritual action in pyramid complexes in Coastal Peru. He suggests that the form of ritual practiced in large pyramid complexes could be limited by the spectators' ability to perceive ritual at a distance. For example, a figure standing atop a large pyramid would have an extremely difficult time being seen and heard. Ritual in these contexts would most likely involve large movements with little emphasis on speech.

Sacred Landscape

Recent trends in the archaeological study of landscape mirror many of the concerns that have developed in the study of architecture. This is most evident in the developing interest in the way that people perceive, and move through, a landscape. Given the recent emphasis on ideology in archaeology, it is not surprising that a great deal of attention has been placed on the study of sacred landscapes (see Bradley 2000; Carmichael et al. eds. 1994; Ashmore and Knapp eds. 1999; Tilley 1994). In some cases archaeologists have analyzed the spatial distributions of archaeological sites to investigate broader landscape issues (see Alcock 1993; Bradley 2000). Alternatively, archaeologists
have employed iconographic and historical sources to assist in interpreting material remains (e.g., Cosgrove 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels eds. 1988). An example of the latter approach is Gina Barnes' study of Buddhist landscapes of East Asia (Barnes 1999). Through analyses of architecture, mandalas (artistic representations of Buddhist cosmology), and ceremonial cups depicting mountains, Barnes identifies a continuity in earlier Chinese conceptions of sacred mountains and caves in the generalized landscape of later East Asian Buddhism.

Landscape approaches have also been employed in contexts lacking historic or ethnohistoric sources (see Bradley 2000; Barrett 1999). Richard Bradley analyzes site location, patterns of access, and patterns of visibility of votive deposits, rock art, production sites, and monuments to address the landscapes of prehistoric Europe. For Bradley, the interpretation of a particular landscape is the result of the interpretation of specific archaeological remains towards an understanding of those areas of a landscape where remains are not found. In essence, this is no different from the approach used in archaeology more generally, where material remains are used to infer human actions and cultural patterns.

**Iconography**

As should be clear from the discussions above, studies of iconography are integral to many studies of landscape and architecture. However, in those cases iconography is used to infer the function or meaning of other material remains. Numerous studies of iconography do not employ a landscape or architectural approach. These include studies of rock art and the investigation of iconographic elements on a variety of portable objects. These studies are primarily concerned with the investigation of the contexts in which different iconographic elements were located, and the manner in which the elements were employed. An example of this can be seen in work of Kelley Hays-Gilpin and Jane Hill (1999). Building from Hill's ethnohistoric studies of flower symbolism and cosmological conception of a "Flower World" in the Southwest United States, Hays-Gilpin carefully analyzed the geographic, temporal, and contextual location of flower motifs across multiple media (e.g., ceramics, murals, pottery). The spiritual "Flower World" identified by Hill is shown by Hays-Gilpin to have a limited temporal and geographic distribution. Further, she argues, the use of flower symbolism in these limited contexts is the product of the male appropriation of typically female symbolism. Hill and Hays-Gilpin's analyses illustrate an archaeological approach to the study of iconography that emphasizes context and material associations. Other archaeologists working on iconography invited to the conference will be similarly grounded.

**Ethnoarchaeology**

A final approach I hope to include in the conference is ethnoarchaeology. In most anthropological studies of contemporary religion, the material aspects of religion have been largely ignored. Given this, ethnoarchaeological studies could greatly help in identifying the interplay of architecture, offerings, and other material traces with ritual and religious practice. While many archaeologists have conducted ethnoarchaeological research on issues concerning religion, most focus on issues regarding repatriation and land claims of indigenous people (see Carmichael et al. 1994). While important and valuable, this research does not fit into the overall goals of the conference. In contrast I will invite participants whose research focuses upon the role of material culture in religion and ritual more generally (e.g., Insoll 2004; Jordan 2003).

**Conference Details**

Below I provide a list of archaeologists I plan to invite. While I do not expect that all will be able to participate, this list serves as an example of the types of people I hope will attend. The complete conference will include roughly 20 participants. Given that archaeologists who study religion often combine multiple approaches, I cannot determine at this time in which session each will be placed. This will only be possible once I have more formally contacted potential participants and they have provided abstracts of their papers.
Lars Fogelin: Methodologies for the Archaeological Investigation of Religion and Ritual

*Jane Buikstra (Midwest US/South America)  Thomas Levy (Middle East)
*Richard Bradley (Europe)  *Patricia McAnany (Maya)
Elizabeth Brumfiel (Mesoamerica)  Jerry D. Moore (South America)
Severon Fowles (SW United States)  Liv Nilsson-Stutz (Northern Europe)
*Kelly Hays-Gilpin (Southwest US)  Ellen Morris (Egypt)
Meghan Howey (Midwest US)  James L. Pearson (Western US)
Timothy Insoll (Sub-Saharan Africa)  Julie Solometo (Southwest US)
Peter Jordon (Siberia)  Larry Coben (South America)
*Vernon J. Knight (Southeast US)  David Whitley (Southwest US)
Evangelos Kyriakidis (Greece)

Note: 2 years ago I proposed a similar conference for the CAI. At that time I asked several senior archaeologists if they would be interested in participating. I have marked those who I contacted and responded positively with an *. Based upon the comments provided by Heather Lapham, I have reduced the number of European archaeologists to two. I have also reduced the number of senior scholars and added several junior and mid-career archaeologists. If selected to be the CAI visiting scholar for 2005-6, I intend to identify more junior and mid-career people to invite to the conference.

In keeping with the collaborative tone of the conference, I will include extensive discussion time in each session. Papers will be presented over two days, with one longer paper and a roundtable discussion on the first night. Throughout the conference I will organize lunches and dinners to allow participants to continue their discussions.

Conference Volume

Like the conference, the conference volume will be organized by theme rather than geographic area. Upon completion of the conference, participants will be given two months to submit a manuscript. All will be encouraged to update and expand their papers based upon ideas developed at the conference. I will provide a general introduction for the volume. I will ask one or two of the conference participants to write synthetic chapters to conclude it. As with the conference, the goal of the volume will be to present a variety of methodologies and examples for the archaeological study of religion. It is intended as a source for ideas for archaeologists interested in initiating their own investigations of religion and ritual.

Both of the previous conferences on the archaeology of religion will be published as edited volumes in the next year or two. Together they will serve to announce a newfound interest in the archaeology of religion, justify its investigation in the face of traditional antipathy, and provide some theoretical foundations for its study. For the most part, these volumes will not provide methodological tools or examples for archaeologists to employ in their own research. As with the conference in general, the conference volume is intended to fill this gap.

Conclusion

With the greater attention that archaeologists have given ideology in recent years, increasing numbers of archaeologists are beginning to address religion and ritual. This conference will provide a venue to explore different strategies for the archaeological investigation of the material traces of religion and ritual. The primary goal of the conference is to bring together archaeologists studying religion in order to promote a dialogue on methodology. The archaeological study of religion and ritual has, until now, been based within particular geographic contexts. It is time to bring archaeologists together in order to formulate robust methods to effectively study ancient religions.
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