

EDITOR'S CORNER

A number of changes have taken place recently in the editorial offices of *Latin American Antiquity*. Some of them will have little impact on the pages of the journal, but others soon will be seen.

First, the editorial office has just moved from the University of Florida to Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, a move occasioned by my accepting a position in the department of anthropology at that institution. While my new editorial assistant has not yet taken up the duties of office, I would like to take this opportunity to thank James Cusick, my assistant for the last two years at Florida, who handled the diverse tasks with great skill and humor.

Second, members of the Board of Editors and the Editorial Advisory Committee of *LAA* met briefly during the Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in New Orleans and agreed that it is time to begin a reviews and book notes section in the journal. Accordingly, *Latin American Antiquity* will begin publishing this section starting with Vol. 3, No. 1 (March 1992). Dr. Charles Stanish, an Andeanist at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, has agreed to serve as associate editor for reviews and book notes.

Third, we are pleased to welcome Dr. Jeremy A. Sabloff, immediate past president of the Society for American Archaeology, to the *LAA* Editorial Advisory Committee. Dr. Sabloff, a distinguished Mayanist at the University of Pittsburgh, is also a former editor of *American Antiquity*.

Fourth, an announcement has recently appeared in the pages of the *SAA Bulletin* as well as in *American Antiquity* and *Latin American Antiquity* calling for applications for the position of editor of *Latin American Antiquity*. Both of the Society's journals are moving to a new procedure that calls for the SAA Executive Board to appoint (rather than the membership to elect) editors from a pool of applicants. (A similar procedure was recently employed by the American Anthropological Association in selecting a new editor for *American Anthropologist*.) Applications are due by October of 1991, and the new editor of *LAA* will be appointed by May of 1992; this will begin a transitional year for transferring the editorial activities, with the office of the new editor fully operational by May of 1993.

Finally, one of the goals that Jeff Reid, Terry Majewski, and I have shared over the last two years is that of revising the style guide for *American Antiquity*, which, of course, also is used for *Latin American Antiquity*. With the start-up of this new journal, plus the transition to electronic publishing (which has been fairly successfully accomplished now), the need for revising and updating the 1983 style guide is clearly in order. The task has been long and slow, but it is nearing completion, and should be available within the next few months.

Meanwhile, I continue to be fascinated by the details of manuscript flow into and out of the editorial office. This movement is conditioned in part by factors related to the start-up of a new journal, but it also reflects the scholarly process of publishing and peer review, and at the same time provides a not-so-subtle commentary on the enterprise of archaeology in Latin America.

As of this writing (late July, 1991), a total of 135 manuscripts has been submitted since the journal began receiving papers in May of 1989; of these 135, unfortunately only 16 (11.8 percent) have been submitted in Spanish. Fifteen of these 135 papers are currently out for peer review; 29 of the remaining 120 (or 24.1 percent) have been published, 4 in Spanish. There are several ways to look at the paths of these papers as they moved through this office.

The simplest is from the point of view of editorial decisions made about their disposition. My records show that of the 120 reviewed manuscripts, 26 (21.7 percent) were accepted with minor

revision, while 49 (40.8) percent were sent back to be revised and resubmitted for re-review. Another 45 (37.5 percent) were either rejected after review, returned (without review) as inappropriate for *Latin American Antiquity*, or withdrawn by the authors at some point.

Another way to look at manuscript movement is from the point of view of what happened after those editorial decisions were made. Of the papers that were not initially rejected or are currently out for review, 31 have been published or are in press, 10 have been accepted but have not yet been returned in final form, and 32 are still out, presumably undergoing the requested revision for resubmission. These numbers are telling. Forty-two manuscripts are back in the hands of authors for some degree of revision, ranging from minor to major, and some of these papers have been languishing there for months!

It is worth noting that authors who follow the reviewers' and my own suggestions for revising their manuscripts have tremendously high chances of getting their papers published. Of the 49 papers sent back with a request for substantial revisions, 15 have been subsequently resubmitted and accepted, while only 2 have been rejected. Another 32 articles—potentially publishable in *Latin American Antiquity*—are still out there somewhere, perhaps long since submitted to other journals with different editorial standards, or perhaps lurking in the dreaded “to do” pile on the author's desk. I previously made this point concerning the need for timely revisions in an earlier Editor's Corner (*Latin American Antiquity* 1:187), and it bears repeating: *A request for revisions is not a rejection*, but rather a well-intentioned effort to structure a contribution so that its significance will be appreciated by as broad a Latin Americanist audience as possible. Writing for an international journal is different from writing for a regional one.

Another useful way of looking at the flow of manuscripts into the editorial office of a new journal publishing on the prehistory of such a large area as Latin America is to consider the geographical regions represented by the submitted papers. Of the total of 135 papers submitted, 78 (57.7 percent) treated mesoamerican subject matter; of these, 31 focused on the Lowland Maya. Fifty-one manuscripts (37.7 percent) addressed topics relating to South American prehistory, and while the majority focused on the Peruvian Andes, other areas, particularly Ecuador (10 papers) and the “Southern Cone” (Chile and Argentina, 11 papers) are seeing increasing representation. It is particularly gratifying that many of these latter articles are submitted in Spanish. Somewhat surprisingly, this regional pattern is not closely paralleled in the 29 already published papers, as the mesoamerican–South American geographic distribution is nearly even: 13 (44.8 percent) papers on Mesoamerica (8 of them Maya) and 14 (48.3 percent) on South America (10 on the Andes).

The topics of the submitted articles—together with reviewers' reactions to them—provide their own insights. One such insight suggests a thriving materialist streak among Latin American archaeologists, or at least those involved with *Latin American Antiquity*. In general the submitted articles reflect the broad range of subjects addressed by researchers in the field. Some time ago, however, I was struck by the fact that the journal not only receives large numbers of manuscripts treating what I have come to call “The Big Three”—agriculture, subsistence, and settlement patterns—but perhaps more significantly also publishes large numbers of them. Of the 120 reviewed manuscripts, 23 (19.1 percent) are directed toward some aspect of agriculture/subsistence/settlement, and of these, 10 have been published (representing 34.5 percent of the 29 already published articles). “Other” topics account for 97 (80.8 percent) of the submitted articles and 19 (65.5 percent) of the published articles. This in itself is not disproportionate, until one considers that 43.5 percent (10 of 23) of the submitted articles on “The Big Three” have been published, but only 19.6 percent (19 of 97 submitted articles) treating other topics have been accepted and published.

My assessment of this is that there seems to be considerable consensus among reviewers as to what constitutes good research, good data, and good reporting on issues relating to prehistoric agriculture, subsistence, and settlement patterns. Consequently these papers get strong reviews, and it is relatively easy for me to accept them for publication. “Other” topics—including artifacts, architecture, trade, iconography, etc.—stimulate more disagreement among reviewers, perhaps because they are a good deal less straightforward in interpretation and more nuanced in the structure of their arguments. In any case, lest *Latin American Antiquity* become the “Latin American Journal of Settlement and Agriculture,” I have provided considerable encouragement to authors whose

contributions have addressed these subjects and data sets, in order that their research perspectives, however controversial, also can be represented fairly in the journal.

Manuscript submissions also show clearly that “big-site” archaeology is alive and well in Latin America. Given where the major projects have been run in the last few years, it is not at all surprising that six submissions (two published) have treated the site of Copán (Honduras) alone, and five (two published) focused on Tiwanaku (Bolivia). If future issues of *Latin American Antiquity* seem to overemphasize Copán and Tiwanaku, it is not a selective editorial bias. Rather, considerable work has been and is being done at these two important sites, and the investigators are actively disseminating their findings to a broad international readership. Moreover, this work—because of new data and new interpretations—is stimulating a great deal of discussion and debate, and it is a privilege to have the opportunity to publish these fresh ideas on these pages.

Prudence M. Rice
Editor