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March 7, 1913–April 28, 2002

BY EVON Z. VOGT, JR.

GORDON RANDOLPH WILLEY, who died of heart failure at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on April 28, 2002, in his eighty-ninth year, was universally recognized as one of the premier American anthropologists of the twentieth century. His pivotal contributions to science during his long productive life included excavations of archaeological sites in the southeastern United States, Peru, Panama, Belize, Guatemala, and Honduras; detailed ceramic studies that provided data on cultural change in prehistoric societies through time and through space; syntheses of common cultural themes in Mesoamerica and South America; and especially his creation of the field of "settlement pattern studies," an extraordinary theoretical and methodological advance that he pioneered in the Viru Valley of Peru in a single season, in 1946 (Fash, in press).

Gordon Willey was born in Chariton, Iowa, on March 7, 1913, the only child of Frank and Agnes (Wilson) Willey. His father was a pharmacist in the small town of Chariton. This fact later became significant for Willey when he learned that the father of Professor Alfred M. Tozzer, his predecessor at Harvard, had also been a pharmacist of middle-class status in the town of Lynn, Massachusetts. It was only after

Professor Tozzer married Margaret Castle from one of the wealthy and famous "five families" of Hawaii that he became a member of the elite in Cambridge.

At the age of 12 Willey moved to Long Beach, California, with his parents. At Woodrow Wilson High School he excelled in academics and in track. He set several school records, including the 60- and 220-yard dashes. Upon graduation from high school the University of Arizona recruited him.

After reading William Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico and Peru* he had decided he wanted to study archaeology. His Latin American history teacher persuaded Willey that he should study under Professor Byron Cummings, the renowned field archaeologist and Southwestern expert at the University of Arizona. Cummings served as dean of the Faculty of Sciences, Arts, and Letters and was an athletic booster. Willey fondly remembers his arrival in Tucson in the autumn of 1931, when he was greeted by the University of Arizona band, which had marched to the station to meet his train. He later recalled this experience as one of the high points of his early career.

At Arizona Willey took many courses with Byron Cummings (he especially enjoyed his courses on Mexico) and with Charles Fairbanks, who taught the courses on dendrochronology (the study of tree rings to date archaeological sites). Cummings took Willey along on field expeditions in the Southwest and to dig at the site of Kinishba in east-central Arizona. After completing his A.B. in anthropology in 1935, he continued on at Arizona, obtaining his M.A. the following year. During this year in graduate school Willey earned extra money by serving as the freshman track coach.

Willey applied to several schools with leading doctoral programs, including ironically Harvard, but he was denied admittance. When Dean Cummings secured a Laboratory

of Anthropology Field Fellowship for him with Arthur Kelly in Macon, Georgia, Willey eagerly accepted and spent the summer of 1936 excavating at the Stubbs mound and learning about the sites of the region, their ceramics, chronology, and other aspects of material culture. He also observed the finer administrative points of running this major excavation funded by the Works Progress Administration. His first publication (1937) was a preliminary effort to establish a dendrochronology for the Southeast. This reflected his work with Fairbanks at Arizona as well as being a harbinger of a career devoted to the mastery of "time-space systematics" (Fash, in press).

It was also in Macon that Willey met, courted, and married in 1938 the charming Katharine Winston Whaley who became his lifelong mate through 63 years of happy marriage until she died in 2001.

Willey continued his WPA work in Louisiana. His first monograph, published in 1940, was the product of collaboration with James Ford and was titled *Crooks Site: A Marksville Period Burial Mound in LaSalle Parish, Louisiana*. The collaboration with Ford also led to an innovative article "An Interpretation of the Prehistory of the Eastern United States" (1941) that became a classic in American archaeology. I recall reading and admiring this article as a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Chicago.

With the continuing support of Dean Cummings and Willey's hard work in the field, Willey was finally admitted in 1939 to the doctoral program at Columbia University. His new teacher and mentor at Columbia was William Duncan Strong, who was noted for introducing his students to the great figures in the field and setting up meetings for discussions of the burning issues of the day.

Willey excavated in Florida in 1940 and published on the area (1949), but he shifted his geographic focus from

the southeastern United States to South America when Duncan Strong invited him to go to Peru in 1941. As a fledgling archaeologist Willey had no intention of pursuing Latin American studies, but in 1940 the energetic Peruvian scholar Julio C. Tello convened a meeting at the American Museum of Natural History in New York to promote Andean research. At this meeting Duncan Strong was persuaded to undertake research in Peru, and he invited Willey to go along.

Strong and Willey excavated at Ancon and Supe, and later at the famous Inca oracle site of Pachacamac. From September 1941 to March 1942 Willey and James Corbett excavated at Chancay, Puerto de Supe, and Ancon. Willey's Ph.D. dissertation was based on the research at Chancay and was titled *Excavations in the Chancay Valley, Peru, 1943* (Moseley, 2003).

Upon completing his Ph.D. in 1942 Willey served a year as an instructor of anthropology at Columbia. The following year he landed a post at the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution, where he worked under the direction of Julian Steward from 1943 to 1950. Much of his time was devoted to working on the monumental *Handbook of South American Indians,* edited by Julian Steward. Willey edited many of the articles as they were received and he wrote many himself.

Willey's next field experience occurred in the Viru Valley in Peru in 1946 as a member of the project team consisting of archaeologists Duncan Strong, Clifford Evans, James Ford, Junius Bird, Donald Collier, and Willey, along with geographer F. W. McBryde and the social anthropologist Alan Holmberg.

While most of the archaeologists continued to engage in the useful data gathering they had followed before, Willey was convinced by Julian Steward to withdraw from the "strati-

graphic race" being run by the others and to undertake a "settlement pattern survey." As Willey later wrote: "I would be doing more for the project, myself, and archaeology, he argued, if I attempted to say something about the forms, settings, and spatial relationships of the sites themselves and what all this might imply about the societies that constructed and lived in them" (1974, p. 153). Willey conducted the settlement survey, which consisted of making maps from aerial photographs, checking these maps in the field with compass and chain measurements, and recording details of the setting and forms of architecture.

At the time of the Viru Valley survey Willey did not appreciate the potential of the settlement pattern survey either as a new viewpoint for archaeologists or as an integrating force for the various other studies that were being conducted in the valley. Willey later reported that

> in that 1946 field season, as I walked over the stony and seemingly endless remains of Viru's prehistoric settlements, I felt I had been misled by Steward and dealt a marginal hand by my colleagues. The latter were getting tangible pottery sequences to delight the heart of any self-respecting archaeologist while I was chasing some kind of wraith called "settlement patterns" that had been dreamed up by a social anthropologist (1974, p. 154).

As it turned out Willey's *Prehistoric Settlement Patterns in the Viru Valley, Peru* (1953) became a classic. It not only recorded the settlement patterns for the whole valley in meticulous detail but it also served as the fulcrum for integrating all the information gathered in the valley. It is clear that this was a monograph that would set new guidelines and standards for future archaeologists and archaeological research programs (Vogt and Leventhal, 1983, p. xvi).

Gordon Willey pursued the settlement pattern approach in archaeological field research shortly after he was appointed to the Bowditch professorship at Harvard in 1950. In 1948

he had been excavating in Panama to investigate the interesting question of pre-Columbian relationships between Peru and Mesoamerica and he had planned to move north gradually, reaching the Maya region from the south. But Professor Alfred Tozzer insisted in 1952 that Willey move his research immediately to the Maya area in accord with the wishes of C. P. Bowditch, who had bequeathed the funds to Harvard for the professorship that bore his name.

Willey followed Tozzer's advice and began his Maya field studies in British Honduras (later Belize) in 1953. He selected an area in the Belize River valley, an area whose river banks had recently been cleared of tropical forest, and promptly set out to plan the Belize Valley settlement pattern project that was "to change the course of Maya archaeology forever" (Fash, in press). It was the first archaeological program to be supported by the National Science Foundation and it produced new insights into Classic Maya settlements and lifeways (Ashmore, 2003). Almost all the Maya archaeological research carried out previously had concentrated on the centers of the ancient sites with their pyramids, temples, and palaces and had ignored the outlying settlements where most of the Maya lived and grew their crops of maize, beans, and squash (1956, 1965). As Fash explains,

> The Belize River Valley work was to leave its mark on Maya archaeology, in a way that very few projects in that part of the New World have, before or since. The settlement pattern focus proved extremely productive, showing that there were densely populated areas even away from the major centers, and leading to examinations of the structure of ancient Maya society (Fash, in press).

The settlement pattern focus had the additional scientific advantage of relating to ethnographic studies of the structure of contemporary Mayan communities and espe-

cially to the analyses of cultural continuities and changes in Mayan culture from the time of the Classic Maya to the present.

Shortly after Willey's arrival at Harvard, I discovered that he and I shared a deep interest in settlement patterns. Because my A.B. at the University of Chicago was in the Department of Geography, I was trained to think of the dispersal of human settlements on the landscape as a productive way of understanding the relationship of culture to the natural environment. Gordon Willey's publications on the Belize Valley project stimulated me to pay close attention to settlement patterns when I began my long-range study of Tzotzil-Maya communities in the highlands of Chiapas.[1] Willey and I also taught courses together (especially "Peoples and Cultures of North and South America") and offered a joint seminar on "The Maya" for many years.

In the spring of 1960 Gordon Willey and I decided to exchange field visits in order to learn more about each other's research operations. Gordon was excavating in Guatemala and I was making an ethnographic study of the Zinacantan in Chiapas. In March I drove our Land Rover to Guatemala City, where I met Gordon. The following day we flew in a small plane to Sayaxche in the Peten and from there traveled by motorboat down the Rio Pasion to the famous Maya site of Altar de Sacrifios, located near the junction of the Rio Pasion and the large Rio Usumacinta. Gordon had been excavating Altar de Sacrificios for a number of years, and I spent a week with him at his wonderful field camp that had been set up by the efficient and congenial field director A. Ledyard Smith.

Each day we visited the archaeological site where a large crew of Guatemalans was excavating this Classic Maya center. Work stopped in the hot late afternoon, and we would go for a swim or take one of the boats and go fishing. At

sundown Ledyard would have one of his men cut a heart of palm for hors d'oeuvres. Then Ledyard would break out a bottle of S. S. Pierce whiskey. He always alternated between scotch and bourbon. When the bottle was empty, it would be time for dinner at the camp. We would then fall into our cots, carefully covered with a mosquito net, for a deep sleep, broken only by the cries of howler monkeys in the tropical night.

It was a wonderful week. I was impressed with the quality of the meticulous archaeological work and by the well-organized daily schedule. However, I found the heat of the tropical selva enervating, and was again glad I was doing my ethnological research in the cool highlands.

After we flew back to Guatemala City, Gordon and I drove to San Cristobal Las Casas for a visit at my field station in the highlands of Chiapas before continuing our joint travels back to Boston. The mayor of San Cristobal, whom I knew well, kindly invited us to stay in his house, so we had comfortable accommodations.

During the visit in Chiapas I drove Gordon to the Tzotzil-Maya-speaking Chamula Center, Zinacantan Center, and the Zinacanteco hamlet of Paste, where I had a field house, to observe our research operations. I recall that Gordon, who was used to the systematic daily schedules of an archaeological field camp, was rather uncomfortable with the constant changes and demands of ethnological research in which one has to adapt to, for example, a sudden evening request (just at dinner time) of an informant for a ride to Zinacantan Center to locate a shaman to perform a curing ceremony for a sick child. Organized daily schedules are simply not possible as they are in archaeological work. Gordon himself recognized this in a recent comment: "I would have made a poor ethnologist. I have often thought archaeologists and ethnologists have gone on their different career ways be-

cause of their different temperaments. . . . Nevertheless, ethnologists and archaeologists can learn from each other."[2]

Willey's later excavations in the Maya region at Altar de Sacrificios (1958-64) and Seibal (1964-68) in the Rio Pasion River valley of Guatemala and in Honduras at Copan (1975-77) resulted in dozens of monographs on subjects ranging from ceramics and artifacts to architecture, epigraphy, and settlement patterns (Fash, in press).

Willey also had a deep interest in archaeological systematics. This interest was best expressed in his highly influential 1958 book with his Peabody Museum colleague Philip Phillips, *Method and Theory in American Archaeology*. This path-breaking volume was "must" reading for a generation of American archaeologists and was recently republished. In the book Willey and Phillips arranged all of New World culture history in time and space in a masterful overview of the field. The book presented a view of American archaeology from the mainstream; it was a rebuttal to the sharp criticisms that had been leveled at Maya studies by Clyde Kluckhohn and later by his student, Walter Taylor, in *A Study of Archeology* (1948) (Leventhal, 2003).

Willey's diverse interests in New World prehistory and his willingness to take on the big issues of the day propelled him into the forefront of American archaeology. One example was his presidential address on "The Early Great Art Styles and the Rise of Pre-Columbian Civilizations" presented at the American Anthropological Association meetings and published in 1962. This search for causality in the ideological realm was a far-sighted attempt at plotting a new course. Marcus (2003) recently reviewed Willey's evaluation of the similarities of Mesoamerican Olmec and Andean Chavin art styles. She concluded that Willey's central question—What role did Olmec and Chavin art play in the rise of civilization?—should be rephrased as: Was the rise of

first-generation states stimulated in some way by the prior appearance of widespread art styles among neighboring chiefdoms? Marcus suggests that much of chiefly art communicated and extolled the attributes that chiefs wanted, such as bravery and success in battle, and close genealogical ties to heroic ancestors and supernatural forces. Sometimes that art could reach the level of greatness. In the case of the Early Horizon art in Mexico and Peru it was eventually followed by state formation. But in Panama, chiefdom followed chiefdom until the arrival of the Spaniards (Marcus, 2003).

Another example was his 1976 article "Mesoamerican Civilization and the Idea of Transcendence," published in the British journal *Antiquity*. In this article Willey opines, "I cannot be satisfied to believe that we have all of the worthwhile answers about human cultural behavior in the data of subsistence, demography, war, trade, or the processes of social class differentiation" (p. 213).

With his masterful ability to synthesize disparate information Willey proceeded to consider the significance of the Mesoamerican mytho-historical figure of Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl in light of the concept of ideological transcendence. In this effort he sought to place Mesoamerican religion on a par with Old World civilizations with transcendent movements such as Judaism and Buddhism, among others. He boldly proposed that the antiwar, antihuman sacrifice ethic embraced by Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl transcended the aggressive political character espoused by most Mesoamerican states in the wake of the collapse of Teotihuacan and suggested that transcendent movements appeared during times of civilization crises (McAnany, 2003).

Willey's Maya work was also the inspiration for three highly influential advanced seminars at the School of American Research in Santa Fe: *The Classic Maya Collapse* (Culbert,

1973), *The Origins of the Maya Civilization* (Adams, 1979), and *Lowland Maya Settlement Patterns* (Ashmore, 1991). Willey wrote and coauthored the summary statement for all of these and also wrote the introductory chapter for the School of American Research volume on *Late Maya Civilization* (Sabloff and Andrews, 1986).

Willey served as the president of the American Anthropological Association in 1960-62 and of the Society of American Archaeology in 1967-68. He was a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (elected 1952), the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, the Society of Antiquaries, a member of the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropologia, the National Academy of Sciences (elected 1960), the American Philosophical Society (elected in 1984), and a corresponding member of the British Academy.

When he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he was told by Professor Tozzer, who nominated him, "I got you into the American Academy, but there are two higher ranking academies in the United States, the National Academy of Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, and it's up to you to get yourself into those academies."

Willey's awards included the A. V. Kidder Medal for Archaeology, the Order of the Quetzal from the government of Guatemala, the Gold Medal for Distinguished Archaeological Achievement from the Archaeological Institute of America, the Viking Fund Medal for Archaeology, the Huxley Medal from the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Distinguished Service Award from the Society for American Archaeology, the Walker Prize from the Boston Museum of Science, the Lucy Wharton Drexel Medal for Archaeology from the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, and the Gold Medal from the London Society of Antiquaries. He was awarded honorary doctorates from the Uni-

versity of Arizona, the University of New Mexico, and the University of Cambridge (U.K.), where he was a visiting lecturer in 1962-63 and an overseas fellow at Churchill College in 1968-69.

Willey was also repeatedly invited to attend international symposia at the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research's Burg Wartenstein near Gloggnitz, Austria. Two of these symposia were focused on Maya studies, which I organized and chaired: "The Cultural Development of the Maya" in September 1962, which included 10 Maya specialists (1964), and "Prehistoric Settlement Patterns: Retrospect and Prospect" in August 1980 with essays in honor of Gordon R. Willey who served as the discussant (1983).

After his scientific writing was complete, he turned to writing fiction, including a mystery novel, *Selena,* based on his field experience in Florida, as well as to numerous award-winning plays and musicals he wrote for the Tavern Club of Boston, where he served as president from 1973 to 1975.

Gordon Willey had a great capacity for friendship and for collaboration with colleagues old and young. He was always modest about his own achievements and made certain that proper credit was given to all who worked and published with him over his long lifetime. Understandably he became a mentor for dozens of students and younger colleagues in anthropology.

But Gordon Willey's impact in the long run will come from his impressive publications, articles in scientific journals, technical monographs on every site he ever excavated, and more general books, such as his *A History of American Archaeology* with J. A. Sabloff (1976, 1980, 1993) and his masterful two-volume *An Introduction to American Archaeology* (1966, 1971).

His colleagues in anthropology and other sciences

throughout the world will long and warmly remember Gordon Willey and his outstanding scholarly contributions.

Gordon Willey is survived by two daughters, Alexandra Guralnick and Winston Adler, his sons-in-law, Peter Guralnick and Jeffrey Adler, and five grandchildren.

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NOTES

1. See E. Z. Vogt. Some aspects of Zinacantan settlement patterns and ceremonial organization. *Estudios de Cultura Maya* 1(1961):131-45; Some implications of Zinacantan social structure for the study of the ancient Maya. *Actas y Memorias del 35th Congreso Internacional de Americanistas* 1(1964):307-19; *Zinacantan: A Maya Community in the Highlands of Chiapas,* 1969 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press); *Tortillas for the Gods*, 1976 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press); *Fieldwork Among the Maya*, 1994 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press).

2. G. R. Willey. Vogt at Harvard. In E*thnographic Encounters in Southern Mesoamerica: Essays in Honor of Evon Z. Vogt, Jr.*, eds. V. R. Bricker and G. H. Gossen, pp. 21-32. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989.

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