Anthropology 21
Ancient Cities of the Americas
Spring 2005

Take-Home Project 1

Archaeologists use artifacts discarded in a location to infer the activities that went on there. Your assignment is to report on a simple experiment that relates activities with the artifacts that are left behind. Your write-up should be typed (with a hand-drawn map on a separate piece of paper), should be no more than a page in length, and should do a reasonable job of completing all parts of the assignment. Be prepared to discuss your results in class.

To do this assignment, choose a public location, such as a park, a classroom, or an outside area on campus. Define a specific area of interest, no larger than about 25 ft by 25 ft (for example, 10 ft on either side of a picnic table, bench, newspaper stand, coffee bar, or desk). The measurements don't have to be exact; you can pace it off or just estimate. Then do the following:

1. Location. In a sentence or two, identify the location (e.g., a picnic table next to Lenoir Hall).

2. Map. Draw a sketch map of your area. A sketch map can be in pencil and need not be drawn to scale or be of publishable quality, but it should be clear and should show the major features, such as tables, trash cans, planters, trees, grass, or sidewalk.

3. Artifact Inventory. Now look carefully over the area you have laid out for discarded items on the ground or in formal disposal areas (like in a trash can). Your artifact inventory should consist of a list of artifact classes (5 or so classes should be sufficient; e.g., snack wrappers, soda cans, or newspapers) quantified in relative terms (e.g., rare, moderate, or common). This should be presented in a simple table such as the one that follows. (This isn't necessarily part of the assignment, but you might also think about whether different classes of material are found in different parts of your area. Are soda cans more often found in trash cans and candy wrappers on the ground?)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact Class</th>
<th>Relative Abundance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soda cans</td>
<td>rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy wrappers</td>
<td>common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidentified paper</td>
<td>common</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Inferred Behavior. Describe in a paragraph what the trash that you have recorded implies about the behavior that occurs in this area and why you draw those conclusions. Include some relative statements about frequency (e.g., common eating of candy). Don't describe what you've seen go on here, but what you infer based only on the trash.

5. Observed Behavior. Finally, spend 10 minutes observing the area you have selected and describe in a short paragraph the behaviors you observe and their relative frequency, recognizing that your 10 minutes may not be representative of all the activities that take place in this location.

6. Contrast. Briefly discuss the relationship between your inferred and observed behaviors and how you would account for any differences. Again, a paragraph will suffice.

Due in class on Tuesday 2/8; late assignments will not be accepted (see syllabus for policy).

[This exercise is adapted from one developed by Keith Kintigh and Margaret Nelson at Arizona State University]