

The Ethnography and Archaeology of Prehistoric Hunter-Gatherers, Or the Brutality of Archaeological Ethnographic Records

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Abstract

The constraints imposed on anthropological fieldwork have likely influenced the literature on hunter-gatherers, resulting in diverse interpretations regarding their era, location, and behaviors. This study explores the historical context of several theoretical frameworks and demonstrates the frequent utilization of anthropological theory by archaeologists. In addition, it raises questions about whether particular buildings had the necessary sensitivity to accommodate the diverse range of activities recorded in ancient times. By integrating excavation methodologies with ethnography, researchers are able to effectively reconstruct the structure and organization of the ethnographic record within the archaeological site. This facilitates a more comprehensive comprehension of historical events.

Introduction

The Recor for Archaeology

Instead, then focusing on the overt demonstration of conduct in and of itself, the concept represented by the letter "D" takes into account the antecedents and effects of the action in question. Ethnographers are unable to investigate a number of behavioral areas because to their specialized training. For instance, it is difficult for researchers to directly observe actions that are carried out in secret, such as infanticide, because of the restrictions placed on their capacity to do so. When researching actions that have been influenced or transformed by the presence of observers, such as hunting, the accuracy of observations may be impaired. This is especially the case when studying wild animals. In addition, the study of behaviors that display large variability across enormous temporal and spatial scales is difficult for researchers since it presents a number of unique problems. It is essential to develop hypotheses that are founded on observable behaviors, the conditions that led to those behaviors, or the results of those behaviors in order to be successful in overcoming these problems. Therefore, the difficulties that archaeologists and ethnographers experience while attempting to develop a scientific understanding of human behavior are comparable to one another. Despite this, the anthropological philosophy has retained a uniquely ethnographic flavor throughout its history. This remark lends credence to the notion that the evaluation of compatibility is predominately dependent on preexisting criteria and is frequently put through formal inspection simply in connection to behavioral patterns that are documented in contemporary ethnographies and ethnoarchaeologies. It is frequently used for the goal of organizing archaeological knowledge, establishing archaeological predictions, and clarifying patterns and variations observed in the archaeological data because, if it cannot be disproven within the limits of this observable universe, it is frequently adopted for these purposes. The ability of anthropological observation to properly capture the myriad of patterns and variations that can be seen in human behavior is restricted. It is possible that the anthropological

record will give support for the implications; yet, there is no assurance that a hypothesis will precisely foresee human behavior. This statement gives the impression that it predicts human behavior by conforming to the explanations offered by ethnographers, who obtain their insights from empirical observations. Since ethnographers have either not been able to undertake examinations in this regard or have not been able to conduct examinations in this respect, it is unknown to what extent this theory covers predictions on behavioral variability. Instead of relying solely on behavioral depictions found in ethnographic literature, it is best for archaeologists to view their theories as unproven hypotheses, unless they are convincingly disproven through robust deduction based on actual behavior, its historical precedents, and tangible artifacts. This is the case even if the theories are convincingly disproven through robust deduction based on actual behavior. Archaeologists have a high level of trust in the results of this kind because of their capacity to provide evidence on actual activity that both predates and generates recorded conduct. When archaeologists use ethnographic theories without first putting those beliefs through the appropriate testing, they expose themselves to a significant risk of accidentally recreating ethnographically perceived realities in archaeological records. Because the form and structure in question have the ability to unwittingly reinforce the theoretical expectations that emerge from ethnographic study, they have the capacity to continue a cycle of injustice that has been going on for a long time. It is vital that our conceptual frameworks be liberated from the prejudices that have been entrenched into them by the ethnographic record in order to create a comprehensive anthropological theory that is capable of predicting human behavior, whether in the setting of archaeology or ethnography. In order to do this, it is necessary to free our conceptual frameworks from the embedded biases. Archaeo-ethnology is an archaeological research that integrates expectations, assumptions, and metrics drawn from ethnography. The word "archaeo-ethnology" refers to this type of investigation. In this sense, one of the goals that I have is to direct the reader's attention toward specific areas of hunter-gatherer archaeology that have made extensive use of this methodology.

How Hunter-Gatherers Lived in The Past

During the time period that is referred to as the "ethnographic era," hunter-gatherer communities were closely intertwined with continent-wide cultural networks. This was primarily made possible by the existence of a worldwide market as well as different direct and indirect links with cultures that were more advanced. Because of this justification, the ethnographic documentation ought to serve as a significant source of knowledge regarding the processes that are taking place both within and among hunter-gatherer cultures, as well as their interactions with other communities on both the regional and interregional levels. However, the academic literature does not contain an investigation into the behavior of oticulates within the context of broader social and spatial frameworks. In a similar fashion, the hypotheses concerning the regional and interregional dynamics within the hunter-gatherer universe demonstrate ambiguity, despite the fact that they are aligned with the body of evidence that is now available. The ideas of the "ethnographic present" and salvage ethnography have recently surfaced as major obstacles to overcome in relation to this specific

category of material. An examination of hunter-gatherer communities that were either experiencing rapid acculturation or were on the verge of extinction was carried out by salvage ethnographers in order to get the most out of the generation of contrasting data. Documenting the various behaviors that continued to identify these hunter-gatherer societies from the agriculturalists who were advancing upon their territories was the goal of this project. These agriculturalists were threatening to take over their traditional lands. It should not come as a surprise that a sizeable section of salvage ethnographers concentrated their efforts exclusively on documenting culturally distinctive behaviors inside local contexts, rather than exploring the broader patterns of cultural contact that took place both within and between regions. Furthermore, the unique characteristics of regional behaviors were gradually lost as a result of these events. To put it another way, the logic of salvage ethnography only allowed for a limited amount of room to examine issues pertaining to different regions. The process of rebuilding the "ethnographic present," which refers to a hypothetical period when the investigated civilizations were less impacted by cross-cultural interactions, can mistakenly obscure this kind of information. This is because the "ethnographic present" refers to a time when the examined societies were less influenced by cross-cultural interactions. In bigger population settings, the presence of cattle ranches, forts, trade, and missions can essentially remove any observable behaviors exhibited by hunter-gatherers. This is the case even when the influence of these factors is controlled for. The only populations that have survived are those that have a keen awareness of the smallest social, economic, and topographical details. Ethnographers are forced to attribute the remaining components, after discarding regional and interregional causes, mostly to internalized and localized forces because they are the only ones that remain. The discovery of the causative elements that distinguish the behaviors of hunter-gatherer cultures from those that are anchored in agriculture can often lead to a propensity to focus on narrow and localized explanations for the differences in behavior that are observed between the two types of societies. Nevertheless, in spite of the significant strain that the populace was under as a result of the growing complexity of the civilizations, these inequities lasted until the arrival of the ethnographer. Understanding the connection between these behaviors and regional articulation is so difficult because of the nature of the relationship between the two. The idea that these things can be neatly tied to purely localized factors seems plausible in light of Occam's razor, which is a philosophy that advocates for simplifying explanations whenever possible. Recently, discussions have been held on the subject of "family hunting territories" (Speck and Eiseley, 1939; Leacock, 1954) and Bushman conduct (Lee, 1968; Lee and DeVore, 1976; Schrire, 1977; Williams, 1974:101), which have shed light on the high amount of risk that is connected with this practice. Due to the limitations of time and money, ethnographers almost always present a steady stream of data that lends support to the parochial model of hunter-gatherer tribes. When human populations engage in behaviors with the intention of mitigating their exposure to significant stresses, hazards, and disasters (as discussed by Vayda and McKay in 1975), it may be difficult for ethnographers to identify the primary factors that drive these behaviors within shorter periods of observation. This is because human populations engage in

behaviors with the intention of mitigating their exposure to significant stresses, hazards, and disasters. People have a tendency to avoid engaging in activities that are extremely stressful, which explains why significant stresses are not typically seen. As a result, the process of creating linkages between observed phenomena and the dynamics of tiny social groups, as well as the geographical units and temporal and spatial variability of restricted scale that are covered within the purview of ethnographic inquiry, is made easier as a result of this. The use of words like the catchment region (Jarman, 1972) and the two-hour-walk territory (Lee, 1969) in ethnographic writing contributes to the continuation of the worm's-eye view of reality, which can be seen as a perpetuation of the worm's-eye viewpoint on reality. This piece of conjecture is enthusiastically ingested by archaeologists. It is typically easier to assign local changes to local causes, which is consistent with Occam's razor, which states that the simplest explanation is the most likely explanation. In the framework of site-centered archaeology, the archaeologist's observational scope is often limited to locations that can be covered within a walking distance of two hours or less. This distance is determined by the archaeologist's ability to cover the distance. Therefore, it is plausible to expect that archaeological investigations will corroborate the widely held ethnographic generalization that hunter-gatherer societies primarily engage in local interactions, while regional and interregional dynamics among them are indicative of cultural decline and contact without substantial evidence (Platt 1964). In other words, it is plausible to expect that archaeological investigations will corroborate the widely held ethnographic generalization that hunter-gatherer societies primarily engage in local interactions. A robust type of communication is displayed by hunter-gatherers, which is analogous to what is seen in other human populations. This form of communication is characterized by a confined and spatially constrained diversity. It's interesting to think that people who hunt and gather would have the fewest restrictions when it comes to restricted catchment regions. Along with their inadequate construction of infrastructure pertaining to storage, ownership, and land rights, humans are partially responsible for this problem due to their heavy usage of food resources. Additionally, this problem is caused by humans' poor establishment of infrastructure. Individually or as a group, hunters and gatherers have the ability to shift their camping grounds and catchment areas in reaction to changes in the surrounding environment, which gives them an advantage over farmers in situations in which farmers face significant obstacles when attempting to relocate from their catchment region. In addition to this, it is within their power to redistribute resources, which will result in a change in the ease with which one can obtain sustenance. In contrast to the majority of agriculturalists, hunter-gatherer populations often do not have spatial boundaries within their catchment region, nor do they demonstrate restrictions in terms of the plant or animal species on which they rely. Rather, they rely on a wide variety of resources, including both plants and animals. In contrast, these zones have maintained their geographic integrity and are open to localized exploitation by hunters and other groups involved in activities such as gathering and hunting. Because neither individuals nor resources are confined to the limited spatial unit that many overarching theories attempt to assign to hunter-gatherer societies, the

rationale behind the prevalent reliance of archaeologists on its contents as the sole means of explaining hunter-gatherer behavior remains perplexing. This is especially true when taking into consideration that hunter-gatherer societies did not live in isolation. The present collapse of the "tribal" and "nation-state" paradigms (Fried 1975 and other sources) raises the possibility of a forthcoming review of the hunter-gatherer parochial model (Wallerstein 1974). The observation that hunter-gatherer communities intersected with Hopewell and other pre-Columbian exchanges in the New World (Struever and Houart 1972:Fig. 5), as well as Egyptian (Hofmann 1975), Arabic (Thorbahn 1976), and Chinese (Okladnikov 1968) trade in the Old World, highlights a clear distinction between the parochial model and the global model. The ability of the late Paleolithic hunter-gatherers to adapt to their environment provides evidence that they took part in regional exchange (Gabori 1969; Kozlowski 1972/3; Soffer 1977, et al.). This is demonstrated by the fact that they were able to trade goods. Even a fundamental activity like mating, when it takes place in regions with low population densities, can have localized repercussions for some groups and can lead to interactions between local populations within the context of a larger regional population framework (Weiss, 1976; Yellen & Harpending 1972). This is according to research published by Weiss and Yellen and Harpending. (Wobst, 1976; Wobst, 1977). At the level of integration, there is an unmistakable tendency toward the employment of theoretical frameworks as a part of the overall process. In spite of this, the process of attaining this adaptation utilizing ethnographic data is a substantial problem (for a thought-provoking viewpoint on this subject matter, see Lee, 1972, the proponent of the two-hour walk hypothesis). Given that archaeologists are the only type of anthropologists who have the potential to investigate "simultaneous" behavior, in particular the results of such behavior, across regional or interregional transects, it is generally accepted that archaeologists should be the ones to carry out this particular mission. Archaeologists have a tremendous chance to contribute to the understanding of human behavioral patterns through the study of regional cultural dynamics among hunter-gatherer tribes. Given the restricted availability of ethnographic evidence, this gives a significant opportunity for archaeologists to make a contribution.

Conclusion

During the period commonly referred to as the "ethnographic era," it can be observed that hunter-gatherer societies maintained deep connections with cultural networks spanning across continents. The feasibility of this endeavor was primarily facilitated by the global market and its numerous direct and indirect associations with more advanced civilizations. Due to this rationale, it is imperative to consider the ethnographic record as a primary and significant resource for comprehending the dynamics taking place within and among hunter-gatherer societies, as well as their engagements with other communities at both regional and interregional scales. However, the scientific literature lacks an examination of the behavior of oticulates in connection to broader social and spatial settings. Similarly, the hypotheses concerning the dynamics inside and across regions in the hunter-gatherer society demonstrate a certain level of uncertainty, despite their alignment with the existing body of evidence. In relation to this specific type of material, the concepts of the "ethnographic present"

and salvage ethnography have developed as noteworthy issues that require attention and resolution. In order to optimize the utility of the assortment of opposing data, salvage ethnographers conducted examinations on hunter-gatherer communities that were either undergoing quick acculturation or confronting the threat of extinction. The primary objective of this study was to document the many strategies employed by hunter-gatherer groups to differentiate themselves from the agricultural communities that were encroaching onto their territories. The farmers posed a threat to the customary lands of the indigenous community. It is not unexpected that a considerable proportion of salvage ethnographers directed their attention into documenting culturally unique activities inside specific local settings, rather than exploring broader patterns of cultural interaction across regions and within regions. Furthermore, these incidents resulted in a gradual erosion of the unique characteristics of regional customs and practices. In alternative terms, the constraints of salvage ethnography limited the capacity to thoroughly investigate location-specific issues due to spatial limitations. The technique of reconstructing the "ethnographic present" can inadvertently obfuscate this type of knowledge, as it refers to an imaginary period when the studied civilizations were less influenced by cross-cultural interactions. The utilization of the term "ethnographic present" is attributed to the designation of a certain temporal phase during which the influence of cross-cultural interactions on the cultures under examination was comparatively minimal. The presence of cattle ranches, forts, trade, and missions has the potential to significantly diminish observable hunter-gatherer practices within more populous settings. Even after accounting for the impact of these variables, this assertion continues to be true. Only populations with a keen knowledge of even the most subtle social, economic, and topographical characteristics have managed to endure. Upon excluding factors related to specific regions and interactions between regions, ethnographers are confronted with internalized and localized influences, which they must attribute to the remaining components. The inclination to focus on narrow and specific explanations for the variations in behavior between hunter-gatherer and agrarian cultures sometimes arises due to the identification of the causal elements that distinguish the actions of these two societal groups. Nevertheless, these inequalities endured until the advent of the ethnographer, despite the significant burden that the population faced as a result of the escalating intricacy of the civilizations. The intricate relationship between these behaviors and regional articulation poses a significant challenge in comprehending their link. The principle of Occam's razor, which advocates for the preference of simpler explanations, lends credibility to the idea that these phenomena can be attributed solely to localized factors. The practice under scrutiny has garnered attention due to its significant danger factor, as evidenced by scholarly discourse on the concept of "family hunting territories" (Speck and Eiseley, 1939; Leacock, 1954) and the behavior of Bushmen (Lee, 1968; Lee and DeVore, 1976; Schrire, 1977; Williams, 1974:101). Due to limitations in time and resources, ethnographers commonly present a continuous stream of data that tends to reinforce a limited viewpoint of hunter-gatherer tribes. Ethnographers face difficulties in identifying the primary factors that drive the behaviors exhibited by human populations, with the aim of mitigating their vulnerability to significant

stresses, hazards, and disasters. This challenge is particularly pronounced due to the limited duration of time during which these behaviors are observed, as discussed by Vayda and McKay in their 1975 study. This phenomenon can be attributed to the measures implemented by human populations in order to mitigate their vulnerability to hazardous circumstances, significant pressures, and occurrences of natural calamities. The occurrence of notable stressors is often infrequent as individuals tend to actively avoid participating in activities that are notably unpleasant. As a result, this enhances the ability to establish correlations among the dynamics of tiny social groups, geographical units, and the restricted temporal and spatial variability that are encompassed within the scope of ethnographic study. The utilization of phrases such as the "catchment region" (Jarman, 1972) and the "two-hour-walk territory" (Lee, 1969) in ethnographic literature exemplifies the endorsement of the "worm's eye" viewpoint on reality. Archaeologists eagerly embrace this speculative notion with considerable excitement. The principle of Occam's razor, which posits that the simplest explanation is typically the most credible, aligns with the observation that it is generally easier to trace localized changes to localized factors. In the framework of site-centered archaeology, the archaeologist's scope of observation is often limited to sites that are accessible within a maximum walking distance of two hours. The ability of the archaeologist to traverse the distance is a determining factor for said distance. Hence, in the absence of substantial empirical support, it is justifiable to posit that archaeological investigations will corroborate the prevailing ethnographic generalization that hunter-gatherer societies primarily engage in localized interactions, while regional and interregional dynamics among them imply cultural regression and contact (Platt 1964). In other words, it is a plausible expectation that archaeological investigations will provide evidence in favor of the widely acknowledged anthropological generalization that interactions within hunter-gatherer societies are primarily localized. Hunter-gatherer societies demonstrate a resilient mode of communication that has resemblance to the communication patterns observed in several other human communities. This particular mode of communication is characterized by a constrained range of variation that is confined inside a certain spatial context. The notion that hunters and gatherers would face the least restrictions in terms of confined catchment regions is a thought-provoking concept. The responsibility for this issue can be partially attributed to human beings due to their high utilization of food resources and inadequate establishment of land rights, ownership, and storage facilities. Moreover, the insufficiency of human-built infrastructure serves as a contributing component to this problem. Hunter-gatherer societies possess the ability to relocate their camping sites and catchment areas either individually or collectively, in order to adapt to environmental fluctuations. This mobility grants them a distinct advantage over agricultural communities, as the latter face considerable challenges when attempting to displace themselves from their established catchment regions. Moreover, they demonstrate the capacity to redistribute resources, hence modifying the availability of food-related amenities. In contrast to the majority of individuals engaged in agriculture, hunter-gatherer communities often exhibit a notable absence of spatial limitations within their

designated hunting and gathering areas, as well as a lack of constraints on the specific flora and fauna they are able to exploit for sustenance. In contrast, their survival is contingent upon a wide array of resources, including many forms of plant and animal life. In contrast, these regions have maintained their geographical integrity and remain accessible for restricted utilization by hunters and other communities involved in hunting and gathering activities. The rationale underlying the extensive dependence of archaeologists on its contents as the sole means of elucidating hunter-gatherer behavior remains perplexing, given both humans and resources are not confined to the limited spatial unit that most overarching theories attempt to attribute to hunter-gatherer communities. This observation becomes more apparent when one takes into account the fact that hunter-gatherer societies did not exist in isolation. There is a potential for the reevaluation of the hunter-gatherer parochial model in light of the ongoing decline of the "tribal" and "nation-state" paradigms, as discussed by Fried (1975) and other scholarly sources. According to Wallerstein's seminal work in 1974, The differentiation between the parochial model and the global model is evident when considering the interaction of hunter-gatherer communities with Hopewell and other pre-Columbian exchanges in the New World (Struever and Houart 1972:Fig. 5), as well as their engagement with Egyptian (Hofmann 1975), Arabic (Thorbahn 1976), and Chinese (Okladnikov 1968) trade in the Old World. The evidence presented by Gabori (1969), Kozłowski (1972/3), Soffer (1977), and others indicates that the hunter-gatherer communities throughout the late Paleolithic era demonstrated adaptability to their environments, implying their involvement in regional commerce. This is substantiated by the observation that they were able to engage in the exchange of goods or services. In regions characterized by low population densities, even a fundamental behavior such as mating can exert localized impacts on specific groups, leading to interactions among local populations within the context of a broader regional population (Weiss, 1976; Yellen & Harpending, 1972). This assertion is substantiated by the research conducted by Weiss, Yellen, and Harpending, as documented in their published works. According to the research conducted by Wobst (1976; 1977), it has been found that... The utilization of theoretical frameworks as an integral element of the overall process is evidently widespread at the integration level. However, the task of attaining such adaptation by utilizing ethnographic data presents a considerable obstacle (for a thought-provoking viewpoint on this matter, see Lee, 1972, the proponent of the two-hour walk theory). The consensus among scholars is that archaeologists are the most suitable professionals to undertake this particular endeavor. This is due to their unique expertise in studying "simultaneous" behavior, namely the resulting consequences of such activity, across regional or interregional transects. Archaeologists possess a remarkable prospect to enhance our comprehension of human behavioral patterns through the examination of cultural dynamics within hunter-gatherer societies at a regional scale. Archaeologists possess a significant opportunity to make valuable contributions due to the scarcity of ethnographic material.

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