



Photo by Odd Halseth, at the 1948 Pecos Conference, University of Arizona
Archaeological Field School, Point of Pines, Arizona, August, 1948.

CLYDE KAY MABEN KLUCKHOHN 1905–1960

With Kluckhohn's death at Santa Fe on July 29, 1960, American Archaeology lost a long-time friend and sympathetic but merciless critic. His continued archaeological interest is reflected in his membership in the Society for American Archaeology from the year of its founding. Archaeologically, his classical interests first inclined him toward the Old World, but when he left Princeton in 1923 because of poor health and spent a summer in the Southwest he developed a keen enthusiasm for both the past and present of the "Indian Country" that continued for the rest of his life. This first vivid Southwestern experience is described in *To the Foot of the Rainbow* (1927, Century, New York; 1928, Nash and Grayson, London) — a trip by horseback from Ramah to the Rio Grande pueblos and Santa Fe, over the Jemez Plateau and north to the Mesa Verde, to Canyon de Chelly, Kayenta, and finally Rainbow Bridge. Subsequent pack trips (1926, 1927, and 1928) culminated in the archaeological exploration of the remote and rugged country north of Navajo Mountain, especially Wild Horse Mesa. In *Beyond the Rainbow* (1933, Christopher, Boston) these adventures are told in the same informative style as in the earlier volume, but with a conspicuous addition, a chapter on "The First Americans" (pp. 210–31) summarizing the peopling of the New World, Basketmaker-Pueblo culture history, the technique of tree-ring dating, the Maya calendar, and theories of trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific

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influence on the New World; also, the archaeology of Wild Horse Mesa is sketched, on the basis of considerable serious reconnaissance work. Although Kluckhohn's written contributions to archaeology remained few, he continued from the early 1930's onward to keep abreast of archaeological thought and field work, and was always emphatic in his insistence on the essential continuity of the archaeological past with the ethnographic present, and on the importance of archaeological findings being interpreted in the light of the entire spectrum of anthropological specialties.

From 1932 to 1934 he was assistant professor of anthropology at the University of New Mexico, and at the same time research associate in archaeology of the School of American Research. Although his interests in the Navajo, in Indian languages, in social anthropology, and in anthropological theory were already strong, his archaeological interests continued, and he participated in the summer field school programs in Chaco Canyon and Jemez Canyon (1932-34, 1937). The culmination of this activity was the 1939 volume edited jointly with Paul Reiter, "Preliminary Report on the 1937 Excavations of Bc50-51, Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, with some Distributional Analyses" (*Univ. New Mex. Bull., Anth. Ser.*, Vol. 3, No. 2). In addition to his share of the editing, he wrote about one fourth of the text, his most important contribution being the final "Discussion" (pp. 151-62). This chapter is still a valuable critique of the Pecos Classification, and on its publication stimulated many archaeologists to examine more carefully the bases on which their chronological schemes were built. Kluckhohn wrote, for example:

Probably the single fact of greatest general import which has emerged thus far from the Bc50-51 excavations is that the various stages recognized by the Pecos classification (and very commonly referred to as "periods") do not, necessarily, represent clear-cut time periods, even in the same geographical locality. (p. 159)

He pointed out that neighboring villages, classified as Developmental and Great Pueblo (in Roberts' terminology) were occupied contemporaneously, their architectural or ceramic differences indicating that cultural changes occur with much less regularity than has often been assumed. His closing statement is still pertinent to the continuing problem of archaeological taxonomy:

Surely, all classifications can but, at best, express modal tendencies and must be used purely heuristically, with

constant awareness that they are most crude categorizations of the human acts we are trying to reconstruct. (p. 162)

In 1935 Kluckhohn joined the Department of Anthropology at Harvard, where he remained until his death, also associated with the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology and with the Department of Social Relations. He had published, in 1935, one short article in the Maya field, "A Note on the Sources of the Drawings in the Del Rio Volume on Palenque" (*Maya Research*, Vol. 2, pp. 287-90), and was invited to contribute to the volume of papers being prepared for A. M. Tozzer. The volume appeared in 1940, titled *The Maya and Their Neighbors* (edited by C. L. Hay and others; D. Appleton-Century, New York), and many of Tozzer's friends and admirers were shocked that "The Conceptual Structure in Middle American Studies" (pp. 41-51) contained a number of fairly blunt criticisms of the lack of methodological rigor and explicit purpose of Maya scholars, and of archaeologists in general. Kluckhohn said, for example:

... I should like to record an overwhelming impression that many students in this field are but slightly reformed antiquarians. To one who is a layman in these highly specialized realms there seems a great deal of obsessive wallowing in detail of and for itself. (p. 42)

And from a broader point of view he asked:

Do researches which require large funds for their support require no social justification other than that of quenching certain thirsts for knowledge on the part of a relatively small number of citizens? (p. 43)

All of this essay is still well worth a careful reading. It was received by some as an unnecessarily sharp attack on the work of the large circle of eminent Maya scholars among whom Tozzer was numbered. We should recall that Tozzer's translation of Landa's *Relación* was published in 1941, with its 1154 footnotes (some of them one and two pages in length), its 91-page "syllabus," its concordance of earlier editions, and so on. Kluckhohn's criticisms were not, however, directed specifically at Tozzer, whom he liked and respected, but at archaeology in general, and his strictures were supplemented by clear statements of what approaches would, in his opinion "suggest the pertinence of various constellations of data to the primary problems of human interaction."

It should perhaps be mentioned that W. W. Taylor's dissertation, presented at Harvard in 1943 (published in 1948 as "A Study of Archeology," *Am. Anth. Assoc. Mem.* 69) was written

partly under Kluckhohn's supervision, and carries some of the same criticisms and suggestions considerably further than was ever done by Kluckhohn.

Although Kluckhohn reviewed archaeological publications from time to time (three books by Hewett and Eric Thompson's *The High Priest's Grave* in 1939 [*Bol. Bibl. Antro. Am.*, Vol. 3, pp. 50–1], Volumes 1 and 2 of the *Handbook of South American Indians* in 1946 [*Science*, Vol. 104, pp. 212–3], *Men out of Asia* by H. S. Gladwin in 1947 [*N. Y. Herald Trib. Bk. Rev.*, Dec. 14, p. 10], C. S. Coon's *The Seven Caves* in 1957 [*Sat. Rev.*, Jan. 5, p. 11]) and wrote an obituary of Paul Reiter in 1954 (*Am. Anth.*, Vol. 56, pp. 1085–7) and one of Tozzer in 1956 (*Am. Philos. Soc. Year Bk.*, pp. 128–31), his only other specifically archaeological writing was the chapter "Potsherds" (pp. 45–77) in his tremendously popular *Mirror for Man* (1949, Whittlesey House, New York). In this he goes considerably beyond a discussion of what archaeology is, to discuss the importance of the historical approach for an understanding of man in all his aspects.

His professional interests ranged widely through social anthropology, psychiatry, art, religion, and language, to name a few of the fields he worked intensively in, but his concern for archaeology continued and in recent years his interest in the significance of what is conveniently called "material culture" for insights into many

facets of man's behavior assumed steadily greater proportions. He was Curator of Southwestern American Ethnology at the Peabody Museum, and at his death was collaborating with W. W. Hill on a comprehensive study of Navajo material culture, the only aspect of the Navajo, as he once said, in which pioneering work remained to be done. He was also deeply involved in the archaeological research carried on by the Navajo tribe in support of its land claims, a major research program on a long-neglected part of Southwestern archaeology.

In sum, the very range and variety of Clyde Kluckhohn's interests and the number of his professional commitments resulted in his contributions to some of the fields of social science falling short of what his desires and abilities might have achieved if channelled into a single specialty. Yet although he devoted the greater part of his career to non-archaeological pursuits, the study of the past, and especially the prehistory of the Southwest, held a continuing fascination for him. His archaeological writings are marked by valuable insights, by rigorous criticisms, and by urgent pleas for greater methodological precision and for greater breadth and depth of interpretation that make them provocative and significant contributions to the basic literature of archaeology.

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