



WENDELL C. BENNETT — 1905-1953

One of the most productive careers in American archaeology was cut short when Wendell C. Bennett died of a heart attack on September 6, 1953, while swimming at Martha's Vineyard, Mass. His loss will be keenly felt not only in South American archaeology, his specialty, but also in the other branches of anthropology and in the social sciences as a whole, since his interests ranged broadly over all of these fields and he made significant contributions to all of them.

Born in Marion, Indiana on August 17, 1905, Bennett grew up in Oak Park, Illinois, where his father, William Rainey Bennett, was a Protestant minister. He attended Oak Park High School and the University of Chicago, which awarded him a Ph.B. degree in 1927, an M.A. in 1929, and his Ph.D. in 1930.

Like the other students of the period at the University of Chicago, Bennett got his start in archaeology by participating in the local survey, but this phase of his career has received little recognition, probably because he did not follow it up. Instead, he accepted an opportunity to do research in the Hawaiian Islands under the auspices of the Bishop Museum in 1928-29. Out of this came a descriptive monograph on the archaeology of Kauai and his dissertation, a comparative study of religious structures throughout Polynesia.

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For a year after receiving his doctorate, Bennett worked with Robert M. Zingg on a study of the Tarahumara Indians in northern Mexico, as a Research Instructor of the University of Chicago. Zingg and he did both archaeology and ethnology, but he participated only in the report on the ethnology, which was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1935. It is indicative of his versatility that he wrote the sections on social rather than material culture. From this work stemmed a life-long interest in Latin American ethnology and probably also his conviction that archaeology and ethnology are so closely related as to make it advisable, wherever practicable, to do them together.

In 1931 he went to the American Museum of Natural History to succeed Ronald L. Olson as Assistant Curator of Anthropology and to continue the program of research in Andean archaeology which Olson had inaugurated. In this capacity, Bennett made four major field trips to Bolivia and Peru, in 1932, 1933-34, 1936, and 1938, and in addition he excavated in Venezuela in 1932 as the first of three North American archaeologists invited there by Dr. Rafael Requena, secretary to the dictator of that country. All of these trips resulted in major reports.

Bennett began his work in the Central Andes at the time when Kroeber and his students at the University of California were completing their analyses of the Uhle collections and had established the first comprehensive chronology for the area. He chose as his problem the expansion and verification of their chronology. It was the logical choice, for no extensive excavation with chronology as the main objective had been done since Uhle's work a quarter of a century earlier, except for Tello's, which was not accepted because of his failure to publish the evidence.

Bennett's first two field trips were devoted to filling a gap in Bolivia, where Uhle had been unable to do chronologically significant research. In 1932, he established a sequence of three ceramic periods at the great highland site of Tiahuanaco and in 1934 he was able to distinguish four ceramic periods at Arani in the eastern lowlands and to correlate these with both the highland Tiahuanaco sequence and the results of Nordenskiöld's work in the Mojos section of the lowlands. In 1934, too, he discovered a new culture underlying Tiahuanaco-style pottery at Chiripa, southeast of

the Tiahuanaco site. In 1936, he turned to the north coast of Peru and excavated mainly in Virú and Lambayeque valleys, where he substantiated and expanded the Uhle-Kroeber sequence, isolating a new Gallinazo style. Finally, in 1938 he went to the north highlands to check Tello's claim that the Chavín style is earlier in Peru than anything discovered by Uhle. He confirmed this by excavating pottery at the classic site of Chavín and placing it at the beginning of a sequence of seven ceramic periods.

Not the least of Bennett's contributions to Andean archaeology while at the American Museum of Natural History was his introduction, in the excavations at Tiahuanaco, of the technique of digging refuse deposits by arbitrary levels, in order to obtain ceramic stratigraphy, a technique which had been developed in the Southwest by one of his Museum colleagues, N. C. Nelson, and which another colleague, George C. Vaillant, was simultaneously introducing into Mexican archaeology. However, the Bolivian government was more impressed by his discovery of a large, carved stone statue in one of the strata cuts; they named this the "Bennett Monolith" and awarded him the Order of the Condor of the Andes for finding it.

While still in Peru in 1938, Bennett accepted an appointment as Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin. He transferred to Yale University in 1940, becoming full Professor there in 1945 and Chairman of the Department of Anthropology in 1949. He also served as Research Associate in the Yale Peabody Museum and participated in the Museum's Caribbean Anthropological Program, which was expanded to include the area of his interests. Altogether, he made four trips to South America under Peabody Museum auspices, in 1941, 1944, 1946, and 1950, and published a major monograph on each of them. At the time of his death, he was making plans for a fifth field trip, during the spring semester of the current academic year.

For the first two trips, he decided to go to the Northern Andes in order to fill the space between the previous work of the Caribbean Program in Venezuela and the West Indies, and his own previous research in the Central Andes. He made a ceramic survey of Colombia in 1941, as his contribution to the Institute of Andean Research program sponsored by the

Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, and in 1944 excavated in the Cuenca region of highland Ecuador, following up a survey previously made by Collier and Murra. The results of both were disappointing from a chronological standpoint—like all other field work of the period in the Northern Andes—but his reports, particularly the one on Colombia, are still the most comprehensive and readable summaries of the archaeology of the Northern Andes, and he formulated a number of hypotheses which will stimulate his colleagues in the area for years to come. In 1946, he returned to Peru to participate in the Virú Valley Program with Collier, Evans, Ford, Strong, and Willey, and his final trip was also to Peru, in 1950, when he excavated at the central highlands site of Wari in order to establish its relationships with classic and coastal Tiahuanaco.

He was one of the principal organizers of the Virú Valley Program. It is probably no accident that the locale of the Program was one in which he had previously worked and that the Program included research by ethnologists, a geographer, and a historian as well as archaeologists, in accordance with his belief in the necessity for cooperation among these disciplines. As a result, the Program conformed well to the “functional” standards which were becoming popular in American archaeology, in that the amassing of data on a relatively small area by means of a number of different approaches made it possible to draw more extensive conclusions concerning the life of the Indians and thus to add the flesh of culture to the ceramic skeleton which had been the principal result of Bennett’s previous Virú research. This in turn led to the various developmental classifications which were advanced at the subsequent Conference on Peruvian Archaeology in New York and were published in the report of the Conference, “A Reappraisal of Peruvian Archaeology,” which he edited.

Bennett himself never claimed much credit for these accomplishments, and his own monograph on the Virú Valley work consisted mainly of a chronological study of the Gallinazo culture, following up his previous excavations. Nevertheless, he made full use of the results of the Program in his “Andean Culture History,” a *Handbook* which he wrote for the American Museum of Natural History during 1948 in collaboration with Junius Bird, and

which is perhaps the best detailed synthesis of Peruvian archaeology. He also made an important theoretical contribution in his article on the Peruvian co-tradition which appears at the beginning of the “Reappraisal” volume. The article has been subject to some criticism (e.g., by the writer in another part of this issue), but it well serves the main purpose for which Bennett intended it—to express the assumptions under which Andean archaeologists are currently operating.

Bennett’s courses at Yale were primarily ethnological, and he stressed the necessity for archaeologists to receive ethnological training. Limitations of space make it impossible to go into this phase of his career, except to note the volume on Argentine archaeology which he and a group of students published in 1948 as the result of a specialized seminar in the subject at Yale. Nor can his later contributions to other branches of anthropology and to outside disciplines be discussed, except in the field of area studies. He was the first Assistant Editor of *American Antiquity* for South America and the first Contributing Editor for South American archaeology to the *Handbook of Latin American Studies*. Subsequently, he served on Latin American committees at Yale and for the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Research Council, among others; and he gradually came to regard his research more as a contribution to Latin American studies than to the field of archaeology. Out of this grew an interest in area studies in general, which he promoted both at Yale and in the Social Science Research Council and which he refocused on archaeology in his 1952 presidential article for the American Anthropological Association, entitled “Area Archaeology.”

Bennett was a man of strong drive and great sensitivity. He was proud of his record of prompt and thorough publication, yet he sometimes doubted the value of doing it. His feelings were well concealed behind a pleasant and unassuming manner. He was among the least jealous of anthropologists and the least inclined to impose his opinions and prejudices upon others. Few men in the profession have been so free with advice and encouragement to both colleagues and students and yet have expected so little in return. Few have left so many friends and such a record of achievement.

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The following abbreviations are used:

AA	<i>American Anthropologist</i> , n.s. Menasha.
AA _n	<i>American Antiquity</i> . Menasha, Salt Lake City.
AMNH-AP	<i>American Museum of Natural History, Anthropological Papers</i> . New York.
BAE-B	<i>Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin</i> . Washington.
HLAS	<i>Handbook of Latin American Studies</i> . Cambridge.
NH	<i>Natural History</i> . New York.
PAU-B	<i>Pan American Union, Bulletin</i> . Washington.
SAA-M	<i>Society for American Archaeology, Memoirs</i> . Menasha.
YUPA	<i>Yale University Publications in Anthropology</i> . New Haven.

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