



# **Gordon R. Willey and American Archaeology: Contemporary Perspectives**

*William L. Fash*

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*Gauging the impact of one scholar's contributions to modern archaeology*

For an appreciation of the growth of American archaeology over the second half of the twentieth century, one need look no further than the career of Gordon R. Willey. A preeminent archaeologist and New World theorist, Willey made innumerable contributions to the prehistory of the Americas and helped establish the leading methodological and theoretical paradigm used in American archaeology.

This volume of original essays gauges the wide-ranging impact of Willey's lifework. The editors have selected ten of his key publications and solicited assessments of their lasting influence from well-known archaeologists. These works cut across geographic regions and areas of inquiry and represent some of the most challenging intellectual questions in archaeology, explaining Willey's methods while revealing how greatly his work shaped the field.

The articles reflect the importance of Willey's research in coastal Peru in developing the field of Andean archaeology, and show how his application of the settlement pattern approach to the Belize Valley forever transformed the archaeology of Mesoamerica.

This volume not only analyzes Willey's impact on culture history and archaeological thought but also shows his human side, places his writing in historical context, and offers a unique overview of the growth of American archaeology over the past six decades. To understand the work of Gordon R. Willey is to understand the history and future direction of American archaeology.

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