

# Preface

The study of the human-made world, whether it is called artifacts, material culture, or technology, has burgeoned across the academy. Archaeologists have for centuries led the way, and today offer investigators myriad programs and conceptual frameworks for engaging the things, ordinary and extraordinary, of everyday life.

This book is an attempt by practitioners of one program – Behavioral Archaeology – to furnish between two covers some of our basic principles, heuristic tools, and illustrative case studies. Our greater purpose, however, is to engage the ideas of two competing programs – agency/practice and evolution – in hopes of initiating a dialog. We are convinced that there is enough overlap in goals, interests, and conceptions among these programs to warrant guarded optimism that a more encompassing, more coherent framework for studying the material world can result from a concerted effort to forge a higher-level synthesis. However, in engaging agency/practice and evolution in Chap. 2, we are not reticent to point out conflicts between Behavioral Archaeology and these programs.

This book will appeal to archaeologists and anthropologists as well as historians, sociologists, and philosophers of technology. Those who study science–technology–society interactions may also encounter useful ideas. Finally, this book is suitable for upper-division and graduate courses on anthropological theory, archaeological theory, and the study of technology.

The idea for this book came during a Fulbright sponsored trip to Porto Alegre, Brazil, by Jim Skibo in 2004, and conversations with Adriana Schmidt Dias, Fabíola Silva, Klaus Hilbert, and the participants in the seminar. The seminar was on ceramic analysis, ethnoarchaeology, and pottery use-alteration, but much of the discussion focused on how our theoretical approach to the study of technology contrasts with agency/practice, evolution, and other theoretical models currently in vogue. This led to a discussion between us and the decision to write this book. Although we had been collaborators for over two decades, this was our first co-authored book and we would like to thank the participants of the Fulbright seminar for the provocative conversation that convinced us to embark on this enjoyable enterprise.

A number of people commented on the manuscript: Eric Drake, Nathan Hardwick, Vincent LaMotta, Fernanda Neubauer, Charles Orser, Tim Pauketat, Michael Schaefer, and William Walker. Nathan Hardwick also created the wonderful

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