

Memory Magic

FRITZ HAAS

Curator Emeritus, Lower Invertebrates



M. Pahl

DR. Fritz Haas, our Curator Emeritus of Lower Invertebrates, has been active for more than fifty years in his branch of science, the study of non-marine mollusks. From his early days as a student in Germany through his years as curator of mollusks at the Senckenbergisches Naturforschende Gesellschaft in Frankfurt-am-Main, and during his association with Chicago Natural History Museum, he has been interested especially in the fresh-water unionid clams. Now, at the age of 77, he is busy preparing a world monograph of the group for *Das Tierreich*, a project that will occupy his time for the next few years.

Some months ago, the Museum acquired a collection of non-marine mollusks from a private collector in Seattle. In the course of processing these new materials into the Museum's collection, Dr. Haas was amazed to discover some old friends—fresh-water clams that he had personally collected in Europe forty to fifty-five years ago! How these clams found their way from Europe to Seattle, and finally to Chicago Natural History Museum is a long and involved story. What we would like to share with our Museum Members, many of whom are, themselves, collectors of long-standing,

are some of Dr. Haas' memories associated with these specimens. [Ed. note]

Unio crassus batavus
(MATON & RACKETT)
Wickerbach near Florsheim,
Germany
July, 1912

At this time I had just become interested in fresh-water clams, and was systematically combing the rivers, streams, and ponds near my home town for the mussels. Being inexperienced, I equipped myself with bulky hip boots for wading in the water. Only later did I learn that the bare foot gives you much surer footing, besides allowing you to feel for the buried clam in the bottom muck. On that day in July I was working a mill creek in water almost up to my hips, when it began to rain—at first slowly, then much harder. Soon I was completely soaked except for the only parts of me actually under water, my legs and feet, which remained safely dry in the hip boots.

Unio crassus cytherea
(KUSTER)

Wornitz River near Mosbach, Germany
July, 1912

In those days, as probably now also, Southern Bavarians looked upon North Germans ("Prussians") with great dislike or even fear. They were no more welcome in the country districts than a revenue agent in the North Carolina mountains.

I was used to having to explain my very odd actions—wading and fumbling in all sorts of waters—to curious passers-by, but on this day an old peasant woman was particularly curious. Indeed, her questions were so many and frequent that I was seriously distracted from my work. Finally, I told her sternly that I was a Prussian, whereupon she crossed herself and ran away!

Psilunio littoralis littoralis
(LAMARCK)

Ebro River near Sagunto, Spain
September, 1915

When World War I broke out, I had recently arrived in Spain for a short field

trip, which lasted for years because I was stranded by the war. Luckily I was able to make extensive studies of Spanish non-marine mollusks. On this trip to the Ebro River near Zaragoza, I was after a big mussel which I had known previously only from fossil stages in the Rhine sands. In the deeper pools of the Ebro these clams were abundant, and I soon obtained a good series. Then, to my intense joy, I discovered an assemblage of very young shells of this species in shallow water less than ten inches deep. In my enthusiasm, I simply plopped down on my belly and started to collect, ignoring the exposure of my back to the hot Spanish sun. Later on my back began to hurt, and that night the pain became so bad, I had to dress and walk a half mile to a doctor's house (there was no telephone). He, in turn, wakened the pharmacist, and through their ministrations I survived, but with the afternoon's collecting "burned" into my memory.

Unio elongatulus valentinus
(ROSSMAESSLER)

Dehesa, Albufera de Valencia, Spain.
July, 1917

The Albufera de Valencia is a big fresh-water lagoon south of the city of Valencia. For several days previously I had engaged an old fisherman to take me from one portion of the lake to the other. He had become quite accustomed to seeing me wading in the shallow water near the shore, where mussels were quite plentiful. On this occasion, I spotted some in water too deep for hand collecting or even the dip net. So I stripped myself and dove for the mussels. Never did I expect such an outburst from my fisherman! He implored me to come out, since he could not swim, and how could he help me if an accident happened!

THESE and many more cherished memories have come flooding back in past weeks, conjured up by good acquaintances, those fresh-water clams plucked from the waters of Europe so many years ago. Who could have believed that these old greenish-brown clam shells could work such magic?

TRASH + COMPUTER = ARCHAEOLOGY

(Continued from page 3)

statistically in another study, this one being accomplished by William A. Longacre, graduate student in anthropology at the University of Chicago. Since his study involved the use of the *designs* painted on the sherds, he found it necessary to reject about 28,000 sherds and to use only about 6000 sherds that clearly displayed designs or elements of designs.

Omitting all details as to the mechanics of this study, I may briefly outline some of the results.

Within the site under study a two-fold pattern emerged: (a) roughly 60 per cent of the design elements show a pan-village distribution without any clustering or preferential grouping; (b) the other 40 per cent of the design elements did cluster, some at one end and some at the other end of the village trash heap. Mr. Longacre's interpretation of this (along with other evidence) is that the site had been occupied by at least two matrilineal groups who practiced matrilineal residence patterns (in this marriage custom, the husband resides with the wife's family). This inference would suggest that two kin-based groups of potters occupied the pueblo; that each one favored certain design elements and rejected others; but that each group also used some designs in common with potters from the other end of the pueblo. Certain design elements, then, may con-

stitute a kind of "hall mark" for a given lineage. These differences in groupings of design elements within the village were *not due* to any chronological differences in the trash.

Several other hypotheses were derived from Mr. Longacre's study. One of the most interesting of these is that each village seems to have had separate but related ceramic traditions and that villages of a given valley also share certain design elements. Thus one can speak of three subdivisions of a particular pottery type: 1) kin-based, intra-mural traditions of pottery decoration; 2) a village tradition of pottery decoration; and 3) a regional tradition, or style, composed of traditions of pottery decoration from several villages within the same valley.

THUS, the use of statistics—a notion that used to make me shudder—has changed my concept of archaeology. The study of extinct cultures can now go far beyond description. We can now ask new questions about the life of prehistoric peoples—questions that were never before possible. Years ago, for example, we used to think that archaeology could not recover data on the social organization of an extinct people. We now know it can. These sorts of questions are the real "stuff" of archaeology for me; I think we are on the threshold of an exciting breakthrough in the study of prehistory.

Flower Portraits

"Flower Portraits," an exhibition of 69 water color paintings of favorite North American and European flowers, will be displayed from June 15 through July 31 at the entrance to the Museum's new Hall of Useful Plants (Hall 28, Second Floor—East). The large-size paintings were made by Miss Ethelynde Smith of Altadena, California.





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