

1996

Preface to *Archaeological Chemistry*

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Recommended Citation

Orna, M. V. Preface. In *Archaeological Chemistry: Organic, Inorganic and Biochemical Analysis*; Orna, M. V., Ed.; American Chemical Society: Washington, DC, 1996, pp. ix-xi.

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Preface

TRACING CULTURAL EVOLUTION OVER CENTURIES and even millennia is the exciting task shared by archaeologists and archaeological chemists. Seldom financially rewarding, but of perennial interest, it has been the subject of nine major symposia at national meetings of the American Chemical Society. These symposia have attracted practicing archaeologists, chemists, biochemists, cultural anthropologists, and members of related disciplines from all over the world. The proceedings of five of these symposia have been collected in volumes published by the American Chemical Society (ACS), four in the *Advances in Chemistry Series* and the present volume in the *Symposium Series*.

New methods in analytical chemistry, particularly methods coupled to one another in tandem, have rendered biochemical samples almost as accessible on the ultratrace level as inorganic materials have been over the past few decades. Exciting new discoveries in the field, and the growth of the science fiction that often accompanies such discoveries, have contributed to a burgeoning interest in the biochemical aspects of archaeological chemistry. In this hemisphere, interest has centered on what chemical analysis can tell us about pre-Columbian civilizations. Although no one is claiming that "Jurassic Park—The Reality" is right around the corner, imaginations have been fired by the popularization of DNA reconstruction and replication. These developments have given rise to questions based on new possibilities in archaeological research.

Plans for the present symposium were initiated in 1992–93 to create a forum for presentation and discussion of these new possibilities in research. Special invitations were sent to some of the foremost workers in the field, and a call for papers was issued to every major venue of archaeological research worldwide. The resulting program contained papers from every major new area of archaeological research with an emphasis on the pre-Columbian and biochemical aspects. This symposium volume is a representative compilation of these papers. As such, it will be of interest to practicing archaeologists, archaeological chemists, anthropologists, historians of science, chemical educators, and all those interested in the story of how chemistry, not without some controversy, can help to trace the roots of humankind and the human environment through the millennia.

I sincerely thank each author for the time, effort, and cooperation it took to prepare this material for publication.

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October 15, 1995

Dedication

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED to Lucy Roy Sibley, whose life and work exemplified that of a true scholar, mentor, teacher, and colleague. Her contributions to the field of archaeological textiles continue to guide us toward the future as we strive to understand the lifeways of the past.