

A Theoretical Review of Formation Process in Archaeology

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Introduction

Archaeology is the study of human activity through the recovery and analysis of material culture and it is a bridge between the past, the present and the future. The purpose of archaeology is to learn more about past societies and the development of the human race. Many people treat archaeological sites as time capsules that were preserved unchanged below the surface. This, however, is hardly ever true. Before and after the moment in which the remains became part of the archaeological record, they went through various processes that moved them, added substance to them, changed them, broke them and even destroyed them completely.

The processes that shape the remains and bring them to their current state are called 'site formation processes'. Formation theory is one of the most important achievements in archaeology. This body of method and theory was conceived and promoted by many, notably by M.B. Schiffer. According to Schiffer, mainly there are

two types of Formation Processes which are called as Cultural and Natural formation processes. Natural formation processes are the environmental processes that influence the survival of the archaeological record. Cultural formation processes are the processes of human behavior that affect or transform artefacts after their initial period of use in a given activity.

The Archaeological Sites including different Archaeological Records which were influenced by both cultural activities and natural phenomena have been spread around the world revealing historical human culture. To make correct and rationale interpretations regarding Archaeological Records, it is essential to have understanding and knowledge regarding the Formation Process. Therefore, the general objective of this study is to review the formation process in Archaeology. The specific objectives are: to define the formation process, to identify the natural formation process, to identify the cultural formation process, to identify

the inter-relationship between natural and cultural formation processes. Better knowledge of this theory that allow archaeologists to better understand and interpret the archaeological records without leading to misinterpretations.

Methodology

The study was totally based on secondary data collection methods. The information required for the study was collected by reviewing previously published journal papers, newspaper articles, books, and some websites. Further, the data was gathered from the sources such as previously published research papers. These methods were used to accomplish the above mentioned objectives.

Results & Discussions

Formation processes can be defined as the factors that create the historic and archaeological records. The formation processes were carried out by several authors since 1960, but the idea was better accepted by the archaeological community after the works of Michael Schiffer (1972, 1975, 1976, 1983, 1987), who called the attention of archaeologists to the increasing need of integration between the Earth Sciences and Archaeology. According to Schiffer, mainly there are two types of Formation Processes which are called as Cultural and Natural formation processes. These formation processes are crucial to the discipline

because archaeologists use the patterns of artifacts in the ground to infer behaviors and create the evidence of past societies and environments that remains for the archaeologist to study.

Natural formation processes are the environmental processes that influence the survival of the archaeological record. Natural Formation Processes can vary from country to country and it specially depends on its Environmental condition and Environmental factors. Environmental factors comprises mainly, Biological factors (animals' activities), Botanical factors (activity of plants), Climatic factors (Water, Wind, and Temperature). Natural phenomena (especially natural disasters such as Floods, wildfires, landslides, Tsunami and Drought etc.). Because of these activities, archaeological records are then shifted and deposited from the natural deposits made by past cultures to another place. As a result of it, archaeological records can be modified, broken down, or combined with other elements.

Cultural formation processes are the processes of human behavior that affect or transform artefacts after their initial period of use in a given activity. Discussions of cultural formation processes usually begin with the theoretical distinction between systemic context and archaeological context (the behavioral and non-behavioral states of artifacts). Systemic context labels the condition

of an element which is participating in a behavioral system. For analytical purposes, the activities in which a durable element participates during its life, or systemic context, may be broadly divided into 5 processes: procurement, manufacture, use, maintenance, and discard. Each process consists of stages, and stages can consist of one or more activities. Archaeological context describes materials which have passed through a cultural system, and which are now the objects of investigation of archaeologists. The four principal types of cultural formation processes: reuse, cultural deposition, reclamation, and disturbance are defined in part by changes in state within and between contexts.

The inter-related inter-relationship can be identified between natural and cultural formation processes. Cultural formation process based on the activities of Cut, Fill and Products. These any kind of cultural activity can be happened within the natural formation process. These processes may influence different sites in different countries in the world in different degrees and ways, but they do occur in every site. Archaeologists should have a sense to identify these process through the understanding the theory and they responsible to make correct interpretations regarding the archaeological records.

Conclusion

Archaeology possesses an undeniably rich conceptual structure of surprising breadth and complexity. Formation theory is one of the most important achievements in archaeology. This body of method and theory was conceived and promoted by many, notably by M.B. Schiffer. According to Schiffer, mainly there are two types of Formation Processes which are called as Cultural and Natural formation processes. Identifying and explaining these formation processes is an important first step towards developing justifiable inferences about past behavior and past societies. A sound understanding of the archaeological record and how it was formed is necessary in order to effectively interpret the data that is recovered. This study provide the theoretical guidance regarding the formation process in Archaeology.

References

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