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The Early Days of the S A S
by Charles Hudson
University of Georgia

To the best of my recollection, the impetus that led to organizing an anthropological society in the South came from John Honigmann, who sent out a flurry of postcards in the fall of 1965. Others had tried before him to form such a society, but it was his impetus that prompted a small band of the faithful to attend an organizational meeting in New Orleans in the spring of 1966. I have looked high and low for my copy of this postcard, but it seems to have dematerialized. All who knew John Honigmann at all well will have received such crisp messages, written in pen and ink on plain postcards.

By every measure, anthropology in the 1960’s was more weakly developed in the South than in any other region of the United States. I once calculated the number of anthropologists teaching in the South per millions of population for the year 1962-63 (Hudson 1982). It was on the order of .46 anthropologists per million people, while in the Northeast it was 3.2 anthropologists per million, and for the far West it was 4.1 anthropologists per million. (It never occurred to me that the employment opportunities indicated by these paltry numbers might dampen the ardor of our undergraduate and graduate students.) These are notable demographic differences. In 1962-63 anthropologists in the Northeast were about seven times more numerous than in the South, and in the West they were about nine times as numerous. The South also had the fewest Ph.D. programs, the fewest obituaries of illustrious dead in the American Anthropologist, and the fewest lines in standard histories of anthropology. No anthropologist in the South merited as much as a full page in any of these histories. When we began planning a book manuscript prize for the SAS, we cast about for a famous deceased Southern anthropologist to name it after. And there were none. We finally settled on James Mooney, the Bureau of American Ethnology anthropologist who wrote a famous book on the myths of the Cherokees. The argument in favor of Mooney was strengthened when we found that he had married a woman from Tennessee, and so we named the prize for him.

Anthropology was not the only field of intellectual endeavor that lagged in the South. I once wrote a paper (1982) assessing the role of Southern anthropologists in American intellectual life. It may be worthwhile to recall some of my observations here. As a point of departure,
I cited H. L. Mencken's famous 1917 essay "The Sahara of the Bozart"—his commentary on the sad state of culture in the American South in the early decades of the 20th century. Mencken characterized the South as a region "of fat farms, shoddy cities, and paralyzed cerebrums... (It) is almost as sterile, artistically, intellectually, culturally, as the Sahara desert." Mencken's explanation of the sad state of culture in the South was racist. The cause, he argued, was that after the Civil War, Southern culture was dominated not by so-called Anglo-Saxons—the defeated and defunct aristocracy—but by Celts (a euphemism for Scotch-Irish), with some Spanish and African thrown in. Had the epithet "red neck" been in usage in 1917, I am sure that Mencken would have used it to characterize the degraded race that had brought down Southern culture.

The inadequacy of Mencken's racist explanation for the degeneration of Southern culture became evident about a decade after he published his article. A remarkable literary renaissance flourished in the South, with notable novels by Erskine Caldwell, Robert Penn Warren, Alan Tate, Ellen Glasgow, Thomas Wolfe, and most particularly William Faulkner. Had we any reason to think that such a renaissance might occur in anthropology in the South? We had no reason to be optimist because literature and anthropology are such dissimilar enterprises. To write a novel all one needs is a pen and some paper. As Robert Penn Warren once observed, Southerners have always been devoted to two pastimes: story-telling and fornication. Both of these activities are engrossing, he says, and neither requires any expenditure of money. But I don't have to tell anthropologists that our scholarly endeavors are not nearly so engrossing as story telling or fornication, and unlike writers, anthropologists need an institutional framework in which to exist. Among other things, we needed a learned society in the South that would foster scholarly communication on all things anthropological.

In the 1960's anthropology in the South had nowhere to go but up. Although it is hard to imagine today, in the 1960's and 1970's American anthropologists looked askance at their brethren who took jobs in the South. I well remember when I took a job at the University of Georgia in 1964. It was as if I had gone to work for the enemy. In the 1960's and 1970's, the American Anthropological Association at its annual meetings provided a form that fresh Ph.D.'s filled in for the region in which the applicant preferred to be placed. Quite a few applicants wrote: "Anywhere but the
The first meeting

Anthropologists in the South came together at the annual meeting of the Southern Sociological Society in New Orleans in April, 1966. In those days, anthropology in the South was very much in the shadow of sociology. Included in the Sociology program for that year, we anthropologists had two volunteered sessions of papers. They were chaired by Asael Hansen of the University of Alabama and Harriet Kupferer of UNC-Greensboro, with a total of ten papers between them. The most significant event at this meeting is that on the afternoon of April 8, the anthropologists attended an ad hoc organizational meeting, with Frank J. Essene of the University of Kentucky presiding. The forty-two persons present moved by voice vote to form a society to be called the Southern Anthropological Society.

I do not remember who proposed that we be named the Southern Anthropological Society, but perhaps it just emerged from the meeting, with no particular authorship. I do remember that Frank Essene particularly liked the acronym SAS—sass. I liked it too. Certainly all in my generation who grew up in the South had been admonished by our mothers that the young and the brash should never, never talk back to or sass the old and the settled. The SAS was certainly young, and I hoped that it would be brash. I recall that I once thought of proposing that the SAS adopt as a logo the woodpecker motif that shows up in the iconography of late prehistoric Mississippian Indians in several parts of the South. It depicts a woodpecker—possibly an ivory-bill—with its crest flaring, its beak open, regarding its viewer with a single baleful eye. I can never look at this sprightly little Mississippian woodpecker without thinking of Woody Woodpecker and his sassy, mocking laugh. [This woodpecker is on the cover of this issue—Ed.]

At the organizational meeting we put up three nominees to stand for election as first president of the SAS: John Honigmann, Asael Hansen, and Frank Essene. Honigmann declined to be considered. The two remaining candidates left the room. We elected Hansen president, and by acclimation Frank Essene was elected Vice President. Harriet J. Kupferer was elected secretary-treasurer, and I was elected program chairman for the next meeting. Before we left the room, Frank Essene challenged us to put our money where our mouths were, and all of those present at the meeting put in a dollar apiece into a hat that was passed. The duties of the secretary-treasurer were not great that first year.

We decided that for the time being, we would continue to meet with the Southern Sociological Society, but insofar as possible, we should organize our papers into a separate program. We discussed what was to be our relationship with the Southeastern Archaeological Conference (SEAC), which, founded in 1939, was well established by 1966.

The second meeting

Our second meeting in the spring of 1967 is the only one we jointly with the American Anthropological Society. Our 1966 meeting had been structured more like that of the organized sessions of the American Anthropological Association than that of the American Anthropological Association. At that time, the secretary-treasurer of the American Anthropological Association was Patrick of UNC-Greensboro, and he used that meeting to circulate a draft of a constitutions, which was passed. Later, the American Anthropological Association was able to circulate it among its members and received a lot of comment. From the beginning, the SAS recognized the possibility of publishing proceedings. Later, something like a quarter-page of the American Anthropological Association. From the beginning, the SAS recognized the possibility of publishing proceedings. Later, something was added to the constitutions, which was passed. 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established by 1966 and had its own traditions. But nothing was decided on this matter, except to notify SEAC of our existence and of our future plans.

The SAS officers met in November in Pittsburgh on the occasion of the 1966 American Anthropological Association meeting. Among matters we discussed there were: (1) the production of a newsletter, (2) some way to encourage and recognize student papers, and (3) the possibility of publishing an annual proceedings. Later Frank Essene drew up a draft of a constitution and by-laws and circulated it among the officers for comment. From typos in the draft I judge that he used the constitution and by-laws of the American Ethnological Society as a model. At that time Essene was, I believe, treasurer of the AES.

The second meeting

Our second SAS meeting, in the spring of 1967 in Atlanta, was again held jointly with the Southern Sociological Society. Our 1967 program was more structured than our first, including both organized sessions and volunteered sessions. We had seven sessions in all, with twenty-seven papers, plus a general session entitled "Developmental Change in Underdeveloped Areas," jointly sponsored by the SSS and the SAS.

As it turned out, for the anthropologists the strongest thematic sessions at this meeting were the two sessions on medical anthropology, organized by Ralph Patrick of UNC and Thomas Weaver, then of the University of Kentucky. This was at a time when anthropologists were just beginning to divide up into specialized bands, and the very idea of medical anthropology was new and chic.

The officers of the SAS convened three times at that second meeting. We discussed whether we should continue meeting with the sociologists. The advantages were that their existing infrastructure made our task of organizing a meeting much easier, but having a separate society would give anthropology a visibility in the South that it lacked and needed. We discussed raising our dues to support the publishing of a proceedings. We decided that in 1969 we would meet jointly with the American Ethnological Society, but the location of the meeting was not known at that time. The executive committee nominated me to serve as editor of the proceedings, and no other contenders being present, the job fell to me.

The Proceedings

What kind of a proceedings were we to have? Publishing all of the papers presented at a meeting would be prohibitively expensive, and it would make it impossible to insure a high standard of scholarship. Essene argued in favor of the American Ethnological Society model, in which the annual proceedings were devoted to a single topic. As a practical man, he noted that the printings of AES proceedings always sold out.

This is the direction that we took. And after some initial fumbling, we
evolved a procedure in which the Society would feature at its annual meeting a key symposium, which would be largely shaped by the college or university sponsoring the meeting for that year. The idea was that we would include all or most of the invited papers at the key symposium into the published proceedings, as well as a few papers that were volunteered or otherwise solicited. If this could be done, it would foster a thematic focus to each meeting and the published proceedings could have enough integrity as books that they could enjoy sales beyond our membership. This would make the activities and scholarship of the SAS visible to the profession at large and it held out the possibility of placing the proceedings series on a sound fiscal basis. As I look back, I realize that both Frank Essene and I were fiscal conservatives, even cheapskates.

If I seem to be mentioning Frank Essene's name rather frequently, it is no accident. I took my first anthropology course from him at the University of Kentucky in 1957. I like to describe the 1950's as the desert of my life. It was a dreadfully gray, conformist era. At that time Elvis Presley was just loosening up his pelvis, and the Beatles were still a pimply foursome in Liverpool. In such an era, as an undergraduate student I found the relativity of anthropology to be exhilarating, and Frank Essene's story-telling, salty language, and iconoclastic sense of humor made it irresistible.

At the general business meeting of the society in 1967, the membership voted in favor of an alarming increase in our dues. They were to be tripled—from $1.00 per year to $3.00 per year. The increase would be used to finance the publication of the proceedings series, the first number of which would be devoted to medical anthropology. We did not reach any decision on where to meet in 1968. It was left up to the officers to decide where that would be.

This was the year in which the University of Georgia Press agreed to publish our first proceedings. I have not done any research on this, but my recollection is that in 1967-68, aside from some archaeology titles, Southern university presses had published next to nothing in the field of anthropology. My long-term strategy was that if we could get a single Southern university press publishing anthropology, then perhaps other Southern university presses would become interested. The first SAS proceedings was Essays in Medical Anthropology, edited by Thomas Weaver. It was produced very cheaply, by photo-offset from a typescript, and again the format was patterned after that of the AES Proceedings. An initial run of 500 copies was printed by the University of Georgia Press for a total cost of $648.00.

The third meeting, 1968

At the time of our third SAS meeting in 1968 we still had not worked out a fail-safe mechanism by which the key symposium would be selected. That year we somehow managed to get a program that listed four key symposia: physical anthropology, a plenary session on the Anthropology Curriculum Project, and two sessions on urban and rural communities, and chaired by Edward Adams. As it turned out, the medical anthropology was to be selected as the second proceedings volume, Frank Essene was the editor. And this was only because of the complexity of having multiple key symposia. That year in the future, proceedings should be submitted to SAS and subject to a selection process, as the general preference was to deal with a single topic.

One of our meetings, 1968 was to expand these calculations I made in our second year of existence. The greatest number of votes were for: North Carolina with 14, Florida 10, Louisiana 8, Mississippi 7 each in Tennessee, Alabama. We had to deal with our frontiers, and meet in such border towns as: North Carolina, Mississippi, Arkansas, South Carolina. At those days we had to deal with our frontiers, and meet in such border towns as: North Carolina, Mississippi, Arkansas, South Carolina.

The fourth meeting, 1969

Our 1969 meeting was held jointly within the University of Georgia and the Ethnological Society of the American Ethnological Society held jointly within the Ethnological Society of the American Ethnological Society. It was to be held in the University of Georgia and the Ethnological Society of the American Ethnological Society.
sessions on urban anthropology organized and chaired by Elizabeth Eddy and Richard Adams. As it turned out, urban anthropology was to be selected as the subject of the second proceedings, and Elizabeth Eddy was the editor. A few feathers were ruffled because of the confusion over having multiple key symposia, and I later argued that in the future, proposals for key symposia should be submitted to the officers of the SAS and subject to their approval. For one thing, as the general editor of the series, my preference was that I should only have to deal with a single volume editor.

One of our concerns in the SAS in 1968 was to expand our membership. By calculations I made at some point—perhaps in our second year—we had 88 members. The greatest number of members were in North Carolina which had 15, Georgia had 14, Florida 10, Louisiana 9, and there were 7 each in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama. We had zero members in Mississippi, Arkansas, West Virginia, and South Carolina. One of our strategies in those days was to recruit new members on our frontiers, and thus we endeavored to meet in such border states as Texas and Missouri.

The fourth meeting, 1969

Our 1969 meeting, our fourth, was held jointly with the American Ethnological Society in New Orleans. Miles Richardson was program chairman, and the organization of that meeting and the key symposium went very smoothly. The mechanism and guidelines with which we operated for many years were finally in place. The title of the key symposium was "Anthropologists and their Assumptions," the most theoretical of any of our key symposia up to that point. Stephen Tyler, then of Tulane, chaired this symposium and served as editor of the proceedings. For me, the outstanding event at this meeting is that on the SAS key symposium Eric Wolf presented a trenchant historical analysis of theory in American anthropology. We were the first to publish his paper and subsequently it was reprinted several times. Moreover, the AES theme that year was "Symbolism in Ritual, Myth, and Folklore," and present were such anthropologists as Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, Terence Turner, Peter Riviere, David Schneider, Melford Spiro, Nancy Munn, and James Peacock. I think we all went home that year with the feeling that this meeting had put the SAS on the map.

The fifth meeting

The 1970 meeting, our 5th, was held in Athens, Georgia. Our membership had grown. In that year we had 361 members in 35 states, and we had a few members in foreign countries. The first two proceedings had sold surprisingly well, with many textbook adoptions. For that meeting I organized a key symposium entitled "Red, White, and Black: Symposium on Indians in the Old South." One innovation in 1970 was that the University of Georgia Press began publishing the proceedings series by letter press in a large paperback format. This was more expen-
sive, but it produced a more professional looking publication, and we still use essentially this same format today.

A second innovation in 1970 was that we produced an extra or bonus proceedings—*The Not So Solid South*, a collection of papers mostly from SAS meetings, edited by J. Kenneth Morland. My reasoning in attempting to institute occasional extra proceedings was that if the SAS accrued a surplus of funds based partly on the sale of its proceedings, a good use of that surplus might be to use it to support the publication of innovative scholarly works. That is, in addition to the annual proceedings based on the key symposium, as finances permitted we could bring out innovative or timely collections of papers, or even an occasional worthy monograph. But this was an idea that went nowhere. Only one such extra proceedings was ever produced. (I still think it is a good idea.)

Another publishing venture I was involved in that did not pan out was the Mooney manuscript award. The University of Tennessee Press approached me in 1972 with a proposal to establish a manuscript prize and publication of book-length works describing or interpreting New World populations. I was at first delighted by this turn of events, because this is precisely the stimulation for publishing anthropology in the South that I had hoped for. The problem was that judging the manuscripts was a lot of work. Both the person in charge of the competition and the judges had a heavy workload in sifting through the entries. We did make awards to several manuscripts—three, I think. But in some years there was no prizeworthy manuscript submitted, and this made it seem that the competition had lost its momentum. Also, we missed out on publishing two manuscripts that would have brought distinction to the competition but for various reasons fell through. In time the Mooney manuscript prize faltered and lapsed. Subsequently the Mooney prize was resurrected as a book prize—a competition for books already in print—a much better idea.

**Gilgamesh at the 6th meetings**

If I had any doubts about the claim of the SAS to originality or brashness, they ended during the course of the 6th annual meeting in Dallas, Texas. That was when Miles Richardson hitched up his socks and strode to the lectern to read a paper entitled: "Gilgamesh and Christ: Two Contradictory Models of Man in Search of a Better World." I cannot recall a more rapt audience at a professional meeting. And as I listened to Miles' paper, I started thinking again about that Mississippi woodpecker as a logo.

At one point in the early days we considered whether to merge our finances with the AAA, as many anthropological organizations were doing. We decided to remain separate because we thought we could operate with less overhead than the AAA. We were fiscally separate from the AAA, but if I had any worry that we were also philosophically separate, that ended in 1978 when the SAS resolution to boycott the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution was ratified. The consequence of this resolution was that North Carolina, which had accepted Appalachian State University to host the meeting in 1980, changed their opinion that they would host SAS and there in 1980, the SAS resolution to boycott the ERA did not pass in North Carolina. Sol Kimball, the SAS president, explained that the Southern states were Kentucky and the border state. And yet the majority of Appalachian states voted to meet there in 1980, our own boycott.

**Looking back**

At the end of a year, we take satisfaction in what has been accomplished. We have our own society, and in it...
1978 when the SAS membership passed a resolution to boycott any state that had not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution. As a consequence of this resolution, we could not accept Appalachian State University's bid to host the meeting in 1979. Some were of the opinion that we could probably meet there in 1980, their assumption being that North Carolina would ratify the ERA. But it seems that North Carolina politicians were not exactly quaking in their boots because of the SAS resolution, and the ERA did not pass in North Carolina. In 1980, Sol Kimball, then the SAS president, complained that the SAS was strangling itself by the boycott. The only Southern states that had ratified the ERA were Kentucky and Tennessee, along with the border states of Texas and Missouri. And yet the majority of the SAS membership would not budge on the boycott. However, the membership did vote in favor of making an "exception" in the case of Appalachian State University, and we voted to meet there in 1982—defiance of our own boycott.

Looking back

At our 30th SAS meeting we can take satisfaction in what we have accomplished. We have a small but strong society, and in my opinion that is the best kind. We have created a forum for anthropologists in the South and a context in which our students can present their first papers. One has only to scan the list of titles in the SAS proceedings series to see that we have served up a diversified bill of fare. We have dealt with theoretical topics and with topics in applied anthropology, but we have not slighted empirical research on several aspects of the fascinating region in which we live and work.

As a senior citizen, I assume that I am entitled to give some advice. I was taken aback when Wilfrid Bailey pointed out that I was the only member of the University of Georgia anthropology faculty present at the 1996 SAS meeting. That led me to the realization that there must be only a very few SAS members at the University of Georgia now. The University of Georgia is not what it was in 1966. The pressure is very great to demonstrate one's participation in scholarly activities that are identifiable national or international. An unfortunate corollary of this is that anything that is identifiable regional is undervalued. It is assumed to be second rate.

Because of this prejudice, I would argue that the membership frontier that the SAS ought to be cultivating today is the larger departments in the South—the very departments that initially pioneered the SAS. The SAS has for the most part been
built by young people who were on the make professionally. Perhaps one of our challenges in the future could be to devise ways of attracting the participation of faculty and students in the large departments. The SAS proceedings are still a flexible medium, and there is no reason why the SAS cannot be a context in which to sponsor the most exciting, cutting-edge thought our field has to offer.

Now I want to exercise my prerogative as a senior citizen to make some crankier observations. In addition to the SAS, I belong to the Southern Historical Association. I have to say that in comparison to SAS meetings, in my opinion the level of critical discourse is higher in the SHA than it is in the SAS. In the sessions at the annual meetings of the SHA, one feels that within the audience of any particular symposium there are a substantial number of people who have done research on the topic under discussion. Hence the possibility of critical argumentation is always potential, if not actual. At SHA meetings it is usual for entire sessions to be devoted to a couple of papers, or even to a single paper or recent notable book, with discussants who have closely read these papers and books and who will stand and deliver criticism that can be pointed and even unsparing. As we all know, this is one of the principal ways in which knowledge is improved.

Perhaps the kind of fissioning of anthropology that was beginning when the SAS was first formed has now gone so far that such critical intensity is not possible. If so, that is too bad. I once heard a friend say that a particular anthropological theory was so patently absurd that only an academic would take it seriously. My friend was, of course, exaggerating. But the quality of thought is well served by focused debate and criticism, and anyone who doubts that a softening or blurring of criticism can have a deleterious effect on scholarship should read Alan Sokal's (1996) account of the satirical hoax he perpetrated on the journal Social Text (see also Fish 1996). The fact that Sokal was able to get a paper full of high-sounding, trendy, gibberish past coterie peer review speaks volumes. One of our motives in organizing SAS meetings around key symposia was to foster intellectual intensity and criticism. So, perhaps the quality of the critical give-and-take at SAS meetings can be notched up by simply tweaking our present arrangements a bit.

I take pleasure on this occasion to wish the SAS a happy 30th anniversary, and may it have many more to come. If Woody Woodpecker could be asked for a few words on this occasion, can anyone doubt that he would say anything but: ha, ha, ha, haaaaaa, ha.

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