

JAMES C. GIFFORD  
(1927 - 1973)

Robert ELIOT SMITH

As an Archaeologist James C. Gifford has played a very distinctive role in the development of taxonomy and typology. He was one of the co-authors of the Type-Variety Concept as a method for analyzing pottery. He amplified this concept by establishing a publication, *Ceramica de Cultura Maya*, with a primary function of listing all of the new place and geographic names used in the archaeological nomenclature of the Maya territory and neighboring regions. He was also especially interested in the archaeology of Mesoamerica with particular reference to the Ancient Maya. His other major interests included: synthesis, prehistory as anthropology; the Prehistory of Pennsylvania, and the History of Archaeology.

James C. Gifford was born in 1927 in New York City. He lived in New Canaan, Connecticut until father's death in 1940 when the family moved west and Jim attended the Thatcher School in California and Fountain Valley School in Colorado Springs. His interests in science and scientific collecting developed early and by the time he graduated from high school he had personally acquired and arranged significant butterfly and mineral collections. These were subsequently donated to the Museum of Northern Arizona. He climbed many of Colorado's high peaks and journeyed down the Green River and a portion of the Colorado River. It was on this latter river trip that he discovered an ancient Indian pot eroding from the bank of a tributary and from then on anthropology became his vocation and his hobby.

His education continued at the University of Arizona where he received his B. A. in 1951 and M. A. in 1957. His military service intervened from 1953 to 1955. Then in 1963 he received his Ph. D. in Anthropology from Harvard University.

Jim was employed at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University,

Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959-1964, first as Research Assistant in Middle American Archaeology and later as Research Archaeologist. It was during these years that we became closely associated both on matters of Ceramic analysis and nomenclature as well as in various Maya ceramic projects. It was a pleasure to work with Jim. He had a keen analytical mind especially well qualified for the resolution of problems dealing with ceramic classification. He was one of ten archaeologists selected to take part in a Conference on Maya Lowland Ceramics in Guatemala City in 1965.

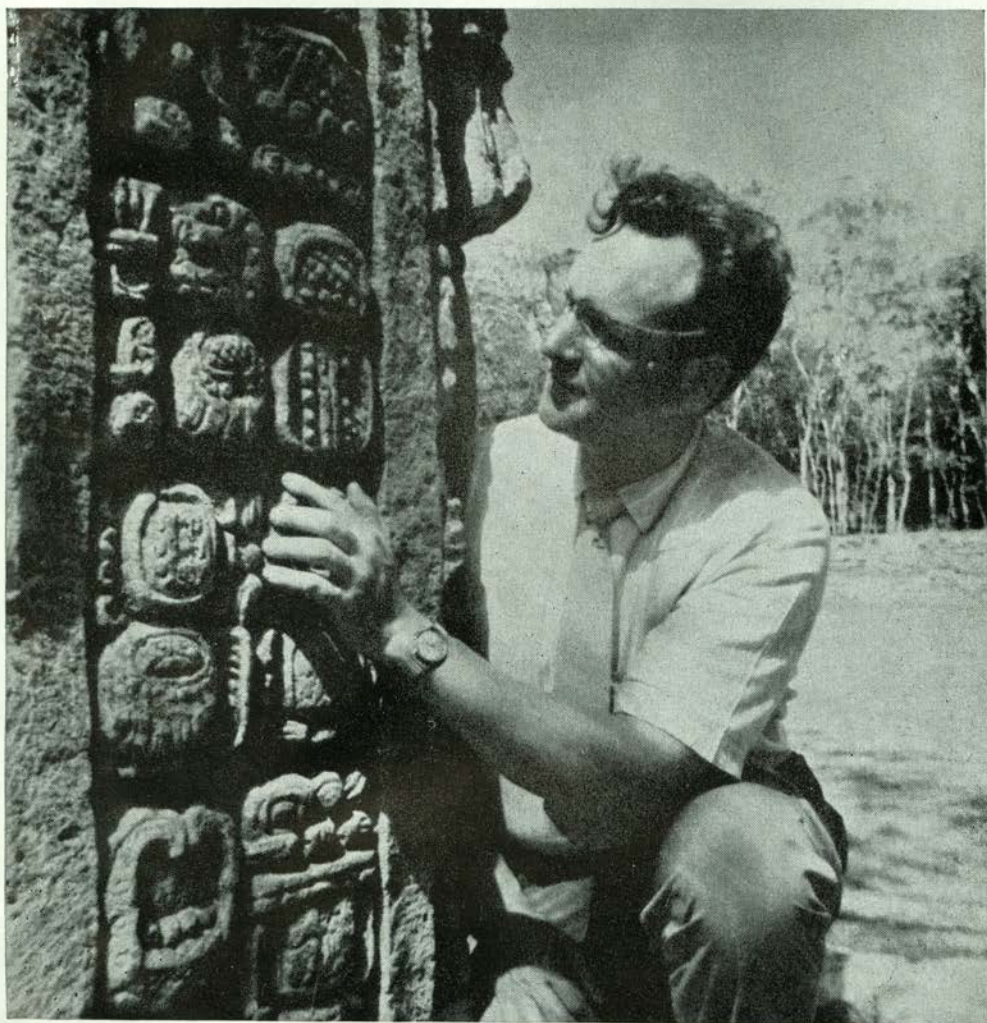
From the Peabody Museum Jim moved on to Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania as Assistant Profesor of Anthropolgy, 1964-1969 and later as Associate Professor of Anthropolgy. He was a Fellow of the American Anthropological Association and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was also a Member of the Society for American Archaeology and the Classification Society.

Jim's field experience and travels to study ceramic collections cover the years 1950 - 1967, as follows:

- Arizona, 1950-1952, Point of Pines, University of Arizona Archaeological Field Station.
- Arizona, 1952, Excavations at Pine Flat Cave.
- México, 1952, Chihuahua, Barranca del Cobre Tarahumara Material Culture.
- Arizona, 1955, Excavations at Red Bow Cliff Dwelling.
- Guatemala, 1960, Tikal, University of Pennsylvania Archaeological Field Station.
- Mexico, 1965, Yucatan, Merida, Andrews Archaeological Field Station.
- Mexico, 1965, Chiapas, Palenque, Rands Archaeological Field Station.
- El Salvador, 1967 (Spring), Chalchuapa, University of Pennsylvania Archaeological Field Station.
- Mexico, 1967 (Summer), Chiapas, Tuxtla, New World Archaeological Foundation Field Station.
- Mexico, 1967, San Cristobal Las Casas, Zinacantan Material Culture.

At the time of his death Jim was working on a ceramic report. A Study of Maya Pottery from the Site of Barton Ramie in British Honduras to be published by the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, Cambridge. The present status of this work is reported





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by Carol A. Gifford and I quote: "I have decided to try to pull together all of Jim's work on the Barton Ramie pottery and hope to have a manuscript in Dr. Willely's hands in approximately a year. Tentative title is *Prehistoric Pottery Analysis and the Ceramics of Barton Ramie, British Honduras* by James C. Gifford. It will contain the type-variety conceptual approach and its applications to Barton Ramie as presented in his Ph. D. dissertation, and brief type descriptions by me, Muriel Kirkpatrick, and perhaps some early types by Robert J. Sharer, with illustrations by Muriel Kirkpatrick, to be published as a Peabody Museum Paper."

Carol proceeds: "We hope to continue the *Ceramica de Cultura Maya et al.* Newsletter. I have asked Dr. Richard E. W. Adams (University of Texas at San Antonio) and Dr. Robert J. Sharer (University of Pennsylvania) to be Editorial Advisors of *Ceramica*, and Muriel Kirkpatrick (Laboratory of Anthropology, Temple University) will remain as Coordinator. She intends to keep up-to-date the pottery type name listing and hopes that as new names are applied to ceramic units, authors will send the information to her."

During his last months Jim made every effort to meet his commitments. He conducted an archaeological field school in central Pennsylvania in June of 1972. During the last week of excavations the flood from Hurricane Agnes isolated their living quarters and it took several days for all students to be safely returned to Philadelphia. A few weeks later an electrical fire burned the Temple University Law Library and the laboratory Jim had been assigned in the basement of that building was destroyed, including current Maya ceramic work, personal books and collections.

In late August, he travelled to Cambridge, England delivered a paper at the Mesoamerica Symposium at the University of Cambridge. He seemed to regain strength in the fall, but in early December heart and kidney failure forced him into the hospital for the third and final time. In addition to his wife, he is survived by two children, Sharon K. (age 9) and James S. (age 4), his mother, and a brother.

Jim had a great deal more to contribute to anthropology and he will be missed not only as a scholar but as a person.



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(Compiled by Carol A. Gifford)

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