

Personal Statement for Doctoral Program in Anthropology (Archaeology)

The peculiar fact that archaeology is both a social and physical science forms the basis of my attraction to the study. The process whereby information gained from chemistry and geology is transformed into statements about human culture and society fascinates me. I have chosen to study archaeology because it is one of the few fields I have found which demands a knowledge of metallurgy in order to make statements about trade networks, or of religious forms to understand settlement patterning – in short, an open and enquiring mind into all aspects of the past and present world as basis for an understanding of humankind. I am applying to Brown University because my investigations have led me to believe that I will find an atmosphere of intellectual interest and diversity in faculty, students, and course work paralleling those I would like to see in myself.

An overworked catechism among marine archaeologists is that “there is no such thing as marine archaeology, only archaeology under water,” but after four years of exposure to the field I am skeptical. The dichotomy in archaeology between technique and technology on the one hand, and the questions of human social processes which these try to answer, is not fully appreciated by many. My experiences on projects in Jamaica, Bermuda, and Italy, and my personal research into the matter, had led me to believe that technique exists in marine archaeology apart from any humanistic component and that most researchers follow the Gary Cooper school of “shoot first, ask questions later.” Even after thirty years, most of its intellectual parameters continue to be defined not by the archaeologists, but by the artifacts themselves. Although there is no doubt that other institutions in the United States and abroad offer fine education in the techniques of marine archaeology, techniques, in and of themselves, hold little interest for me. These techniques should only be a means, and my studies at Brown will be directed toward understanding and defining an end.

In general, therefore, what I would like to do while at Brown is to examine the nature of the interaction between human social processes and the maritime environment and to see what light marine archaeology can throw on existing questions of human culture change. On a more specific level I am currently interested in the following questions: Did the deforestation of Crete lead to the decline of the Minoan civilization as a sea-power, was the site of Troy and inevitability given the nature of the Hellespont and the abilities of Bronze Age shipping; and at what point in time, if at all, were the Mycenaeans able to penetrate the Black Sea to the Danube, perhaps for tin from Bohemia?

Given the nature of these questions it seems logical that I should stay at Oxford. My professors are pleased with my work to date and have asked me to stay on to complete a D.Phil. There are two reasons for which I have chosen to apply to Brown instead of staying on. On a pragmatic level I have financed my year here without any financial aid by working for two years: I am unwilling to spend the equivalent of a small condominium or two BMW's for three more years. Money aside, I enjoy teaching and intend to make a career of it at the

This candidate is clearly going to be an asset to any department he might join. In the second paragraph he has articulated his reasons for selecting a school stronger in archaeology than in marine archaeology and it would seem that any school would be interested in his affiliation with Oxford's Marine Archaeological Research Expedition (M.A.R.E.). This is another example of a student who is going to excel regardless of whether he is admitted to any particular program.

A student who brings intellectual queries with him is more interesting than one who expect to be told what to investigate.

Of course Brown would love to be told why it is a better choice than Oxford.

GRADUATE ADMISSIONS ESSAY

university level. Oxford does not emphasize teaching for its graduate students, and I feel that an important part of my education is lacking. Although I will be leaving Oxford I will maintain my ties here and I expect that my involvement with M.A.R.E. (the Marine Archaeological Research Expedition) will continue, allowing both myself, and hopefully other students at Brown, an opportunity to do marine archaeology in the Mediterranean.

In conclusion, I would like to say that given my interest and concerns, I feel Brown is the very best place for me to be. The facilities, scholarships, and traditions of the institution, combined with the calibre of the student body, make me confident that I will be stimulated throughout the course of my studies. I feel confident of my ability to succeed and hope that I have demonstrated a commitment to, and some ability in, the study of archaeology.