

# Introduction: Contextualizing Recent Developments in the History of Archaeology

## *Introducción: Contextualizando recientes desarrollos en la historia de la arqueología*

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As it happened with many other sciences, during most part of the 20th century, the history of archaeology was typically considered as an unexciting but harmless amusement, a discipline that added nothing to archaeological knowledge. In a context in which evolutionist, culture-historical and processual archaeologists trivialized historical studies, works on the history of archaeology were rare and typically devoted to praising the story of the great archaeological discoveries. In England, for instance, most stories of archaeology were written to entertain the public, with the notable exception of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century monographs by Glyn Daniel and Stuart Piggott. In France, only a small number of works in the history of archaeology were of historiographical value. In the United States, the first substantial contributions to the history of American archaeology only appeared in the late 1960s. As these examples illustrate, in the early years of archaeological research the history of archaeology attracted little attention among professional archaeologists, historians and historians of science.

Starting in the 1980s and accelerating through the last three decades, studies in the history of archaeology have greatly diversified. There are a number of signs indicating that the discipline has ceased to be considered as unimportant for most archaeologists and it is now considered as essential for getting a better understanding of archaeological practice. First, in recent years we have witnessed a signifi-

cant increase in the number of papers on historiography. For instance, with the exception of the most scientifically oriented publications (e.g. *Journal of Archaeological Science*, *Journal of Human Evolution*), mainstream archaeological journals such as *Antiquity*, *Archaeological Dialogues*, *Journal of Social Archaeology* and *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* are now publishing several articles per year dedicated to the history of archaeology. Second, this growing concern with historical studies has resulted in the appearance of new publications explicitly devoted to historiography. For instance, the *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology*, currently edited by Timothy Murray, has been publishing research on the history of archaeology since 1991. More recently, Oxford University Press created in 2006 a new series of publications (*Oxford Studies in the History of Archaeology*) that focuses on the history of archaeology throughout the world. Third, in the last three decades historical studies have been professionalized. A new generation of scholars is teaching courses on the history of archaeology in many universities all around the world, creating and sustaining networks with other scientists (including historians, sociologists and historians of science) and training young scholars who are enriching the field by examining new historical sources.

There are a number of factors that explain this increased interest in the history of archaeology. Beginning in the 1970s, postmodernism and its em-

phasis on relativism has influenced many social and human sciences, including archaeology. The works of Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Thomas Kuhn, David Bloor and many others promote the idea that scientific knowledge is historically and socially constituted. In this setting, numerous archaeologists as of the 1980s have examined how archaeological interpretations have been historically determined by a number of political, social and gender prejudices. Furthermore, research on the socio-politics of the past has been fuelled by a growing interest in the studies of nationalism and colonialism. The numerous political conflicts that arose in the last decade of the twentieth century (e.g. the constitution of new states following the collapse of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the nationalistic struggles in Spain and the United Kingdom) have encouraged a growing interest in nationalism for many social sciences. Alongside this, the emergence of post-colonial studies in the 1970s has inaugurated an intense reflection on the global effects of Western imperialism upon the former colonies. In this setting, the recurrent use of archaeological data to justify both nationalist and colonialist agendas since the 19<sup>th</sup> century has made archaeology an ideal discipline for addressing some of the issues that are currently of interest to social scientists.

Together with these worldwide trends, the recent vogue of historical studies in archaeology has also benefited from a number of specific developments in different countries. For instance, the history of archaeology played an essential role in the rise of post-processual approaches in the US and the UK during the 1980s. In a context in which archaeology was largely dominated by positivism and its emphasis on objectivity and rationality, the history of archaeology was a useful tool to demonstrate that a wide range of political, social and economic factors can (and do) influence archaeological interpretations. After all, even the most stubborn positivists could accept that archaeological research had been used to legitimize totalitarian regimes (such as German Nazism and Italian Fascism) or to dispossess aboriginal peoples (as it happened in North America). The corollary of this proposition was that if archaeological interpretations had been used to legitimize political interpretations in the past, they might also serve political ends in the present.

While the history of archaeology became an element of innovation in the English-speaking world, the new historiography that emerged in the 1980s in France strongly aligned with history and history of science. It is not by chance that French historiographies of archaeology have been written mainly by historians, historians of science or archaeologists

trained in historiographical research (including Noël Coye, Nathalie Richard, Alain Schnapp, Arnaud Hurel, Wiktor Stockowski, Marc-Antoine Kaeser). In this setting, the discipline has closely followed trends in the history of mentalities (*l'histoire des mentalités*) and the history of ideas. As a result of this orientation, French historians of archaeology have given rise to a greater understanding of a number of theoretical, methodological and epistemological problems.

In the case of Germany, after a long period in which historical studies attracted little attention among archaeologists, the last decades have witnessed an explosion of work in the history of archaeology. As it happened with other social sciences, German archaeologists have been particularly attracted to examine the influence of Nazism in the interpretation of archaeological data. For instance, they have examined how the Nazi regime used archaeology to support 'racial hygiene' views, how archaeologists contributed to legitimize political agendas and how archaeological institutions under the auspices of National Socialism were a crucial element in ensuring the survival of the regime.

As these examples illustrate, the recent expansion of the history of archaeology is related both to (A) a number of trends common to most social sciences and (B) a number of parallel evolutions of the discipline in different national contexts.

The volume now in your hands seeks to grasp the plurality of perspectives, sources, and approaches that characterize current research in the history of archaeology. While the papers in this volume do not follow a strict thematic order, their contributions open new horizons in three interrelated areas of historical research. First, they promote a number of original approaches to examine the disciplinary past. Second, they incorporate innovative methodologies into their research. Third, they consider alternative historical sources that allow archaeologists to explore their history from different viewpoints.

To begin, a number of contributors to this volume put into question prevalent ideas and paradigms in the history of archaeology. For instance, Alain Schnapp interrogates the widespread interpretation of antiquarianism as a mere pre-scientific period in the history of archaeological thought. As he examines in his paper, there are important continuities between antiquarian and archaeological research; in particular, both disciplines seem to be firmly rooted in a universal curiosity about the past. Timothy Murray discusses the relationship between history and theory in archaeology. In the last few years numerous authors have demonstrated that the history of archaeology is important to archaeology;

Murray goes a step further and argues that historiography is fundamental for evaluating archaeological theory. He suggests a number of ways in which historiography may help archaeological theory to move forward in the evaluation of archaeological theories.

In a self-reflexive context, a number of authors in this volume put into question the notion that archaeology is *essentially* a nationalistic science, an idea that has been customary in recent historiographical research. Contrary to this belief, these scholars effectively demonstrate that internationalism also played an important role in the constitution of scientific archaeology. For instance, Jose María Lanzarote examines the essential role of the French *Institut de Paléontologie Humaine* in the development of prehistoric archaeology in Spain; Francisco Pelayo López and Rodolfo Gozalo Gutiérrez situate the discovery of prehistoric humankind in Spain within its international context in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; and Eduardo Palacio-Pérez shows in his paper that during the same time period in France, the complex relationships between science and religion played an essential role in the constitution of prehistoric archaeology.

Additionally, many papers in this volume examine the history of archaeology from the lens of the sociology of science. Since the 1980s, social studies of science have greatly contributed to the understanding of many social dimensions of scientific research; yet historians of archaeology have traditionally been reluctant to evaluate the different social facets involved in the production of archaeological knowledge. As many of the papers included in this volume illustrate, this situation has changed in recent years. For instance, Andrew Christenson references recent sociological literature so as to examine the process of professionalization in American archaeology and the creation of boundaries between professionals and amateurs. He demonstrates that academic boundaries are not necessarily natural for the discipline and examines how they were created through a long process of professionalization. Nathan Schlanger examines Jules Rebourg's contribution to the archaeological foundation of prehistory. Forgotten by the historians of archaeology, Rebourg established the succession of flaked, knapped and polished stone tools at the French site of Levallois. Alice Kehoe draws together the history of archaeology and the history of science to examine the history of professionalization of North American scientific archaeology. She dissects the Myth of Columbus that has legitimated the European conquest of America and the colonization of American First Nations. Marc-Antoine Kaeser examines his biography of Eduard Desor in an aim to overcome

the false dichotomy between the history of ideas and the social studies of science. While these approaches have often been considered opposed to each other, Kaeser shows how biographical studies can integrate both perspectives in a productive way. Margarita Díaz-Andreu explores the influence of Miles Burkitt's trips to Spain and France (1912-1913) on the textbooks he wrote in the 1920s (*Prehistory, Our Forerunners, Our Early Ancestors* and *The Old Stone Age*). With reference to studies in the geography and sociology of knowledge, she provides an illustrative example of how archaeological knowledge is transmitted through time and space.

The use of archival materials is a central concern for many of the contributing authors of this volume. Broadening the use of archival materials, they go beyond conventional historical studies, which often limit themselves to examining only published books and papers. For instance, Alexander Smirnov's examination of the intertwining of politics and archaeology during the Russian Empire heavily relies on the analysis of an impressive number of archives. Smirnov succeeds in demonstrating the links between Russian politics and Russian archaeological research during the Russian Empire. Francisco Gracia Alonso examines the relationship between archaeology and nationalism in Catalonia at the turn of the twentieth century. His research is founded on an exhaustive investigation of the archives of the History and Archaeology Section of the Institute of Catalan Studies. Archival materials such as personal diaries, correspondences, notes, drafts for lectures and unpublished papers are at the base of Marc-Antoine Kaeser's research on Eduard Desor. Oscar Moro Abadía calls into question the traditional definition of archives as privileged spaces in which historical texts are kept and studied. Focusing on the case of Juan de Vilanova y Piera, one of the first scientists to accept the authenticity of Altamira paintings, he suggests that archives are highly theoretical constructions determining historical interpretations.

Together with this exploration of archival sources, many papers in this volume provide a welcome opportunity to think about new sources for the history of archaeology. For instance, Martijn Eickhoff reflects on the use of oral sources in the history of archaeology. He uses interviews to reconstruct the dynamics of oral memory and community narratives in Dutch archaeology. Similarly, Pamela J. Smith examines how oral historical methodology can contribute to historical studies. She argues that oral interviews can be used in combination with other historical sources to explore the disciplinary past. Interestingly, both Eickhoff and Smith focus on the emotional dynamics created between

the interviewer and the interviewee. The papers by Sudeshna Guha and Neha Gupta enrich this reflection on visualization techniques by highlighting the multiple uses of photographs and GIS methods within archaeological practices. Beyond the traditional understanding of pictures as guarantors of objectivity, Sudeshna Guha explores how the agency of photographs may contribute to a better understanding of the history of archaeological knowledge in South Asia. Neha Gupta examines how archaeologists can use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a method for understanding the history of archaeology. Drawing upon the example of the history of Indian archaeology and the razing of the Babri Masjid mosque in Ajudhya, she convincingly presents innovative research on how GIS may help to examine some of the social and political factors underlying archaeological research. In this search for new archaeological sources, Noël Coye and Beatrice Vigié examine how the scale models created by Hippolyte Augier in the 19<sup>th</sup> century may provide archaeologists with important historical information. The abovementioned examples demonstrate how different kinds of sources can be incorporated into studies dealing with the history of archaeology.

The plurality of perspectives explored in this volume reflects how the history of archaeology has become a captivating, rich and well-established discipline in the last years. Particularly, the discipline provides a credible basis to understand how archaeological interpretations are related to social and political contexts. In this setting, we hope that this volume contributes to the recent wave of interest in historiographical studies.

Several of the papers in this volume go back to a conference of the European research network *Archives of European Archaeology* (AREA) held in Freiburg in 2007. Founded in 1999, AREA is an international research group dedicated to the archives and history of archaeology. Passing through several steps of activities and an increasing number of partners, AREA became an important part of the European *Culture 2000* program for many years. AREA has strongly contributed to the exploration and valorization of all kinds of archives related to archaeology; specifically, their archive-oriented

activities led to the establishment of a database of major European archives relevant to the history of archaeology.

AREA IV, the final stage of the project, focuses on several lines of research: the study of 'Antiquarian traditions' in the centuries prior to the establishment of scientific archaeology; the study of 'Archaeology abroad' as a body of knowledge, practices and practitioners that circulate across the continent and beyond; the study of 'Archaeology under dictatorship', dealing with the instrumentalization of archaeology in extreme historical circumstances; and the assessment of the 'Memory of sites' as foci of identity and national importance.

The Freiburg conference was dedicated to the concept and nature of historical sources referring to archaeology and hence was entitled "Speaking Materials – Sources for the History of Archaeology" (July 27-28, 2007). 'Speaking materials' points to the fact that any relic of the past is or at least can be a matter of historical evidence. Naturally, this is also true for archaeological research from the very beginning in its antiquarian phase. Collecting, reading, writing and drawing have produced objects, collections and a huge variety of written, printed and pictorial sources that provide information on the early history of archaeological interest.

Nevertheless, researchers into the history of archaeology are more likely to be historians than archaeologists. Writing an archaeology of archaeology requires a profound knowledge of historical methods. It is a truly interdisciplinary affair. A history of archaeology is indispensable for anybody engaged in archaeological research; not only is it producing knowledge about the past, it is also creating the distance necessary for a proper understanding of our own research, therefore providing new perspectives for archaeology as a whole.

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