

Historical perspectives on the material culture of archaeology

Session abstract

This session aims to shed light on archaeology and its history from a fresh angle - the material culture of archaeology. Together with various strands of textual evidence (publications, reports, correspondence), the practice of archaeology needs also to be understood through the diverse tangible activities and remains which accompanies it, such as casts, models, dioramas, reconstructions, systems of display and classification, not to mention the equipment used in archaeological excavation and analysis. These diverse tangible remains deserve to be studied in very much the same way that we study the material culture of the remote past, that is, calling on perspectives from material culture studies, anthropology and history of science. Drawing on illuminating historical case-studies, the contributors to this session will address the material conditions surrounding the construction and presentation of archaeological knowledge, and thus contribute to our better understanding of the discipline.

Speakers

Nathan **Schlanger** (AREA, Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris)

Introduction: On the material culture of archaeology.

François **de Polignac** (Centre Louis Gernet, CNRS, Paris)

Images of the soil and conceptions of the site in 18th Century archaeological investigations at ancient Rome

Andrzej **Prinke**, Danuta Prinke (Poznan Archaeological Museum, Poland), Agnieszka Dolatowska (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland)

Archives for the history of aerial archaeology in Central Europe

Andrew **Sherratt**, Corinne Roughley (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)

The equipment of scientific prehistory in Victorian times

Jarl **Nordbladh** (Department of Archaeology, Göteborg University)

Models in archaeology: presentation and pedagogy.

Alexandra **Alexandri** (Archive of Monuments, Hellenic Ministry of Culture)

Casts and Copies: the dissemination of images of antiquity in Greece at the turn of the 20th century.

Sergey A. **Vasil'ev** (Institute of the History of Material Culture, Petersburg)

Changing Views: A history of the representations of prehistory in Russian museum displays.

Rhoda **Cronin** & Elizabeth Twohig (University College Cork, Ireland)

Teaching aids: century-old agendas in the creation of archaeology collections at UCC, Cork.

Kathy **Perrin** (English Heritage, England)

Unlocking the box – The future of archaeological archives in England.

Oliver **Gilkes** (Butrint Foundation, University of East Anglia)

Presenting Fascist Archaeology: The Italian Archaeological Mission to Albania and the presentation of archaeology to the public.

Hubert **Fehr** (Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte und Archäologie des Mittelalters, Freiburg)

Material remains of archaeological propaganda during the "Third Reich".

Abstracts

Introduction: On the material culture of archaeology.

Nathan Schlanger

Just as they are interested in the material culture of the past, so might archaeologists be concerned with the material culture by which this past has been brought into the present. A healthy dose of subtle materialism can thus complement an emphasis on history of ideas and intellectual endeavours, and further highlight the cognitive and ideological stakes surrounding the practicalities of archaeological practice. In this brief introduction, I will only mention the issue of archaeological specimens in transit (with a couple of examples drawn from colonial Africa), while other contributors to this session will critically examine such objects of interest as the surveyed and excavated site, the recovered find, the association, the collectible, the model, the cast, the display, the record, and the archive.

Images of the soil and conceptions of the site in 18th Century archaeological investigations of ancient Rome

François de Polignac

Archaeology appears to be quite obviously a science of fieldwork, geared towards the terrain and the site. This taken-for-granted is in reality the outcome of an intellectual construction, closely associated with the evolution of analytical techniques and the displacement of research questions during the history of the discipline. In the archaeological investigations of ancient Rome undertaken during the 18th Century, the 'site', in the concrete sense of location or soil was effectively absent from the archaeological horizon. While excavation did take place on sites, which were furthermore represented in illustrations of the excavation, the sites themselves effectively vanished behind the key problem which monopolized the attention of all the archaeological actors concerned (antiquarians, collectors, artists...): how to acquire as much knowledge as possible of Antiquity from the recovered objects? For lack of typologies or classification systems which would have linked these objects to given or potential assemblages, almost each unearthed find remained singular. In these conditions, the 'site' was the place where the different archaeological actors, with their distinctive interests and techniques, elaborated working procedures and knowledge structures to overcome the contradiction between singularity and exhaustivity. The setting up of typologies solved the disciplinary problem of the status of the object, and this made it possible for the 'site' to emerge as a distinctive topic of study and interpretation.

Archives for the history of aerial archaeology in Central Europe

Andrzej Prinke, Danuta Prinke, Agnieszka Dolatowska

We present a case study on the practical use of air photos for archaeological aims by comparing the attitude of Polish, German and Czech researchers to this powerful tool of landscape recognition. The primary stimulus to analyse this narrow aspect of history of archaeological research was a spectacular application of this method in Biskupin - a famous water-logged settlement from Late Bronze Age (Mid-Western Poland) by use of several military balloons, including a Zeppelin. This Polish example, together with some others (a series of air photos of Early Slavic strongholds in the province of Greater Poland as well as Late Neolithic coastal settlement in Rzućewo on the Baltic). The result was a set of high quality photo documentation of the chosen archaeological sites. This strategy - of archaeological initiative, mobilizing military specialists and equipment - contrasts with the contemporary practice observed in Germany and Czechoslovakia, where archaeologists rather used to analyse the ready-made routine military documentation. On another hand, the Polish attitude aimed only at documenting the known (and

usually most spectacular) archaeological sites, whereas the British archaeologists used it to discover and locate new sites by applying a sophisticated system of recognition and interpretation of “cropmarks” and “soilmarks”.

At the moment, the main source to the knowledge of this topic in Central Europe are the air photos themselves, while in the case of Great Britain they are supplemented by the original photo and air hardware. One should therefore propose to intensify the research on the material relics of the application of this method and to carry out the adequate retrieval of the archaeological archives.

The Equipment of scientific prehistory in Victorian times

Andrew Sherratt, Corinne Roughley

Museums and archives often preserve a remarkable record of the material culture of early archaeology itself. Although little has been written explicitly about the subject, long-established institutions have accumulated not only the finds from early excavations and fieldwork and their records, but also the containers of the time (especially tobacco tins and cigarette boxes!) and sometimes items of old equipment or personal belongings of archaeologists. These form the material for an archaeology of archaeology in the archaeological sense (as opposed to that of the immaterial Foucauldian metaphor, with its emphasis on abstract epistemes). They thus give important evidence for the history of practice, which complements the “official” histories of archaeology, which deal largely with theory—though Stuart Piggott was unusual in spanning both realms of disciplinary history.

The equipment of the Victorian prehistorian can be reconstructed both from surviving pieces (illustrated here by personalia of Sir John Evans, 1823-1908) and from inferences drawn from the use of particular techniques of recording. The focus of this presentation is on artificial drawing aids (recently tackled on a longer timescale by David Hockney and Martin Kemp), and their use in recording archaeological landscapes, and in particular the megalithic monuments of the Morbihan. The contrast between the work of Sir Henry Dryden, amateur architectural historian, and the Rev. William Lukis, clergyman and member of a distinguished Jersey antiquarian family, several of whom were accomplished watercolourists. Dryden employed the *camera lucida*, and his watercolour scenes have a somewhat mechanical appearance but nevertheless record views with an impressive accuracy. Even more impressive, however, are the achievements of the amateur archaeologist Sir Francis Ronalds (1788-1883), co-author with Dr Alexander Blair of *Sketches at Carnac*, published privately in 1836. Ronalds’ “sketches” and plans have long been admired for their antiquarian and topographic appeal (and their plan of the Carnac alignments, taken from a base-map established by a professional land-surveyor for the Rev. John Bathurst Deane’s visit there in 1833). What is less commonly appreciated is the considerable optical and mechanical ingenuity which went into their construction. Ronalds was a distinguished engineer, at one time Director of Kew Gardens and Superintendent of the Greenwich Observatory, inventor of the electrostatic clock and the electric telegraph. His papers show in considerable detail the mechanical drawing instrument which he patented, and was used in pioneer archaeological fieldwork in Brittany. Although actual examples have not survived, detailed drawings of this apparatus fill in an important chapter of archaeological recording before the use of photography.

Models in Archaeology

Jarl Nordbladh

Within archaeology we have been too used to relate arguments to text forms. This has also got a new support in regarding the whole scope of archaeology as a text. However, during the development of archaeology other forms of presentation have been used for pedagogical reasons,

as final results and even as a conducting and controlling device during excavations. These material constructions probably exist in very dangerous and precarious conditions of preservation in museums, schools and archives, as very few within the discipline recognise them as important parts of the building up of a discipline and also as a link within the visualisation of archaeology. The examples chosen come primarily from Sweden .

Casts and Copies: the dissemination of images of antiquity in Greece at the turn of the 20th century.

Alexandra Alexandri

Throughout the 19th century and for the greater part of the first half of the 20th century, casts and copies of ancient artefacts played a crucial role in the theoretical development and practical application of the discipline of archaeology. At a time when cheap travel and accurate reproductions of artefacts (e.g. photographs) were not readily available, casts provided one of the basic means for studying archaeological finds, for teaching archaeology and art history, and for introducing the general public to classical antiquity.

Although cast galleries and the organized production of copies was an established practice in most European museums, the official creation of a cast workshop in Greece occurred late in the 19th century. The systematic production of casts under the auspices and direction of the Archaeological Service, was closely regulated by laws and decrees. This paper, drawing on research conducted in the Historic Archive of the Archaeological Service, will examine the crucial role played by casts of classical statuary in understanding the past and in the formation and consolidation of a national identity in Greece. A number of questions will be addressed, including the theoretical motivation for the choice of casts to be created, the distribution of these casts to institutions and national organizations within and outside of Greece, and the role accorded to casts in Greek foreign policy.

Changing views: A history of the representation of prehistory in Russian museum displays

Sergey A. Vasil'ev

The last decade has seen the growth of interest to the representations in archaeology (Stone, Molyneaux, 1994, McMannus 1996, Moser, 1998). As a by-product of both academic and non-academic modes of representation the museum displays reflect the influence of external (ideological and sociocultural) factors and the growth of archaeological knowledge. The paper is devoted to the developmental history of archaeological displays in Russia during the last 125 years. At the dawn of Stone Age studies in Russia von Baer and Shifner put forward the idea of a national museum of antiquities. The late 19th-early 20th centuries saw the appearance of a number of displays on prehistory in the central (Historical Museum, Moscow, and Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, St.Petersburg) and provincial museums. >From these early days of research the interpretation of prehistoric culture change had been attempted within a framework of unilinear evolutionism. As such, the museum displays were oriented toward the arrangement of assemblages along a temporal ladder and defining progressive stages of development.

An emphasis on man-land relationships characteristic for Russian anthropological archaeology of the 1920-early 30s resulted in magnificent Quaternary exhibition opened in Leningrad in 1932 at occasion of the 2nd Conference of the European Quaternary Association, the predecessor of the INQUA. The 1930s witnessed a radical shift in presentations connected with the introduction of Marxist concepts, thus emphasizing the reconstruction of prehistoric lifeways as exemplified by the discoveries of the Upper Paleolithic dwelling structures.

Due to the contemporary economic troubles in Russia there is no current achievements in public archaeology not to say about the introduction of new technical means of virtual representation.

We could cite only two open-air Paleolithic occurrences (Kostenki and Yudinovo) with site museums.

Teaching aids: detecting the century-old agendas in the creation of archaeology collections at UCC, Cork.

Rhoda Cronin and Elizabeth Twohig,

This paper will examine the archaeological and ethnographical collections in the Department of Archaeology, University College, Cork which were acquired in the late nineteenth century and especially after the creation of the chair of archaeology c. 1909. The extent to which these reflect a colonial concern will be examined, and also the question of increasing importance of developing nationalist ideas.

Unlocking the Box – The Future for Archaeological Archives in England

Kathy Perrin

This paper will describe a major new initiative in England, which is already beginning to address some of the complex and often long standing issues surrounding archaeological archives. These range from a lack of storage facilities, problems with access, the need for clear documentation of the archives, the need for more use and imaginative re-use of the resource, through to the modern challenge of digital archives.

In the past year English Heritage has undertaken a project which identified all the issues, began to prioritise the most pressing and outlined courses of future action. This was based on wide consultation throughout the heritage sector. The results are described in an English Heritage report, one of whose main recommendations was that most effective way forward was for the wider heritage sector to work together in partnership on an agreed action plan. This has now been achieved, and an Archaeological Archives Forum comprising representatives of all the major bodies in the heritage sector has been established. Its inaugural meeting was held in May this year and already several projects have been enacted which will make a real difference to the future of archaeological archive management. The eventual long-term aim is the establishment of archaeological resource centres in all the new government regions.

Presenting Fascist Archaeology: The Italian Archaeological Mission to Albania and the presentation of archaeology to the public

Oliver Gilkes

The Italian Archaeological Mission to Albania was created for political purposes. Anxious to establish an Italian hegemony in the Balkans and to mine material to sustain the myth of Romanita the Italian government of Benito Mussolini supported the initiative in Albania as part of a trans-Mediterranean programme of research and cultural penetration. The 'products' of the excavations in Albania were intended to sustain Italian political programmes but also to be employed for home consumption as part of a wider aim of giving elite cultural activities an element of mass participation.

This paper will discuss the various media that were used to disseminate the archaeological results, newspapers, film footage, postage stamps, postcards, guidebooks, popular journals, scientific publications and museums and exhibitions. The message and intent of these media will be examined, and we shall attempt to assess their actual impact and resonance within the fascist programme for Italy and abroad.'

Material remains of archaeological propaganda during the "Third Reich".

Hubert Fehr

Within the story of political misuse of archaeology, the extent and consistency of political instrumentalisation of prehistoric archaeology during the period of the National-socialist

dictatorship surely was unique. Various archaeological institutions as well as state organisation used archaeology and images of archaeological objects to popularise an utopian picture of a glorified Germanic past, belligerent, racially pure and superior of civilisation. For obvious reasons, a lot of the objects used in archaeological propaganda have been destroyed in the post-war period. What is left, has neither been collected systematically nor studied until recently. My lecture aims to show the variety of different objects used to promote an ideologized Germanic past. They range from furnishing of open-air museums, reconstructions from regular archaeological museums, models and images used in exhibitions, to replicas of archaeological objects and movies on excavations. But also within teaching materials from school and university, schoolbooks on prehistory, and popular stories on the Germanic past for younger readers, archaeological images and illustrations were used more or less subtle as means of propaganda. Finally, the badges shaped after archaeological objects, which were issued by the "Winterhilfswerk", a charity organisation of the Nazi party, show the status of prehistoric archaeology as field of propaganda during the "Third Reich".