Archives, Ancestors, Practices
Histories of Archaeology

General introduction to the series

Nathan Schlanger and Alain Schnapp

Archaeology is surely too interesting and inspiring and important to be left in a state of semi-amnesia, as if indifferent to the circumstances and implications of its own developments. That the past itself matters hardly needs nowadays to be argued – a little more persuasion is however required to extend the same concern and topicality to the ways by which this past has been conceived, researched, reconstructed and represented over the past decades and centuries. The pertinence of such historical and historiographic perspectives is increasingly recognised by today’s more theoretically informed and broad-minded practitioners – be they specialising in prehistory, classics, Near Eastern, African or American archaeology, and dealing with material culture, environmental evidence, preventive archaeology or interactions with the public. Archaeologists aside, there is also a wider academic audience to reach and take on board, including historians, anthropologists, museums and heritage specialists, researchers in science and cultural studies, and the like. After all, superficial expectations aside, there is much more at stakes here than the romantic discovery of spectacular finds or lost civilisations. Beyond its undeniable empirical appeal, archaeology, wherever and whenever practiced, has always been fraught with a range of scientific, cultural and ideological challenges – which make the study of its history all the more relevant and rewarding.

As the first series of its kind, ‘Histories of Archaeology’ aims to contribute to this critical and contextual understanding, and also to serve as a forum for presenting latest insights and perspectives in this domain. The first three volumes in the series promote these objectives in complementary ways. The inaugural volume, ‘Archives, Ancestors, Practices. Archaeology in the Light of its History’, is the outcome of a major international conference organised by the AREA network in Göteborg. In it, a broad range of authors address issues of historiographic methodology, archaeological practice and visualisation of the past, as well as questions of archaeology and identity. The second volume, ‘The History of Archaeology – A Reader’, assembles over fifteen previously published articles on the topic: besides serving as a much needed teaching aid, it provides a certain state of the art for ongoing research. The third volume, ‘The Fabric of the Past. Historical Perspectives on the Material Culture of Archaeology’, examines this particular theme from several historical perspectives and case studies, including Antiquarianism, dictatorial regimes and the Internet. These monographs and edited volumes (and those to follow in the series) are designed to be accessible to both advanced students and scholarly readership worldwide. Informed as they are by latest advances in social sciences and historical research, these publications aim for a broad geographical, chronological and thematic coverage which, so we hope, will do full justice to the richness and pertinence of this field.
Archives, Ancestors, Practices

Archaeology in the light of its history

Nathan Schlanger and Jarl Nordbladh
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Preface and Acknowledgements

Nathan Schlanger and Jarl Nordbladh

The book now in your hands is, unashamedly, a conference volume. It is true that such publications often suffer from poor press in academic circles: editors of multi-authored proceedings tend to downplay this fact, and publishers too are often reticent to deal with them. It is also true that planning a conference and editing a book are quite different matters, and similarly that a brilliant orator may prove a poorly structured author, that twenty minutes will not necessarily make twenty pages, and indeed that these ever so valued requirement of ‘coherence’ and ‘novelty’, bolstered by the effervescence of the conference itself, may seem with hindsight and changed media somewhat less compelling. As editors we are not oblivious to such pitfalls, of course, and nor can we pretend to have avoided them all. Nevertheless, we do believe that the origins of this volume in a particular conference deserves to be specifically highlighted – both for the benefit of the present publication, its genuine coherence and novelty, and more generally, if we may be so bold, for the sake of this emerging field of research, the history of archaeology.

The conference in question, titled ‘Histories of archaeology. Archives, ancestors, practices’, was held at the Department of Archaeology, University of Göteborg, Sweden, on 17–19 June 2004. In both chronological and conceptual terms, this conference represents the culmination of an important phase of activity of the European-wide research network known as AREA – Archives of European Archaeology. The AREA network is probably unique in being specifically dedicated to research and documentation on the history of archaeology, with a strong emphasis on the archives of the discipline. Since its launching in 1998, the AREA network has gone through four funding phases, each including a growing number of partner institutions from across the continent – university departments and institutes, museums, research centres and public bodies – working together within a common European framework. The AREA network, the Göteborg conference and the resulting book are obviously connected. Some conceptual and methodological links will be mentioned in our editorial Introduction (and of course in the chapters themselves), so here we simply point at some specificities of the conference in terms of its structure and its composition.

AREA partners, who had planned together the conference and its themes, were of course present and well represented on the day. It was agreed however that AREA members should not themselves give any papers (but only contribute to the poster session). Besides serving to bypass issues of selection and representation within the network itself, this withdrawal also made room available for welcoming other scholars, other voices, other experiences. Some of these scholars were specifically contacted by the scientific committee – and here is the place to acknowledge the very useful and lively participation of Alice Kehoe, the good wishes sent to us by Bruce Trigger who unfortunately could not attend, and more specifically the contribution of Leo Klejn, who was unable to travel to the meeting, but who provided instead on the basis of the extended abstracts a penetrating commentary which was included in the conference booklet. Most speakers however simply responded to the call for paper, and submitted their proposals along the indicated guidelines. Those selected were then happy to realise that their costs were taken care of by the
conference organisers – the AREA network. Altogether, 23 papers were presented at the conference, and the vast majority are published here, reworked and edited as the case might be. Several speakers did not see their papers through to publication (A. Doulgeri-Intzesiloglou, S. Wiell, M. Svedin), and likewise some additional papers were accepted from authors who could not attend (A. T. Martinez et al.), or who had only presented posters (J. Bergman, U. Sommer, M. Diaz-Andreu, J.-P. Bellón et al.). The contributors to this volume range from well-established academics to emerging scholars, some at doctoral or post-doctoral stage, and others relatively new to the field. In line with the intrinsically international character of archaeology itself, and the vocation of the AREA network and its funding programme, these contributors came from all over Europe, from St Petersburg to Portugal and the Canaries Islands, and the Mediterranean through to Scandinavia, and also from North and South America, as well as Australia.

The conference itself was structured into four major themes, namely ‘Sources and methods for the history of archaeology’, ‘Archaeological practice’, ‘Visualising archaeology’ and ‘Questions of identity’. Papers were submitted and selected in function of these themes (see further in the editorial Introduction). From the onset, it was decided not to hold separate or parallel sessions, but on the contrary to remain together for the whole duration of the conference. Practical considerations aside – the auditorium at our disposal was of a proper ‘human’ scale for the c. 100 participants that we were – this decision followed from reasons of principle: on balance, the history of archaeology is really not sufficiently advanced or established to permit itself the luxury (if such it is) of further fragmentation into specialism. Not only did all the participants, audience and speakers alike, wish to attend all the presentations, also the very attribution of some papers to this or that theme proved quite difficult and arbitrary to maintain – so much so that several papers presented under one theme at the conference, ended up better placed under another theme in the publication. Last but not least, bringing all the participants under one roof certainly encouraged longer and wider ranging discussions (held mostly in English, our chosen ‘official’ language). Many of these lively exchanges continued throughout the social programme of the conference, including a fabulous evening cruise along the Göteborg archipelago, and of course in the weeks and months following the conference itself, thus confirming one of its tacit objectives: to further broaden the network of contacts, competencies and commitment dedicated to the history of archaeology.

As indicated, the conference at the origin of this volume was not only organised but also funded by the AREA network – and here again we must acknowledge the very generous support of the Culture 2000 programme of the DG Education and Culture of the European commission. The Institut national d’histoire de l’art – INHA, then project-leader of the AREA network, provided further assistance in terms of funding, logistics and information technology: special thanks are due to Alain Schnapp, to Dominique Barillé and to Pascal Presle and his team. In Göteborg, financial and logistical support were received from Göteborg University, the Jubilee Foundation and the Department of Archaeology, the Magnus Bregvall Foundation, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the National Heritage Board, the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, the Wilhelm and Martina Lundgren Research Foundation I, and the Göteborg Municipality. The conference itself, and the sortie with the Bohuslän, the last remaining passenger steamer boat on the Swedish West Coast, were smoothly organised by the conference organising firm Inspiro Event with Henrik Svensson. In addition, Jarl Nordbladh thanks the archaeology students Malin Börjes, Mikael Cerbing, Maria Persson and Andreas Skredsvik for their devoted assistance with practical matters during the conference. Lastly, Nathan Schlanger wishes to thank Marion Berghahn and Marc Stanton for their support and much needed patience during the production of this volume, the first in the ‘Histories of archaeology’ series.
Note
1. Support for the AREA network was generously awarded by the Raphael programme (AREA phase I, 1998–1999), and subsequently by the Culture 2000 programme of the European Commission’s Directorate General for Education and Culture (AREA phase II, 1999–2000, an experimental measure, and AREA phase III, 2001–2004, followed by AREA phase IV, 2005–2008, both multiannual cultural collaboration projects). Initiated by Sander van der Leeuw, Giovanni Schiccilone and Alain Schnapp, AREA has continued under the leadership of the latter and with the scientific coordination of David van Reybrouck (AREA I, II) and Nathan Schlanger (AREA III, IV). Institutional project leaders were the Maison des sciences de l’homme – MSH (AREA I, II), the Institut national d’histoire de l’art – INHA (AREA III), and the Maison de l’archéologie et de l’ethnologie – CNRS (AREA IV). The following institutions were and are partners of the AREA network (in parenthesis is indicated the AREA phase in which they participated): National Archive of Monuments, Hellenic Ministry of Culture, Athens, Greece (AREA I, II, III, IV); Centro Andaluz de Arqueología Ibérica, Jaén, Spain (I, II, III, IV); Department of Archaeology, University of Göteborg, Sweden (I, II, III, IV); Fondation Maison des sciences de l’homme – MSH, Paris, France (I, II); Institut national d’histoire de l’art – INHA, Paris, France (II, III, IV); Maison de l’archéologie et de l’ethnologie – CNRS, Nanterre, France (IV); Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Berlin, Germany (I, II); McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge, United Kingdom (I, II); Service de Préhistoire, Université de Liège, Belgium (I, II); Archeologisch Dienst Centrum, Bunschoten, Netherlands (II); Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Rome, Italy (II, IV); Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, United Kingdom (I, II); The Butrint Foundation, London / University of East Anglia, United Kingdom (III); Department of Archaeology, University College Cork, Ireland (III); Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife, Granada, Spain (III); Department of History, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium (III); Institut für Ur- und Frühgeschichte und Archäologie des Mittelalters, Freiburg University, Germany (III, IV); Poznan Archaeological Museum, Poznan, Poland (III, IV); Department of Archaeology, University of Durham, Durham, United Kingdom (IV); Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic (IV); Institutul de Arheologie ‘vasile Parvan’, Bucharest, Romania (IV); Museu Monográfico de Conimbriga, Coimbra, Portugal (IV); Professur für Ur- und Frühgeschichte der Universität Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany (IV).