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Archaeologies of Europe: Histories and identities. An introduction

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The end of the Cold War triggered significant changes in the archaeologies of Europe and caused archaeologists across the Continent to rethink the way they go about their work. Increased communication and co-operation led to greater openness and a softening of the kind of “national” archaeologies and “schools” of archaeological thought that characterized the discipline after World War II. Despite their dominant role, these archaeologies and the archaeological identities they spawned have received little critical attention. It is only recently that we have begun to look at them analytically and until now, they have not been compared systematically. We have, therefore, made them the subject of this book. Only in understanding them can we grasp the current state of archaeological research in Europe and begin to better shape the archaeology of tomorrow.

As young archaeologists from Continental Europe, we have experienced the post-Cold War changes firsthand. All of us have studied and excavated in both Eastern and Western contexts, both before and after 1990. In our work, we became aware of our own biases and of the differences in archaeological practices and perceptions in various countries. Intrigued, we began talking with each other and with other archaeologists. We soon became convinced of the need to bring together archaeologists from various national or pan-national milieus to discuss the methods and theories influencing our diverse archaeologies, the differences in teaching and excavation methods in different countries as well as our disparate ways of documenting finds and presenting pre- and protohistory. The result is this book.

In preparing it, we asked archaeologists from across Europe to share their views on the archaeological theories and practices that shaped the discipline in their countries. We also asked them to elucidate where they think archaeology is headed. The perspectives they offer are mainly historical. They focus on the history of methods and theories, and the political and social contexts – the *Zeitgeist* and *episteme* – that buttressed the divergent archaeological practices. The very fact that we could collect such diverse opinions from archaeologists across Europe is a testament to the times and the astonishing way communication networks opened after 1990. While academic exchange occurred during the Cold War, the information traded was subjected to individual and/or collective filters and the content was often altered. Truly open forums of pan-European debate such as those held by the U.I.S.P.P. and the Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) in the UK were rare. It was only after the Cold War ended that the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) could emerge and establish a tradition of annual meetings and uninhibited exchange.

In creating the volume, we had one main question in mind: How and to what degree are existing differences between various archaeologies in Europe cross-cut by socio-political, epistemological and regional identities? This question focused our work, but it certainly did not limit it. In fact, as the volume took shape, new questions emerged that overshadowed the first. We began to ask ourselves – and our contributors – if European archaeology is really split between just three paradigms, that of traditional culture-history (“Continental archaeology”) and processual and postprocessual archaeology (“Anglo-Saxon” or “Anglo-American archaeology”), or if there aren’t many more paradigms at work. We strongly believe that seeing European archaeology as merely bifurcated is too simplistic and does not capture the richness and diversity of European archaeologies. The volume does not try to create an easy formula for classifying these archaeologies. Instead, we want to understand them by offering a close look at the way archaeology – whose object is not national – often developed along national lines and was then manipulated for nationalist aims. This development varied in scope from the obviously national to the regional, to the European and clearly influenced what sort of questions were asked, what sort of work was published, what sort of information was exchanged and what data was discussed.

Our work also led us to scrutinize the notion of archaeological heritage. Before 1990, heritage was mainly explored on a national level. However, as political barriers fell, so it seems did those surrounding the notion of “our heritage”. Suddenly discussion about a common European heritage surged and led to the establishment of the *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*. Today, globalization and an ever-increasing number of planning schemes, natural risks, clandestine or unscientific excavations are disturbing or destroying much of the archaeological record. This is rendering some discussions about common heritage moot. Still, we must ask, what we mean by “our common European heritage” and if we can conceive it without reproducing the nationalist paradigm on a higher level.

We have no doubt that archaeology in Europe in the 20th century, particularly its second half, suffered from a lack of communication and exchange of ideas. This blockage – at its root political and the result of a divided Cold War Europe – resulted in a vast hole in understanding between different traditions. In recent years, technological advances have not only revolutionized the way we find, record and excavate archaeological monuments, but also the way we communicate with each other. Today, we can exchange data, study sites and correspond with each other instantly and at minimal cost. We must become fluent in using this technology as it offers a possibility – a “language” that can bind us and help us link our disparate archaeologies.

Our first attempt at such a linkage occurred in May 2000, when we organized a three-day conference in Poznań called “Archaeologies East – Archaeologies West. Connecting Theory and Practice across Europe”. The goal of the conference was to elucidate how post-Cold War exchange has influenced the way archaeologists from Eastern and Western traditions, as well as those from Northern, Southern, and Central European countries conceive and practice archaeology. We hoped that open discussion would force the sort of exchange that has been rare among archaeologists of the various traditions.

One of our main goals of the conference was to reach “common ground” on questions of terminology, archaeological concepts, paradigms and research pursuits. The

conference was divided into three sessions reflecting the different dimensions of the history of archaeology in Europe, their social context as well as current developments and new approaches being implemented. The debate was so vigorous in the session we organized on history and theory that we were inspired to include much of it in this volume. As a result, this book also offers an overview of the history of 20th century archaeologies in Europe. It includes analysis of the theories and methods that shaped the various archaeologies and the perceptions and misperceptions that guided them. In addition to theorizing and conceptualizing a connection between theory and practice, the volume offers examples of how the various archaeologies were employed in Eastern, Central, Western, Southern and Northern European contexts. As a means of practicing the kind of diversity we espouse and which characterizes Europe and to prevent language barriers from blocking communication, we have summarized each paper in this volume in English, German, Polish, and Russian.

The volume presents a reference book on the history of archaeology in Europe, its theories and methods. We believe it also elucidates much about the history of humanities in the 20th century. Still, the book is just a beginning. The debate on the history of archaeology, its current identity and future development is in its infancy. This book is a measure of its growth.

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Although the papers in this volume focus on the history of archaeology in the 20th century, many take into account attitudes that dominated archaeology in the 19th century. The texts conclude that when the discipline formed, there was a pan-European attitude about what archaeology was. One could, therefore, argue that 100 years ago something akin to 'a European archaeology' existed and possessed both nationalist and universal components. This archaeology was characterized by both antiquarian studies and universalistic anthropological interpretations.

The rise of "ethnic" questions and the development of the concept of archaeological cultures and the search for the peoples behind them caused the first major rift in archaeology. With the professionalization and institutionalization of archaeology the discipline not only became national, but nationalist. Such tendencies began before World War I (and were partly responsible for its outbreak), and increased in the 1920s and 1930s. Archaeology was no longer perceived as an anthropological but as an historical discipline, aimed at writing the histories of "our ancestors". At this time and in ensuing decades, two large archaeological schools – those in Germany and Soviet Russia – as well as several smaller ones became increasingly susceptible to and influenced by political demands. This politicization of archaeological practice and theory led to the second major break in its epistemological identity. In the following decades, most Central and Eastern European archaeologists concentrated on descriptive analyses. As a result, they were – and to some degree remain – unwilling to "go beyond what the material really says".

The third rupture in the development of archaeological identities occurred in the 1960s, when archaeology in the United States and the United Kingdom experienced a theoretical revolution. At the same time, Soviet archaeologists and those dominated by the German school focused on improving excavation and recording techniques as well

as handling large-scale research projects. Central European archaeologists concentrated on sorting and classifying material culture in order to establish chronologies.

After the 1960s, archaeology divided into three research directions from which it is still influenced. Culture-historical archaeology, which places great emphasis on knowledge of material culture, continued to be dominant in Central and other continental European archaeologies. The approaches originated in the 19th century, concentrate on *Kulturkreise* and closed cultures and focus on the analysis of the cultural development of prehistoric (ethnic) communities. Still, it was only after the 1960s and then again in the 1980s when culture-historical approaches contrasted with the New Archaeology and postprocessualism that they became the focus of theoretical debates. Their basic assumptions, which are now a subject of debate, were that changes in culture could be seen as the result of external factors such as migration or diffusion, while the race or *Volksgeist* of a people remained stable. Diffusion was understood as a process of transmitting innovations and materials between groups while migration was seen as an actual movement of people from one region to another. Sound knowledge of the archaeological record was considered pivotal and training was rigorous. The major contribution of this approach was the introduction of the concept of 'archaeological culture,' understood as a set of distinct objects found in a delimited space and time and stemming from a specific people or ethnic group.

The second major paradigm occurred in Northwestern Europe, where the Anglo-Saxon emphasis on theory and the continuing development of New Archaeology / processualism bred a generation of archaeologists who tend to focus less on material culture than on the story the material culture may tell. This type of archaeology – which held sway mainly in the UK, The Netherlands and Scandinavia, and which follows the tradition of cultural evolution and cultural ecology – adopted a social theory in which culture is defined as an extrasomatic means of human adaptation to the environment. Processualists view culture change as external and stemming from environmental conditions and population growth.

The next major research direction originated in the UK in the 1980s as a reaction against processual functionalism and thus has been labeled postprocessualism. Post-processual approaches reject the notion of ideally homeostatic social systems and external factors as the cause of social and culture changes. They emphasize the individual and agency. They do not advocate a coherent social theory, but draw from structuralism, hermeneutics, neo-Marxism, phenomenology and gender theory. Despite their dominance in the Anglo-Saxon world, postprocessualists have had little impact on the development of European continental archaeology. Today, some postprocessualists are working to overcome the widespread perception that their ideas are reactionary and that they are inherently "against" or "post".

No discussion of the major archaeological research directions could be complete without at least some reference to Marxism in its various forms. The introduction of Marxism represents the first attempt to transpose a coherent social theory into archaeology and as such it contributed greatly to the development of archaeological thought. Its dominance in the East was clearly political and was linked to a lack of civil and political freedom. The majority of archaeologists managed to bypass Marxism's influence by referring to it superficially, but in sufficient doses to satisfy political expectations. Soviet teams showed early interest in cultural chronologies and ecological stud-

ies and made great strides in settlement studies. Still, the cultural-historical background of many approaches allowed theoretical debate to virtually stagnate outside the schools of Kiev and St. Petersburg.

To complicate the pattern, during the late 1970s and 1980s Western European archaeologists showed great interest in neo- and structural Marxist approaches. Marxism was applied as a social theory in certain schools in Italy and France, then later used in Spain and Greece, and eventually included to some degree in Anglo-American (post-) processual approaches.

National identities and research directions aside, the authors in this volume agree that in the 20th century one social function that touched *all* European archaeology was the desire to track the history of modern states / regions into prehistory. The discipline was, more or less directly, bent to political goals, namely of proving the origins of a modern society and asserting “scientifically” that its people were long-term occupants of their territory. Such manipulations are part of the social or sociopolitical identity of archaeology in Europe and are accounted for here. These political, historical and epistemological influences on the identities of archaeology resulted not only in different research paradigms but also in both a diversity of approaches and similarities in research questions.

The majority of real or potential barriers between the major and minor traditions in European archaeology stem from a lack of communication. Epistemological differences and personal biases in the perception of the “other”, political pressure, and inconsistent exchange all contributed to skewed impressions and thwarted dialogue. This has led to mutual misunderstandings and has set up rivalries that need not exist. Part of the blame falls on Central European archaeologists who falsely believed they could practice archaeology “neutrally”, meaning objectively and theory-free. As the various approaches to the social, political, historical and epistemological identities in archaeology assembled here show, a separation of theoretical, practical and historical aspects of archaeological practice is impossible. Processual and postprocessual archaeologists unfairly rejected Central European archaeology, assuming its focus on material culture made it non-theoretical and overly conservative. At the same time, Soviet (and now Russian) archaeology has been dismissed by many as purely Marxist. As a result, its diversity and progressive nature – for example, its combination of natural sciences and ethnography with archaeology – as well as its theoretical advances have been ignored.

Much of these mutual misunderstandings are rooted in historic and political perceptions of the “other”. The academic culture, i. e. teaching and debating, the way research questions were formulated and how funding was dispersed etc., differed considerably among the research traditions. Several authors in this volume discuss gerontocratic and patronage systems and differences in the intellectual freedom of the younger generation and their attraction to new approaches.

As Europe moves together, and as more joint projects and committees are formed and universities connected, it is vital that these differences be understood and bridged. More and more, we will be dependent upon each other, not only to share research and data, but also to exchange students and create a cross-European means of teaching and evaluating them. Already, we are linked financially by programs like the Socrates program, which provides scholarships to students who want to study in European coun-

tries. Outside the university, in the fields of heritage management, (rescue) excavations, conservation and presentation, we are also becoming increasingly reliant on European – rather than national – funds and projects. We, therefore, must learn to work efficiently and harmoniously together. At the start of the 21st century, we are advocating something rather ironic – a return to the archaeology of the 19th century. Naturally, we don't mean this in full, as research techniques have clearly advanced and the discipline has evolved. But, what must be recaptured is the unquestioned exchange of concepts, research questions and approaches that characterized the discipline and the Continent before the violence of the 20th century shattered Europe.

* * *

Twentieth century European archaeology clearly battled under harsh regimes, political bifurcation, closed borders, and individual unscrupulousness. To date, there has been too little reflection on what this did to the epistemological and social identities of the various archaeologies that emerged. The past ten years have seen new changes that seem poised once again to shift the discipline. Theory has been rediscovered in Central and Eastern Europe, and archaeologists across Europe have begun to embrace diversity, rather than being mired in the intellectual “corsets” of particular theories and practices. Many of the authors who contributed to this book welcome this new plurality of thinking and see it as an opportunity to enrich and enliven archaeological debate across Europe.

As such, classifying the Continent and its archaeologists according to particular schools or paradigms such as cultural-historical, processual, postprocessual or (neo-) Marxist is no longer appropriate. Today, categories overlap and crosscut each other. If we are to understand what the future holds, we must learn to restructure how we ask questions and avoid outdated categories. We must also avoid simple assumptions, like the belief that after being isolated for so long, archaeologists from Eastern countries are now eager to immerse themselves in Western practices and “catch up” to their western colleagues. Such wholesale cutting and pasting would be doomed to fail because of the completely different conceptual backgrounds, histories and identities at work in Eastern Europe.

A close look at the current state of the different ‘schools’ and traditions that dominated the 20th century reveals something remarkable: They have started to change from within. Archaeologies in Europe today are only partly defined by paradigms in the old sense – i. e. culture-history, Soviet archaeology or postmodernism. These days, it is archaeologists’ willingness to reflect on their own theories and practices, the process behind the formation of those practices and archaeologists’ institutional and / or personal biases that are the crucial dividing point.

Increasingly, we are seeing monolithic research agendas disappear as numerous research strategies are incorporated into single projects. We are also seeing the rediscovery of forgotten or neglected archaeologists who during their lifetimes embarked on pan-European communication in archaeology rather than thinking along national or regional lines. The individual histories of archaeologists such as Arne Tallgren, Gerhard Bersu, and V. F. Gening offer a glimpse at what archaeology could have been, were it not dominated by the major breaks and schools described above. Moreover, in

tracing the genesis and development of approaches and paradigms in relation to individuals such as Gordon Childe and Moritz Hoernes, we are rediscovering 'Central Europe'.

Clearly, the archaeologies of the 21st century will not develop along a single axis. Rather, they will incorporate elements from various research strategies, schools, paradigms and practices. Such increased openness will add richness to the discipline and far from creating one homogeneous European archaeology, will make each archaeology more nuanced. Indeed, the "local flavor" so valued in Europe will remain. It will simply be more difficult to discern the clear influence of national schools. As the pool of potential archaeological resources widens, old paradigms are growing thin. One problem still to be faced, of course, is that not all archaeologists have equal access to this resource pool. Funds are still unequally distributed and institutional resources and possibilities for exchange differ greatly among nations. The increasing dominance of English creates a further imbalance by favoring those archaeologists with a strong command of the language and penalizing those whose English is faulty. Thus, the idea of a universal language is both inclusive and exclusive. For these inequalities, we have no real answer. But we do hope the openness of Europe will provide enough possibilities to assist individual archaeologists who are creative and driven enough to make use of existing resources.

In recent years, some archaeologists have tried to analyze the new multi-faceted research directions and to contextualize them socio-politically. We believe such analysis will fail unless it is supported by the kind of detailed study of the histories of archaeological thought that this volume provides. European archaeologists of the 21st century must be aware of the theoretical and ideological underpinnings that support their work. There is no such thing as an objective study of the past. If we understand this, we can better take advantage of the new openness to establish "positive" communication with our colleagues and to come together as equals. In order to have a truly international archaeology, we must challenge perceptions in regional, epistemological and social identities that we long took for granted. The rapidity of electronic communication and advanced research techniques is helping us, as is the new atmosphere of political openness. But we must do more as individuals and as institutions to bridge gaps in communication and connect the diverse theories and practices that characterize European archaeology. This book is but one path in that direction.