



Themata 5 E-learning Archaeology, the Heritage Handbook





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E-learning Archaeology

the Heritage Handbook

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Archaeology and politics

by Heleen van Londen

→ **LU** Introduction to archaeology and politics
by Heleen van Londen

sco Introduction

Remembering the past is a present-day activity. In that sense we choose our past, manipulating it (un)willingly to our needs. Politicians are no exception. In this course we present a history of archaeology and politics. We would like to show how disciplines like history and archaeology have been used in Europe by politicians for their strategic purpose through time. Creating images of the past may serve as a justification, social binding, social outcasting, cultural domination or simply a claim on land. Artefacts of ancient cultures were thought of as prestigious demonstrations of the supremacy of modern nation states. Archaeological expeditions were sometimes instrumental in military strategies and imperialistic politics. Large parts of the world were yet to be mapped as is evidenced by the map of Africa dated to 1830. In the 19th century many travels were undertaken as archaeological expeditions.

sco Constructing National Identity

History was used for the construction of identity of the European nation states during the 19th century. But there are many other cases too as will be shown below. The ambition to make Europe a new political and economic entity brings the process of identity fabrication into the present day environment in which archaeologists do their work. The Faro treaty on the value of cultural heritage for society (2005), a document created by the Council of Europe, is very explicit about the aims to acknowledge a European identity and a common heritage.

Central to nationalistic politics are shared collective memories. Nationalism, in general, refers to a political system where political and national territorial entities must coincide. But some define nations as perceived political communities, because people within the community are bound by an idea or ideas. The whole purpose of erecting monuments or having memorial days is to nurture the collective memory. A very famous book in three volumes, *Les Lieux de Memoire*, written

by the French historian Pierre Nora lists all the places that embody French national history.

The study of archaeology – in particular local regional studies - and the creation of archaeological monuments feeds into the societal need to create shared memories. Historians introduce, in relation to these social processes, the concept of memory cultures. Various groups may share the collective memory, but it is in no sense a static thing. Famous quotes by the British historian Eric Hobsbawm strike at the core:

‘Nations without a past are contradictions in terms. What makes a nation is the past, what justifies one nation against others is the past, and historians are the people who produce it.’ (E.J. Hobsbawm) and
‘Historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin-addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market.’ (E.J. Hobsbawm)

Following Hobsbawm, the way forward to study archaeology and politics is to follow the formation of Europe's nations from the late 18th century onwards. In the period of two centuries we can discern at least three great movements related to nationalism. They will be explained below.

→ **LU** Formation of European nation states:
early 19th century by Heleen van Londen

sco Political climate

Modern nation states find their basis in the period between 1770 and 1830. The ancien régime and the role of aristocracy came to an end and an irreversible process started. Nations were formed during the 19th century. Governments reached well into the regions through bureaucratic networks and national identities were needed. People were mostly bound by family and local church communities. They were to be educated into virtuous civilians that would serve their countries. All powers and knowledge were united to create a national identity and culture, using standardisation of law, time, currency, language, education, national military service and the introduction of national traditions, rituals and symbols. Archaeology as a discipline developed in the 19th century out of antiquarianism. So, the emergence of nations and the development of archaeology as an academic discipline took place in the same period.

sco Archaeology: the case of Caspar Reuvers

After the French occupation, the Kingdom of the Netherlands became a nation in 1813. It was by no means an entity other than in territory. King William I saw as his greatest challenge



bringing social fabric to form unity. His strategy among other things was education. As head of government and advised by his minister of Education, the king appointed the first professorial chair in (non-classical) archaeology at Leiden University in 1818. Caspar Jacob Reuvens (1793-1835) was the first Dutch professor of archaeology at the age of 22. The Royal Decree also stated that he became director of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden which he had to build from scratch. Furthermore, the king funded the first professional excavation, that of the Roman town Forum Hadriani in 1827 close to The Hague.

All this was motivated to find the roots of the new nation. Research in the area of national history was mainly focussed on analysing historical sources, predominantly Tacitus' *Historiae*. The Germanic tribe of Batavians described by Tacitus to have lived in Roman times in Dutch territory had become epic already in the 18th century and before. The Batavian leader Julius Civilis organised the very successful Batavian revolt against the Romans.

In the 18th century the province of Holland identified with the Batavians. After the Spanish war in the 16th and 17th centuries, the provinces were united as the Batavian Republic using what is now tenderly called the Batavian myth. This illustrates that even before the formation of the nation in 1815, history and politics were already joined at the hip. In his inaugural speech Reuvens stated that historical sources needed testing and that archaeology would open new sources of knowledge. He listed Dutch archaeological sites and started a collection of Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities for his museum. Germany, France and the United Kingdom were already very successful at filling their national museums. King William I did not want to be left behind.

The Netherlands were no exception, Germany, France, Belgium all had their rebels against the Roman Empire. Mythical heroes were sought in classical history as symbols of collective memory and national identity. They were Arminius and his Germanic tribe who sacked three Roman legions during the battle in the Teutoburgerwald; Vercingetorix (France) who resisted successfully until he was brought to Rome to fight and die in the Colosseum; Ambiorix and the Eburones (Belgium) who resisted fiercely before being completely wiped out by the Roman army.

Mythical heroes in stone: Case study of Arminius and Vercingetorix

In the 19th century several European countries invested in upholding mythical heroes of the past that would symbolise

national unity, patriotism, virtue, strength and perseverance. Remarkable examples are the immense statues that were erected and would nurture the nationalistic movements.

In Germany in 1838, funds were collected to erect a statue of Hermann, the Germanised name of Arminius, who was from the 18th century onwards thought of in literature as the liberator of Germany. In the politics of the 19th century a true 'Hermannsdenkmal bewegung' (Statue of Arminius movement) took form. Tacitus described the historical event, also known as the Varus battle, that took place in 9 AD. Arminius belonged to a Germanic tribe, but served for a great many years in the Roman Army. During the military expeditions into Germania aimed at expanding the Roman Empire towards the Elbe river, Arminius secretly plotted against Rome. Because of his betrayal, three legions were sacked and this basically led to the failure of the Elbe strategy. Germany, north of the river Rhine, would never belong to the Roman Empire. The location where the battle took place is still a matter of great discussion. Many municipalities today claim the honour, however Tacitus mentions the Teutoburgerwald. For that reason the statue of Hermann was located in Detmold. Construction was started in 1841 and the statue was finished in 1875.

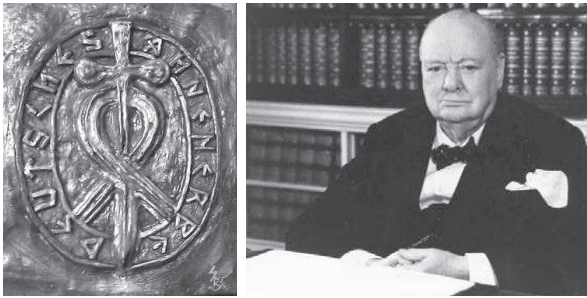
The French saw the movement in Germany and were inspired to do the same, to create a nationalistic history. They thought of Vercingetorix as the earliest founder of what would become France. Emperor Napoleon III erected a seven metres high statue in 1865 of Vercingetorix who resisted Caesar in 52 BC.

Shortly after victory in the French-German war of 1870-1871 the German Emperor Wilhelm I unveiled the Hermann statue in 1875 as infinite proof of German strength. The sword in Hermann's hand pointed to France. The pedestal has a golden inscription saying 'The German unity is my strength, my strength is Germany's power'. Today the statue is visited by one and a half million people and has still an important symbolic meaning in perceived German history.

→ LU Imperialism by the European states: 1870-1945 by Heleen van Londen

sco Introduction

From the 15th century onwards Europe was colonising large parts of the world mostly for profit and these actions materialised in trading places in coastal areas or settlements founded by emigrants. In the early 19th century not much was left of those colonies. However, in the years after 1870 European expansion increased rapidly and was different in character. Now, apart from economic gain, political and ideological



systems were imposed, like Christianity, humanism, communism and nationalism. Nationalism gave European nations the idea that only a great people with the will for power (Nietzsche) and the survival of the fittest (Darwin) could be destined to rule lesser people (racism). National prestige and self preservation became the basis for world politics of power, war and military thinking.

At the Berlin Convention of 1884-5 Africa became divided between 15 European nations and the United States. The colonies gave Europe a sense of superiority striving to create empires, economic growth, but also imbalance. Germany became especially restless due to the feeling of being left behind in colonialism.

sco Archaeology: the great expeditions

The first great archaeological expeditions into the Mediterranean, the Middle East and northern Africa date to the second half of the 19th century. These were the expeditions that formed the collections of the famous museums such as the British Museum, The Pergamum Museum and the Louvre. A recent study by Charlotte Trümpler (2010) and a magnificent exhibition in the Ruhr Museum in Essen show how the imperialistic politics were intertwined with archaeology at that time.

Nationalism led to the search for most prestigious archaeological sites and the best Museums, Religion to Biblical fact-finding and Imperialism to the strategic occupation of archaeological sites. The title of the book - as well as the exhibition - is called *The Great Game*. It relates to the competition between the European Nation States to have the most prestigious excavations to illustrate their supremacy. And it really was of secondary importance which ancient culture was studied. Trümpler presents some of the motivations behind the archaeological expeditions such as military, religious, rivalry, acquisition of antique science, domination, espionage, war, administration, occupation and tourism.

Thomas Edward Laurence (1888-1935) was writer, archaeologist and soldier during the First World War. He is better known as the legendary figure Laurence of Arabia. One of his

archaeological expeditions, following the footsteps of Moses from Egypt into Sinai between 1913 and 1914, was in fact a cover up for espionage activity. His campaign was in fact a military cartographic measurement of Palestine.

→ LU Second World War 1940-1945: national socialism by Heleen van Londen

sco Introduction

During the beginning of the 20th century the ideology of national socialism (Nazism) developed in Germany and is normally referred to as the period 1933-1945 and Nazi-Germany.

Nazism was an anti-liberal, anti-Marxist and racist expression that leaned strongly on Social Darwinism and Eugenetics. The movement behind the ideology and the politics derived from it used science to legitimise this agenda. Nietzsche's concept of *übermensch* was quoted out of the context of social Darwinism. And social Darwinism was used to explain the murder of weaker elements of society, such as handicapped people and homosexuals.

The idea Blood and Soil linked heritage to place. Only true Germans could be farmers and own land from 1933 by the land heritage law. The biological notion of habitat was first used in 1901 to launch the concept of 'Lebensraum' meaning the minimum space a people needed to farm and exploit for minerals. In Germany the frustration of losing the colonial competition with the other nations was eminent. This frustration fuelled the desire to improve the geopolitical situation of Germany, and so to expansion.

Heritage, soil and ethnicity became major themes that needed scientific back-up. An entire branch of pseudo-science came into existence, including archaeology. In 1935 a research institute was founded by Himmler, Wirth and Darré with the specific task of finding evidence for the origin and supremacy of the Aryan race (the Study Society for Intellectual Ancient History).

The Society organised various expeditions, for instance for the archaeologist, Franz Altheim, professor at Halle University, to study prehistoric rock inscriptions in Italy. Altheim was convinced he discovered Nordic Runes there and that Rome must have been originally Nordic. The same year saw the establishment of Amt Rosenberg, an official body for cultural policy. It is an understatement that National Socialists had a remarkable interest in archaeology. National identity, national culture and national character became one package and it needed to be rooted firmly in prehistory.

Figure 3 Logo of the Study Society for Intellectual Ancient History (Deutsches Ahnenerbe) source: <http://vnnforum.com/blog.php?b=502>

Figure 4 Sir Winston Leonard Spencer-Churchill 1874-1965

sco Prehistory and the quest for origins

The Dutch archaeologist and prehistorian F.C. Bursch was a convinced national socialist. In a lecture in 1941 he emphasised the importance of archaeology as a source of knowledge for the origins of ethnic people making special emphasis on how lucky it was that the Dutch and Germans were ethnically bound.

A special book publisher, called Hammer, was founded in the Netherlands in 1940 for SS propaganda. Its main purpose was to stimulate the idea of a great Germanic cultural community. Bursch published his book here on the earliest history of The Netherlands in 1944. A series of studies were financed that looked into the origins of Germanic culture. Between 1940 and 1944 they produced one book a month and were in fact the largest national socialist publisher.

→ **LU European Integration and globalization: 1945-present** by *Heleen van Londen*

sco Introduction

After the Second World War large parts of Europe were devastated by extreme nationalism. Winston Churchill presented the idea of a United States of Europe on September 19th 1946 at the University of Zürich to be formed as an independent development alongside the creation of the United Nations [read the speech http://www.zeit.de/reden/die_historische_rede/200115_hr_churchill1_englisch].

The idea was to create a broader sense of citizenship.

In 1949 The Council of Europe was created and its greatest achievement became the European Convention of Human Rights in 1950. The conventions of the Council of Europe aim at greater legal integration. Member states are invited to sign a convention after which the content needs to be integrated into national law.

To prevent further war between France and Germany, France proposed a six nation organisation to form a common market for coal and steel, the European Coal and Steel Community. It was the first supranational community consisting of Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg (Treaty of Paris 1951). These countries formed the European Economic Community (EEC) after the treaty of Rome in 1958 that laid the foundation for the European Union in 1992 (Treaty of Maastricht). Europe's union is primarily an economic one and it lacks political unity as is illustrated by the problems surrounding the Euro today. The present debate focuses on the increase of political central power, where nation states give away part of their sovereignty to prevent economic imbalance. In reaction, although the thought was

not new, a wave of nationalism and populism swept over Europe (see Rosenmuller's tv documentary on populism in Europe <http://www.ikonrtv.nl/uitzendingDyn.aspx?IntType=41>).

sco Perceived societal problems and heritage

National cohesion - or lack thereof - is a substantial theme on the political agenda in Western Europe. Western leaders speak of a crisis in national identity. One of the main causes pointed at is a general lack of historical understanding. This feeling of loss dominates the integration debate. Newcomers need to learn about the nation's history, language and core values. The Dutch government for instance asks of the cultural sector and education to communicate a clear national narrative. Recently, Dutch history was studied with the purpose of creating a Canon for school education. This Canon is now put down in law and each teacher must use this selection of important windows into Dutch history (look for the interactive content at <http://www.entoen.nu> in English).

In 2007 the French president Sarkozy appointed a minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development. Identity quickly became a hot topic in politics, journalism as well as research. The role of governments interfering with peoples' identity is part of a general discourse. Of course, the debate must be placed in a context of increased European influence and globalisation. Several people now forecast a true United States of Europe as was presented by Churchill in 1946.

There is a strong emphasis on a shared European identity with a common European heritage as is stressed by several European heritage conventions such as the Valletta Convention 1992 (archaeology), Florence Convention 2000 (landscape) and the Faro Convention 2005 (heritage tangible and intangible).

Also regional identities are sought and developed through history or archaeology. The biography of landscape is an example of a narrative on regional history and character alike (see the course on the biography of landscape). In reference to the historical canon, more than a few (small) cities developed local archaeological canons, such as the archaeological canon of Cuijk (see <http://www.cuijksecanon.nl/press>) or the city of Oss (see: <http://www.ossecanon.nl>). A complete map of regional Canons in the Netherlands is to be found at <http://www.regiocanons.nl/>. All contain some archaeology. Regional identity has become a communication format for the public.

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> sco Exercises

→ **LU Archaeology and politics** by *Heleen van Londen*

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