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Institute for Ethnographic Research

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Source: *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (Winter, 2003), pp. 55-69

Published by: [The George Washington University Institute for Ethnographic Research](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3318361>

Accessed: 09/05/2011 09:37

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SOCIAL THOUGHT AND COMMENTARY

Archaeological Reflexivity and the “Local” Voice

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There have recently been a number of attempts to develop reflexive field methods in archaeology (eg Andrews et al 2000, Bender et al 1997, Chadwick 1998, Dowdall and Parrish 2003, Faulkner 2002, Fotiadis 1993, Gero 1996, Hodder 1999a, 2000, Lucas 2001, Politis 2001). It might be argued that this turn to the reflexive in archaeology is ironic. After all, socio-cultural anthropology has recently seen a sustained critique of the concept of reflexive ethnographic method (Lynch 2000, Salzman, 2002, Robertson 2002). At the very least, the archaeological move might seem delayed, given what Robertson (2002) describes as a 20-year history of reflexive discussion in anthropology (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Gupta and Ferguson 1997) and given the indications of even earlier beginnings (Robertson 2002).

I wish to argue at the start of this paper, however, that the development of reflexive field methods in archaeology is neither delayed nor ironic. Rather it results from specific issues and problems which are of a rather different nature from those found in ethnography. Archaeology as a discipline grew in the 18th and 19th centuries as an integral part of the projects of nationalism and colonialism (Trigger 1984). For many European countries, for example, the archaeological past still has a self-evident relationship with the state. The protection

of ancient monuments is a function of national governments, however much local and diverse voices might be raised against them.

A closely related issue is that the distant past in many parts of the world may have no present communities which can stake a direct claim on it. There is no one today, for example, who can speak for, or represent the interests, of the "Beaker people" of the 3rd millennium bc in Europe, and the same is true for countless other cultural groupings identified by archaeologists in the deep past. A reflexivity that derives from the fieldworker's interaction with 'other', 'indigenous' voices of 'informants' is less likely to emerge in archaeology.

It is precisely when the past is claimed by present communities that a reflexivity has been forced on archaeology. By reflexivity here, I mean initially the recognition and incorporation of multiple stakeholder groups, and the self-critical awareness of one's archaeological truth claims as historical and contingent. Post-colonial processes, global interactions, and the massive rise in the destruction of archaeological sites and monuments around the world have together created an awareness of divergent opinions about how the past should be managed. While there have been parallel intellectual debates in archaeology over the last 20 years (Shanks and Tilley 1987), the main impulse towards reflexive concerns has been the increased use of the past in identity formation and land-rights claims (Layton 1989; Gathercole and Lowenthal 1989, Kohl and Fawcett 1995. For a recent review see Meskell 2002a). While reburial issues in the United States have led to some objectivist retrenchment, they have also led to greater consultation (in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act) and to anti-objectivist calls for the full integration of oral histories and indigenous knowledge (eg Anyon et al 1996; Stoffle et al 2001, Watkins 2000).

The materiality and monumentality of the archaeological past mean that archaeological sites and monuments are often central to the construction of the national and colonial memory and counter-memory (eg Abu el-Haj 1998, Rowlands 1993; Meskell 2002b). The resulting conflicts over ownership, guardianship and interpretation have often been very public. The moves towards reflexivity, as defined above, have proceeded in the increasingly ethically-conscious halls of the academy, but also in local, national and international heritage management committees. Indeed, it has been the world of heritage management that has often been in the forefront of the development of guidelines which lead towards collaboration and multiple perspectives. For example, the Australian chapter of ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) has produced the Burra Charter which moves away from defining sites

and monuments in objectivist terms, and towards the description of cultural landscapes as understood and perceived by indigenous peoples (Australia ICOMOS 1981). Specific examples of collaborative work include that at the Nevada test site (Stoffle et al 2001) and at the Barunga rock art site in Australia (Smith et al 1995; see also Smith and Ward 2000).

This is not to deny the importance of the moves that have been made in archaeology towards new forms of writing that seek to dissolve a dependence of neutral objectivity (Edmonds 1999, Tilley 1994, Tringham 1994, Joyce 1994). These intellectual moves have been made in response to feminist and post-structuralist critiques. But the new forms of writing so far attempted in archaeology have largely been synthetic accounts, and have had little impact on the process of archaeological writing in the field (though see Bender et al 1997). Indeed, until recently excavation methods have been largely untouched by the issue of reflexivity. This may be partly for reasons already touched upon, especially the link between excavation and the idea of “keeping a record” that is held in guardianship by the state. State and government institutions in many countries are responsible for making sure that sufficient records are kept of what is found, and that the material finds and monuments are properly curated. This “primary” role is seen as separate from the interpretations that archaeologists are then allowed to make, usually with less state supervision. There has thus been little room or motivation for the introduction of reflexive methods in excavation methods themselves.

Another reason for the rather different position of archaeological fieldwork in comparison to ethnography is that archaeology often uses a wide range of techniques adopted and adapted from the natural and physical sciences. Most archaeologists spend much of their time in the field worrying about radiocarbon dating, geophysical prospection surveys, DNA sampling, Munsell colour charts, Harris matrices, micromorphology, phytolith analyses, and so on. Much of their work is carried out in on- or off-site laboratories devoted to archaeozoology or archaeobotany and the like. Such work is a long way from observer participation with local communities. It has the aura of laboratory science, and empirical description seems straightforward. Of course, many archaeologists are aware of the post-positivist critique of value-neutrality in such contexts, and they may have read works such as those by Latour and Woolgar (1986) on the social factors involved in laboratory life. But such deconstructions rarely provide clear guidelines about how a reflexive scientific archaeology should proceed.

For most archaeology, there can be no easy import of the reflexive methods used in ethnography. Archaeology sits between the natural sciences and the so-

cial issues and conflicts that make reflexivity so essential. It is necessary to develop specifically archaeological ways of being reflexive that respond to this particular context.

Towards reflexivity in field archaeology

As Lynch (2000) has noted, there are numerous ways of defining reflexivity. I do not use the term here in ways that refer to behavioral reflexivity, or to systems feedback. Neither do I equate reflexivity simply with the examination of self. I have argued elsewhere (1999a; 1999b) that some reflexive writing in archaeology verges on the egocentric and self indulgent (cf. Robertson 2002). I accept the criticism (Salzman 2002) that accounts of the self are not, in some privileged way, outside bias and critique. Rather, as already noted, reflexivity as noted here refers to a recognition of ‘positionality’—that one’s position or standpoint affect one’s perspective (Rosaldo 2000)—and thus reflexivity involves recognizing the value of multiple positions, and multivocality. It also involves a critique of one’s own taken-for-granted assumptions, not as an egocentric display, but as an historical enquiry into the foundations of one’s claims to knowledge.

But within these general guidelines, what are the specific contours of reflexivity in field archaeology? Important and ground-breaking work of a collaborative nature has now been widely pursued (Swidler et al 1997; Watkins 2000). I am concerned here with how these collaborative and integrative projects have an impact on field methods. The following points derive from several years of developing new methods at the excavation of the 9000 year old site of Çatalhöyük in central Turkey (Hodder 2000), and from the published accounts of the new methods being developed in Britain at Heathrow Terminal 5 by Framework Archaeology (Andrews et al 2000), and from other projects in the United States (eg Ludlow Collective 2001, Dowdall and Parrish 2003).

One of the common themes in many of these projects is the emphasis on *interpretation at the trowel’s edge*. As the trowel moves over the ground it responds to changes in texture and colour, but always in a way informed by a particular perspective. The knowledge of the archaeologist influences the way in which the site is dug. There are many classic examples such as the inability of archaeologists trained in northern Europe to “see” mud brick walling in the Near East. But more generally, if excavators have limited knowledge of what they are excavating (Is this a human or animal bone? Is this 4th or 3rd century pottery?), they will be less able to excavate and interpret correctly. If they do not know that a yellow-green deposit they have come across is actually dung, they

may misinterpret a stable as a house, or fail to see a slight foundation trench for a wall used to pen animals (for other examples see Hodder 1999a). If they do not look out beyond the individual context or unit they are excavating, they will not be able to deal with interpretative issues that involve other contexts and other sets of data.

So one aim of a reflexive approach is to get the archaeologists as they dig to have as much information as they can so that they can make a good judgement about what it is they are digging. From this viewpoint, digging is not just a technique; it is a highly skilled and difficult balancing many different types of information (Shanks and McGuire 1996). But how is it possible to empower the excavator with all the information that is needed? One solution is long-term—to upgrade (in terms of education and pay levels) the task of excavation so that the field archaeologist is better informed and more able to evaluate specialist information. Another response is to enable a large number of scientific specialists to be present on site, with on-site laboratories, so that they can give advice and feedback as the excavation is progressing (unlike the usual situation in which specialists work in labs elsewhere and are sent data to analyse).

Several of the projects involved in developing reflexive approaches try to balance the recording of data in the field with some form of narrative construction. This may involve setting time, and funds, aside so that team members can discuss possible narrative accounts about the purpose of features, the functions and meanings of buildings, the links between separate layers in terms of depositional history, and so on.

The importance of developing interpretation at the trowel's edge is that archaeology involves destruction (though see Lucas 2001). Excavating involves destroying the relationships between artifacts and monuments. As a result, the moment of excavation is the best chance the archaeologist will ever have to explore alternative interpretations about the data. This leads to a second theme in reflexive field archaeology—the importance of *multivocality*. We have already seen that different specialists can be brought in relation to each other in order integrate information and to reach consensual narrative accounts. But to what extent can non-specialists be involved? Most archaeological sites attract multiple stakeholders, many of whom may be interested in the types of narrative that are being constructed about the site. There has been much involvement of local communities in the construction of visitor centers and site interpretation, and there have been reflexive attempts to open the “site tour” to groups of different background (Handler and Gable 1997; Leone et al 1987). But archaeological excavation itself is a highly skilled task, especially if carried

out in the way described above. To what extent is it possible to involve varied stakeholder groups in the moment of interpretation at the trowel's edge?

The training of indigenous participants allows a fuller degree of participation, though usually within the methods set by the academy. When indigenous archaeologists (Watkins 2000) are fully trained within the academy, it might be argued that their potential for expressing alternative voices is compromised. But in many collaborative examples, close integration has occurred between archaeologists and Native Americans (Swidler et al 1997). This has sometimes led to a blurred genre somewhere between science and ritual. In excavations in the Andes, foreign archaeologists are often obliged to hold rituals to ensure the success of the project or to placate the spirits or gods on the recovery of a human or llama burial. In recent Caltrans archaeological projects in California, Native Americans and archaeologists have worked side by side in developing ways of interacting with Native American pasts (Dowdall and Parrish 2003). The non-Native American archaeologists have agreed to follow the rules specified by tribal rules and taboos. For example, women and partners of women who are menstruating do not participate in the excavations or laboratory analysis. There are other examples of how traditional native knowledge has been integrated in archaeological projects on tribal lands. One such example is the Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota. Native Americans are hired and trained to carry out the work and their traditional beliefs are taken into consideration both during planning and fieldwork (Kluth and Munnell 1997). For Australia, many examples are provided by Smith and Ward (2000). For other examples of blurred genres see Swogger (2000) and Leibhammer (2000).

But it is not possible for large numbers of unskilled people to be involved in excavation itself. One partial solution is to record and disseminate information in such a way that larger and more dispersed communities can be involved. At Çatalhöyük diary writing has been used (see below) to encourage a more open account of the interpretation process. These musings are placed on the project website. They allow a wider debate and dialogue about the interpretation of the site, especially when backed up with an on-line database (www.catalhoyuk.com). Experiments in using the internet to involve more communities in the process of interpretation have been at least partially successful. For example, McDavid (1997; 2000) has used a website about the Levi Jordan Plantation in Brazoria, Texas, to mediate relations between archaeologists, local community members, and descendents of both slaves and slave owners.

As much as one can attempt to bring as many different voices to the trowel's edge in order to create a range of perspectives (and thus to do better sci-

ence), in practice it becomes important to open up the process of enquiry so that other groups at a later date can re-interpret the evidence. Within objectivist frameworks in archaeology it was thought sufficient to provide data records so that later generations could reconsider the conclusions that had been drawn. But in practice many data archives, which are often huge and highly codified, are difficult to use because it is difficult to reconstruct the thinking that lay behind the excavation and the selection of data. It is difficult to reconstruct what questions were being asked. The whole social side of the construction of data is not formally recorded and so it is difficult to reconstruct the social relations of production of past archaeological knowledge.

Thus, in order to open the archaeological process to wider scrutiny, it is necessary for reflexive approaches to develop methods for *documenting the documentation process*. There are numerous ways in which the records can be embedded within an outer layer of documentation. For example, databases and archives can be tagged with a history that describes changes made through time. Diaries can be written which describe the thought processes of the excavators and laboratory analysts. Traditionally much archaeological recording was done in the form of diaries. Increased codification often led archaeological teams to dispense with such diaries and to use solely codified forms. But there remains a need for diary writing, and this can easily be achieved by typing straight into a computer. In the reflexive Citytunnel-project (Berggren 2001) in Sweden, the archaeologists' thoughts are documented in diaries, with possibilities for commenting on their colleagues' diary entries. Diary entries thus become part of the database and can be searched for key words.

Another way of documenting the documentation is to use digital video. This allows visual information, sound and words to be used to provide a record of the excavation and post-excavation process. Such a range of information allows the excavation process to be embedded within a greater depth and richness of context than is possible in texts and pictures and drawings alone. The excavators can be shown explaining what they are finding and discussing their interpretations as they develop them. They can point out what they have found; and on-site editing allows insets and close-ups. The video clips can be added to the site database and can be recovered using key words. In this way it is possible for later archaeologists to evaluate more clearly the claims that are made by the excavators. The later re-interpretation can make relationships between what was found and what the excavators were preoccupied with at the time. The video clips may show data that were not seen at the time or which can be reinterpreted with hindsight. They may show things that were missed, and

they may explain why the site came to have the meaning it did for the excavators (Brill 2000, Emele 2000, Stevanovic 2000).

This fragmenting and multiplying of the archive allows authorship to be reconsidered. Even if an excavation is performed by a group of archaeologists, and the interpretations that make up the archive are the result of all the team members, the published report is often written by one or two, typically the site manager and perhaps an assistant. The many participants are mentioned by name in the report, but the personal contributions are not identifiable. But when the individual participants to an increasing degree write direct accounts of their interpretations, there is the potential for including a multiplicity of voices in publications and other output. For example, at Çatalhöyük the publications of the excavated features will involve direct quotes from the diary entries of the excavators, and references to and quotes from videos. They will also include direct quotes from the local community which was invited to participate in the post-excavation interpretation, as well as from the various specialists that had looked at data from a particular perspective. The end result is a patchwork of perspectives and points of view which can be identified as to authors.

While there are certainly close parallels between these various strands of a reflexive field methodology in archaeology and ethnography, there are also differences, in response to the different contexts of the two disciplines. In archaeology, there has been less emphasis on autobiography, personal positioning, dialogue and writing. The emphasis has been on finding ways to increase interpretive knowledge and diversity at the trowel's edge and at all stages in the analytical process, including in the laboratory. There has also been a concern to provide an outer layer of documentation around the documentation process itself so that the vast amounts of codified data produced by excavations can be critically situated within the social relations of production of archaeological knowledge.

Working with “the locals”

The archaeological equivalent of the ‘native informant’ might be thought to be the mute sherd, but today throughout the world, archaeologists work closely with those communities that claim some form of cultural affiliation with particular archaeological remains. Indeed archaeology might now be defined not as the study of the material remains of the past, but as a particular mode of enquiry into the relationship between people and their pasts.

As a result, one of the main aims of much collaborative and reflexive archaeology is to involve local people in some way, and this tendency has been am-

ply shown above. The aim has been to listen to and incorporate the local voice. Archaeology has always been involved in constructing local institutions and memories—as in local museums, working with and employing local labour, setting up Site Management Plans with local participation etc. But this emphasis on and definition of the local is nowadays often at least partially constructed within a global construction of the local as when UNESCO, ICOMOS, World Bank, or the Getty define how sites should be conserved and who should be consulted. There has been a massive increase in international charters for the management of archaeological sites over recent decades, and many of these have turned their attention to the processes of collaboration with local communities around sites and monuments. For example, the General Assembly of ICOMOS in 1987 adopted the Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas which includes guidelines for the participation of residents. The Charter for Sustainable Tourism that emerged from the World Conference on Sustainable Tourism in 1995 stated that tourism must be 'ethically and socially equitable for local communities'. The Corinth Workshop on Archaeological Site Management in May 2000, organized by the Getty Conservation Institute, refers to the importance of collaboration with local community members. Indeed, the Getty Conservation Institute has modified and developed the planning framework outlined in the Burra Charter (Avrami et al 2000. See also de la Torre 1997), which as noted above is particularly sensitive to local cultural interests.

So at one level, the local is defined so that it can be better managed by global institutions. At another level the local is also constructed through global communities such as the many New Age groups that travel to archaeological sites in search of the authentic and traditional, the unsullied (Meskell 1995; Conkey and Tringham 1996). For example, Rountree (2002) has described the ways in which Goddess groups travel to the Neolithic temples of Malta in order to create a vision of traditional lifeways. At Çatalhöyük such groups have tried to set up and 'rejuvenate' local crafts by women. In northern California New Age groups have been involved in preserving 'traditional' dance lodges that were no longer in use (Dowdall pers com). More generally, as has been widely recognized (eg Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998), it is often in the interests of global markets and international tourism to enlist archaeology in the construction of 'preserved' traditions and authentic destinations.

So archaeology is fully complicit in the construction of the local—both imagined and institutional (cf Castañeda 1996). But there has been little reflexive discussion of this process in archaeology, except at the level of wanting to incorporate the local voice. But what that local voice is has remained largely untheorised and

unexamined in archaeology (cf Appadurai 1996). While the guidelines of international conservation agencies specify the importance of local participation and stakeholder involvement, there is rarely a full account of how to evaluate and involve different forms of 'local' interest and how to reach a thorough understanding of long-term effects of heritage management. In my view this has partly been because there has been insufficient involvement of ethnographers and other specialists themselves in archaeological and heritage management projects. The separation of the disciplines has meant a lack of contact and a lack of problematisation about what it is that constitutes 'the local' (cf Gupta and Ferguson 1997). If archaeologists are to be reflexive and involve the local voice, they need to work more closely with ethnographers and others in order to find out who exactly 'the locals' are, how fluid and global they are, and what type of relationship with archaeology and heritage would best serve their interests.

At Çatalhöyük, the archaeological project includes both ethnoarchaeologists (such as Nurcan Yalman, working on the ways that the contemporary settlements and use of building materials can inform the study of the archaeological site) and ethnographers (such as Ayfer Bartu and David Shankland—see Hodder (ed) 2000) who have worked on understanding local community knowledge about the site, and on the social, cultural and economic impact of the project on the nearby villages and towns. Bartu has also helped the project make long-term investments in the local village, such as in the provision of a library, the building of a water reservoir and distribution system, and the construction of a regional school. She has undertaken numerous outreach programs. But she has also guided the project in understanding the complex ways in which the nearby village is constructed as 'local' within globalizing processes of appropriation. For example, the craft center mentioned above, set up in the local village by an international women's group, partly funded by UNESCO but also linked to the Goddess movement, was rejected by the village. The definition and conception of 'the local' that was being imposed by outside groups was not acceptable to the ways in which the villagers saw themselves. It threatened existing power and gender relations. The project also has complex relations with the fundamentalist or nationalist politicians who are popular in the area. In such contexts it is not possible for archaeologists blithely to 'work with the locals'. Rather, attempts need to be made to reach a fuller understanding of how neighbouring communities see themselves in relation to the intersections between the global and local.

Involving ethnographers will hopefully assist archaeologists to shy away from assuming an equation between 'local' and fixed or indigenous. A reflexive

approach to the local involves seeing how it is historically constructed. The local may not be an 'authentic' voice that can be used uncritically to make sense of the past in that locality (Fabian 1983). The ethnography that is carried out in relation to archaeological locales needs to be multi-sited (Marcus 1995) and engage with multiple stakeholders. It needs to examine the intersections between local and global economies and to find ways of engendering long-term sustainable change through use of the materiality of the past, in partnership with varied local interests. For example, many archaeological projects are of such a size that they create a considerable amount of local employment (excavators, guards, attendants and so on). But when the project ends this employment opportunity may disappear unless the project has invested in infrastructure, education or training.

I would be the first to argue that archaeologists should listen to and engage with local communities that are directly affected by and involved in archaeological sites. In many cases, the local communities are historically marginalized and in need of support. They are often disempowered and neglected. A remarkable example of an attempt to counteract this disempowerment is provided by the District 6 project in Cape Town, where a local community is being reconstituted through an archaeological and museum project (Hall 2000). But archaeologists need to understand the processes of global disempowerment and to recognize that there may be many cross-cutting 'local' communities that could be constructed in different ways. For some of these, in some circumstances, the presence of an archaeological project might best be used to create links to global economies and relationships (through language training, craft industries, tourism, and training in heritage management etc). Rather than archaeology being used to construct the local as the flip side of the global (ie as traditional, authentic, and small-scale but also as exploited and constructed by globalizing interests), archaeological projects can lead to change and transformation of the local in a variety of different ways.

Conclusion

We have seen some similarities and differences between reflexive field methods as they are being pursued in archaeology and ethnography. In archaeology there is less emphasis on autobiography, dialogue, self-positioning, and writing, although these are all relevant to archaeology and have been pursued. In archaeology the emphasis is more on finding ways in which the collection of material data can be opened up to interpretation as it happens (breaking down

the distinctions between discovery and interpretation, and between description and interpretation), allowing a greater diversity of perspectives or 'positions' in the interpretive and analytical process, and allowing extra layers of documentation so that others can re-evaluate conclusions that have been made.

Many of the reflexive moves that have been made in archaeology derive from ethical concerns about incorporating local voices, but I have argued in this paper that a further level of reflexivity is needed in problematising our assumptions about 'the local'. At the very least, it seems important for archaeological projects to adopt closer working ties with ethnographers, social scientists, oral historians, cultural economists and a range of other specialists who can assist in evaluating the long-term impact of a project on the full range of stakeholder communities. But I suspect that the disciplinary divides within anthropology which many of us decry, and which are in my view largely a product of the emergence of processual archaeology and its positivist perspective, limit the current potential for full-scale collaboration. Despite recent reworkings, the current NSF guidelines and expectations regarding provision for work with local communities in archaeological projects are inadequate. Grant proposals need make little reference to how an archaeological project will have long-term community impact. There is little to require archaeological projects to collaborate with stakeholder groups in terms of setting research agendas. (In this way, research funding bodies are well behind some of the international conservation and heritage institutions that have been referred to in this paper.) There is little to encourage closer ties with ethnographers in developing in-depth understanding of 'the local' as constructed through materials and monuments of the past.

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