The history of Archaeology and the connections between archaeology and other disciplines of the humanities

Archaeology today is a multidisciplinary field that helps modern archaeologists and historians to bridge the gap between any material evidence of our long-gone past societies and helps us to explore the broader questions studied by the humanities. Archaeology on a general definition is studying physical remains and evidence of past human activity, with the biggest topics of discussion and research being ancient artefacts and relics, the architecture and certain landscapes. Archaeology provides us today with indispensable insights into the social, cultural and historical stages in development of ancient civilisations. Archaeology has much crossover and deep connections with other humanities disciplines such as history and ancient history and enables for a richer understanding of human development; making Archaeology an extremely vital collaborator in understanding humanities past within the context of the humanities.

Archaeology as a study has been around for a very long time, with evidence showing that its beginnings trace back to as far as the "Mediterranean Bronze Age, with the first archaeological investigations of ruins." (Hirst 2020). Archaeology being a specific study is a relatively new idea, but humans' curiosity and interest in the past is much older, with the earliest known dive into our own past comes with the excavation and later reconstruction of the Egyptian Sphinx; of which we can date to roughly 1500-1000BC, although we have no found written evidence to support the existence of the excavation, there is clear physical evidence of the Sphinx's reconstruction "there are ivory carvings from earlier periods that indicate the Sphinx was buried in sand up to its head and shoulders before the New Kingdom excavations." (Hirst 2020).

Our earliest evidence of a recorded archaeological dig was managed by the Babylonian king Nabonidus, dated around his time as king around 555BC-539BC. A more modern example of early archaeologists and the study of it came very recently, with archaeology progressing methodically and technologically within the 20th century. "Archaeology came of age between the world wars, as excavation became more refined." (Fagan 2018). Specifically with the discovery and excavation of Tutankhamun's tomb by Howard carter, a British Archaeologist and Egyptologist in 1922. Though there is much resentment towards his methods during his work uncovering the 18th dynasty pharaoh; specifically due to his method of cutting the body from its wooden base, as well as his focus being on the discovery of gold, and not for the details of the past.

Today, archaeology has evolved massively when compared to its earlier stages in history, reflected in its primarily academic methodologies, it's extremely advanced technology, and its interdisciplinary approaches. In the past, archaeology was more often than not a

solitary pursuit focused on the practical excavation of historical sites, ancient artefacts and monuments, focusing primarily on the material culture of our past human societies. Archaeology today makes heavy use of different theories and scientific techniques from a multitude of different disciplines, combining other humanities disciplines such as anthropology, history, linguistics, but also making use of other academic studies such as sociology, biology and chemistry, making it a very dynamic and interconnected field of study in the modern world today.

Archaeology and history; especially ancient history, are tied very closely to one another within the study of the humanities due to the fact that both disciplines major aims are to understand and reconstruct the fragmented knowledge we today have of our human history and past. Though they differ in the way that history often primarily relies on written records of the past, while archaeology focuses on material remains, such as artifacts to gain insight into past societies; especially long-gone civilisations with little to no documentation.

These two separate disciplines help each other extensively by filling the gaps in historical knowledge. Ancient history often relies on ancient texts and writing, except the problem with this is often early human civilisations and societies did not leave written records, archaeology helps to fill this gap by providing us with evidence of prehistoric cultures and advancements, with examples being through found tools, cave art or burial sites, allowing historians to trace human development before even recorded history. But even in societies with writing systems in place, historical records are very often flawed in the way that they tend to only reflect the perspectives of the elites or specific events. Archaeology is utilised in uncovering the aspects of daily life of more ordinary people, such as their homes, clothes, tools or their agricultural practices, offering us with a much more comprehensive view of these ancient civilisations beyond what written texts alone can convey.

They also aid each other by contextualising historical events, archaeological discoveries often provide material evidence that supports, refines or sometimes even challenges any historical accounts. Examples include the discovery of ancient battle sites or monuments, even cities can confirm historical records about certain military campaigns, their rulers or major events over the course of our history. A case example being the archaeological site of Pompeii, as the site provides us with extremely valuable context towards the study of Roman history. As while the texts we have provide us with knowledge of their politics, their military and social overviews, the excavation of Pompeii revealed an exceptionally intricate amount of details of the daily life within a Roman city, from simple household items to entire parts of their urban infrastructure and architecture; paining a much fuller picture of how society was during the Roman period.

Another way in how archaeology affects the other disciplines is that it helps historians somewhat reconstruct the ancient civilisations to form a better understanding of how the ancient people lived. Archaeologists will often excavate objects like pottery, coins, weapons and some art, of which historians can then look at them and study them to figure out the civilisations social and cultural practices, like their economy, trade routes and social structures. These excavated materials provide historians with direct evidence of how these ancient people lived, worshipped and governed. Archaeology also helps historians studying the ancient world find out about ancient civilisations architecture and their urban planning, as with all the excavating of ancient cities and monuments can give these historians confirmed insights into the technological and architectural advancements of these times. With a big example of this being the study of the ancient Egyptian pyramids, Greek temples and Roman aqueducts reveal not just the technical skills of these civilisations way back when, but also their religious, social and political ideologies.

The excavation of the capital cities, forts and administrative centres help historians by archaeologists providing them with direct evidence of how ancient empires such as the Roman, Greek, Egyptian and Persian empires functioned, both politically and militarily. Furthermore, historians can then go on to study these material remains to help them map out the governance, expansion and further on decline of these empires more in-depth. Archaeology also helps us understand the continuity and change of ancient civilisations, it can show how certain cultural practises and technologies persisted and changed over time, as well as their respective political regimes and transition from bronze age to iron age societies. This long-term view allows historians to effectively track the evolution of these cultures.

There are some accounts of historical literature that have benefitted archaeologists immensely, with some examples of this being very recognisable people and work from history. Firstly, Homers “Iliad” was very beneficial for archaeologists as it gave them clues of potential sites to excavate, Manfred Korfmann; a prominent German archaeologist who was known for his work done around what if believed to be where Troy may have been, mentions in his article "Homer’s Iliad may not be a reliable historical account, but archaeological excavations have revealed that a large, fortified city existed at Troy around the time traditionally associated with the Trojan War. These findings suggest that Homer’s epic reflects at least a distant memory of historical events and locations." (Korfmann 2004). This quote comes from Korfmann’s article labelled “Was there a Trojan war”

Though, in the book written by Michael Wood; another historian and archaeologist, writes in his book labelled “In search of the Trojan war”, talks about how the written literature can have more truth to them than thought about “The real contribution of archaeology to

Homeric studies lies in showing how the world described in the epics corresponds, in part, to the Late Bronze Age. The discovery of the citadel at Troy, Mycenae's palaces, and the great treasures unearthed in these sites suggest that Homer's poetic imagination was rooted in historical reality." (Wood 2005), This theory could suggest that Homers work, while poetic, were actually inspired by the cultural realities of Greece in the late bronze age, giving archaeologists a good framework to interpret Homers epics as nonfiction, or as a true writing of historical events.

A major figure for historians today as a whole as well as archaeologists, Herodotus; known and celebrated as the "Father of history" for his role in founding historiography (the study of the writing of history and of written history)

In contrast to its earlier iterations, the study of archaeology today is very holistic and is a globally engaged discipline that benefits greatly from, as well as contributing to, a much wider array of other humanities disciplines and subjects. It helps to provide tangible evidence that aids the clarification and challenges of historical narratives. By collaborating with other humanities disciplines in recent years, the study of archaeology embraces a diverse bundle of new methods and ethical considerations. Archaeology has become an incredibly crucial link in the web of the humanities' disciplines.

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