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II. Papers

The History of Archaeology as a 'Colonial Discourse'

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During the greater part of the twentieth century, the history of archaeology promoted an idealized image of archaeological practice in colonized places. Historians usually omitted the political implications of archaeology and, in many instances, justified the appropriation of material culture from colonized places. In this paper, I suggest that postcolonial studies, a field constituted during the 1980s and 1990s, offers a useful framework in which to understand the relationships between the history of archaeology and colonialism. Taking postcolonial theory as reference, I define the history of archaeology written until the 1980s as a particular form of 'colonial discourse'. I conclude by proposing some ways in which postcolonial theory can inform the history of archaeology.

Introduction: The History of Archaeology and Colonialism

In recent years, certain historians of archaeology have expressed their widespread dissatisfaction with the *modus operandi* of their predecessors. In their opinion, the history of archaeology has traditionally been limited to 'consensus whiggish histories' (Kehoe 1989: 105), to a simple chronicle of spectacular discoveries 'without taking much account of the ideas and institutions surrounding them' (Schnapp 2002: 134), or to the hagiographic veneration of precursors and daring heroes (Schlanger 2002: 128). It is only in the last two decades that new works in the field (e.g. Trigger 1989; Christeson 1989; Schnapp 1993; Pinsky 1989; Coye 1997) have helped to overcome the 'Whiggish history of archaeology' that had previously dominated the field.

One of the principal critiques of traditional historiography is its emphasis on an 'internalist' interpretation of the history of archaeology (e.g. Hinsley 1989: 94; Schnapp 2002: 134; Van Reybrouck 2002: 159; Kaeser 2002: 170). In historiography, 'internalism' is the term given to the approach that defines the history of science in terms of the inner evolution of scientific ideas. From this perspective, 'context' (political or religious institutions, economic and political sphere) is not especially relevant in order to explain the evolution of science. As Robin Dennell has pointed out, Glyn Daniel's writings are a telling example of the 'internalist' viewpoint in the history of archaeology: 'From reading his major books [...] one gets the impression that world wars, for instance, interrupt research, but not the way that archaeologists thereafter viewed the past' (Dennell 1990: 549).

Since 'internalism' has been defined as the main characteristic of this repudiated traditional historiography, the 'critical history of archaeology' which emerged in the 1980s has encouraged 'externalist' approaches that seek to correlate archaeological practice with its political, economic and social contexts. In other words, 'new' historians are primarily 'concerned with how economic political and social conditions influence the interpretation of archaeological data' (Trigger 2001: 635). From this 'externalist' standpoint, historians have examined some of the political uses of archaeology. They have analysed, for instance, how nationalism has determined archaeological research (e.g. Meskell 1998; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Atkinson, Banks and O'Sullivan 1996; Härke 2000; Richard 2002; Alexandri 2002), how particular social classes have

promoted archaeological agendas (e.g. Kehoe 1989; Patterson 1995) or what was the influence of the sociological structure of science over the interpretation of archaeological data (e.g. Gero 1985; Van Reybrouck 2002).

In this context, the links between archaeology and colonialism have become one of the primary topics among hundreds of publications devoted to the 'socio-politics of the past'. Since the first works of Trigger (1980, 1984), Gaucher and Schnapp (1984) and Murray and White (1981), scholars have analysed how the history of prehistory is related to the colonialist process (e.g. Sheppard 1990; Rowlands 1998; Jeffreys 2003); how archaeology has been used to promote a certain picture of the past in colonized places (e.g. Prochaska 1990; Shaw 1990; Bernal 1994; Shepherd 2002c; Schlanger 2002c); and how archaeological discourse has served to legitimate colonialist domination (e.g. Chakrabarti 2000). At the same time, a new way of approaching colonialism has emerged from within the social sciences: postcolonial studies. This field, which has considerable influence on several disciplines, is consecrated to discussions about the cultural, political, economic and social effects provoked by the colonial process from the sixteenth century until the present day (Ashcroff, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989: 2; Young 2001: 4).

This article questions whether a postcolonial studies perspective can usefully contribute to the new wave of studies in the history of archaeology. In the first section, I propose a brief introduction to 'postcolonial studies' and to the concept of 'colonial discourse', one of the main categories coined in the field. Taking this postcolonial theory as a theoretical framework, I suggest in the second section that, until the 1980s, the history of archaeology was a specific type of 'colonial discourse' characterized by a promotion of the romantic idea of archaeological practice in colonized places. In the third section and in the conclusion, I consider that, even if the 'new' historians of archaeology have critically examined the relationship between colonialism and archaeology without reference to postcolonial theory, this theoretical framework can provide methodological instruments that can help to understand the colonial dimensions of the archaeological practice.

'Postcolonial Studies' and 'Colonial Discourse'

A mixture of excitement and confusion has surrounded *postcolonial studies*, a new field which seeks to provide critical reflections about Western imperialism and colonialism. Both the term and the discipline are products of a broader tendency in literary studies from the 1980s and 1990s. However, it is only recently that postcolonialist discussion has had a greater impact on academic disciplines such as history, anthropology and philosophy. Despite this recent 'boom', most scholars are not clear how to define postcolonial studies and how to gauge their real impact. For some, postcolonial criticism has revolutionized the understanding of the global effects of Western colonialism. For others, the term 'postcolonial' has become 'the latest catchall to dazzle the academic mind' (Jacoby 1995: 30). Most of the confusion is due to the heterogeneous nature of the discipline: postcolonial studies is a diffuse interdisciplinary field influenced by various thinkers (including Gramsci, Foucault, Lacan, Said, Bhabha and Spivak) and defined by a set of concepts frequently employed interchangeably (such as 'colonialism', 'imperialism', 'neo-colonialism' and 'globalization').

In seeking to eliminate some of this confusion, three different meanings of the term 'postcolonial' are useful: chronological, critical and political. Originally, 'postcolonial' was used in a chronological sense to distinguish the period following the independence of Western colonies (Ashcroff, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989: 1). In the late 1970s, this concept was used by some literary critics to describe the emergence of a more critical understanding of the effects of colonialization. In this new context, the idea of the 'postcolonial' entailed a rupture with precedent interpretations of colonialism (Best and Kellner 1991: 29). This new understanding included 'the study and analysis of European territorial conquest, the various institutions of European colonialism, the discursive operation of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects, and, most importantly perhaps, the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post-independence nations and communities' (Ashcroff, Griffiths and Tiffin

1998: 187). Related to this critical approach, postcolonial theory has often been defined as a political project designed to promote the contesting of colonial domination and to critique the legacies of colonialism. Even if the list of colonies is long (e.g. British Gibraltar, Dutch Antilles, French Guiana, Martinique, Reunion, St Pierre and Miquelon, Spanish Ceuta and Melilla, US Puerto Rico), the era of political colonial control is nearly over. However, it is clear that 'political independence did not necessarily mean a wholesale freeing of the colonized from colonialist values, for these, along with political, economic and cultural models, persisted in many cases after independence' (Ashcroff, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998: 64). In its political meaning, the postcolonial project has been understood as a kind of active resistance against the new forms of colonialism, generally designed as neo-colonialism, a concept first coined by Ghanaian independence leader Kwame Nkrumah in 1965.

Within the framework of postcolonial studies, I suggest it is not an exaggeration to say that the notion of 'colonial discourse' has become central to postcolonial criticism (see, for instance, Williams and Chrismas 1994; Bhabha 1994; Thomas 1994: 33–65; Ashcroff, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998: 41–43; Loomba 1998: 38; Young 2001: 383–394). Said's definition of *Orientalism* (1978) initiated colonial discourse theory which defines 'colonial discourse' as its object of study. The idea of 'colonial discourse' is clearly related to Foucault's notion of discourse: 'I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969) and in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) to identify Orientalism' (Said 1978: 3). Indeed, Said's notion of discourse was not really based on *Discipline and Punish* but on Foucault's analysis of discursive formations proposed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Following Foucault, discursive formations regulate discourses such as illness or sexuality. Discourse is an object of knowledge defined by a regime of truth and regulated by relations of force and power. It imposes specific knowledge, produces concepts and determines the role of subjects. Sexuality, for instance, is the 'discourse' that has organized the sexual lives of Western societies since the eighteenth century. It constitutes a 'field of truth' about sex, defines subjects through systems of knowledge and belief (the 'pervert', the 'homosexual', etc.) and generates concepts and experiences. With Foucault's idea of discourse in mind, Said defines *Orientalism* as a 'colonial discourse' that,

> Is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and existed in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning science like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern political sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about 'we' do and what 'they' cannot do or understand as 'we' do) (1978: 12).

Following Said, 'colonial discourse' can be defined as an apparatus of Western power that produces knowledge about non-western cultures under colonial control. Controlling what is known and the way it is known, 'colonial discourse' serves to justify Western domination over colonized people. In this sense, the link between power and knowledge is the key to understand colonial discourse theory. As Foucault put it, 'it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together' (1976: 100).

Taking the power of knowledge into account, most colonial discourse theorists are similarly concerned with the knowledge of power. Until the late nineteenth century, Western representations of power were generally based on a judicial and military model stemming from notions of rule and imposition. From this more traditional perspective, power was assimilated into political control. In the case of colonialism, this model entails several problems: although Indian independence in 1947 began a rapid process through which former Western colonies achieved their political independence, these territories remain subject to the political, economic, cultural and social control of Western power. The persistence of this Western supremacy infers that political independence is not equivalent to actual independence. Power cannot be totally characterized by political control. Consequently, many postcolonialist theorists are concerned with the definition of models of power that explain new forces of global control operating in the world. In many ways, Gramsci's notion of *hegemony* can be

considered as the reference of most of these works on power. In his *Quaderni del carcere* (1929–1932), the Italian philosopher makes a fundamental distinction between the two ways in which ruling groups impose their supremacy. First, the state establishes the dominance and persistence of ruling groups through direct forms of domination or coercion, such as legislation. Second, the establishment maintains its domination by *hegemony* or consent through ruling groups, and convincing ruled groups that their interests are the common interest of society. Hegemony is not only a kind of power, but a condition of power: a group can only become a ruling class if it has previously imposed its conception of the world over all remaining groups. In this sense, Foucault, Said and others have emphasized the importance of 'consent' in the maintenance of power. In using the term 'symbolic violence', for instance, Pierre Bourdieu stressed how the dominated accept their condition of domination as legitimate. From this point of view, colonial domination operates through consent, leading the dominated to adopt the view point of the dominant.

In short, 'colonial discourse' can be defined as a *discourse* (in Foucault's sense) that produces knowledge about colonized people in order to legitimate colonial domination. This discourse constitutes a particular kind of symbolic power which serves to legitimate a hegemonic and colonialist point of view.

The History of Archaeology as a 'Colonial Discourse': 1870–1970

During most of the twentieth century, the history of archaeology has been an eloquent example of 'colonial discourse'. By focusing on a particular image of the archaeologist and of archaeological practice, historians of archaeology have helped to legitimate colonial domination in encounters between the West and 'the rest'. To understand the ways in which the history of archaeology has offered an effective legitimation of some imperialist and colonialist practices, it is necessary to examine the historical evolution of the field.

Archaeology became a scientific discipline at the end of the nineteenth century, in the context of competition with consolidated sciences such as geology, palaeontology and historical archaeology. As John Evans pointed out in 1870, archaeology was still generally excluded from the 'federation of the sciences' (Evans 1870: 4). In this context, archaeologists were eager to display the scientific nature of their work. To do this, they elaborated different strategies such as the organization of international congresses or the publication of scientific journals. Among these strategies, the history of archaeology served to legitimate the new discipline, demonstrating universal and longstanding interest in the remains of the past. Indeed, most of the first general works of prehistoric archaeology began with a chapter devoted to the history of the discipline (e.g. Lyell 1863; Lubbock 1865; Evans 1872; Hamy 1870; Mortillet 1883; Cartailhac 1889; Déchelette 1908; Boule 1923). Written *by* archaeologists and *for* archaeology, the history of archaeology had to necessarily reproduce the empiricist philosophy of knowledge prevailing at that time. This empiricism can be briefly summarized by two tenets: the belief in the autonomy of science, and faith in the neutrality of science. These two claims decisively influenced the 'internalist' orientation of the history of archaeology between 1870 and 1970 and, therefore, they marked the way in which historians of archaeology interpreted the relationship between archaeological practice and colonialism.

The belief in the autonomy of science (i.e. the idea that science is independent from its political, economical and social context) was related to the influence of empiricism at the turn of the twentieth century. At that time, archaeologists wanted nothing but 'facts'. Like Mr. Gradgrind (the teacher of Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*), they were persuaded that 'you can only form the mind of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them' (Dickens 1852: 1). Archaeology took 'nothing for granted, owes little to theory or hypothesis; but points to early vestiges, substantive records, visible and tangible evidences' (Hoskyns 1871: 25). This empiricism provoked a clear distinction between the facts (objective, undeniable) and theorizations (subjective, questionable):

> We ask for facts, and evidence of facts, and we are content to leave to others the responsibility to their own conclusions. Most people of any ingenuity can discover in history whatever they wish

> to find there; and if you choose to make a bad use of the materials with which we supply you, do it at your own risk (Houghton 1864: 4).

Once these facts have been collected, the inductive method was the only way to progress in the knowledge of the past:

> Whatever they may be, the principal, of not the only safe method, is that by which all true advances in science have been effected and which, since the days of Bacon, has so largely extended the confines of human knowledge. I mean the diligent observation and collection of facts, from which, in due time, some general laws may be induced, so that these, in their turn, may serve to explain other facts (Evans 1870: 9).

The second idea that summarized the paradigm prevailing during the 1870–1960 period was the widespread belief in the neutrality of scientists:

> While the true reward that the inquirer into the truths of nature has lies in the rational gratification which the pursuit carries inseparably with it, and in satisfaction that in his day and generation he has contributed his mite to the advancement of that natural knowledge with which the destiny of the human race is so intimately bound up (Falconer 1864: 599).

In light of the empiricism dominant at this time, it is not surprisingly that the history of archaeology took an 'internalist' point of view pervasive during the first half of the twentieth century. In the United States and in Europe, the history of archaeology was seen as the inevitable development of archaeological ideas throughout the ages: 'an account of the slow journey at the darkness of subjectivity and speculation towards objectivity, rationality and science' (Murray 1989: 56). This progression was strictly 'internal' because of the absence of political anomalies or social interferences. What was the role assigned by historians to the context in the construction of archaeological knowledge? The history of science was defined as a 'history of the progress of the science about the primitive civilisations and the antiquity of man' (Cartailhac 1889: 1) and, therefore, non-epistemological factors were not considered. For the archaeologists of the first half of the century, their practice was not conditioned (or, at least, not decisively) by extra scientific interests because their main interest was the (disinterested) pursuit of the truth. From this point of view, their main motivation was curiosity: 'Camden's back-looking curiosity was the curiosity that has made us all archaeologists' (Daniel 1981: 10). Only towards the second half of the century, this strict 'internalism' started to have some problems in explaining certain episodes within the history of the discipline. For instance, how to explain the political use of archaeological practices by totalitarians regimes such as Nazi Germany? To do this, historians of archaeology occasionally adopted an 'externalist' perspective, only invoked to explain the 'errors' or the 'aberrations' in the history of science. David Van Reybrouck has summarized this 'asymmetrical' approach: '"Good" science is explained by rationality, "bad" science by sociology. Thus, while the work of Dubois, Leakey or Tobias is explained by empirical luck, methodological rigour or theoretical sophistication, the Piltdown fraud, the Moulin Quignon mandible and the eolith debate are treated in terms of externalist parameters' (Van Reybrouck 2002: 160).

In this context, the history of archaeology written until the final decades of the twentieth century can be defined as a specific kind of 'colonial discourse', i.e. as one of the discourses by which colonialist groups constitute the field of truth about the past by imposing specific knowledge, practices and values upon colonized groups. Moreover, this discourse has served to legitimate certain colonialist practices. We can distinguish three ways in which the history of archaeology has operated as an instrument of knowledge-power about the past within which some colonialist practices have come into being. First, historians of archaeology generally promoted a romantic image of archaeological practices in colonized countries. Second, they usually omitted the connections between the consolidation of archaeology as a scientific discipline and the colonialist expansion of Western nations. Third, historians sometimes justified the appropriation of material cultures from colonized spaces.

A Romantic Image of Archaeological Practice

During the first half of the twentieth century, most histories of archaeology were what Bruce Trigger called 'popular histories' (2001: 631), i.e. accounts of the fabulous explorations and spectacular discoveries written to captivate the public's interest. They generally focused on the archaeology of the great disappeared civilizations. These stories gave emphasis to the romantic stereotypes of archaeology (also promoted by literature and cinema) and they supported the image of the archaeologist as a sort of Indiana Jones searching for treasures in ruined places. From this point of view, the history of archaeology was described as the story of the discovery of abandoned monuments, mysterious cities or ancient treasures (e.g. Casson 1934; Bibby 1956; Bacon 1960; Eydoux 1966; Fagan 1978). One of the earliest popular histories of archaeology was Adolf Michaelis's *A Century of Archaeological Discoveries* (1908 [1906]). Some years later, the Czech journalist C. W. Ceram (a pseudonym for Kurt Marek) published *Gods, Graves and Scholars* (1951), the most popular of these historiographical accounts. Ceram also published other best sellers such as *A Picture History of Archaeology* (Ceram 1957) and *The World of Archaeology* (Ceram 1966). Still today, this genre focuses on the history of archaeology in colonized regions. These countries constitute the geography of Western romantic imagery: Egypt (Fagan 1975; Hofmann 1979), Mesopotamia (Lloyd 1947), and so on. As Bruce G. Trigger has pointed out, these popular histories of archaeology have generally emphasized the importance of 'many individuals, such as Howard Carter, who made celebrated discoveries but contributed little to the intellectual development of archaeology. On the other hand, archaeologists whose ideas played a major role in shaping the discipline, such as Oscar Montelius, Vere Gordon Childe and Grahame Clark, are rarely mentioned in such works' (Trigger 2001: 631).

More interesting are the intellectual histories of archaeology, best exemplified in Glyn Daniel's works. Although Daniel acknowledged the impact of political and social factors in some extreme examples (as in the case of Nazi Germany), he typically adopted an 'internalist' approach focused on the inner evolution of archaeological ideas. In the case of colonialism, Daniel promotes a romantic image of the ancestors of modern archaeologists (dilettantes and antiquarians), such as Giovanni Battista Belzoni (1778–1823):

> Born in Padua, he made a living in England by performing feats of strength at circuses, went to Egypt to sell hydraulic machinery for irrigation purposes, and, this failing, turned his strength and energy to collecting antiquities by tomb-robbing (Daniel 1981: 68).

On the 'fathers' of archaeology (such as Flinders Petrie, Heinrich Schliemann and Arthur Evans), Daniel promotes the image of fair-minded scientists working exclusively for the progress of science:

> When [Petrie] was financed by the Egypt Exploration Fund, he wrote to Miss Edwards: 'the prospect of excavating in Egypt is a most fascinating one to me, and I hope the result may justify my undertaking such a work'. They most certainly did [...] Petrie was one of the giants among archaeologists. His techniques and methods, as well as his actual discoveries, certainly justified calling the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Heroic Age of Egyptian archaeology (Daniel 1981: 119).

In Daniel's books, there are references neither to the political context nor to the social and cultural implications of archaeological practices in the colonized world. Archaeology was the product of a natural curiosity in antiquity,

> Then again, in the last few centuries, travellers have observed and described from parts of the world, other than Europe and the Mediterranean, primitive or preliterate folk who now coexist with civilised men. It has been natural to ask how this could be and what it implied. What was the origin of these savages or barbarians? Are they the impoverished and degraded remnants of former civilisations, or are they the survivals of stages in our prehistoric past? And to all these questions we must add a fourth, natural curiosity, which has prompted an interest in prehistory –

> the natural curiosity as to show man and his culture came into being, the mechanism of cultural origins and change? (1978: 13–14)

Promoting an idealized image of archaeologists and of their activity, general histories of archaeology have helped to justify Western domination. Moreover, these stereotypes have been reinforced by hundreds of exquisite photographs used to illustrate these books. These images describe the colonized countries as the romantic landscapes of archaeology.

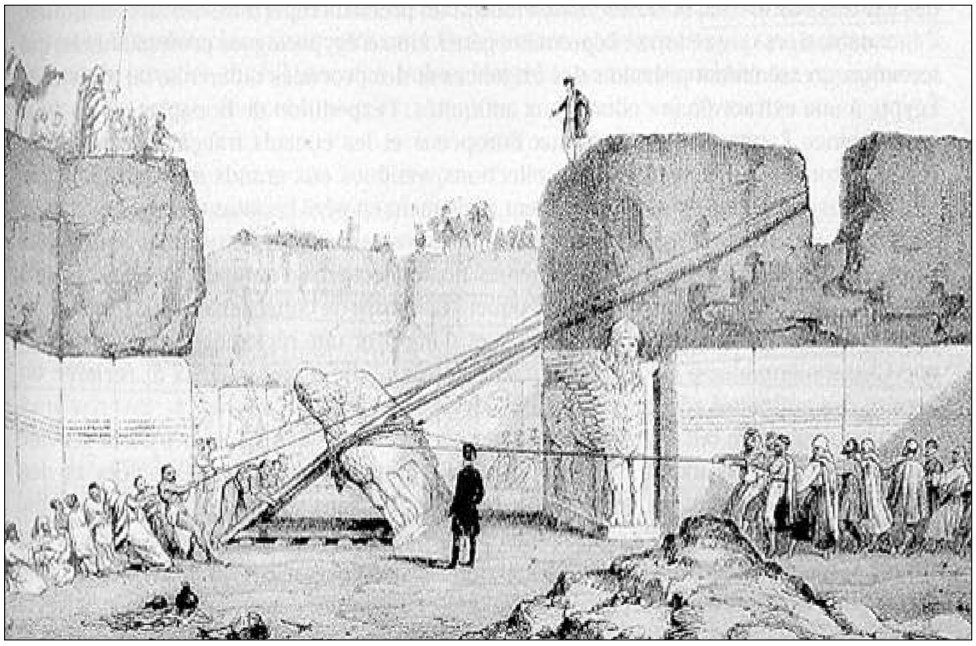
Oversight of the Political Implications of Archaeological Practice

In *A Short History of Archaeology* (1981), Glyn Daniel describes Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in the following terms,

> The 167 savants – nicknamed the 'Donkeys' – who formed the scientific and artistic commission which Napoleon brought with him to Egypt, started work soon after he reached Cairo on 21 July 1798 [...] The French Egyptian Institute was set up in a palace in Cairo and in three years achieved an astonishing amount of work. The publication of the *Description de l'Egypte* by Jomard (1777–1862) was the beginning of the serious study of Egyptian antiquities (1981: 64).

This account summarizes the way in which historians of archaeology had traditionally omitted the political implications of their science: Daniel's description of the expedition completely neglects the relationships between the organization of the scientific expedition and the colonialist's interests of Western nations. This is but one telling example of how historians have generally omitted the connections between the expansion of archaeology and the colonialist process. The same can be said of other works of this period such as *Origines de l'archéologie préhistorique en France* (Laming-Emperaire 1964), *A History of American Archaeology* (Willey and Sabloff 1974) or *Conceptions of Kentucky Prehistory* (Schwartz 1967). Sometimes, these authors explicitly recognized that they were not interested in the context of the discipline:

> In the following chapters, we will discuss but the exterior aspects of archaeology: research, conservation and publication. Here we would like, following the theoretical definition and historical discussion which brought us to the current state, to examine the goals and methods (Daux 1958: 66).



Archaeology and colonialism: The English military lead the collecting of archaeological pieces. From: Layard 1849.

The development of the archaeological methodology in a colonialist context: the application of the Wheeler Method in Arikamedu (India). From: Daniel 1981.

Nevertheless, the consolidation of archaeological science was related to scientific expeditions promoted by Western governments and commercial organizations, the opening of museums such as the Louvre or the British Museum and the creation of Western institutions whose main objective was to rule conquered countries. Some examples illustrate the connections between colonialism, imperialism and archaeology. In North America, archaeological discourse served to justify racial myths that claimed that Native American people were incapable of significant cultural development. Arguing that Native American cultures had remained static since prehistoric times (and, consequently, that Indians were incapable of adapting to a European way of life), eighteenth-century archaeologists justified European colonization. In South America, in countries such as Mexico or Brazil, the development of scientific archaeology was the result of the constant interactions of various dimensions, such as nationalism, economic development and, of course, certain forms of colonialism. In Africa and Asia, the development of archaeology during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries was clearly related to the political and economical interests of Western nations. It is not therefore surprising that the most famous archaeologists from this period were men in government service such as the French consul Paul Emile Botta or the Englishmen Austen Henry Layard and Mortimer Wheeler. Wheeler is generally celebrated as the inventor of a new technique of excavation, which 'consists essentially of broad sectioning, excavation by squares or quadrants, with key separating baulks, the rigorous recording of everything, accurate and detailed survey and full publication as soon as possible' (Daniel 1981: 169). However, it is important to remember that Wheeler developed most of these archaeological methods in a colonialist context: Wheeler served as brigadier for the English army at El Alamein and Salerno and, in 1939, accepted the position of director general of Archaeological Survey of India, a country administered by the British.

These examples demonstrate that colonialist implications of archaeological practice are much more important than what one can deduce from the traditional histories of archaeology, where archaeology appears as a homogeneous and decontextualized science.

The Justification of Some Colonialist Forms of Domination

> Turning our attention for a moment in another direction, we may briefly consider the immense advances that have within the last quarter of a century been made in our knowledge both of the pre-classical antiquities of Greece and Rome, and of the early history, languages, and archaeology

> of Assyria, Egypt, and the Holy Land [...] *It is much to be regretted that the British Government should be so far behind those of other countries in fostering such schools.* Our own Hellenic Society has done much excellent work, as have also the explorers of Cyprus, while the enterprise of other nations has brought to light at Olympia, the Acropolis of Athens, and elsewhere monuments not only of archaic art, but of the palmy days of Pheidias and his successors. These discoveries have re-acted on our own Museums of Classical Archaeology, to promote the study of which subjects chairs have been founded of our principal Universities (my emphasis, Evans 1891: 10–11).

As John Evans's text exemplifies, the pursuit of the 'very advance in knowledge' (Evans 1876: 45) has often licensed the appropriation of other cultures in the name of disinterested scholarship. In this context, historians of archaeology have sometimes justified acts of colonialist usurpation in adopting ethnocentric viewpoints which presuppose that archaeological pieces are better conserved in Western museums:

> After the many vicissitudes the Elgin 'marbles' were bought from him for the nation in 1816 for the sum of £35,000 and exhibit in the British Museum. There has been, and still is, endless controversy about the propriety of transporting the 'marbles' to Britain and discussion as to whether they should now be returned to Greece. What is beyond dispute is that they have survived admirably in the British Museum, where they are now beautifully displayed: they would have suffered great damage if left in their original home (Daniel 1981: 82–83).

The justification of certain acts of imperialist usurpation can be defined as a form of 'cultural appropriation'. This term has been used 'to describe the ways in which post-colonial societies take over those aspects of the imperial culture-language, forms of writing, film, theatre, even modes of thought and argument such as rationalism, logic and analysis that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998: 19). In other words, the history of archaeology has sometimes been used to justify the strategies by which imperial powers incorporate, as their own, the culture they invade.

This is a brief depiction of how the history of archaeology has ultimately served to support, justify and legitimate some colonialist practices. Even if this approach has continued until today, it is clear that recent interpretations in the field have promoted a new manner of understanding the relationship between archaeology and colonialism.

History of Archaeology as a Critique of Colonialism: 1980–2000

Influenced by the end of the decolonization process and by the first intellectual critiques of colonialism (e.g. Césaire 1950; Fanon 1961; Leclerc 1972; Asad 1973; Copans 1975; Said 1978), some archaeologists denounced, during the 1970s and 1980s, the use of the archaeology to legitimate colonialism and imperialism (e.g. Garlake 1973; Evans and Meggers 1973; Garlake 1982; Bray and Glover 1987). In this context, new interpretations of the history of archaeology in colonized regions were suggested. Anthropologists and archaeologists demonstrated that, 'Colonial powers, especially the British, encouraged anthropological research, which gave them useful insights into the people they administered [...] Anthropology developed and flourished as a result of colonialism' (Fagan 1989: 48). At the same time, historians of archaeology made it obvious that archaeologists have promoted static interpretations of colonized cultures in order to give legitimacy to imperial powers. At least until the beginnings of the twentieth century, archaeologists treated colonized people in a clearly pejorative fashion: 'unchanging people, with an unchanging technology' (Murray and White 1981: 256). New historians proved that 'colonialist archaeology, wherever practised, served to denigrate native societies and people by trying to demonstrate that they had been static in prehistoric times and lacked the initiative to develop on their own [...] This primitiveness was seen as justifying European colonists assuming control over such people or supplanting them' (Trigger 1984: 363).

In the United States, certain archaeologists have reviewed the history of American archaeology taking the colonialist context into account. Robert Silverberg's *Mound Builders of Ancient America* (1968) was a pioneer work exploring the impact of racism in North America Archaeology. Silverberg

traced the 'myth of the moundbuilders' which, during the eighteenth century, held that the mounds found in Ohio could not have been built by the Native People of America, who were considered too savage. Instead, it was widely believed that they were built by a 'civilized' race that disappeared a long time ago. Racist interpretations within the practice of archaeology was later analysed by Bruce Trigger (1980). Trigger considered that even the New Archaeology had been informed by a racist prejudice against Native American People (Trigger 1980: 662).

Modern interpretations of the relationship between archaeology and colonialism have been further marked by Bruce Trigger's *Alternatives Archaeologies: Nationalist, Colonialist, Imperialist* (1984). According to Trigger, 'there is a close relationship between the nature of archaeological research and the social milieu in which it is practised' (Trigger 1984: 356). Trigger's model includes three alternative archaeologies: *nationalist archaeology* encouraged by patriotic sentiments and used to glorify the national past (Trigger 1984: 358); *colonialist archaeology* developed either in countries whose native population was replaced or overwhelmed by Europeans or in ones where Europeans remained domination for a long time (Trigger 1984: 360); *imperialist archaeology* practised in a number of countries that have exerted political dominance over large areas of the world (such as the United Kingdom or the Soviet Union). Even if Trigger's typology is questionable (it is a general classification that fails to explain a number of local variations), his theoretical framework was the first which critically discussed the relationship between archaeology and colonialism.

Following the pioneering works of Trigger and others, historians of archaeology have recently explored some of the ways in which the archaeological agenda has been influenced by colonialist contexts. For instance, they have examined the link between colonial governments and the preservation of West Africa's past (Fagan 1989), and the meaning of the archaeological document in the North of Africa (Coye 1993) or the invention of South African Prehistory (Shepherd 2002c). In the last few years, the bibliography on colonialism and archaeology has increasing considerably (e.g. Silberman 1989; Coye 1993; Hall 2000, 2001; Gosden 2001, 2004; Gosden and Knowles 2001; Shepherd 2002a, 2002b; Schlanger 2002b, 2002c, 2003). These links between archaeology and Western colonialism and imperialism can be clearly contrasted with the traditional viewpoint which considered archaeology exclusively as an intellectual activity (a perspective which still persists in some intellectual and popular histories: Stiebing 1993; Grand-Aymerich 1998).

Some Concluding Thoughts

Following this review of the historical relationship between the history of archaeology and colonialism, one question seems especially pertinent: Do we need to adopt a postcolonial point of view as historians of archaeology? The problem is complex and, therefore, there is not one unequivocal answer. Because of this complexity, I want to explore some of the negative and positive responses to this question.

Historians of archaeology do not need a post-colonial viewpoint to recognize the continuing effects of colonialism and imperialism over the practice of archaeology. Indeed, the recognition that most archaeological agendas have been affected to some degree by Western imperialism has been carried out without reference to postcolonial theory. During the last two decades, historians have traced the effects of Western imperialism over archaeology, have depicted how colonialism determined which questions were and were not investigated, and have demonstrated that some archaeological evidence has been systematically misinterpreted to offer a historical justification for colonialist interests. These investigations have been undertaken without reference to postcolonial studies.

However, postcolonial studies offer a wide variety of theoretical positions, ideas and categories that can be useful to elucidate the nature and impact of colonial powers and their effects on archaeological practice. The field provides a set of critical terms that are helpful in unraveling the complex nature of relationships between colonialism and science. Terms such as 'colonial discourse', 'appropriation', 'hegemony' and 'authenticity', for instance, have generated extensive discussions in parallel fields such

as anthropology and history, and can be similarly used both in archaeology and in the history of archaeology.

The use of elaborate theoretical frameworks such as postcolonial studies can assist historians to overcome a central problem in the new history of archaeology:

> In replacing an internalist framework of explanation for an externalist one, there is a danger of repeating some of the very mistakes historians wanted avoid. If for scholars like Daniel, the development of archaeology was explained by what can retrospectively be regarded as its successes, for critical historians it would be explained by its contemporary contexts. But just as the notion of 'success' was much more problematic than a resentist perspective permitted to see, the notion of 'context' requires much more sophistication that its immediate attractiveness suggests. If not used carefully, one runs the risk of reifying the fluid notion of 'context' to an explanatory concept that is as reductionist as that of 'success' (Van Reybrouck 2002: 159–160).

Van Reybrouck has reason to point out that if archaeology is to be understood in terms of its social and political context, then historians of archaeology must define 'context' more precisely and they have to specify in which ways the social, political and cultural environment has marked archaeological agendas. To do this, the history of archaeology should be informed by debates and discussions developed in other fields, like postcolonial studies. This interdisciplinary approach can provide historians with critical tools to better understand the assumptions within the discipline. Indeed, this was the objective of this article, as well: to take as reference one of the main concepts in postcolonial studies and to expose the ways in which the history of archaeology was written to justify some colonialist practices.

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